

A single Sustainable Community Strategy for Worcestershire

Foreword by Chairman of Worcestershire Partnership

Welcome to Worcestershire's new Sustainable Community Strategy for 2011 to 2021.

This is our third edition since 2003 but the first time we have combined all of the districts and county sustainable community strategies (SCS) into one single strategy. In doing so we have significantly reduced the number of priorities enabling greater focus for all partners in light of reduced resources and increasing demands.

Having a single strategy will help improve the links between county and district partnerships and establish a robust local vision that underpins future partnership delivery arrangements that are flexible to adapt to future changes nationally and locally.

This strategy sets out the vision for the future of Worcestershire enabling partners to focus on the activity needed in the short term to improve the quality of life of the people who live, visit or work in the county.

Our **vision** for Worcestershire is "a county with safe, cohesive, healthy and inclusive communities, a strong and diverse economy and a valued and cherished environment."

To achieve this vision we have focussed our efforts on those areas where we really need to make a difference and where we can only do this effectively through partnership working.

We have used a wide evidence base in preparing this strategy and have ensured that we have the ability to influence the priority outcomes and that there is a clear community benefit.

Taking all this into consideration we have identified three key priorities:

- A skilled and prosperous **economy**
- An **environment** that is cherished and resilient
- Improving **health & wellbeing**

Alongside gathering priorities on a countywide level, district partnerships have been identifying their own priorities at a local level which are set out in this strategy along with their own vision, challenges for the area and how they will deliver their priorities.

To support working towards these priorities the Worcestershire Partnership has agreed a number of **values** that apply to all partners in their work and underpin everything we do. We will:

- Provide for the needs of all groups in society
- Treat people with equality and value diversity
- Build strong, cohesive communities and promote good community relationships
- Remove barriers that prevent individuals from reaching their full potential
- Intervene early to prevent problems from becoming entrenched
- Take account of the needs of future generations
- Deliver the right services in the right way and provide value for money
- Involve and listen to local people and communities whether they are geographical or communities of interest
- Promote Worcestershire on the regional, national, European and international stage and maximise the opportunities available to the county

We are now working to develop and agree priority action plans that will contribute to supporting the delivery of the priorities in this strategy and will regularly monitor and report our progress towards delivering the strategy.

Adrian Hardman



Cllr Adrian Hardman
Chairman, Worcestershire Partnership

About Worcestershire

The County of Worcestershire is located in the heart of England and covers an area of 173,529 hectares. It comprises six districts: Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester City, Wychavon and Wyre Forest. It has a combined population of 557,426 (mid 2010 estimate), with more older people than regional and national averages.

Worcestershire has an outstanding and rich natural environment and is home to spectacular features such as the Malvern Hills. A large part of the county consists of a combination of fields, orchards, woodlands, meadow, ancient forest and rivers. By contrast, the county's remaining habitat is extremely fragmented.

Though agricultural land and open countryside dominate the landscape, 64% of the total population lives in urban areas. Worcestershire is adjacent to the major West Midlands conurbation and has generally good road access to and from the national transport network.

We have a significant rural population. Approximately one third of Worcestershire's residents live in rural areas and many of these residents experience difficulty accessing services. Nearly 40% of areas in Worcestershire are ranked within the top 20% most deprived nationally in terms of geographical barriers to services.

The perception of Worcestershire is that it is affluent, free from social disadvantage, and an attractive place in which to live. In reality there are pockets of deprivation and some very specific, and sometimes conflicting, challenges that the diverse nature of the county poses. The 2007 Indices of Deprivation highlights seven areas (lower super output areas) in Worcestershire that are in the top 10% most deprived areas in England and Wales, with education deprivation, income deprivation and crime of particular concern.

Worcestershire Priorities

The three priorities identified for Worcestershire are nothing new. They featured in our first community strategy published in 2003 and still reflect what residents and partners have told us are the most important issues for them. What's different are the challenges partners face in the current climate where there are increasing demands despite fewer resources being available, which is why we have focused on what is most relevant and needed in order to achieve our vision.

The three priorities for Worcestershire are:

- A skilled and prosperous **economy**
- An **environment** that is cherished and resilient
- Improving **health & wellbeing**

These priorities are not exclusive given there are demonstrable connections between each of them, highlighted by their inter-dependency and potential impact on each other. For example activity around green infrastructure provides multiple benefits not solely for the preservation and enhancement of the environment, as residents living in greener areas demonstrate increased longevity, a higher level of physical activity as well as better health among senior citizens. In addition it contributes to increasing the local economy in terms of its tourism and in providing a greater opportunity for 'green' employment.



Underpinning each of these priorities are **communities**.

In Worcestershire there are a number of real benefits to be gained from taking a more local community based approach to delivering services and by giving communities a bigger say and a greater part to play in the delivery of those services.

Through engagement and empowerment we can support individuals and communities to get involved, volunteer and work together enabling them to own, manage and shape services that meet their local needs.

Community involvement strengthens interactions between people, changes individuals' perceptions for example their fear of crime, and improves their sense of belonging to the local area. It also encourages communities to take ownership and action over local issues and make decisions, taking responsibility for projects within their community, reducing conflict and creating stronger communities with mutually supportive networks that are more resilient during times of crisis.

Having communities as an underlying principle to our priorities will help address the issues that partners are concerned with but none are solely responsible for example social cohesion and inequality, and it recognises that that the empowerment of individuals and communities needs to be at the centre of action in order to reduce inequalities.

Localism affords us the opportunity to work more closely together with our partners and local communities and will be essential to the development of action plans supporting the delivery of each of our priorities.

Worcestershire Priorities - A skilled and prosperous economy

Worcestershire has a prosperous economy which contributes significantly to the social, economic wellbeing and sustainability of its communities. The County has a beautiful natural landscape which is a real asset in attracting visitors, businesses and workers to the County. Worcestershire has good connectivity via the national motorway network, with the M5, M50 and M42 all running through the county. There are also direct rail links from Worcester City to Birmingham and London, and connections to other towns in the county. One of the strengths of the Worcestershire economy is its diversity as the County is not overly dependent on one or two major employers or on the performance of a specific industrial or service sector. Worcestershire has significant presence of high value added manufacturing, food and drink, retail and leisure, research and development and high technology. Worcestershire benefits from a number of strategic employers attracting inward investment, a large proportion of small to medium enterprises (SME's) and high levels of self employment. Worcestershire's unemployment remained below the regional and national averages even at the peak of recession. The County offers excellent opportunities to develop a highly skilled and prosperous economic future for the residents and businesses.

The County faces economic challenges such as contraction in private sector employment and significant employment in the low value added sectors, notably manufacturing. Some of the urban centres such as Kidderminster and Redditch have been adversely affected by the industrial decline leading to loss of jobs and higher than average unemployment rates especially amongst young people with a higher than average working age population with no qualifications. Young people in the county are disproportionately affected by recession with higher rates of 18-24ys claiming benefits. A major challenge is the loss of skilled young people from the county, through a lack of higher education and employment opportunities. The County is also facing difficulties in retaining and attracting graduates. There is a lack of higher level skills in some sectors and geographical areas, such as Redditch, including management and skilled trades in engineering, manufacturing and construction. The ICT infrastructure in some rural areas and absence of high speed broadband are some of the barriers in attracting inward investment.

Our vision is to shape Worcestershire's future so that the County can realise its full economic potential. The Local Enterprise Partnership has recognised that supporting and encouraging business growth and investment is important as it stimulates wealth creation in the county. Business growth and investment provides the environment for residents to have access to opportunities for learning and training and a focus on providing appropriate training improves the employability of the workforce and benefits the economy.

The Worcestershire Partnership will help to realise this ambition by supporting the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership to unblock barriers to growth ensuring the county is 'Open for Business'. The focus is on increasing business activity and jobs whilst coordinating delivery around the economy, planning, housing, transport and infrastructure. This will be achieved by creating the right environment for sustainable growth and making it easier for businesses to locate in Worcestershire. Current and future activity will involve the delivery of key strategic employment sites, a transition to a low carbon economy and a focus on high technology and knowledge based research and development businesses, examples include the early completion of Worcester Technology Park and new Bosch facility, and building on the existing Malvern Hills Science Park and Bromsgrove Technology Park sites. There will also be a focus on advanced manufacturing and environmental technologies progressing the work undertaken on the South Kidderminster site to become an Enterprise Zone.

For better access for businesses, partners will work together to bring investment for high speed broadband and broadband in rural areas and to secure improvements to rail and road transport networks, including the Southern link and the east/west links and A449 in the North of the county. Partners will help facilitate the delivery of affordable housing to meet housing needs and to continue to tackle the problems of worklessness and financial exclusion. Partners will also work to support young people into employment through apprenticeships and work with educational establishments to raise achievement levels and ensure education leavers are equipped with the right skills for the job market.

Economic priority outcomes for the next ten years are:

- Enhanced economic prosperity through sustainable economic growth
- Improved survival rates for new and existing business
- A skilled workforce that meets the needs of business

Worcestershire Priorities - An environment that is cherished and resilient

Worcestershire's natural and historic environment helps define our county. It provides a strong sense of place, attracts and retains people and businesses, and contributes a vast range of services - many of which are taken for granted. Maintaining a high quality environment requires us to take care of wildlife, landscapes, archaeology and buildings, allowing them to play their crucial role in supporting social and economic wellbeing.

A healthy, accessible and well-managed environment contributes to everyone's quality of life. It is much more than just an attractive landscape; it is a fine balance of ecology and history that needs the right conditions to thrive and expand. A protected and cherished environment supports a healthy community and makes the county a desirable place to live, work and visit. It enhances our sense of place and delivers social and economic benefits to our communities. Our historic environment and geology provide an irreplaceable link to the past and a sense of cultural identity.

Some of the most pressing environmental issues faced by Worcestershire include adapting to the inevitable consequences of a changing climate, and the need to move to a low-carbon economy. Energy costs are a threat to both householders and businesses. Reducing Worcestershire's contribution of greenhouse gas emissions also presents opportunities. Our existing business base can be strengthened and diversified through embracing a move to a low-carbon, zero waste economy. Energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable construction are all set to play an increasing role. Environmental technologies offer opportunities to capitalise on new skills and to open up new markets.

Worcestershire is very vulnerable to extreme weather events, having felt the impacts of high temperatures, drought, flooding and heavy snowfall, all of which have had a significant impact on local communities. In recent years, flooding has cost the county millions of pounds through damage and lost business, and has forced people out of their homes. We need to continue to build resilience to extreme weather in both homes and businesses. Natural and historic environment data can enhance our understanding of the impact of extreme weather events. Since the devastating flooding of 2007 we have protected a number of communities with the construction of permanent defences and have improved our ability to warn and inform people about likely flooding. We also have a better understanding of the role the natural environment can play alongside hard engineering solutions in reducing flood impacts. This includes using landscape features to store water, reducing run-off rates, and ensuring new developments have sustainable drainage schemes built in.

There is a strong history of joint working on environmental issues in Worcestershire. Partners are embracing the concept of Green Infrastructure, which means moving away from looking at individual parts of the environment in isolation, towards a more joined-up, multifunctional approach. In this way, opportunities for environmental enhancement, such as may arise as part of a new housing development, can be looked at with a view to using limited resources to make the greatest gains. For example, green infrastructure provision on a site could provide a wildlife corridor, flood attenuation, protection of an archaeological monument, sustainable transport route and recreation resource – all from a single green space.

The protection and enhancement of our unique environment remains our priority. But the county cannot be preserved in a fossilised state; development can and must come forward if Worcestershire is to prosper. In order to ensure that development is sustainable, the character and value of the natural and built environment should be maintained. We will seek to work with developers wherever possible to capture the environmental benefits that development can bring.

Environmental priority outcomes for the next 10 years are:

- Protecting and enhancing the county's natural and historic environment through a better understanding of its social and economic value and its contribution to health and well-being
- Working better together to deliver environmental improvements
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change

Worcestershire Priorities - Improving health and well-being

Worcestershire enjoys generally good health and life expectancy is increasing. However, we need to improve health and well-being overall and close the health gap between areas of higher and lower deprivation. Improving health is everybody's business and many different organisations in all sectors have a pivotal role to play in creating the conditions for good health. We will work collaboratively to improve health outcomes by influencing the wider determinants of health, which include education, income, employment, transport, the environment and housing. We will also work together to enable local people to take responsibility for their own health, so that healthy lifestyle choices are easier to make, and become the norm in Worcestershire.

Reducing health inequalities is important because living as long and as healthy a life as possible should not depend on where you live, or on other factors such as gender, age, disability, or ethnicity. Much of the difference between social groups in terms of health outcomes can be explained by differences in lifestyle choices. For example, people who smoke, are inactive, eat too much and drink too much alcohol are all at far greater risk of ill-health and premature mortality, and these people tend to be disproportionately clustered in particular groups such as areas of high deprivation. The costs of these lifestyle choices are high, both for the individual, and for society. The avoidable disease burden of illness caused by obesity for example, may threaten to overwhelm our health and social care services if current trends are not reversed.

Improving the quality of life and independence of those with longterm illness and older people is important because the demography of the county is such that they make up a rapidly rising proportion of the whole population. It is essential that problems in later life are prevented as much as possible by the promotion of health improvement through lifestyle choice. It is also essential that the latest evidence as to what works is applied in supporting those who already find it hard to live independently. The application of new technologies and service redesign will be important areas for collaboration and partnership working as we face the demographic challenges of the County. We will also maintain the principle of people being empowered to make their own decisions about how they live, ensuring that choice is always possible, with the development of a more vibrant health and social care sector, including too the incorporation of the Big Society opportunity.

Improving mental health and well-being is important because this underpins so much of our overall ambition, to make Worcestershire a vibrant and healthy place to be. Families, individuals, and communities thrive when overall mental health and well-being is good, and they struggle when it is not. Working together to reach those who need help, and to promote mentally healthy lifestyles so that mental ill-health does not develop, is key if the county is to provide the best environment it can for those living in it. At a time of economic challenge and rapid social change, mental health can be compromised, and developing a resilient population can be one of our most effective ways of making sure that the County is fit for the future.

Health and Well Being Priority outcomes for the next 10 years are:

- To reduce health inequalities between social groups in terms of health and quality of life outcomes
- To improve the quality of life and independence of older people and those with a long-term illness
- To improve mental health and well-being.

Our Vision

"We will make Bromsgrove District the place to live, do business and to visit."

About Bromsgrove District

Geography and Population

Bromsgrove District is in North Worcestershire and over 90% of its 83.9 square miles is greenbelt. The population is estimated to be almost 93,400¹ and nearly 20% are aged over 65, which is 3% higher than the national average². This proportion is set to increase which is likely to significantly impact on policy and planning for the District.

Economy and Employment

The economic picture is comparatively positive and business survival rates remain above the national average³. The District's median household income is the highest in the County⁴ and the Claimant Count Unemployment Rate has been consistently lower than regional and national figures since October 2007⁵. However, the highest claimant rate is in Charford, followed by Sidemoor and Catshill Wards⁶ and the same three wards have high claimant rates for 18-24 year olds, putting them in the top ten wards in the County⁷.

Bromsgrove Town Centre is a major area of economic concern and its extensive redevelopment is underway. Improving the shopping and other facilities has come up as a key issue for residents.

Health and Wealth Inequalities

The health of people in Bromsgrove District is generally better than the England average according to the District's Health Profile 2011. However, the profile also points out that 16.8% of Year 6 children and 24.9% of adults are classified as obese. There were 1,710 hospital stays for alcohol related harm in 2009/10 and there are approximately 140 deaths from smoking each year. The Profile states that priorities in Bromsgrove include obesity, alcohol misuse and falls in older people.

Although over 46% of residents are classed as 'Wealthy Achievers'⁸ there are pockets of deprivation, most notably in Charford. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007 (specifically income, health and education indicators) show Charford and Sidemoor as the areas of greatest need.

The demand for property within the District has had a significant impact on property prices which are higher than the County average. Therefore, affordability is an issue and suitable housing for the elderly is also a concern.

Crime

Bromsgrove District is a low crime area; however, domestic burglary rates have been high at times and the District's proximity to a large conurbation and its excellent motorway links are unfortunately contributing factors. Reported crime and disorder in Bromsgrove town centre is relatively low, and it is important that it remains this way as its landscape evolves through its regeneration. Anti-social behaviour continues to be high on the national agenda and recent research has also identified domestic abuse as a key concern.

Environment

The District is rich with biodiversity, geodiversity and attractive landscape. It has approximately 37,772 households⁹ and most CO₂ in Bromsgrove is produced from housing, followed by transport and businesses. With the cost of fuel increasing, more people are likely to suffer fuel poverty which has

¹ Office of National Statistics, mid-year estimates, 2010 (R&I Unit, Worcestershire County Council)

² Ibid

³ Office of National Statistics 2010, Business Demography 2009 (Local Economic Assessment Profile)

⁴ CACI Ltd, 2010. PayCheck (Worcestershire County Economic Assessment 2010-11)

⁵ Office of National Statistics, 2010. Claimant Counts downloaded from NOMIS (Local Economic Assessment)

⁶ Worcestershire County Economic Monthly Summary - July 2011

⁷ Office of National Statistics, 2010. Claimant Counts downloaded from NOMIS (County Economic Monthly Summary - July 2011)

⁸ Acorn, CACI, 2010 (Local Economic Assessment Profile)

⁹ Figure derived from CLG (Bromsgrove District Profile, R&I Unit, Worcestershire County Council)

social and health implications. Good energy management makes good environmental and economic sense. Reducing CO₂ emissions is a considerable challenge and remains a national priority.

Bromsgrove Partnership Priorities

The Bromsgrove Sustainable Community Strategy for 2010-13 and the priorities within that were based on an understanding of the available evidence and the views of the public. These priorities were reviewed in 2011 and simplified to the top three priorities. Key outcomes agreed for each priority and the Theme Groups responsible for delivering on those priorities, are shown below:

Priorities	Key Outcomes	Theme Groups
Economic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration of the Town Centre • Effectively market Bromsgrove District • Encourage business growth (including retention of businesses) 	Economic Development Theme Group
Balanced Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce alcohol misuse and smoking, encourage healthy diet and exercise and improve perception of mental health issues • Implement an age well scheme and focus on falls prevention • Deliver accessible, localised and sustainable services for vulnerable neighbourhoods via The Trunk (Areas of Highest Need Project) • Provide positive activities for young people 	Balanced Communities Theme Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the fear of becoming a victim of domestic burglary • Maintain safe clean streets by tackling night time economy and reducing graffiti • Protect communities by tackling domestic abuse, youth related anti-social behaviour and supporting vulnerable people 	Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce CO₂ emissions through improved energy efficiency in housing and businesses • Explore improving biodiversity and nature in key strategic sites; and how land use influences carbon emissions / carbon sinks • Ensure shared priorities are delivered in a cohesive way e.g. environmentally sustainable town centre 	Better Environment Theme Group

Delivery

Bromsgrove Partnership operates a Board and four Theme Groups and it is those Theme Groups which are the delivery arm of the Partnership. Theme Groups will decide the best way to meet the agreed priorities and their measures of success. Any barriers to delivery which they face will be dealt with by the Board. As many of the issues being tackled overlap across more than one Theme Group, all cross-cutting challenges and identified gaps will be considered at Board level to ensure a truly effective and cohesive partnership approach is taken.

The Trunk is the Bromsgrove Partnership's Areas of Highest Need project and is a multi-agency partnership which began in 2009. EPIC, a community interest company, was commissioned by Bromsgrove Partnership to run The Trunk and it is already delivering a programme of learning, skills acquisition, support activities and community resources for the residents of Charford and Sidemoor primarily with an outreach programme for Catshill residents. We will continue building on the project's success to ensure sustainability for the future.

With many organisations seeing a reduction in resources, Bromsgrove Partnership believes good partnership working is now even more crucial. Therefore, we will continue to work hard to meet the existing and future needs of our local community in the most effective and efficient way.

District Priorities - Malvern Hills Partnership

Our vision:

To build a district where people live in supportive communities; travel without reliance on owning a car; feel free from crime and the fear of crime. A place where the rural character and beauty of the area is looked after, where people can enjoy a good standard of living and health and wellbeing, have secure, well paid and fulfilling jobs and live in an affordable home that suits their needs.

The district:

The Malvern Hills District covers 577km of west Worcestershire. A predominantly rural area it is sparsely populated, consisting of many hamlets and villages. It is due to this rurality that over 32,000 (45%) of our residents live in areas which are amongst the 10% most deprived areas nationally in terms of geographical barriers to services, such as GP surgeries, general stores, primary schools and post offices.

A generally affluent and content district, with a cohesive community living in excellent surroundings and satisfied with the local public services it receives, the area can be characterised as a good place to live and work. However, there are pockets of deprivation. The ward of Pickersleigh has a number of areas which are in the worst 10% nationally in terms of income deprivation. It is estimated that 66% of the Pickersleigh population will most likely die before they reach 75, compared to the county as a whole. Unemployment levels are also at their highest in Pickersleigh, followed by Priory, Chase, Hallow and Baldwin and Lindridge.

With an already elderly population, projected to increase even more over the next 20 years, there will be greater demands on health, council and community services. The district already has 25% more hip fractures amongst the elderly than the national average, with a prediction that hospital admissions due to fall or hip fracture, which currently sits at around 1630 per year, will increase to 2,500 per annum.

Further to that, some of the things that make the district such a seemingly idyllic place to live; such as the close vicinity to the River Severn and the River Teme, whilst adding to the rural beauty of the district, means that the area is prone to flooding. Major floods occurred in 2000 and again in 2007, with a number of households and businesses displaced. The town of Tenbury was hit particularly badly due to a brook, which runs alongside the town's high street, overflowing onto the road. With no flood defences in place, the town has remained vulnerable, with over 200 properties rated as having a real risk of flooding.

The natural beauty of the area – the Hills themselves are classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – together the close proximity of the towns to major road networks and transport links, and the fact children and adults enjoy healthier and more active lives, has made the district a desirable place to live. Decent affordable housing is regularly rated as one of the top five things that most need improving according to our residents. This will only intensify as the population lives longer; with older people occupying properties that have outgrown their needs.

Priorities of the Malvern Hills Partnership:

The Malvern Hills Partnership has recognised that there are a number of challenges that cannot be tackled by one organisation alone. Instead, in order to add real value, issues must be addressed collectively in order to be truly effective.

Our priorities are:

- To reduce the impact of rurality on our local communities
- To tackle issues associated with inequalities, including health inequalities
- To raise awareness of key environmental issues and to drive down our reliance on fossil fuels
- To protect residents and businesses from the impact of flooding

Delivery

Rurality

The Malvern Hills Partnership will ensure residents have better access to the services they need. In understanding the issues facing those living in rural areas; particularly with regards to transport and access to health services, the Partnership will work to ensure current and future services are more accessible. This includes meeting the specific needs of older residents and helping them to engage with public services so that they receive the support they need, as well as working with people throughout their lives to maximise the length of disability free life. Work in this area will lead to improved satisfaction and importantly, will reduce the deprivation rating for our rural residents.

Inequalities

The Malvern Hills Partnership will increase the ambition and aspiration of the residents living in our most deprived wards, starting with Pickersleigh. By building confidence and establishing projects and services right from the heart of the community, the partnership will have a positive impact on the lives of residents. Reducing levels of inequality will, in the medium to long term, drive down the fear of crime, whilst improving health outcomes, increasing employment and encouraging more resident involvement in positive activities. In turn, this will lead to more residents feeling a real part of their local communities.

Climate Change

The Partnership, through its support of Transition Malvern Hills and by the example set by partners, will seek to reduce carbon and greenhouse gas emissions. This partnership working will lead to a reduced carbon footprint for the district and an increased public understanding of what can be done to tackle climate change.

Flood Protection

By continuing to petition Central Government and by working together to identify and promote flood protection solutions to river and surface water flooding, the Partnership can collectively achieve more than one organisation alone. In time, this will mean a district where people can live without the fear of flooding.

District Priorities - Redditch Partnership

Vision

The Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy is built around a shared vision for the Borough. It is envisaged that by 2026:

'Redditch will be successful and vibrant with communities that have access to good job opportunities, good education, good health and are communities that people will be proud to live and work in'.

About Redditch

Redditch is situated in the north east of Worcestershire and lies 15 miles south of the West Midlands conurbation. The Borough covers a total of 54 square kilometres, and is comprised of several communities focused around district centres. Redditch was designated a New Town in 1964 and since then the population has increased dramatically from 32,000 to around 78,813 (2001 census).

Compared to other areas of Worcestershire, the Borough has a higher proportion of young people aged 0-17 (22.4% compared to 20.8% in the County), and a smaller proportion of individuals aged 65 or over (14.1% compared to 18.7% in the County). Redditch has the largest proportion of ethnic minority groups of Worcestershire's six districts with 8% of the population from an ethnic group.

In 2009, the then Government's performance assessment regime, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) gave Worcestershire a 'red flag'. This red flag was given specifically for the differences in the quality of life for people living in Redditch compared to people living in the rest of Worcestershire. Particular areas highlighted included: lower life expectancy; high levels of smoking; poorer GCSE exam results; more people reliant on benefits; and more families on a low income.

Health Inequalities

In broad terms the health of people in Redditch is similar to the England average; however, there are significant differences in health and well being between Redditch and Worcestershire. Inequalities particularly exist in lifestyle choices including smoking, physical activity, and alcohol.

Nationally, alcohol abuse has been flagged as an issue and Redditch is no different. Approximately 19.3% of people in Redditch are considered to be "binge drinkers" and there are approximately 1,629 hospital stays per year for alcohol related harm. Levels of smoking have also been identified as an issue of concern for Redditch. The prevalence of adults who smoke is estimated at 22% which is just below the England average of 22.2% and the worst in the County. According to the 2010 Health Profile, 29.9% of adults in Redditch are classed as obese. The percentage of adults classed as healthy eaters has decreased since 2009 from 24.3% to 21.7% and is now significantly worse than the England average.

Educational Attainment

Educational performance of pupils in Redditch has been recognised as an issue over many years. Redditch has consistently fallen behind Worcestershire in the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. Data from 2009 and 2010 shows that while average results are getting better in Redditch, they are still behind those of the County as a whole.

The Economy

Job losses for people living in Redditch have increased the most and recent statistics from the Office for National Statistics show that more people are out of work with the overall unemployment level in Redditch at 8.7%. This is 0.6% lower than the regional average, but 0.8% higher than the national average. The gap between the unemployment level for Redditch and Worcestershire is 4.2% with Worcestershire's unemployment level at 4.5% (as at March 2010).

Pockets of Deprivation

According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007, from the district level summary (where 1 is the most deprived) of the average deprivation score, Redditch is ranked 131st out of 354 areas nationally. This is the most deprived area in Worcestershire. Redditch is in the top 40% most deprived districts.

The most deprived areas in Redditch include parts of Winyates, Church Hill, Batchley and Woodrow. Winyates housing estate is the most deprived area in Redditch, and is the sixth most deprived area in the County. Based on this evidence, Redditch Partnership decided to focus its Areas of Highest Need project on Winyates Centre and the immediate surrounding area.

Priorities

- 1. Health Inequalities** - focus is on three issues: smoking, alcohol; and obesity / health lifestyles.
- 2. Education attainment and raising aspirations of young people** - focus is on three issues: improving literacy and numeracy; raising aspirations; and improve statistical levels of attainment.
- 3. The economy of Redditch with a focus on providing a larger and more diverse job offer** - focus is on three broad issues: promotion of Redditch as a business location; jobs and worklessness; and fostering economic ambition in young people.
- 4. Areas of deprivation with an initial focus on Winyates and Church Hill** - Winyates project focuses on: enhanced security measures for residential areas in Centre; and community engagement in the area.

Delivery

Four action plans have been produced which focus on the four priority areas. They contain actions which are to be undertaken in partnership and which are not already being undertaken by partner organisations as part of their core business. Delivery of the action plans is driven by the Theme Groups with regular reports up to the Redditch Partnership Management Board. The action plans are viewed as 'live' documents which can be altered and amended as new projects come on stream or if circumstances change.

The actions listed are just the start and Redditch Partnership must develop and build on these over the next three years, responding to new ideas and developing innovative solutions to meet the Vision it has set out for Redditch. The yearly meeting of Redditch Partnership will formally review overall progress towards achieving the vision and also hold the Partnership Board to account.

District Priorities - Worcester Alliance

Our Vision:

The Worcester Alliance vision is to make Worcester a **"First Rank Cathedral and University City"**.

This means developing the services, the infrastructure and the quality of life for local people to the level that one would expect of Europe's best historic cities.

About Worcester City

Worcester is an historic and thriving city on the banks of the river Severn. It is the county town for Worcestershire and is a key regional centre of economic and social activity. The total population of Worcester is 94,721, the distribution of age is broadly in line with the UK average with the majority of residents in the 20-55 age bracket. About 5% of Worcester's population is made up of black and minority ethnic communities.

Worcester is already a great place to live, work and visit surrounded by an outstanding natural environment. It has a vibrant retail economy which is important for the City's future and tourists and visitors make a significant contribution to the local economy. In 2010, they generated around £80m of spend and sustained around 2000 jobs with an estimated 1.3m trips. The city is home to over 2,300 businesses in a range of industrial and commercial sectors and important future plans include the delivery of the Worcester Technology Park. However, the city also has the lowest rate of business births in the county and needs to grow more of its own businesses to ensure a sustainable economy with a balance of local and national and global businesses.

The new Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is will play a key role in the future development of the City's economy through its role in encouraging inward investment, stimulating the local economy, identifying barriers to growth and promoting schemes, for example to meet transport infrastructure demands, that will remove or reduce these barriers.

Average household income in Worcester in 2010 was £35000 which is lower than both the County and national average and more households in Worcester City fall into the lowest income bracket, earning less than £10,000 per year. In Worcester 3.9% of the population aged 16-64 were claiming Job Seekers Allowance in July 2011, slightly higher than the average for Worcestershire of 3.2%. However, this figure rises to 7.6% in Gorse Hill and 7.2% in Warndon. Overall employment rates are only slightly lower in the city than the county average at 74.2% compared to 74.3 % and higher than the England average of 70.4%. 65% of residents work in or around the City.

There is still a great disparity between the quality of life for people living in different localities in the city, which ranges from some of the highest to some of the lowest in the country in terms of prosperity, health, crime and educational attainment. The percentage of residents aged between 16 - 74 years who have no qualifications has reduced since 2007, 27.6%, lower than both the Worcestershire and England average 28.1% and 28.9%, respectively, ensuring that all young people in the City have access to education, training and employment opportunities remains a priority. A slightly higher percentage than the County and national average have achieved higher level qualifications at 20.4% compared to 19.3% and 19.9% respectively.

We need to work with our partners to ensure that the City continues to grow and provide the jobs, homes and infrastructure that will enable it to successfully compete with larger centres in the West Midlands and a vision and plans for future growth and development are being developed through the South Worcestershire Development Plan and a new city centre masterplan.

Worcester City Priorities

Priority One - Economy

- To have the right infrastructure in place to support a successful and growing economy
- To support business growth and expansion and attract new businesses which provide a diverse economy and more, higher paid, quality jobs
- To ensure the City has a vibrant retail offer
- To make sure that people have the right skills for existing, growing and new businesses
- To develop plans to reduce the numbers of young people not in employment or education and encourage more apprenticeships

Priority Two – Communities

- To improve the quality of life for local residents across the City as a whole and with a focus on areas of highest need
- To work creatively and innovatively in partnership with local communities to tackle local issues and meet local needs and build resilience
- A range of quality housing which meets local needs and supports cohesive neighbourhoods
- To ensure local people benefit from improved health and wellbeing, reducing health inequalities in the City and promoting healthier lifestyles

Priority Three – Environment

- To ensure Worcester continues to be an attractive place to visit, work and live in, enhancing and protecting open and green space which is seen as important
- To help make the city resilient to flooding, climate change and extreme weather events
- Promoting strong planning policies and working with partners to minimise the impact of development on the natural environment

Delivery

The Worcester Alliance recognises that if we want to improve the lives of local people we need to work in partnership, joining up services and bringing agencies and communities together to tackle issues.

In Autumn 2011 the Worcester Alliance plans to review how it works as a partnership to make sure that we have the right structures in place, and will also be developing robust plans to tackle the priorities identified above. We will build on the work that has already been undertaken through Worcester Forward, the previous Sustainable Community Strategy, for example the Areas of Highest need project.

District Priorities - Wychavon Strategic Partnership

Our vision

Our vision is of a strong, vibrant district with a thriving and distinctive local economy. A place where people live in decent, affordable homes and people are healthy regardless of which area they live in. A place where people are involved in their local communities; where older people feel supported and young people have positive things to do and decent prospects.

Our district

Wychavon covers 673km² of the southern and eastern parts of Worcestershire. It is the largest of the six Worcestershire districts. The three main towns of Droitwich Spa, Evesham and Pershore, along with the village of Broadway, account for almost half of the district's population. The rest of the district is more sparsely populated and includes nearly 100 smaller villages and hamlets.

The Wychavon district has a population of around 117,000. This is predicted to increase, at a faster growth rate than the national average, to 124,700 by 2026. The proportion aged under 16 is set to fall to below 15% by 2026, whilst the proportion aged over 60 is due to increase to 37%. An increasingly ageing population will place greater demands on health, housing and other public services.

The district is a good place to live and work, with a rich natural environment, historic heritage and low crime levels. 87% of residents are satisfied with the local area as a place to live and 69% feel they belong to their neighbourhood. Activities for teenagers are residents' second highest priority for improvement.

There are approximately 51,500 homes in Wychavon. Levels of home ownership are high at 76%. Wychavon has over 2,250 housing register applicants in housing need – the highest levels in Worcestershire. With the mean cost of a dwelling eight times the average household income, there is a significant shortage of affordable housing to buy and rent. This will increase as the population lives longer and older people occupy properties that have outgrown their needs.

Wychavon is home to over 5,000 businesses. A significant percentage of the workforce is employed in manufacturing, hotels and restaurants, agriculture, food distribution and the public sector. Since 2007 there has been a significant fall in business creation rates and in 2009 enterprise deaths exceeded births by around 30%.

Unemployment levels, which have been traditionally very low, are currently around 3%. 8% of working age people are claiming key out of work benefits. 18% of 16 to 64 year-olds are economically inactive, or classed as 'workless'. 9.7% of the population have no qualifications. There is a skills gap in the Droitwich area, which is related to the lack of a local college.

Overall, the district is relatively well-off and lies in the bottom third of most deprived local authorities in England. But three areas are in the top 30% most deprived nationally and 15 areas are among the 10% most deprived nationally in terms of barriers to housing and services. This is related to the rural character of the district and limited public transport options in some rural areas. There are also smaller pockets of deprivation in parts of the district.

Wychavon has the second highest average household income in Worcestershire; but income levels vary significantly across the district. Overall, 12% of children are living below the official poverty line. However, there is a wide geographic variation in levels of child poverty across the district. In one Droitwich ward, levels are nearly 51%.

80% of residents consider their health to be good or very good. Life expectancy is above the England average. Death rates from heart disease, stroke and cancer have fallen over the past ten years. However, the gap in life expectancy between people in the most and least deprived areas has widened. People from the least deprived areas can expect to live around six years longer than those in the most deprived areas. Wychavon has one of the highest proportions (24.8%) of overweight or obese children in reception year in the county and nearly a third of children in Year 6 are overweight or obese.

Our priorities

Wychavon Strategic Partnership recognises that a number of the challenges described above cannot be tackled effectively by one organisation alone. We have identified seven priorities where we will work together to make a real impact, with sustainability as an overarching principle: These are:

1. Supporting and improving the local economy
2. Developing skills and lifelong learning
3. Delivering housing that meets local needs
4. Reducing health inequalities and promoting healthy lifestyles
5. Supporting older people
6. Providing positive activities for young people
7. Supporting people to play an active role in their communities and to take responsibility for improving their lives

Delivery

Partners on the Wychavon Strategic Partnership will seek to deliver these priorities as sustainably as possible through action to:

- Support urban and rural businesses, boost town centre economies, promote tourism, raise income levels, encourage environmental technology and local distinctiveness
- Increase employability and work-based skills, family learning, adult literacy and numeracy, and language skills
- Build more affordable housing, better match homes to needs, bring empty homes back into use and improve the condition of existing homes
- Take action to reduce the incidence of heart disease, diabetes and alcohol consumption, and tackle obesity in children and health inequalities in deprived areas
- Support older people within their own homes, encourage independent living, health and well-being, and quality of life
- Encourage volunteering, personal and social responsibility and enable change in neighbourhoods.

We will also deliver some of the priorities through the **Opportunity Vale of Evesham** project. This is providing help to around 1,430 hard pressed households in 11 small areas in the Vale of Evesham. Through this project we are improving skills and confidence, reducing fuel poverty and improving health.

District Priorities - Wyre Forest Matters

Our vision:

To build a district which people want to live in and visit; where they feel free from the fear of crime and a place where the unique rural character and beauty of the area is looked after by all. A district where children can thrive and look forward to the possibility of suitable employment following their education. Where business is actively encouraged and the economy becomes stronger and where the population are healthy whatever their age.

The district:

The area takes its name from The Forest of Wyre, once a medieval hunting forest, now a popular visitor attraction. The three main towns of Kidderminster, Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn and several surrounding villages like Arley, Rock, Chaddesley Corbett and Wolverley make up the district. The area is both rural and urban and there are pockets of wealth and deprivation throughout the district.

The area has some of the best attractions in the Midlands from an exciting safari and leisure park to Britain's premier steam railway.

The Wyre Forest District has a population of 98,000 people and is situated in north Worcestershire. Of the six Worcestershire districts, Wyre Forest has the smallest proportion of young people (aged 0-19). Worcestershire as a whole is characterised by an ageing population, with a declining proportion of young people (aged 0-19) and an increasing proportion of older people (aged 65 or more). Among older people, there is a gradual but entirely predictable increase in the number of people aged 85 years or more.

There is a strong and direct correlation between the increase in the proportion of elderly people and the number of those with disabilities and other medical conditions.

Wyre Forest District had an estimated population (mid 2005) of 98,000 people, of which 3,000 people, or 3.1 per cent, were of minority ethnic origin. Wyre Forest has a distinctive community of 500 people of Bangladeshi origin, by far the largest in the county, owing its foundation historically to the availability of work in the Kidderminster carpet industry. There is also a well-established gypsy and traveller community living locally, many now settled in houses, but no reliable data exists on numbers.

50.8 per cent of the Wyre Forest population are women. The Census 2001 showed that women were far more likely than men, in a ratio of 9:1, to live in lone-parent households with dependent children, and, if working, to work part-time. Wyre Forest had 2,048 lone-parent households with dependent children, of which 89.2 per cent, were headed by women, with 31.8 per cent of those women in part-time work.

Of the six Worcestershire districts Wyre Forest has the lowest proportion of economically active people and people in employment.

Wyre Forest has the highest proportion of economically inactive people with nearly 20 percent of the county's claimants for Job Seeker's allowance. It also has the lowest rate of gross weekly pay at £405, almost £50 less than the county average, £150 less than for Bromsgrove, and £260 less than for Malvern Hills.

The major causes of death, circulatory diseases and cancers, are lifestyle related. To maintain the reductions in death rates, Wyre Forest will need to reduce smoking and alcohol consumption, and tackle obesity through a better diet and more physical activity.

Our priorities:

- A. To boost the economy and encourage employment within the district**
- B. To encourage better health and well-being**
- C. To help to provide education as a means to employment**
- D. To improve the local environment**

The work of Wyre Forest Matters:

Wyre Forest Matters has recognised that there are a number of challenges that cannot be tackled by one organisation or project alone. Instead, in order to add real value, issues must be addressed collectively in order to be truly effective.

Delivery

We aim to:

- Continue with a strategic, business-led approach to regeneration via the ReWyre initiative. To work towards improved infrastructure and connectivity including improved road links with the motorway network and promoting our high capacity broadband advantages to potential new businesses. Assist partners to boost the economy within the district using various methods including promoting and increasing tourism, helping local businesses to use local suppliers and encouraging employment by linking in with local businesses and promoting programmes such as apprenticeships.
- Improve the health and well-being of the district by promoting healthier lifestyles and encouraging young people to improve their fitness levels through differing methods. We will also be promoting the advantages of staying fitter to older residents in order to maintain health in older age. The partnership will focus on assisting partners in their projects to reduce obesity and alcohol dependency in people of all ages.
- Improve the local environment and continue to make Wyre Forest a desirable place to both live in and to visit. The partnership will promote the work being done by partners to restore local heathlands and rare plants and insects as well as encouraging public participation in the running of local spaces such as parks. The partnership will be active in assisting the Community Safety Partnership and Prevent team to make sure Wyre Forest remains a safe place to live in. This partnership will also lead to an increased public understanding of what can be done to tackle climate change.
- Improve education as a means to gain employment in the district. The partnership will work together to provide a link between business and education in the district and to reduce the gaps in skills and knowledge for those seeking employment at all ages but will focus on school leavers, those recently made redundant and those out of work with low skills levels. This in turn will help to raise aspirations and improve recruitment and retention levels in local businesses.

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