Balsall & Berkswell Parish Councils Joint Merger Working Group

Terms of Reference (TOR)

1. Purpose

1.1. To consider how best to progress the merger of the two councils to enable a smooth transition to a single, unified Parish Council that represents the combined area of Balsall parish and Berkswell parish and its inhabitants.

1.2. To produce a merger project plan, monitor progress and deliver against the identified timescales.

1.3. Each parish council will be responsible for its own closure arrangements; these are outside the scope of the Working Group.

1.4. To provide recommendations to both councils on issues that need to be considered and decisions to be made in order to achieve the best possible position for handover to the new Council.

1.5. To provide written reports on those issues, with options and recommendations to both councils.

2. Membership

2.1. Each council to nominate up to 3 Councillor representatives to the Working Group; if any are unavailable, they may nominate a substitute.

2.2. In the absence of Balsall Parish Councillor engagement with the Working Group, up to 3 Balsall residents to be invited to attend to represent the views of Balsall Parish.

2.3. Quorum will be three.

2.4. An independent chair will be appointed, who is not a councillor on either Parish Council.

3. Administration

3.1. Agendas and meeting notes minutes will be produced by the Working Group Chair or nominated Committee member.

3.2. The Working Group may establish sub-groups to carry out specific tasks and provide recommendations in the form of a written report to be agreed by the JMWG, before being taken to both Councils for approval.

3.3. The Committee will agree the wording of a motion for approval by the Councils.

3.4. Meetings shall be held in a location incurring minimal cost to the Councils and shall not exceed 2 hrs in length. Meetings may be held in person or online. Working Group meetings are not required to be held in public.

3.5. Costs will be met by both parish councils on basis of Balsall PC two thirds and Berkswell one third for material items over £300.

4. Procedure

4.1. All meetings of the working group will be convened by the Chair. Councillors will conduct themselves in accordance with the Parish Councils Code of Conduct.

4.2. Advertising the time and place of a working group meeting is not required as the public do not have an automatic right to attend.

5. Key tasks

5.1. The key tasks for the Working Group include:

i. Liaise with Solihull MBC Legal and Electoral Services team on the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (Part 4) Regulations and order to
    a. understand the requirements, implications and timings
    b. clarify the respective roles of SMBC and the parish councils
    c. clarify how the transition arrangements will work to ensure staff and contractors are paid throughout the change.

ii. Develop, monitor and deliver a merger project plan that sets out key milestones and critical path issues and dependencies.

iii. Identify, through an independent review, an appropriate organisation structure, systems and staffing that ensures the new council is fit for the 21st century.

iv. Prepare a draft budget for the new council for agreement by December 2026 at the latest.

v. Consider the HR and governance implications and advise on how these are to be managed

vi. Propose.gov.uk domain name for website and emails

vii. Propose branding

viii. Propose website content

ix. Develop a communications strategy to keep key stakeholders informed about the merger of the 2 councils and develop content.