



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 7TH DECEMBER 2011
AT 6.00 P.M.

COMMITTEE ROOM, THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BURCOT LANE, BROMSGROVE

MEMBERS: Councillors R. Hollingworth (Leader), Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP (Deputy Leader), Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP, M. A. Bullivant, C. B. Taylor and M. J. A. Webb

AGENDA

1. To receive apologies for absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 2nd November 2011 (Pages 1 - 6)
4. Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 24th October 2011 and 21st November 2011 (Pages 7 - 16)
 - (a) To receive and note the minutes
 - (b) To consider any recommendations contained within the minutes
5. To receive verbal updates from the Leader and/or other Cabinet Members on any recent meetings attended in an ex-officio capacity (Pages 17 - 18)
6. Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy Review (Pages 19 - 30)
7. Solar Panels Scheme at the Depot - Information Report on Urgent Action (Pages 31 - 34)
8. Medium Term Financial Plan 2012/13 - 2014/15 - Verbal Update on the Budget Position

9. Council Tax Base Calculation 2012/13 (Pages 35 - 38)
10. Victoria Ground Capital Works (Pages 39 - 42)
11. Future Engagement with Parish Councils (Pages 43 - 46)
12. Corporate Performance Report - Quarter 2 2011/12 (Pages 47 - 52)
 - Appendix For Item 6 - Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy Review (Pages 53 - 108)
 - Appendix For Item 7 - Solar Panels At The Depot (Pages 109 - 114)
 - Appendix For Item 11 - Future Engagement With Parish Councils (Pages 115 - 116)
 - Appendix For Item 12 - Corporate Performance Report Quarter 2 2011/12 (Pages 117 - 124)
13. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

The Council House
Burcot Lane
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B60 1AA

28th November 2011



INFORMATION FOR **THE PUBLIC**

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- Meeting Agendas
- Meeting Minutes
- The Council’s Constitution

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Declaration of Interests - Explained

Definition of Interests

A Member has a **PERSONAL INTEREST** if the issue being discussed at a meeting affects the well-being or finances of the Member, the Member's family or a close associate more than most other people who live in the ward affected by the issue.

Personal interests are also things relating to an interest the Member must register, such as any outside bodies to which the Member has been appointed by the Council or membership of certain public bodies.

A personal interest is also a **PREJUDICIAL INTEREST** if it affects:

- The finances, or
- A regulatory function (such as licensing or planning)

Of the Member, the Member's family or a close associate **AND** which a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of the facts would believe likely to harm or impair the Member's ability to judge the public interest.

Declaring Interests

If a Member has an interest they must normally declare it at the start of the meeting or as soon as they realise they have the interest.

EXCEPTION:

If a Member has a **PERSONAL INTEREST** which arises because of membership of another public body the Member only needs to declare it if and when they speak on the matter.

If a Member has both a **PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST** they must not debate or vote on the matter and must leave the room.

EXCEPTION:

If a Member has a prejudicial interest in a matter being discussed at a meeting at which members of the public are allowed to make representations, give evidence or answer questions about the matter, the Member has the same rights as the public and can also attend the meeting to make representations, give evidence or answer questions **BUT THE MEMBER MUST LEAVE THE ROOM ONCE THEY HAVE FINISHED AND CANNOT DEBATE OR VOTE.**

However, the Member must not use these rights to seek to improperly influence a decision in which they have a prejudicial interest.

For further information please contact Committee Services, Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council, The Council House, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove, B60 1AA

Tel: 01527 873232 Fax: 01527 881414

Web: www.bromsgrove.gov.uk email: committee@bromsgrove.gov.uk

Agenda Item 3

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER 2011 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors R. Hollingworth (Leader), Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP (Deputy Leader), Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP, M. A. Bullivant, C. B. Taylor and M. J. A. Webb

Observers: Councillor C. R. Scurrall

Officers: Ms. S. Hanley, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. A. Heighway, Ms. R. Bamford, Mr. G. Revans, Ms. J. Willis, Mrs. S. Sellers and Ms. R. Cole.

61/11 **APOLOGIES**

No apologies for absence were received.

62/11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

63/11 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 27th September 2011 and 5th October 2011 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record in each case.

64/11 **WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 29th September 2011 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted

RECOMMENDED that in accordance with the recommendation contained at minute 16/11, the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy be adopted.

65/11 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 12th October 2011 were submitted.

There was discussion with regard to minute 50/11 relating to the Planning Policy Task Group and the possibility of a separate investigation being

undertaken by the Labour Group. It was noted that the issue of demands on officer time would need to be a consideration at a later stage.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

66/11 **VERBAL UPDATES FROM THE LEADER AND/OR OTHER CABINET MEMBERS ON ANY RECENT MEETINGS ATTENDED IN AN EX-OFFICIO CAPACITY**

Cabinet Members referred to a number of events they had attended in their capacity as Portfolio Holders.

67/11 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2012/13 - 2014/15**

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources gave a presentation on the latest situation regarding the Authority's financial position 2012/13 – 2014/15.

Reference was made to:

- (a) the national situation including possible legislative changes which would impact on all Authorities, such as Business Rates arrangements and the introduction of a system of Universal Credit;
- (b) the local picture including the impact of the reduction in grant funding and the savings achieved from Shared Services programme;
- (c) the assumptions made in producing the Medium Term Financial Plan such as the rate of inflation and increases in utility costs; and
- (d) the actions being undertaken by officers to make further savings and efficiencies in order to address any budget gap for 2012/13.

RESOLVED that the current position be noted and that a further report be considered at the next meeting of the Cabinet.

68/11 **FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT CORE STRATEGY**

Members considered the report on the responses received to the consultation on the Draft Core Strategy 2.

It was reported that following an extensive consultation process, over 3,300 responses from residents, companies and organisations had been received and that officers had commented on all responses. Clearly the current uncertainty regarding future changes to the planning system had had an impact on both the responses and the resulting officer comments. It was noted that the policies which had attracted the most responses had been in relation to site allocations.

It was reported that the responses to the consultation would inform the revised version of the Core Strategy/Local Plan which it was anticipated would be available for consideration by Members during the middle of 2012.

RESOLVED that the report and the publication of the Draft Core Strategy 2 consultation responses be noted.

69/11 **CORPORATE DATA BACKUP**

Members considered the report on the need to address an issue relating to the backup of storage of electronic data and to increase the amount of electronic storage available.

It was noted that the funding requirement could be met from existing budgets within the IT service.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the increase in the Capital Programme for 2011/12 of £55,000, in respect of a user back up device and an additional electronic storage device be approved; and
- (b) that the cost be met from ICT reserves (£10,000) and current revenue underspend in the IT service (£45,000).

70/11 **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY**

Consideration was given to a report on the proposed adoption of an updated corporate policy and procedure in relation to the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. It was noted this would replace the existing corporate Child Protection Policy approved in 2009.

RESOLVED that the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure as contained in appendix 1 to the report be approved.

71/11 **PROPOSED MERGER OF NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS**

The Cabinet considered the report on the proposed merger of the Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership (BCSP), Redditch Community Safety Partnership (RCSP) and Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership (WFCSP) to create a single North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP).

It was noted that the proposal did not involve a merger of the Community Safety Partnerships at operational level and would not produce cashable savings but would release officer capacity to allow operational staff additional time to deliver community based initiatives and projects.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the merger of BCSP with RCSP and WFCSP to create a NWCSP be approved;

- (b) that subject to the approval of the merger by each of the Responsible Authorities, authority be delegated to the appropriate officers to take the necessary steps to implement the merger, including the establishment of governance arrangements and entering into any agreements and that this also be subject to endorsement by the relevant Community Safety Partnerships;
- (c) that the continuation of locality based operational and responsive partnership working through the Operational Tasking Group and its Theme Groups be noted; and
- (d) that the intention to review the Countywide partnership arrangements by 2014 be noted.

72/11 **BROMSGROVE PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11**

The Cabinet considered the Bromsgrove Partnership's Annual Report 2010/2011 which detailed the work of the Partnership over the past twelve months.

Members felt the report was in a very clear and "readable" form.

RESOLVED that the Bromsgrove Partnership's Annual Report 2011/12 be approved.

73/11 **SINGLE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR WORCESTERSHIRE**

Members considered the new countywide Sustainable Community Strategy which included a section relating to Bromsgrove District. It was noted that whilst the Bromsgrove section was the final version, the County and other District sections may be subject to minor amendment.

RECOMMENDED that the Single Community Strategy for Worcestershire, including the section on Bromsgrove District, be approved.

74/11 **FINANCE MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 2 2011/12**

The Cabinet considered a report on the Council's financial position for the period April to September 2011. It was noted that at present there was a predicted underspend of £309,000.

Issues were raised in relation to the car park income level and the Portfolio Holder Councillor M. J. A. Webb confirmed he was discussing this with the relevant officers with a view to mitigating the impact of this.

It was noted that in relation to the Planning section, the need for additional staffing resources on a temporary basis was being addressed. The Portfolio Holder Councillor C. B. Taylor also raised the issue of potential costs arising from planning appeals and officers undertook to consider this further.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets as detailed in the report be noted;
- (b) that the budget virements between £15,000 and £100,00 as contained in appendix 2 to the report be approved;
- (c) that the financial position and movements on the earmarked reserves as detailed reserves as contained in appendix 1 to the report be noted;
- (d) that the expenditure of grant income of £40,000 from Worcestershire County Council for use in funding an insulation scheme for people over the age of 60 be approved; and
- (e) that £1,000,000 in respect of the repaving of the town centre be carried forward into 2012/13 .

75/11 **UPDATE ON WASTE AND STREET SCENE PUBLICITY PLAN**

Members considered a report giving an update on the position regarding the Waste and Street Scene Publicity Plan.

It was noted that it would be of assistance to officers to amend the wording of the recommendation previously agreed in relation to Fixed Penalty Notices, in order to give more flexibility. Following discussion it was

RESOLVED that whenever possible and when considered appropriate, Fixed Penalty Notices be issued for all dog fouling and littering offences during campaign periods when an environmental enforcement officer is present. If it is considered that the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice is inappropriate, then the environmental enforcement officer shall take an appropriate level of action in accordance with the guidance contained in the Joint Environmental Enforcement Strategy.

76/11 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

That under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item of business the subject of the following minute on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act the relevant paragraphs of that part being as set out below and that it is in the public interest to do so.

<u>Minute No</u>	<u>Paragraph</u>
77/11	3

77/11 **DISPOSAL OF RECREATION ROAD NORTH CAR PARK**

The Cabinet considered a report on the disposal of Recreation Road North Car Park to facilitate the inclusion of the land in the potential redevelopment of an Extra Care Village. Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the sale of the Recreation Road North Car Park as part of the development process selected by the Recreation Road Consortium be approved; and
- (b) that the net proceeds from the sale be ring fenced for reinvestment into the Bromsgrove Town Centre Regeneration Programme.

The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.

Chairman

Agenda Item 4

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

MONDAY, 24TH OCTOBER 2011 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P. J. Whittaker (Chairman), P. Lammas (Vice-Chairman), C. J. Bloore, J. S. Brogan, Dr. B. T. Cooper, Mrs. R. L. Dent, K. A. Grant-Pearce, Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, R. J. Laight, Mrs. C. J. Spencer and L. J. Turner

Observers: Councillor S. R. Colella

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mrs. A. Heighway, Mr. C. Santoriello-Smith and Ms. A. Scarce

52/11 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S. P. Shannon.

53/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.

54/11 MINUTES - 27TH SEPTEMBER 2011

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 27th September 2011 were submitted.

Officers informed Members that in respect of Minute No. 36/11, the Cabinet had approved the Board's recommendation that the costs of consultancy fees be detailed separately for future monitoring reports.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

55/11 MINUTES - 12TH OCTOBER 2011

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 12th October 2011 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

56/11 BURGLARY AND VEHICLE CRIME IN BROMSGROVE - REPORT FROM WEST MERCIA POLICE

Officers gave a summary of a report on Burglary and Vehicle Crime in the District based on figures provided by West Mercia Police. The report had been

requested following receipt of a topic proposal form from Councillor S. R. Colella at its meeting held on 11th July 2011.

- Members heard that dwelling burglary figures tended to vary considerably on a month to month basis. This was attributed to various factors, including a historical tendency for increased burglary during longer nights in autumn and winter. Burglaries that took place in garages not connected to a house were no longer classed as dwelling burglaries.
- Burglary rates tended to be higher in Bromsgrove compared to other local authority areas in Worcestershire. It was explained that the area was particularly vulnerable to cross border crimes due to its close proximity to the Birmingham conurbation and motorway networks. Members also heard that a very small number of prolific offenders could account for a spike in offences. However, it was reported that West Mercia Police and West Midlands Police were in constant dialogue to help mitigate cross border crime.
- Members suggested that detection rates for dwelling burglary and vehicle crime appeared to be significantly low in Bromsgrove between April and October 2011. Officers confirmed that the detection rates were currently lower than most other areas in Worcestershire, however it was commented that there had been fewer offences to detect.
- Members discussed the possibility of any reduction in the number of frontline police officers and were advised by Officers that if the Board wished to take this issue further it should do so through its Police Authority representative.

Officers informed Members that it was difficult to accurately compare crime figures in Bromsgrove against that of other areas, as the district's close proximity to motorway networks made it easily accessible. It was not, however, thought that Bromsgrove could be classed as a hotspot crime area when compared to areas of high conurbations.

The Board was concerned that members of the public were increasingly being targeted for theft in popular retail areas. Officers informed the Board that local police were educating residents on this issue to make them more mindful of this particular crime. The police were also encouraging local superstores to take a more pro-active approach in tackling this. However, there was no evidence to suggest that this crime was common in Bromsgrove.

The Chairman invited Councillor Colella to comment on the Board's discussions and he thanked the Board for taking the issue forward, and relevant Officers for providing the report. He welcomed greater transparency through the availability of relevant data and suggested that a comparison of Bromsgrove's crime figures to other areas with similar characteristics could be suitable for further scrutiny.

Members commended Officers on their work and welcomed regular updates.

RESOLVED that an updated report be provided to the Board in six months.

57/11 **CABINET RESPONSE TO THE REDUCTION IN BUS SERVICES TASK GROUP REPORT**

The Chairman invited Councillor C. J. Bloore to introduce this item as Chairman of the Task Group. Councillor Bloore informed the Board that the Cabinet at its meeting on 5th October 2011 had approved the recommendations of the Reduction in Bus Services Task Group, subject to a revision of the wording regarding Corporate Delegations within the Constitution.

RECOMMENDED that the Constitution with regard to Corporate Delegations be amended to read as follows:

- “1.1 Where the Council is asked to respond to a consultation on a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or where it affects the District of Bromsgrove and where the time scales for responding permit then they shall be a matter for the Full Council to consider.
- 1.2 In any event all consultations will pass automatically upon receipt to the Chief Executives Department and will either be managed in accordance with 1.1 above or where 1.1 does not apply will be passed to the Leader of the Council for comment and the relevant Head of Service or Director to provide a response as appropriate.

For the purposes of this delegation a consultation shall not be regarded as affecting the District of Bromsgrove if it relates to a national issue and would have no more effect on the District of Bromsgrove than it would on any other area; or

If it relates to actions taken by or statements made by a body or individual connected with the District, but those actions or statements are not specifically related to the District of Bromsgrove.”

58/11 **PLANNING POLICY TASK GROUP**

The Board was informed that the first meeting of the Planning Policy Task Group had been scheduled for 1st November 2011. Appointed Members would be required to agree the terms of reference of the Task Group, identify potential witnesses and areas to be investigated and set a timescale for completion of the investigation. Regular reports on the progress of the Task Group would be provided to the Board.

59/11 **WORCESTERSHIRE SCRUTINY CHAIRMEN/VICE CHAIRMEN NETWORK MEETING 3RD OCTOBER 2011**

The Chairman invited Councillor P. Lammas to introduce this item as he had attended the meeting. Councillor Lammas provided a verbal summary of the Worcestershire Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice Chairmen Network meeting held at Malvern District Council on 3rd October 2011. It was reported that the meeting had been well attended, with representatives present from the

majority of Worcestershire local authorities. The network had discussed the following areas:

- The current effectiveness of crime and disorder scrutiny
- The Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, of which Councillor Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths was the Bromsgrove District Council representative.
- Potential issues for joint scrutiny working.

Members were invited to suggest possible agenda items ahead of the next network meeting, due to be held at Bromsgrove District Council in the New Year.

60/11 **QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER**

Officers provided a summary of the quarterly recommendation tracker. Members were advised that only outstanding actions were included in the tracker document.

A progress report on the recommendations of the Alvechurch Multi-Use Games Inquiry (MUGA) would be considered at the Board's next meeting on 21st November 2011. An update report on the issue of Fly Posting would be considered at the Board meeting on 23rd January 2012 as agreed by Members at the Board meeting held on 27th September 2011.

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources confirmed that actions that had been allocated to the Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships regarding the Older People's Task Group would be re-allocated due to his period of continued absence.

RESOLVED that the quarterly recommendation tracker be noted.

61/11 **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions was considered by the Board. Members made reference to the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy that was due to be considered by Cabinet on 2nd November 2011, and suggested that it would be beneficial if training that had been made available to Worcestershire County Councillors to give them a greater understanding of the issue could also be made available to Bromsgrove Councillors, especially given the issue's significance. Officers agreed to raise the suggestion with the relevant County Council Officers.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

62/11 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources, informed Members that they would be provided with information on the Council's budget position and any budget bids submitted by senior Officers for inclusion in its 2012/13 budget ahead of the special Board meeting on 5th December 2011.

This would give Members the opportunity to consider the reports ahead of the meeting and to request further information if necessary.

It was explained that the Cabinet would start considering the budget bids at its meeting on 2nd November 2011. The information would therefore be publicly available. However, any sensitive information might need to be considered in confidential session at the meeting of the Board on 5th December 2011.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.45 p.m.

Chairman

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

MONDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER 2011 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P. J. Whittaker (Chairman), P. Lammas (Vice-Chairman),
C. J. Bloore, J. S. Brogan, Dr. B. T. Cooper, Mrs. R. L. Dent, R. J. Laight,
P. M. McDonald, S. P. Shannon, Mrs. C. J. Spencer and L. J. Turner

Observers: Councillor S. R. Colella

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mrs. C. Felton, Mrs. A. Heighway,
Mr. C. Santoriello-Smith and Ms. A. Scarce

64/11 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. A. Grant-Pearce and
Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths.

65/11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.

66/11 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 24th
October 2011 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

67/11 **12 MONTH REVIEW OF THE ALVECHURCH MULTI USE GAMES AREA
(MUGA) INVESTIGATION**

The Chairman invited the Head of Community Services and the Senior
Community Safety Project Officer to introduce the Alvechurch Multi-Use
Games Area (MUGA) Inquiry 12 Month Review Report. For the benefit of new
Members of the Board, the Senior Community Safety Project Officer provided
background information as to why the investigation had been carried out. The
Review had been carried out in order to up date Members on the
implementation of the 11 recommendations which had been considered and
agreed (subject to minor amendments) by Cabinet at its meeting held on 3rd
November 2010.

Members were informed that recommendations 9 and 11 (removal of the
perimeter wall and the seating panels) had not been completed. This was a
decision made by the Parks and Recreation team, who had suggested that the

relocation of the street lighting and the removal of the basket swing in conjunction with other measures had significantly reduced the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Swanslength.

The Chairman invited Councillor S. R. Colella, as Chairman of the MUGA Investigation, to comment on the report. The Chairman thanked officers for the update and asked for it be noted that, should the circumstances at the MUGA site change, then the implementation of recommendations 9 and 11 be reconsidered.

The Board discussed the following areas in more detail:

- The youth services provided by the Lounge and funding provided by the Local Strategic Partnership (the Executive Director, Finance and Resources to clarify details of the grant referred to in the appendix to the report).
- The reduction in ASB in Swanslength, the sustainability of the reduction and the extra resources put in place.
- The changes to the recording of ASB and a comparison of the changes to the categories used by the Police in recording ASB (the Senior Community Safety Project Officer agreed to provide this information for Members).

RESOLVED that the Alvechurch Multi-Use Games Area Inquiry 12 month Review report be noted.

68/11 **PLANNING ENFORCEMENT BOARD INVESTIGATION INTERIM REPORT**

Officers informed Members that the Head of Planning and Regeneration was preparing a report which responded to the issues raised at the informal Board meeting held on 27th July 2011. It had been expected that this report would have been available for Members, however due to the complexity of the issues raised, the report had not been finalised, and Officers apologised for this.

Members were informed that several of the areas covered in the Planning Enforcement Board Investigation would also be covered within the Planning Policy Task Group's investigation. The Board was concerned that this would lead to duplication of work. After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that the work of the Planning Enforcement Board Investigation be amalgamated within the work of the Planning Policy Task Group.

69/11 **PLANNING POLICY TASK GROUP**

The Chairman invited Councillor S. R. Colella, as Chairman of the Planning Policy Task Group, to give an update on its investigations to date. The Task Group Chairman informed Members that at its initial meeting it had received a presentation from the Head of Planning and Regeneration. This had covered, the Planning Process, Planning Conditions, Enforcement and Conditions and Retrospective Planning. It had become clear to Task Group Members who

had also been involved in the initial Planning Enforcement Board Investigation meeting that the work of the Task Group would duplicate some of that Investigation's work. A further meeting of the Task Group had been arranged for 30th November 2011.

Some Members felt that a written update on the work of the Task Group would have been more helpful and the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services explained the Task Group process and guidelines. It was explained that the Board would only receive a written report for consideration when the Task Group's investigations had been completed.

70/11 **JULY TO SEPTEMBER (QUARTER 2) FINANCE MONITORING REPORT 2011/12**

The Board considered the Quarter 2 Finance and Monitoring Report for 2011/12. It was requested that further information be provided where necessary on the following items:-

- The role of the Audit Board in relation to Finance Monitoring.
- Savings from Regulatory Services
- Under spend on vacancies, vacancy management, use of temporary agency staff and consultancy fees.
- The accuracy of the budget process
- The delay in resurfacing the High Street (further detailed explanation to be provided by Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources)
- Shortfall in Car Parking income
- Streets and Grounds Maintenance – concerns were raised that such a large saving would impact on services and the condition of the footpaths surrounding the Council House were discussed. (Head of Environmental Services be asked to attend a future meeting of the Board in order to provide Members with more detailed information).
- Employment of agency staff and vacant post in Environmental Services (Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources to seek clarification on details of vacant post).
- A Member also commented on the response time to a telephone call, which he had made to the Customer Service Centre (and difficulties in contacting Regulatory Services). He was concerned that this may have been due to staffing issues (Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources to take up with relevant Heads of Service).
- An overspend on the Bonfire Event in comparison with previous years.
- Leisure and Cultural Services – scheme for Alvechurch Lions football pitch (Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources to seek further details).
- The availability of grants.
- Benefit subsidies
- Costs and underspend on Elections and Electoral Services
- Sundry debtors and description used for age of debt.
- Details of developers' contributions to 106 monies (Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources to provide further details).
- Process for the monitoring of investments

The Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources informed the Board that in future, where there was areas of concern in the Finance and Monitoring Report the relevant Heads of Services would be asked to attend to discuss any concerns raised by Members. After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that the current financial position for Revenue and Capital as detailed in the report be noted, subject to the requests for further information as detailed in the preamble above.

71/11 **SICKNESS ABSENCE AND PERFORMANCE AND HEALTH REPORT**

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources introduced the report and apologised for the discrepancies which had necessitated a revised report being issued in respect of this item.

The Board discussed the following areas in detail:

- Areas of concern – Environmental Services and the use of “typically” in respect of sickness rates.
- The availability of comparable data with other authorities and at national levels.
- Authorised and non authorised absence.
- The Council’s sickness absence policy.

After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that the Board receive a more detailed report covering some of the areas detailed above.

72/11 **WCC HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Officers informed Members that Councillor Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths had resigned as the District representative on the Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and Councillor Dr. B. T. Cooper had been appointed at full Council on 16th November 2011. Officers would liaise with Councillor Cooper in order to ensure that regular, written, updates on the work of HOSC were provided to the Board in future.

73/11 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.42 p.m.

Chairman

Agenda Item 5

THERE ARE NO ENCLOSURES FOR THIS AGENDA ITEM

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CABINET

07 December 2011

REVIEW OF HOME CHOICE PLUS

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Kit Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Angie Heighway
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	Not applicable
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The sub regional choice based lettings scheme known as Home Choice Plus has been in operation in Bromsgrove since October 2008.
- 1.2 In December 2009 the Government published a statutory code of guidance concerning allocations called 'Fair and Flexible: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities'. The guidance clarifies Government expectations of choice based lettings and sets out examples of good practice relating to the ways in which local authorities can use new freedoms to determine how social housing should be allocated in their local area.
- 1.3 In response to this guidance, the Home Choice Plus Steering Group have conducted a review of the Allocations Policy with the following specific aims:-
 - To make sure that is the policy is legally compliant.
 - To clarify certain parts of the policy to ensure that each partner applies the policy consistently across the 6 districts.
 - To ensure that the policy is sufficiently robust to allow appeals to be successfully defended.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the outcome of that review and to seek approval of the draft policy. The policy will be subject to a further stage of scrutiny by a legal expert as set out in paragraph 3.3 and Cabinet are asked to delegate to officers authority to make any final changes arising out of that exercise.
- 1.4 It is possible that further changes to the way in which the housing register and housing allocations are dealt with in Bromsgrove may have to be considered in due course as a result of the Transformation process. In addition the policy may require further review in the future to take into account welfare reform, localism and the objectives of the Tenancy Strategy that the Council is required to develop within 12 months of the enactment of the Localism Act which received the Royal Assent on 15 November 2011.

CABINET

07 December 2011

- 1.5 In addition to these changes, this report provides Members with clarification around local connection and in particular the use of special circumstances as defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members approve the draft Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy and grant delegated authority to the Head of Community Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to approve any final amendments necessary to ensure full legal compliance.
- 2.2 That Members note the clarification around local connection and the use of special circumstances.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The changes to the allocations policy will require some changes to the Home Choice Plus system. This will incur additional charges from the IT supplier of approximately £1,000 which can be met through the current revenue funding allocated to the scheme.
- 3.2 The changes to overcrowding and financial threshold will require a review of those applications on the waiting list who are in the higher need 'Reasonable Preference' categories. An additional resource at bdht will be required to carry out this work at an estimated cost of £2,000pa which will be paid by the Council and can be met through the current revenue funding currently allocated to the scheme and which can be off set in future years by the income generated from charges made to Registered Providers who also use the system to allocate their dwellings.
- 3.3 The Home Choice Plus Steering Group have agreed that this policy should be reviewed by a legal expert before being finalised. The exact cost is not known at this stage. However, it will be shared pro rata between the partner authorities and officers anticipate it being no more than a maximum of £1,000 per authority. The cost to BDC can be met within the current revenue funding allocated to the scheme.
- 3.4 Members are asked to note that whilst these changes will ensure that the policy is legally compliant, the changes will require additional financial and staffing resources to enable system changes and reviews of those applicants in reasonable preference bands.

CABINET

07 December 2011

- 3.5 The review has taken some 18 months and the anticipated costs associated the changes were identified during the previous financial year. Therefore the budget for this year was set with these changes in mind.

Legal Implications

- 3.6 The relevant legislation is set out in the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act). Under the 1996 Housing Act local authorities are required to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with an Allocations Scheme. A summary of the Allocations Scheme must be published and made available free of charge to any person who asks for a copy.
- 3.7 The Housing Act 1996, (as amended) requires local authorities to give reasonable preference in their allocations policies to people with high levels of assessed housing need. This includes homeless people, those who need to move due to welfare or medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they moved to a particular locality within the local authority's area. The Act also requires local authorities to state within the policy its position on offering applicants a choice of housing accommodation, or offering them the opportunity to express preference about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them.
- 3.8 The Allocations Scheme complies with the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and takes into account the three relevant codes of guidance - Allocation of Accommodation: Code of Guidance for Housing Authorities 2002 issued by the ODPM, the Allocation of Accommodation: Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance for Housing Authorities 2008 and Fair and Flexible: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities in England 2009, issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- 3.9 Members will recall that the other authorities involved in the Home Choice Plus project are Malvern Hills, Stratford upon Avon, Wychavon, Worcester City and Wyre Forest and that the Home Choice Plus Steering Group is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Home Choice Plus allocations policy. As referred to in para 1.2 above the Home Choice Plus Steering Group has carried out a review of the policy. The review process included the following:-
- a legal compliance check by Stratford Upon Avon's legal team
 - consultation with customers and stakeholders,
 - a review of good practice and the strengths and weaknesses of the current policy.

The two years' experience of the partners operating the scheme also identified areas which required better explanation, not only to ensure each partner was applying the policy consistently, but also to ensure that the policy was sufficiently robust to allow appeals to be successfully defended.

- 3.10 A number of changes relating to the clarification of the policy have been based on Manchester City Council's allocation policy which has been promoted by the Department for Communities and Local Government as best practise.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.11 On the 7th October 2008, Bromsgrove District Council, in partnership with bdht introduced the Home Choice Plus, Choice Based Lettings scheme for the allocation of social housing across the District. The Home Choice Plus scheme is a sub regional choice based lettings scheme which the Council operates in partnership with Malvern Hills District Council, Stratford on Avon District Council, Worcester City Council, Wychavon District Council and Wyre Forest District Council
- 3.11 In December 2009 the Government published a statutory code of guidance concerning allocations called 'Fair and Flexible': statutory guidance on social housing for local authorities' which clarified the position on certain aspects of Choice Based Lettings schemes, following case law, particularly around cumulative preference and giving priority for reasons other than reasonable preference. Reasonable preference is defined in the Housing Act 1996, (as amended) and includes homeless people, those who need to move due to welfare or medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they moved to a particular locality within the local authority's area.
- 3.12. The statutory guidance prompted a review of the Home Choice plus policy to ensure that it was legally compliant and considered the latest examples of good practice in allocations policies. It was also identified that some of the underpinning procedures and practices required greater clarity and that some applicant groups were not being given suitable priority by the current policy.
- 3.13 The Home Choice Plus Steering Group felt it was an appropriate time to survey customers using the system to canvas their views about the policy and the computer system to inform any future changes to the policy.

CABINET

07 December 2011

- 3.14 In addition, once the fundamental changes were identified, service users, partners and stakeholders were consulted on these changes. 82 people responded to the on line survey..

Key Changes

- 3.15 The key proposed changes are summarised below and are recommended as a result of consultation with customers, stakeholders and partners, as well as a review of good practise and government guidance.

3.16 Homelessness

Current Policy

An applicant's homelessness is only recognised in the local authority where the application has been made. i.e. if Bromsgrove District Council makes a decision regarding a homeless application, the applicant will be placed either in the Priority band if the applicant is owed the full homelessness duty, in Gold Plus band if the applicant is threatened with homelessness or is homeless but not in priority need, or in the Gold band if the applicant has been found to be intentionally homeless. However, the applicants place in these bandings is not recognised in any of the other local authority districts operating within the Home Choice Plus scheme and applicants are instead placed in either Bronze Plus (if they have a local connection to a local authority area) or Bronze band (if they do not have a local connection).

3.17 Proposed Change

An applicant's homelessness is recognised by all partner local authorities in either the Gold Plus, Gold, Silver Plus and Silver bands depending on their circumstances and their local connection to that local authority. i.e. an applicant who is placed in the Gold Plus band by Bromsgrove District Council because they are threatened with homelessness will be placed in Gold Plus band in any of the other local authority districts to which they have a local connection. Where they do not have a local connection, they will be placed in Silver Plus band. Further clarification of the meaning of "local connection" is set out for Members at para 3.41.

- 3.18 Applicants placed in Priority band by Bromsgrove District Council will not be placed in Priority band in the other local authority districts, but instead will be placed in either Gold Plus or Silver Plus bands, depending on their local connection.
- 3.19 This change is a legal requirement, as a person's homelessness must be given 'reasonable preference' by an allocations policy regardless of

CABINET

07 December 2011

where they make their application. As the Bronze bandings are awarded to applicants who do not have a reasonable preference, it is unlawful to place a homeless person in one of these bandings. This proposed change will therefore ensure that the Home Choice Plus policy is not open to legal challenge in this area.

3.20 Disrepair

3.21 Current Policy

Applicants with disrepair to their properties will only have this recognised with a higher band if the property is subject to Enforcement Notices issued by the Local Authority. Such Notices are only awarded for very serious hazards and lead to the applicant being placed in Gold Plus or Silver Plus bands.

3.22 Proposed Change

Applicants whose homes have less serious disrepair hazards will be awarded a degree of reasonable preference by being placed in the Gold or Silver bands, while those with more serious hazards will continue to be placed in the Gold Plus or Silver Plus bands. Any reported disrepair will continue to be assessed in the same way by Private Sector Housing Officers, i.e. by using the Housing Health & Safety Rating System to assess hazards.

3.23 Overcrowding

3.24 Current Policy

All overcrowded households are awarded a Gold or Silver banding (depending on their local connection), regardless of their level of overcrowding.

3.25 Proposed Change

Overcrowded households will be awarded a Gold Plus/Silver Plus banding if they lack three or more bedrooms. All other overcrowded households will still be awarded a Gold or Silver banding. This proposed change will give greater reasonable preference and priority to those applicants who are living in severely overcrowded conditions and who require a move more urgently.

3.26 Reduced Priority

3.27 Current Policy

All applicants whose circumstances qualify them for one of the reasonable preference bandings (Gold Plus, Gold, Silver Plus, Silver) are placed in these bands, regardless of their financial resources or history of anti social behaviour or housing related debts.

CABINET

07 December 2011

3.28 Proposed Change

A new band has been created which will be used for applicants in reasonable preference categories but whose priority is reduced for one of the following reasons:

- Financial Resources – a household income of over £60K per year or savings/equity of over £50K. Applicants with this level of financial resources are considered to be able to resolve their own housing need without the need to occupy limited social housing. Each application will be assessed individually and discretion is given where it is considered that the applicant's needs are such that they can only be met by social housing.
- Deliberately worsening housing circumstances – i.e. where an applicant has deliberately done something to worsen their housing circumstances in order to qualify for a higher banding under the Home Choice Plus scheme.
- Housing related debts – where an applicant owes money to a Local Authority or Registered Social Landlord for housing related expenses, e.g. rent
- Anti Social Behaviour and other tenancy breaches – where an applicant has breached their tenancy due to anti-social behaviour or other serious breaches such as damaging the property.

3.29 Applicants will be banded according to their current housing need but then demoted to the reduced priority band. This decision will be reassessed by the District Council or their agent after a period of six months, or at the applicant's request at any time. This change has been proposed based on legal advice and government guidance.

3.30 Banding Reviews

Current Policy

3.31 A banding decision will continue subject to the applicant's circumstances remaining the same, regardless of whether they have placed bids on properties. Banding decisions are reviewed at set time periods of 3 months, 6 months, twelve months and two years depending on the band.

Proposed Change

3.32 Where applicants in the Gold Plus, Silver Plus, Gold and Silver bands have failed to place bids, or have placed successful bids but refused properties, and there is evidence that properties that would meet their

CABINET

07 December 2011

needs have been advertised on Home Choice Plus, their banding will be reviewed within the set time period above and may be removed.

- 3.33 This proposed change will ensure that only those households who have a genuine and urgent need to move will retain their higher priority band status. Where applicants in these bands are either not bidding on or refusing suitable properties, the local authority or its agent will be able to review the household's circumstances and assess whether their need is as serious as they claim.

3.34 Applicants Requiring an Adaptation Via Grant

3.35 Current Policy

Where an applicant has applied for a Disabled Facilities Grant and this has been approved, they are not prevented from being allocated a home under Home Choice Plus.

3.36 Proposed Change

Applicants who are applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant which has been approved and works have commenced may not be considered for an allocation on the Home Choice Plus scheme, to ensure that public funds are best utilised. There may be exceptional circumstances in which an applicant will still be considered for a move, such as a significant change in circumstances. One example of this may be a further and serious deterioration in health meaning more suitable accommodation is required.

3.37 Members of the Armed Forces

- 3.38 The current policy does not mention members of the armed forces as a distinct client group. However, feedback during consultation has led to the inclusion of a specific section on this group, setting out how their housing applications will be treated. This is as follows:
"Members of the Armed Forces who have been served with a cessation to occupy accommodation' notice will be given housing advice and the appropriate banding and, if required, considered under the Homeless legislation (Housing Act 1996, Part VII and other relevant legislation).

- 3.39 The Home Choice Plus Partnership will give consideration to the Military Covenant and any further legislation and guidance as applicable to this Allocations Policy."

- 3.40 This does not represent a change to the application of the policy, but clarifies the existing position to ensure that this client group and those representing them understand how their needs will be met.

- 3.41 Local Connection

CABINET

07 December 2011

- 3.42 The factors taken into account when determining local connection with a local authority areas are set out in s199 Housing Act 1996 as follows:
- has lived in the relevant Local Authority area, by choice, for a certain time (usually for six months out of the last 12 months or for three years out of the last five years);
 - has close family living in the relevant local Authority area, who have been permanently resident for at least the previous five years;
 - has permanent employment in the relevant Local Authority area.
 - has special circumstances that give rise to a local connection.

With regard to the fourth factor 'special circumstances' these might include the need to be near special medical or support services which are available only in a particular district'. This factor is only used in very exceptional circumstances.

4. Draft Policy Consultation

- 4.1 During June and July 2011, the draft policy with the above changes was circulated for consultation and an online questionnaire was provided for consultees to give their feedback on the proposals. The consultation period was promoted in Council and Registered Social Landlord offices and on their websites, and customers were given the opportunity to complete a paper feedback form if they were unable to complete the online questionnaire.
- 4.2 100 consultation responses were received. The breakdown in terms of respondent type was as follows:
- 39% housing applicant
 - 20% current tenant
 - 23% Home Choice Plus partner agency
 - 18% other.

- 4.3 The consultation feedback showed an overwhelmingly positive response to the greater clarification provided and the changes proposed. In response to the proposed changes, the following responses were provided:

Disrepair

- 4.4 90% of respondents agreed with this change; 10% of respondents disagreed with this change.

Overcrowding

- 4.5 87% of respondents agreed with this change; 13% of respondents disagreed with this change.

CABINET

07 December 2011

Reduced Priority due to Financial Resources

- 4.6 88% of respondents agreed with this change; 12% of respondents disagreed with this change.

Homelessness Bandings

- 4.7 95% of respondents agreed with this change; 5% of respondents disagreed with this change.

Reduced Priority due to other reasons (e.g. Anti-Social Behaviour and Debt)

- 4.8 95% of respondents agreed with this change; 5% of respondents disagreed with this change.

Applicants Requiring an Adaptation Via Grant

- 4.9 97% of respondents agreed with this change; 3% of respondents disagreed with this change.

- 4.10 The Home Choice Plus Steering Group reviewed all the comments received by respondents, particularly by those who disagreed with some of the proposed changes and found that the majority of negative comments were due to a misunderstanding of the proposals or the way in which social housing is currently allocated. In order to address this, the Steering Group is planning to conduct a review of the information provided about the scheme on the Home Choice Plus website and to include a Frequently Asked Questions and 'Myth busting' section to ensure that the policy and operation of the scheme is clearly understood.

5. Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 The current Home Choice Plus scheme has an existing Equalities Impact Assessment in place. A new assessment will need to be undertaken to ensure that all applicants have an equal opportunity to participate in the scheme and that it does not discriminate on any grounds.

- 5.2 An interim assessment of the changes in terms of equalities legislations is as follows:

- Homelessness – this change is necessary for the policy to be considered legally compliant. It does not affect one specific equalities group more than another.

CABINET

07 December 2011

- Disrepair – this change allows lesser disrepair to be taken into account in the assessment of housing need and is likely to have greater relevance in the Private rented sector. As ethnic minority groups are more likely to occupy private rented accommodation this change is likely to benefit some ethnic minority households.
 - Overcrowding – this change recognises more severe levels of overcrowding and as ethnic minority groups are more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation, this change is likely to benefit some ethnic minority households.
 - Reduce priority – This change means that those who can afford to resolve their own housing need are encouraged to do so. Also those who have deliberately worsened their circumstances, have outstanding housing related debts or have breached their tenancy due to anti social behaviour or other serious tenancy breaches will be placed in a reduced priority band. This may affect a greater proportion of older people in the District who have equity in their properties.
 - Applicants requiring an adaptation via grant which has been approved may not be considered for an allocation through Home Choice Plus. This change is likely to affect households with physical disabilities. However, it can be justified through the need to make best use of Disabled Facilities Grants and where a condition had deteriorated and the adaptation is no longer appropriate, the allocation of a property can still be made.
- 5.3 Home Choice Plus customers have been offered an opportunity to influence this review. We are aware that customers are frustrated by the lack of availability of social housing. The changes to the policy will help to ensure that the local authority complies with current legislation and also makes best use of the existing supply of social housing by:
1. Giving additional preference to households who are severely overcrowded.
 2. Separating disrepair into two banding levels depending on the extent of the disrepair.
 3. Giving reduced priority to certain individuals, for example; those who have sufficient financial resources to resolve their own housing need.
 4. Working with the Home Improvement Agency to minimise needless expenditure in application of Disabled Facilities Grants.
 5. Providing clarity and consistency in how participating authorities apply the policy.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

CABINET

07 December 2011

- 6.1 As identified by the legal compliance check and by the experience of partners operating the scheme, the lack of clarity around some elements of the current policy places Bromsgrove District Council at risk of a legal challenge to some of the decisions made according to the policy and the way in which the policy is applied. Adoption of the amended draft policy with greater clarification around key issues, as well as the additional proposed changes, will significantly reduce this risk.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

9. AUTHOR OF REPORT

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CABINET

7th December 2011

SOLAR PANELS SCHEME AT THE DEPOT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Kit Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	√
Relevant Head of Service	Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report informs the Cabinet of a decision taken on urgent business by the Chief Executive under his delegated powers with regard to the scheme for the installation of solar panels at the Depot.
- 2.2 Since the scheme for the installation of solar panels was approved by Members on 22nd June 2011, the Government announced changes to the feed-in tariff rate. It is proposed to reduce this rate from 34.1 pence to 15.2 pence. Full details are set out in the appended report.
- 2.3 The timeline for the scheme is to have the solar panels installed by March 2012. As the scheme is already underway and the changes to the feed-in tariff rates were announced by the Government at short notice, it was not feasible to wait until the meeting of the Cabinet on 7th December 2011 before obtaining approval to the changes to the rates and thus allowing officers to continue with the procurement and installation process. Feedback to the consultation was also required urgently to allow officers time to start preparing the Council's response, albeit that any comments from Cabinet members will be incorporated within the response following the Cabinet meeting on 7th December 2011.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Cabinet note that the Chief Executive under his delegated powers to determine matters on urgent business agreed:**
- (a) **That authority be granted to the Climate Change Manager to respond to the Government consultation (*on proposed changes to the solar photo voltaic feed-in tariff scheme*), such response to include the comments of the Portfolio Holder and the Cabinet.**
- (b) **That officers be authorised to continue with the current project plan as approved by the Cabinet (*and Council*) on 22nd June 2011 taking into account the revised financial projections as**

noted at para 3 (*of the appended report*) and on the basis that the sum of £68,000 should remain the figure invested.

- 2.2 That the Cabinet consider any comments it wishes to be incorporated within the consultation response referred to in 2.1 (a) above.

3. **KEY ISSUES**

Financial Implications

- 3.1 As set out in the appended report.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 As set out in the appended report.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.3 As set out in the appended report.

- 3.4 The authority for the Chief Executive to determine matters of such urgency that formal reporting to the Cabinet is not possible is contained within the Scheme of Delegations as set out in Part 3 (Part D) of the Council's Constitution. Such delegation must be exercised by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer. The urgent action on this matter was determined by the Chief Executive on 14th November 2011 in consultation with the aforementioned persons.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.5 As set out in the appended report.

4. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 As set out in the appended report.

5. **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Report to the Chief Executive on Solar Panels – Government Consultation

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Record of urgent decision taken under delegated powers dated 14th November 2011

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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COUNCIL TAX BASE CALCULATION 2012-13

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Hollingworth
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Teresa Kristunas
Wards Affected	No
Ward Councillor Consulted	No
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Local Authority (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations require the Council to determine its Council Tax Base for the coming financial year and to notify precepting authorities of the outcome between 1st December and 31st January in the preceding financial year.

For the financial year 2012-2013 the Council Tax base is estimated at 36,643.86 Band D equivalents when applying a 99% collection rate.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the Council's Tax base for 2012-2013, assuming a collection rate of 99.00%, is calculated at 36,643.86 for the area as a whole. Individual parishes are shown at **Appendix 1** of this report.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 This forms the basis of the calculation of Council Tax for the new financial year.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 Publishing the Council Tax Base between 1st December and 31st January in the preceding financial year is a legal requirement.

The legislation that covers this is the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.3 Collection of Council Tax underpins the corporate objectives of the Council.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.4 There are no implications for the Councils Equalities and Diversity Policies.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.2 There are no risk management issues.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Appendix 1 Council Tax Base Calculation for 2012-2013

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT

Cabinet

7th December 2011

Council Tax Base Calculation 2012 - 2013

The Council Tax Base calculation for each parish is detailed below (band D equivalents).

Parish Name	Gross	Net (99.00%)
Alvechurch	2,335.90	2,312.55
Barnt Green	937.7	928.33
Belbroughton	1,225.80	1,213.55
Bentley Pauncefoot	192.2	190.28
Beoley	477.40	472.63
Bournheath	218	215.82
Catshill & Marlbrook	2,475.40	2,450.65
Clent	1,224.30	1,212.06
Cofton Hackett	754.70	747.16
Dodford with Grafton	401.20	397.19
Finstall	304.30	301.26
Frankley	52.70	52.17
Hagley	2,131.50	2,110.19
Hunnington	239.70	237.31
Lickey and Blackwell	2,109.00	2,087.91
Romsley	703.50	696.47
Stoke Prior	1,769.30	1,751.61
Tutnall and Cobley	357.40	353.83
Wythall	4,839.10	4,790.71
Urban	14,265.80	14,122.18
TOTALS	37,014.90	36,643.86

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Cabinet

7th December 2011

VICTORIA GROUND CAPITAL WORKS

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Mike Webb
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	John Godwin
Wards Affected	St Johns
Ward Councillor Consulted	No
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The report provides members with an updated position in relation to the Victoria Ground in Bromsgrove. It outlines the results of recent dilapidation survey of the site and the opportunity to fund the associated works with a virement from an existing 2011/12 Capital Programme project.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Cabinet is asked to approve the required works and to approve a virement of £42k from the 2011/12 bridge maintenance capital budget to fund the project.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 Members will recall that in 2010 the Council granted a lease of the Victoria Ground to Bromsgrove Sporting and that as part of that arrangement Bromsgrove Sporting agreed to work in partnership with the Council to deliver enhanced sporting activities to the community of Bromsgrove District.
- 3.2 Members are advised that since the granting of the lease officer have meet regularly with club official and closely monitored progress, to date the club has proved to be successful.
- 3.3 As members will recall when the initial lease period was granted the Council had been unable to gain entry to the site in order to inspect the buildings with in the ground. As a result it was not possible to ascertain the condition of the site or under take essential dilapidation surveys.
- 3.4 Following the receipt of the dilapidation survey in late 2010, the club and the Council have undertaken and number of actions/improvement to the site to address the on site issues and improve the quality and experience of visiting the ground. However one area of the ground is

in such poor condition that it requires a capital investment to address the issue faced, these in the main relates to the condition of the building fabric Inc the roof, electrics and internal fittings.

- 3.5 Officers have undertaken a procurement exercise in accordance with the Councils Contract procedure Rules to ascertain the cost of returning the facility to a more usable condition and to ensure that the buildings are fully operational and comply with relevant Health and Safety requirements.
- 3.6 Members are advised that the Capital cost of returning the building to a usable condition moving forward would be approximately £42k, this includes relevant contingency budgets. All project management fees would be provided by L&CS officers and the fee agreed is on a fixed price basis.
- 3.7 Members should also be aware that the above costs were produced on the basis of providing a water tight shell with associated electrical service enhancements to make the building operable, fit for purpose and to comply with H&S legislation. All other works on site to develop the building as a community facility will be met by Bromsgrove Sporting in line with the original business case and lease arrangements.
- 3.8 If members approve the building works it is proposed that the funding be made available from an existing scheme within the 2011/12 Capital Programme to limit the financial resource required. The bridge maintenance budget has recently been reviewed by officers and as a result of procurement opportunities and options appraisals the current budget of £72k can be reduced to £30k whilst still ensuring the Councils responsibility for repairs is met. It is therefore proposed that a virement of £42k be made to support the financial requirements of the Victoria Ground works.
- 3.9 Officers are satisfied that the arrangements that currently exist between the Council and Bromsgrove Sporting are robust enough to ensure that this capital investment will enable the Bromsgrove Sporting to deliver the objectives of the business case and club development plan, whilst working with the Councils on our wider sporting objectives fro Bromsgrove District.
- 3.10 Members will need to consider the operational implications on the club as outlined below as well as consequence of not investing in the capital works and the fact that in order for any lease/service level arrangements to exist with any third party footballing provider that the ground will need to be maintained to a high standard and accessible to a cross section of the community.

Legal Implications

- 3.11 The lease of the Victoria Ground to Bromsgrove Sporting dated 09.09.2011 gave Bromsgrove Sporting a rent free period from 09.09.2010 to 31.12.2010 subject to carrying out specified improvement works at the ground. These works included the replacement of the roof of the Administration Building (Social Club side) and the Refreshment Outlet. By agreement this period was extended until the 31.3.2011.

A full inspection of the condition of the Victoria Ground was not possible prior to the lease being entered into by Bromsgrove Sporting due to the previous tenant holding over and failing to vacate the premises. It is understood that the inspection which has now been carried out has revealed more extensive works are required than were originally anticipated by the Council and Bromsgrove Sporting. Normally the outgoing tenant would be required to carry out the remedial works or pay damages but in this instance the tenant was insolvent under an administration process.

Under the lease terms it is possible the Council could require Bromsgrove Sporting to carry out some of the works revealed by the full inspection. However, if the cost of these works were to place Bromsgrove Sporting in financial difficulties, it is possible the Council could again be left with an insolvent tenant. Given the extent of the work required to put the ground into a safe and useable condition it is highly likely that any new tenant would require the works to be carried out before entering into a lease of the ground.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.12 Although there are no direct service or operational implications for the Council, the decisions that we make will have a major impact upon those of our tenant, Bromsgrove Sporting. At present there is approximately two thirds of the main function and administration block unusable following the re issuing of the lease. The impact upon the club is that they are unable to implement their business plan fully as they can't utilise these areas to generate usage and income away from match days. Further more the club can not offer a full catering service at present as the wiring in this area is sub standard and the community outreach programme that was proposed and being developed can not commence as these areas were due to provide the classroom and tuition spaces required. Examples of usage in this area include junior sports leaders awards, coaching and referring qualifications, modern apprenticeships and community functions/events.

- 3.13 As highlighted earlier in this report the extent of the maintenance requirements were unknown until the club occupied the site, this has meant that although parties entered into the agreement in good faith the extent of the repairs required could not be fully understood or appreciated. As such the club feel that the business case produced can not be fully implemented until the Council as landlord provides all of the facilities it advertised during the procurement process.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.14 The proposed enhancement to the building following the Council's work by Bromsgrove Sporting will increase the availability of services to local residents and support the Council's Vision for Bromsgrove. The investment also supports the Council's Sports and Active Recreation Strategy by increasing the quality and availability of sports facilities for community use.
- 3.15 The proposals will also assist the club in improving disability access arrangements and promote increase opportunity for minority groups to participate in sporting activities.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 The risk associated with in this report have been highlighted in the above sections and relate to the inability of the club to full fill its business case ambitions. There is also the reputational risk to be considered in the circumstances highlighted above should the virement not be approved.

5. APPENDICES

None

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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CABINET

7th December 2011

FUTURE OF THE PARISH FORUM

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mark Bullivant
Portfolio Holder Consulted	√
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Parish Forum was established several years ago by the Council to provide a vehicle for liaison between Bromsgrove District Council and Parish Councils. Meetings are normally held on a quarterly basis to share information and consider matters of common interest. These meetings are chaired by the Leader (or another Portfolio Holder) and serviced by an officer from Committee Services. Various senior and other levels of Council officers attend, as required, according to the subject matters under consideration.

- 2.2 The Council currently provides facilities at the Council House for meetings of the Bromsgrove Area Committee of the Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC). CALC is the representative body for Parish and Town Councils.

- 2.3 It is proposed that the Parish Forum be discontinued and that, as an alternative arrangement, a slot be included at the start of the Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC meetings where Council officers could attend, as required, to give presentations and interact with parish council representatives.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Cabinet consider the response submitted on behalf the Parish Councils and agree:**
 - (a) **that the Parish Forum be discontinued with immediate effect;**

 - (b) **that, as an alternative arrangement, meetings of the Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC be used a vehicle for presentations and interaction between the Council and Parish Councils by way of a slot at the start of such meetings;**

 - (c) **whether to approve the suggestion for a specific Cabinet Member to be given responsibility for managing the relationship with the Parish Councils, and if so:**

- (i) **nominate that person; and**
 - (ii) **agree that this Cabinet Member addresses the Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC at its first meeting in 2012 on the way forward in the absence of the Parish Forum;**
- (d) **whether to approve the suggestion for “the District Council to hold meetings between Parish Councils and District Council Members twice a year (or more often if the need arises) to discuss items of Council Policy that impact on the Parish Councils”;**
- (e) **whether to approve the suggestion for any changed arrangements to be “reviewed jointly before the end of the first twelve months to ensure that the District Council’s commitment to continue to maintain strong links with its parishes is met and the recognition of the need to work together for our communities is satisfied”.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no significant financial implications associated with the proposal. If the Parish Forum is discontinued, modest printing/postage cost savings will be achieved by not having to service such meetings.
- 3.2 In the current financial climate the Council needs to look very closely at how it uses its resources including ways in which officers’ time can be utilised in a more efficient and effective way. The proposal to discontinue the Parish Forum and include a slot at the Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC meetings will rationalise the use of officer time.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 There is no legal requirement for the Council to have a Parish Forum. The Forum was established as a local mechanism to interact with Parish Councils.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.4 In December 2001 the Cabinet considered a report on partnership arrangements with Parish Councils and agreed that “quarterly meetings be set up” to liaise with parish councils. This was effectively the establishment of what is known as the Parish Forum. The first meeting

was held on 9th January 2003 and meetings have been held at the Council House on a regular basis since then.

- 3.5 The Parish Forum meetings have been serviced from the outset by an officer from Committee Services who liaises with the Leader, members of the Corporate Management Team and other Council officers with regard to matters which the Council wish to raise at such meetings and ensuring relevant Member/officer attendance. The Committee Services officer also acts as the link person between the Council and Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC and ensures that items raised by CALC are included on the agenda.
- 3.6 In the current climate the Council has to look very closely at how it uses its resources including the best use of officer time. It is considered that the proposal to discontinue the Parish Forum and instead include a slot on the existing Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC meetings at the Council House will enable officers' time to be utilised in a more efficient and effective way. This will impact on a range of officers from the person who services the Parish Forum through to members of the Senior Management Team.
- 3.7 It is acknowledged that the Council has developed strong links with Parish Councils and the local CALC and there is a desire to maintain these links and to work together for the benefit of the district of Bromsgrove and its communities. If the proposal set out in the report is approved, in order to maintain continuity it is intended that the same person within Committee Services would still act as the link person between the Council and CALC.
- 3.8 It should also be highlighted that the Council's established engagement with Parish Councils includes the provision of training opportunities and this will continue regardless of the future of the Parish Forum. In addition, there are regular Monitoring Officer Liaison Meetings with Parish Clerks. These meetings have been a success and will continue.
- 3.9 The Council has consulted with the Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC on the proposed changes which in turn sought feedback from Parish Councils.
- 3.10 A collective response on behalf of the Parish Councils has been submitted by the Chairman of the Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC (Councillor Mrs. S. Baxter). This response is attached as an appendix to the report.
- 3.11 The response points out that due to the limited timescale for the consultation (4 weeks), CALC has not been able to submit a formal response due its next meeting not taking place until December and that some Parish Councils have not met during this period. However, 12 of

the 20 Parish Councils did respond to CALC's request for feedback on the proposals. Of these 6 were broadly in favour of the proposed changes although they all had some concerns or misgivings. The remaining 6 were against any change as they consider that the purpose of the CALC and Parish Forum meetings is different and that the Forum provides a useful function in its own right.

- 3.12 The response sets out a clear summary of the views of Parish Councils and a number of suggestions for the way forward for the Council to consider. These suggestions have been reflected in the recommendations on the way forward as set out in section 2 of the Cabinet report. The response also highlights a number of issues raised by individual Parish Councils.
- 3.13 Tutnall & Cobley Parish Council also responded directly to the Council that *"Members were unanimous in stating that they wished to the Forum to continue. The Forum is the only open meeting between the District and Parishes, providing an excellent medium for interaction and continued dialogue."*

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.14 There are no significant implications to highlight in addition to the above-mentioned consultation.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 There are not considered to be any significant risks associated with the report proposals.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Parish Councils' response from Chairman of the Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Email to Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC dated 3 October 2011.
Email from Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC dated 31 October 2011
Letter from Tutnall & Cobley Parish Council dated 24 October 2011.

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CABINET

Date: 7th December 2011

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

QUARTER 2, PERIOD ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER 2011

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Mark Bullivant, Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes at Leaders Group Meeting
Relevant Head of Service	Hugh Bennett, Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships
Wards Affected	All Wards
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report asks Members to consider a range of options for the continued reporting of Council performance for 2011/12 in the light of proposed changes to strategic and performance reporting through systems thinking.
- 1.2 This report also provides Members with an opportunity to review the Council's performance for quarter 2 of the 2011/12 financial year and to comment upon it.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **The Cabinet is asked to CONSIDER and DECIDE which of the following options for the Council's performance reporting 2011/12 they would like officers to pursue:**
 - i. **Current performance indicators continue to be collected and reported quarterly (no change).**
 - ii. **Current performance indicators cease to be collected and reported corporately for the rest of 2011/12.**
 - iii. **Current performance indicators are reported at year end 2011/12 only.**
 - iv. **Members select key performance indicators they would like to continue to be reported quarterly for the remainder of 2011/12.**
 - v. **That Corporate Management Team select key performance indicators of concern and remedial action to be taken, for reporting on a quarterly basis.**
- 2.2 **The Cabinet is asked to CONSIDER the future proposals for performance reporting as the Council progresses their transformation agenda.**

2.3 The Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:

- i. the update on key performance indicators for the period ending 30 September 2011 be considered and commented upon.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

3.1 The proposed system of measures for 2012/13 will provide a greater understanding of customer demand, allowing for more proactive services to be provided, with alignment of finance to purposes.

3.2 Poor financial performance will be detrimental to any Council assessment and overall performance. Specific financial indicators included in the 2011/12 set are listed below:

- Time taken to process housing benefit / council tax benefit new claims and change events;
- The amount of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered as a percentage of all HB overpayments;
- Percentage of invoices paid by the Council within 30 days of receipt or within the agreed payment terms;
- Percentage of council tax collected by the authority in the year.

Legal Implications

3.3 The Government announced that the former National Indicator set was to be reduced. At present there is no legal requirement for the local authority to produce specific performance data.

3.4 As the Council progresses with the transformation programme, Members and Senior Management Team may wish to challenge data requirements placed upon the Council by external organisations if it is felt that they do not contribute to the purposes of the organisation.

Service/Operational Implications

3.5 The options for reporting the Council's performance for the remainder of 2011/12 are being presented as a response to the changing demands on departments and the Policy Team as a result of the transformation programme. Service areas are being asked to develop performance measures alongside reporting against the current set of indicators, many of which do not seem to provide the customer focused data which would benefit services or allow insight into the performance from a customer's perspective. Reducing or removing the current quarterly reporting requirements would allow the Policy team to play a greater role in the

development of the new performance system and support officers and members with any changes. The current electronic data collection (EDC) spreadsheet would still be available to officers to capture their data should they require it for reporting to an external body or for departmental use.

- 3.6 The proposed use of a set of measures by which to assess performance against purposes will change fundamentally how performance data is gathered, used and reported from 2012/13 onwards. These measures are currently being developed to reflect what actually matters to customers and their actual (often end-to-end) experience of the Council's services. These measures will be collected and utilised by officers in as real-time as possible, with Members and the management team having access to contemporaneous data about service demand. It is envisioned that this will not be through the current system of quarterly reporting, but through access to a corporate dashboard of measures.
- 3.7 Through the current quarterly performance reporting, the Council looked to; retain a tighter focus at a corporate level – with a clearly defined number of indicators reported and monitored; develop capacity for Directorates to strengthen performance management by focusing on service plan commitments; continue to monitor selected former National Indicators and retained BVPI's and local indicators at a Member level at least annually; and to develop links to how the Council is performing in its key delivery projects.
- 3.8 The new style corporate performance report was agreed by Cabinet in June 2011 and, due to the change in strategic focus, the transformation programme and associated system thinking, targets were not required for the business plans 2011/12 and as such are no longer contained within the report. The corporate performance report compares the year to date outturn with the same period last year and shows those indicators which are included in the Council Plan and whether they have improved, declined or remained static in performance.
- 3.8.1 In total, data has been provided for 24 indicators for quarter 2, 2011/12. Of these, 12 have improved in performance and 10 have declined when compared to the same period last year. In addition there are 2 indicators which have remained static.
- 3.8.2 Of those indicators which have declined, there are 2 which are specifically problematic and may require further analysis (see section 3.8.4).
- 3.8.3 This report shows that of the 24 indicators reported this quarter, 45.8% have improved when compared to the same period last year (April to September). By way of example:
- The percentage of customers who are satisfied with the service received at the customer service centres has

increased from 97.37% to 99.61% when compared to the same period last year;

- There has been a 13% reduction in the number of British Crime Survey comparator crimes reported, reducing from 1,443 in April to September 2010/11 compared with 1,252 in the same period this year;
- The number of people using the BURT service during April to September has increased from 894 in 2010/11 to 1,066 in the same period this year;
- There has been a significant reduction in the amount of time it has taken to complete a Category 3 Disabled Facilities Grant (from referral to completion), falling from 87.93 weeks to 77.91 weeks when compared with the same period last year.

3.8.4 There are 2 indicators highlighted as showing particular concern:

- The number of households living in temporary accommodation has risen quite dramatically from 10 to 37 when compared to the same period last year. There are currently a number of complex cases which are taking much longer to resolve. A meeting has been arranged to discuss all cases in temporary accommodation as a matter of urgency. However, the Housing Strategy Team is closely monitoring the levels of households becoming homeless. At present the cost of the increased homelessness is within budget but a continued rise will have budget implications.
- The numbers of people using the car parks continues to decline. When compared to the same period last year there have been 43,659 fewer users (approximately 5%); this may be due to the current economic climate. Further investigation is required.

3.9 To maintain data quality, the Council uses an electronic data collection (EDC) spread sheet. This shows our current and historic performance against selected performance indicators.

3.10 The Council's current Council Plan makes a clear commitment to improve the way in which priority actions are planned and to improve the way in which performance is managed. Appendix 1 reports on the 2011/12 performance indicators contained within the Council Plan. The performance data contained in the attached report relates directly to the Council's priorities and objectives.

3.11 The performance indicator set includes one which reports on the number of working days / shifts lost to the local authority due to sickness absence per full time equivalent staff member. Quarter 2, 2011/12 shows a minor increase in the amount of time lost due to sickness absence compared to the same period last year (April – September).

- 3.12 There are a total of 2 performance indicators that relate to air quality and climate change within the list of National Indicators all of which are included in the corporate set. These indicators are all reported annually.

Performance management implications are detailed within this report at Appendix 1.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.13 It is anticipated that the introduction of the customer focused measures will improve the services provided and the experiences of our customers, giving Members and officers a clearer picture of what matters to residents and an enhanced ability to respond to and proactively address issues as they arise.

- 3.14 Customer service performance indicators included for 2011/12:

- Percentage of customers satisfied with the service received at Customer Service Centres and,
- Percentage of complaints handled within the agreed time frames.

Performance for these indicators can be found in Appendix 1.

- 3.15 Enhanced performance will assist to improve customer satisfaction.

- 3.16 Information contained in the attached appendix will be communicated to both internal and external customers via the intranet/Internet following approval at committee.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Assessing the Council's performance forms part of the Council's approach to risk management.

- 4.2 The proposed changes to a system of measures should allow issues to be identified much sooner, helping the Council to manage risk.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Quarter 2, 2011/12 Corporate Performance Report, period ending 30 September 2011

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The details to support the information provided within this report are held by the Policy Team and on the Electronic Data Collection (EDC) system.

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Allocation Scheme

**Draft subject to
consultation**



Glossary of terms	5
1. Introduction.....	6
Aims of the partnership	6
What are Allocations under this Scheme?.....	7
The Legal Framework	9
2. Statement on Choice	11
Choice and Constraints	11
3. Eligibility and Reasonable Preference	12
Who is and who is not eligible under this Scheme.	12
Including a carer on the application.....	12
Young people aged between 16 – 18.....	12
The Application of Reasonable Preference	14
Determining priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference.....	15
4. Registration and Assessment Process	16
How to Apply	16
Help with registration.....	16
Definition of Household Types.....	17
5. The Banding Structure	19
Priority Band.....	21
Gold Plus.....	21
Silver Plus	26
Gold.....	26
Silver	28
Reduced Banding.....	28
Bronze Plus.....	29
Bronze	29
Time Limited Bands.....	29
Local Connection.....	29
Waiting Time	30
Change of Circumstances	31
6. Applying for a Property and Lettings.....	32
Looking for available Properties	32
Advertising	32
How to Bid.....	32
When to bid for a Property	33
Number of Properties an applicant can bid for	33
Multiple Bidding.....	33
Applications from employees, Board Members and Co-optees.....	33
Statutory Homeless Households	33
Eligibility for types of dwelling.....	34
Selection process	35
Reasons why you may not be offered a property	35
Refusing Offers of Accommodation.....	36
Exempt Allocations – Accommodation provided for lettings that are not covered by this Scheme.	37
Local Lettings Plans	38
Direct Matching	39
7. Administration of the Scheme.....	41
Delegation of Authority	41
Reassessment of Bandings.....	41

Reduced Priorities	41
Closing of Registrations	42
Re-joining the Housing Register.....	42
Equality and Diversity	42
Confidentiality.....	43
Data protection and information sharing.....	43
Information sharing without consent.....	43
False statements or withheld information	43
Monitoring Home Choice Plus.....	44
8. Reviews and Appeals	45
Information about decisions and reviews	45
Complaints	45
Local Ombudsman	46
9. Feedback on let properties	47
Appendix 1 Home Choice Plus Advice and Contact Points	48
Appendix 2 Home Choice Plus Partners' Contact Details	50

HOME CHOICE PLUS PARTNERSHIP

List of partners

Local Authorities

Bromsgrove District Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Worcester City Council, Wychavon District Council, Wyre Forest District Council

Housing Associations

Advance Housing Association, Anchor Trust, Beth Johnson Housing Group, Bourneville Housing Trust, Bromford Group, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust, Elgar Housing Association, Fosseyway Housing, Fry Housing Trust, Gloucestershire Housing Association, Hanover Housing Group, Housing 21, Jephson Housing Association, Marches Housing Association, Mercian Housing, Midland Heart Ltd, Nexus Housing (West Midlands), Orbit Heart of England, Pershore Alms Houses, Rooftop Housing Group, Sanctuary Housing Association, Servite Housing Association, South Shropshire Housing Association, Spa Housing Association, Stonham Housing Association, Warwickshire Rural Housing Association, Waterloo Housing Association, Worcester Community Housing, Wyre Forest Community Housing, Wyre Forest Sheltered Housing.

Glossary of terms

Home Choice Plus Partnership - A group of local authorities and Housing Association operating the same Allocation Scheme (known as “the partnership”)

Home Choice Plus Scheme / Allocations Scheme - the scheme including the software, the policy and the processes involved for allocating housing to households

Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy / Allocations policy – the policy document that determines how we allocated housing to households

Allocation – an offer of housing from a Housing Association or Local Authority either directly or via a nomination from a Local Authority

Affordable housing – housing let at a social or affordable rent or a low cost home ownership property let to a specified eligible household whose needs are not met in the market

Housing Register – a database/list of households who have applied for affordable housing

Banding/bands – the prioritisation of households on the housing register based on their housing need

Bid – Households expression of interest in an available / vacant property

Persons from abroad - A person from abroad is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation if he is subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, or is excluded from entitlement to housing benefit by section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (c 33) (exclusion from benefits) unless he is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State. Please see page 13 for more information.

Reasonable preference – categories of housing need which are defined by the Housing Act 1996, Part Six that we are required to consider

Local connection – a household’s connection to a local area or authority. Please see page 29.

Registration / Effective date – the date of registration of the Housing Application

Band start date – the date the household is awarded the banding applicable to their housing need

Weekly bidding cycle – the period of time available for households to place bids on properties they are interested in

Direct matching – an allocation outside of the Home Choice Policy/Scheme. Please see page 39 for more information.

1. Introduction

Home Choice Plus is a scheme used to advertise and or allocate social rented and privately rented properties which has been agreed by the Home Choice Plus Partnership (the Partnership) and operates in the same way across a number of Local Authority areas including;

- **Bromsgrove District Council**
- **Malvern Hills District Council**
- **Stratford-on-Avon District Council**
- **Worcester City Council**
- **Wychavon District Council**
- **Wyre Forest District Council**

Within the Home Choice Plus Scheme is an **allocation policy** which outlines how the Partnership will re-house households on the Housing Register.

The districts mentioned above work in partnership with a number of Housing Associations to allocate social housing in a fair and transparent way and have identified the following aims;

Aims of the partnership

- We are committed to working in partnership to offer a choice from a range of housing options for people in housing need.
- We aim to ensure that Home Choice Plus is easy to understand, transparent and fair.
- We will work to ensure that all households are able to access the service we provide.
- We will develop sustainable communities by enabling people to make realistic and informed choices about where they wish to live.
- We will make effective use of all housing stock.
- We will ensure that local people will have an enhanced priority within the banding structure.
- We will assist in achieving mobility across the participating Local Authority areas.
- We will enable a better understanding of the housing demand.
- We will ensure the scheme meets our equalities duties.

Access to Home Choice Plus is via a single register for housing; households only have to register for the scheme once and are then able to bid for vacancies advertised in any of the participating Local Authority areas.

Home Choice Plus enables people with a housing need to look for a home in an area of their choice. Households registered with Home Choice Plus will be banded according to the suitability of their current accommodation to meet their needs and their local connection.

What are Allocations under this Scheme?

The following are allocations of accommodation under this Scheme:

1. The nomination of an applicant to be an Assured or an Assured Shorthold tenant of housing accommodation held by a Housing Association (via a Council's Nomination Rights Agreement with the Housing Association). Often the nomination will be that of a 'Starter Tenant' of a Housing Association whereby the Housing Association will grant an Assured Shorthold Tenancy for a set probationary period (usually 12 months) and provided the tenant successfully completes the probationary period the Housing Association will grant an Assured Tenancy.

Or

2. The selection of an applicant to be a secure or introductory tenant of a Council (including notifying an existing tenant or licensee that the tenancy or licence is to be a secure tenancy) this includes properties that are owned by a Council and managed by agents. This also includes the granting of a new tenancy to an existing tenant by way of transfer upon the tenants request or the granting of a new tenancy under a Council's (non statutory) contractual and/or discretionary succession policy set out below

By 'affordable housing' we mean social rent and affordable rent, allocated to specified eligible households whose needs are not met in the market. It should meet the needs of eligible households, including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices.

The ways in which we advise and assist applicants on a whole range of housing options, including access to the private rented sector and low cost home-ownership opportunities, can be found on the Home Choice Plus website www.homechoiceplus.org.uk and the partner Local Authorities' websites.

A list of Local Authorities' contact points can be found at Appendix 1

The scheme may also be used to advertise intermediate market rent, shared ownership and private rented properties. Please see the eligibility criteria of the relevant landlord for more details regarding allocation of these types of properties.

Allocations Policy

This Allocations Policy describes how the Home Choice Plus scheme prioritises housing applicants to identify their housing need in accordance with the legal definition of Reasonable Preference.

Whilst all applicants are assessed in accordance with the scheme, the allocation of properties may be subject to the allocation policies of individual Housing Associations, who will assess applicants on the Housing Register according to their stated priorities. They may have different rules about the number of people who can live in a home of a particular size. This will be made clear when a property is advertised. For more information regarding the letting of properties please see the Home Choice Plus Partnership website.

This policy sets out in detail who can or cannot be accepted under the policy and how this assessment is made. It also sets out how applicants can apply for and access housing.

We have designed the Allocations Policy to meet current legal requirements and to promote sustainable communities and balance housing markets.

The Legal Framework

This Home Choice Plus Scheme sits within a tight and complex legal framework of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This section describes this legal framework.

The 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act) requires local authorities to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with an Allocations Scheme. A summary of the Allocations Scheme must be published and made available free of charge to any person who asks for a copy. A summary of the Allocations Scheme and general principles is available through the Home Choice Plus website www.homechoiceplus.org.uk and at partner Local Authority and Housing Associations offices.

The Housing Act 1996, (as amended) requires local authorities to give Reasonable Preference in their allocations policies to people with high levels of assessed housing need. This includes homeless people, those who need to move on welfare or medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they moved to a particular locality within the local authority's area.

The Act also requires local authorities to state within the policy its position on offering applicants a choice of housing accommodation, or offering them the opportunity to express preference about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them.

This Allocations Scheme complies with the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and takes into account the three relevant codes of guidance - Allocation of Accommodation: Code of Guidance for Housing Authorities 2002 issued by the ODPM, the Allocation of Accommodation: Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance for Housing Authorities 2008 and Fair and Flexible: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities in England 2009, issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). All of these documents can be obtained through the DCLG website.

The policy is also drafted and framed to ensure that it is compatible with the Partnership's equality duties including the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote good relations between different racial groups, as well the duty to promote equality between disabled persons and other persons and between men and women. The Partnership has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the policy.

This Policy has considered:

- The partner Local Authorities' statutory obligations and discretion as to who is eligible for housing allocation
- The partner Local Authorities' statutory obligation to provide Reasonable Preference to certain categories of applicants set down by law i.e. those who must be given a greater priority under the Allocations Policy.
- The partner Local Authorities statutory discretion to grant "additional preference" and/or to determine priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference.

- The general and specific statutory discretions the partners can exercise when allocating housing.

2. Statement on Choice

Choice and Constraints

We are committed to offering the greatest choice possible in the allocation of housing through the Home Choice Plus scheme.

It must be recognised that there is a very high demand for affordable housing in the area covered by this allocations policy, and this demand cannot be fully met by the properties becoming available.

Whilst keen to encourage and facilitate mobility within housing, the Home Choice Plus Partnership recognises that provision of choice has to be balanced along with local needs.

In determining priority for housing within the banding structure, a higher degree of preference will be awarded to applicants who have the greatest need and have a local connection within a Local Authority area.

Applicants have the opportunity to view details of all properties that are available and to choose to 'bid' for properties for which they are eligible.

Whilst a key objective of the Home Choice Plus scheme is to offer applicants more choice, there will be a number of exceptional situations where this may not be possible, for instance;

- Where the applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme or the vacant property.
- Where a Local Lettings Plan has been agreed and the applicant does not qualify.
- Where there is a legal agreement restricting who can be offered the property.

These exceptional circumstances will be made clear when the property is advertised, unless the exceptional circumstance concerns the individual specifically (who has bid for the property) in which case it will be discussed with the applicant at the point of allocation.

The Home Choice Plus Partnership will collect information from applicants regarding their particular preferences regarding where they want to live. This is to support our work in identifying housing needs and demands within specific parts of districts.

3. Eligibility and Reasonable Preference

Who is and who is not eligible under this Scheme.

Who can apply to register on the Home Choice Plus scheme?

Any United Kingdom resident aged 16 years or over can apply to join the scheme by completing an application form.

Anybody can make joint applications including married couples, civil partners, cohabiting couples, same sex couples, and brothers and sisters. In such cases, it is usual for a joint tenancy to be granted in the event of an offer of accommodation being made. The eligibility of applicants to be on the Housing Register will also be checked at the point of allocation.

Including a carer on the application

A carer is someone who, with or without payment, provides help and support to a partner, relative, friend or neighbour, who would not manage without their help. This could be due to age, physical or mental health, addiction, or disability. In all cases the carer must have been identified by the applicant as the person who is primarily responsible for providing them with care and that they need to live with them or near them.

Even if a carer is in receipt of Carer's Allowance this does not necessarily mean that it is necessary for them to reside with the person who is being cared for. An application to include a carer on a housing application will be considered if the carer has been assessed by Social Care and/or Health as needing to provide overnight support. In these circumstances the applicant must provide supporting evidence from other agencies e.g. Social Care or a Health professional.

In some limited circumstances it may be possible to consider cases where the carer is not in receipt of Carer's Allowance. Under these circumstances it will still be necessary for the applicant to demonstrate that the person looked after is in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Carers Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance – paid at either the middle or higher rate for personal care.
- Attendance Allowance
- Constant Attendance Allowance
- Disablement benefit.

Young people aged between 16 – 18

Young people aged between 16 and 18 can apply to Home Choice Plus and will be registered. For young people under the age of 18 years the Housing Association may grant permission to allow the occupation of a property by way of an "Equitable Agreement" however a Housing Association may not normally grant a tenancy to anyone under the age of 18 years unless they are able to provide a guarantor to cover rent.

Applicants who are not eligible to join the housing register:

At the point of registration all applicants are asked for information about their housing history and legal status, including whether they are persons from abroad or subject to immigration control. Home Choice Plus then carries out checks to establish eligibility to the Scheme under the relevant legislation.

Applicants who apply are registered, but they are not assessed for the Scheme or placed into a Band until a decision has been made regarding their eligibility.

Persons from abroad

People from abroad come to the participating Local Authority areas to live, work and study. The majority of foreign nationals arriving in this area will not immediately qualify for social housing and are therefore more likely to rent in the private sector.

A person from abroad (or two or more persons jointly if any of them is an ineligible person) is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation if he is subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, or is excluded from entitlement to housing benefit by section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (c 33) (exclusion from benefits) unless he is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State.

Other classes of persons from abroad may be ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation because of regulations made by the Secretary of State.

This does not apply to a person who is already a secure or introductory tenant, or an assured tenant of housing accommodation allocated to him by a local housing authority.

Access to housing for foreign nationals is governed by Housing and Immigration legislation. If you are in doubt about your status, please seek advice from housing options advisers at your Local Authority / their agent or independent advice agency.

Unacceptable behaviour

Where the applicant, or a member of their household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant of the relevant authority, they will be ineligible for registration.

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as behaviour which would, if an applicant or member of their household was a secure tenant, entitle a landlord to possession under any of the Grounds 1 to 7, Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985.

Unacceptable behaviour can include:

- Owing significant rent arrears and/or failing to comply with a current tenancy condition with a Council, Housing Association or private landlord to such an extent that a Court would grant a possession order.
- Conviction for using the property for an illegal or immoral purpose.
- Causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors.
- Being convicted for committing certain indictable offences in or near the home and still posing a threat to neighbours or the community.
- Being violent towards a partner or members of the family.

- Allowing the condition of the property to deteriorate.
- Allowing any furniture or fixtures provided by the landlord to deteriorate due to ill treatment.
- Obtaining a tenancy by deception, for example by giving untrue information.
- Paying money to illegally obtain a tenancy.
- Having lost tied accommodation provided in connection with employment due to conduct making it inappropriate for the person to reside there

In determining whether an applicant is ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour, the Council, or its agent, will consider:

- Has the applicant or a member of the applicant's household been guilty of unacceptable behaviour?
- Was the unacceptable behaviour serious enough to have entitled the Landlord to obtain an outright order for possession?
- At the time of the application, is the applicant still unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of that behaviour, or the behaviour of a member of their household who wishes to reside with them

The applicant will be excluded from the housing register and the applicant does have a right to appeal against this decision. This decision will be taken by the District Council, or its agent. An applicant may be rendered ineligible at anytime during the process should Home Choice Plus become satisfied that they are ineligible.

Applicants classified as being ineligible through "unacceptable behaviour" can make an application for accommodation in the future. It is for the Council (delegated as appropriate) to consider behaviour, at the point of application to the housing register, and whether the applicant is now eligible under the Policy.

Each application will be assessed on its merits and a decision regarding eligibility will be made accordingly. Anyone deemed ineligible for the Scheme will be provided with a full written explanation for the decision and will have a right of review of the decision.

Please see the section on Reviews and Appeals on page 45 below.

The Application of Reasonable Preference

Home Choice Plus is required by law to assess the relative priority that housing applicants are awarded. This is particularly important when, as is the case with the Home Choice Plus partnership area, the demand for social housing is greater than the availability of homes.

The law, as it applies to local housing authorities, requires that Reasonable Preference for housing must be given to those in the categories set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The statutory Reasonable Preference categories cover:

- All homeless people as defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996
- People who are owed a duty under s190 (2), 193 (2) or 195 (2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65 (2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section (192 (3).
- People occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing;
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability);
- People who need to move to a particular locality within the district to avoid hardship to themselves or others.

Specific details and examples of how Reasonable Preference and priorities are determined and applied are detailed in section 5: The Banding Structure.

Determining priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference

Home Choice Plus determines priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference by taking into account various factors including:

- The financial resources available to a person to meet their housing costs.
- Any local connection – as defined in s199 Housing Act 1996 (as amended) – that an applicant has with the Home Choice Plus area.
- The length of time the applicant has been waiting within their current band
- Reducing preference because of applicant's behaviour

Details and examples of how Home Choice Plus determines priority between applicants is explained in section 5: The Banding Structure (see page 19 onwards).

4. Registration and Assessment Process

How to Apply

Before anyone can apply for vacancies advertised through the Home Choice Plus scheme they must first register.

Initial registration can be completed;

- online www.homechoiceplus.org.uk
- by requesting and completing a registration form
- at Home Choice Plus partner offices
- via Digi TV

An advocate (for example, a family member, friend or support agency) can complete the registration form on behalf of an applicant who is requesting assistance.

If the applicant is not eligible to register they will be notified in writing giving the reason for the decision and informing them of their right to request a review.

All registrations once received will be assessed and placed in the appropriate band. Assessment may involve a home visit or interview to discuss housing options.

Where additional information is required to confirm that a higher band is appropriate, the application may be placed in a lower band until the circumstances of the applicant have been confirmed.

Once registered with the Home Choice Plus scheme the applicant will be given a membership number.

Applicants to the scheme are entitled to request details from any of the partners about information that has been used to make a decision on their registration. Partners Contact details can be found at Appendix 2.

Help with registration

Help with registration can be given to applicants by any member of the Home Choice Plus Partnership as well as other organisations such as County Council social care services, health workers, support workers and voluntary bodies.

In particular, help will be provided to applicants who find it hard to fully participate in the scheme.

This document and others are available in a range of formats on request from the Home Choice Partnership including audio, large print and other languages.

Support can be offered to assist an applicant to use the system where they are interested and ready to move. Access to the system can be provided through the Worcestershire Hubs, Housing Associations' offices and Local Authorities' offices.

Training can also be offered to a range of local organisations and support workers on a regular basis to enable them to be able to help applicants with accessing the scheme. Staff from the partner Local Authority and Housing Associations will be able

to work with anyone that the applicant has requested to act on their behalf, subject to the applicant's written consent.

Definition of Household Types

Your household type determines the size and type of housing you may be eligible for.

Single person (under 60)	This includes; One person household and with no resident children A woman who is less than 25 weeks pregnant
Couple	This includes; Married, cohabiting, civil partnership and same sex couples without resident children A woman who is less than 25 weeks pregnant
Family	This includes; Single parent or couple with minimum of one dependant child, who lives with parent (s) as the main or principal home A woman who is 25 weeks pregnant or more
Pensioner / Disability Living Allowance (DLA)	This includes; One person household and couples over 60 or person in receipt of DLA
Other	This includes; Any other household group including friends, brother and sister and families with all children over 18

In certain circumstances the Local Authorities, and their agents, may need to put you into a different household type to enable you to bid for an appropriate property;

Example – if you are a single person with a medical need that means you require a larger property, your household type may be family or other to enable you to bid.

The Home Choice Plus process

- 1** You can register for Home Choice Plus by filling in a housing application either online at www.homechoiceplus.org.uk or requesting a paper application form from any of the contact points.
- 2** Once we have registered you, we will send you confirmation of the registration number and the band you have been placed in.
- 3** Vacant properties will be advertised each week and applicants are advised to look for suitable vacancies regularly.
- 4** You can make up to 3 bids per week, as long as you match what the advert asks for.
- 5** The applicant with the highest priority and who has been in the relevant band the longest will be considered for the property.
- 6** The successful applicant will be contacted by the Landlord and asked for information such as proof of identity. A viewing will be arranged and if you are accepted an offer will be made.

5. The Banding Structure

Home Choice Plus operates a needs-based banding system as described below. Bands are arranged to reflect housing need, with the highest band indicating the greatest need for housing. The scheme consists of eight bands, as summarised below. A more detailed description of the bands and of Reasonable Preference can be found under each band section.

The bands within the policy are based on the reasonable preference criteria set out within the 1996 Housing Act.

Once registered the applicant can only be in one band per Local Authority and the highest banding possible will always be applied according to the policy.

The table below describes the criteria which applications have to satisfy to be awarded the appropriate band;

Priority (3 month time limit)

Applicants who are statutorily homeless with a duty to re-house, including where prohibition notice served under s193, Housing Act 1996.

Gold Plus (6 months time limit) (Local Connection)

- Homeless cases where no statutory duty to re-house (excludes intentional homeless)
- Occupying property in a serious state of disrepair; factors taken into consideration by the Local Authority or it's agent include where the Local Authority could have served an improvement notice for a Category 1 hazard or equivalent (not for overcrowding and space hazards)
- Verified high medical need / disability that is directly affected by the current housing situation and would be immediately improved by moving
- Applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness, through no fault of their own (excludes those in priority band)
- Requiring move-on from supported accommodation
- Tenants who are under-occupying social housing in the Home Choice Plus partnership area
- Tenants who are occupying a social housing property in the Home Choice Plus partnership area with major adaptations that they do not need
- Households suffering with serious overcrowding (3 or more bedrooms lacking)

Gold (12 months time limit) (Local Connection)

- Households who have been determined to have become homeless intentionally
- Households suffering from harassment (excludes priority band cases)
- Overcrowding or lacking up to and including 2 bedrooms
- Living in exceptional circumstances
- Households with children under 10 years old and living in upstairs flat

Silver Plus (6 months time limit) (No Local Connection)

- Homeless cases where there is no statutory duty to re-house (excludes intentional homeless and those in a priority band)
- Properties in a serious state of disrepair; factors taken into consideration by the Local Authority or its agent include where the Local Authority could have served an improvement notice for a Category 1 hazard or equivalent (not for overcrowding and space hazards)
- Verified high medical need / disability that is directly affected by the current housing situation and would be immediately improved by moving
- Applicant is threatened with homelessness, through no fault of their own
- Applicant requires move-on from supported accommodation
- Tenants who are under-occupying social housing or an adapted social housing property in the Home Choice Partnership area
- Households suffering with serious overcrowding (3 or more bedrooms lacking)

Silver (12 months time limit) (No Local Connection)

- Households who have been determined to have become homeless Intentionally
- Households suffering from harassment (excludes priority band cases)
- Overcrowding or lacking up to and including 2 bedrooms
- Living in exceptional circumstances
- Households with children under 10 years old and living in upstairs flat

Reduced Banding (with reasonable preference)

- Households with financial resources above defined limits
- Households who have deliberately worsened their circumstances to qualify for a higher banding
- Households with housing-related debts owed to a Local Authority or Housing Association within the Home Choice Plus Partnership
- Households who have committed acts of anti-social behaviour and other tenancy breaches

Bronze Plus (no time limit) (Local Connection)

- Households who do not meet any of the above reasonable preference criteria and with a local connection, and may have low or no housing need

Bronze (no time limit) (No Local Connection)

- Households who do not meet any of the above reasonable preference criteria and without a local connection, and may have low or no housing need

Cumulative Preference in Gold and Silver Bands

Applicants whose circumstances match more than one criterion in the Gold or Silver bands will be awarded 'cumulative preference', which means that they will move up a band. For example, an applicant who met two or more criteria in Gold band would be awarded Gold Plus banding. An applicant who met 2 or more criteria in Silver band would be awarded Silver Plus banding.

Applicants who have been found to be intentionally homeless, within the Gold Band, will not qualify for a cumulative preference award.

The Bandings Explained

Priority Band

(Awarded for 3 months)

The following criteria will lead to Priority band being awarded:

Statutory Homeless with a duty to re-house

Priority band is awarded by the Local Authority or their agent where the local authority or its agent has accepted a full duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) to provide accommodation for an applicant.

The priority band can only be used in the Local Authority area where the homeless duty exists or in another Local Authority area within the scheme if a referral has been agreed. Within the other Partnership areas the applicant will be in a reasonable preference band, usually Gold Plus where there is a local connection to the District, or Silver Plus where there is no local connection.

Gold Plus

(Local Connection and High housing need – awarded for 6 months)

The following criteria will lead to Gold Plus band being awarded:

Homeless cases where no statutory duty to re-house (excludes intentional homeless)

Gold Plus band is awarded by the local authority or its agent where an applicant is determined under the homelessness legislation to be eligible for assistance, homeless, not in priority need, not homeless intentionally and has a local connection to that Local Authority.

Properties subject to serious disrepair

Gold Plus band is awarded where an applicant is living in sub-standard accommodation and (following confirmation or notification of the Private Sector Officer) it is determined that action is required under the Housing Act 2004. This would be for a Category 1 hazard that is very severe and may lead to the service of the following notices (only);

- Emergency Remedial Action
- Demolition or Clearance Orders
- Improvement Notices for Category 1 hazard (other than for overcrowding and space).

Where applicants report poor housing conditions, Private Sector Enforcement Officers may inspect the property to consider using their powers to remedy hazards.

Home Choice Plus will need to liaise with the Private Sector Enforcement Officer on a regular basis to check that the property circumstances are still in disrepair prior to an offer of accommodation being made.

Where the property disrepair has been remedied the applicant's banding will need to be reassessed.

Where a notice has been served that prohibits occupation or the disrepair is so serious that the Private Sector Officer advises occupation of the property is not appropriate on health and safety grounds, applicants will be dealt with under the Homelessness legislation.

High Medical Need or Disability

This band is awarded following an assessment by Home Choice Plus, of the evidence provided by the applicant and/or by the preferred medical advisor in relation to their health and/or disability.

An applicant will normally be expected to complete a medical assessment if they have indicated that there is a medical or disability problem that is made substantially worse by their current housing. Their circumstances will be assessed by a Home Choice Plus officer based on evidence provided by the applicant, and we will consider evidence from all appropriate medical professionals.

This banding will only be awarded if the current accommodation is deemed to be unsuitable in relation to their medical, welfare or disability needs. The assessment is not of the applicant's health, but how their health or welfare is affected by their accommodation.

The following are examples of cases that would qualify for this band

- The applicant's accommodation is directly contributing to the deterioration of the applicant's health; e.g. severe chest condition requiring intermittent hospitalisation as a result of prolonged periods of exposure to damp (i.e. mould spore allergens). The most vulnerable group is that of persons aged 14 and under. The effects of damp must be recognised as severe under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System.
- A person with a severe disability requiring substantial adaptations to a property which are not provided in their current accommodation and where the property cannot be adapted.
- A person suffering with a severe and enduring mental illness or disorder where the medical condition would be significantly improved by a move to alternative accommodation.

Homeless or threatened with homeless households through no fault of their own (who have not made a homeless application)

This status is awarded to all households who are homeless as defined by the Homelessness legislation but have not made a homeless application or don't wish to be considered under the homelessness legislation. It will also be awarded where, following investigation, it is proven that the applicant is threatened with homelessness through no fault of their own, but not expected to be homeless within 28 days.

This banding will only be awarded for applicants threatened with homelessness where the applicant is co-operating with the local authority or its agent to try to prevent their homelessness.

Tenants who are under – occupying affordable housing or an adapted property

It is important that the best possible use is made of existing housing stock and priority will be given where a Local Authority or Housing Association tenant, in the Home Choice Plus area, applies to move to a smaller, or more appropriate type of property.

Some examples would be;

- a) applicants currently living in family sized accommodation, who wish to ‘downsize’ and free up at least one bedroom.
- b) applicant’s currently living in family sized accommodation wishing to move to a one bed property or a two bed property designated for older people e.g. Retirement housing, Extra Care or a bungalow
- c) an applicant occupying an adapted property that they no longer require.

Please note this only applies where a family sized property will become available for reletting following the move.

Move on from Supported Accommodation.

This status is awarded where an agreement between District Council or its agent and the Supported Housing provider, is in place for applicants to move on from supported accommodation in the Home Choice Plus area.

This status will only be awarded to applicants in supported accommodation or care-leavers where the following criteria have been met:

- The applicant is ready to move to independent settled social housing on the recommendation of the support provider
- An ongoing support package has been assessed and where required, is in place.

In the case of young people moving on from care, applicants are awarded this category in accordance with the 16- and 17-year old Joint Protocol between the District Councils and the County Council’s Children’s Services Department (for the five districts within Worcestershire) and the agreement with Warwickshire County Council (in Stratford upon Avon. Applicants must be a former “Relevant Child” as defined by the Children Act 1989.

The evidence to support this will be provided by the County Council’s leaving care service and will consist of confirmation that:

- The care-leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living.

- The care-leaver possesses the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account.
- An ongoing support package has been assessed and where required, is in place.

Applicants are expected to make full use of their priority by placing bids on all suitable properties to enable them to move on to independent accommodation. Home Choice Plus officers may use their discretion to place bids on behalf of the applicant where bids are not being placed or are being inappropriately placed to facilitate move-on through supported accommodation. This will be done in consultation with the applicant and (if relevant) their support worker.

Children accommodated out of area by Children's Services or Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children under the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council will be awarded a Gold Plus band under move from supported accommodation and will be granted a local connection with the five District Councils within Worcestershire.

Serious Overcrowding

Applicants lacking three or more bedrooms will be awarded Gold Plus band e.g. where the applicant has a four bedroom need and is living in a one bedroom property.

Overcrowding assessments will include all household occupants and the overall size of the property in determining the band, regardless of whether the whole household wish to be rehoused together or not.

Applicants who claim they are overcrowded will have their circumstances assessed against the Home Choice Plus Bedroom Standard. The table below shows the bedroom entitlement for adults and children:

Home Choice Plus Bedroom Standard			
Household Make-up	Suitable Property Size :		
	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed
Single Person	✓		
Childless Couple	✓		
Parent(s) & 1 child		✓	
25+ weeks pregnant woman with or without partner and no other children		✓	
Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex aged between 0 and 16		✓	

Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex over 16			✓
Parent(s) and 2 children of different sex under the age of 8		✓	
Parent(s) and 2 children of different sex when the oldest reaches 8			✓
Parent(s) and 3 children – 2 of same sex aged between 0 and 16. Plus 1 other child			✓
Parent(s) and 3 children - 2 of different sex under the age of 8. Plus 1 other child			✓

To calculate the property size eligibility for larger households, please use the following guidance:

- 2 children of the same sex are able to share a room until the oldest reaches the age of 16, at which point an additional bedroom will be required.
- 2 children of different sex are able to share a room until the oldest reaches the age of 8, at which point an additional bedroom will be required.

For example:

A family with 2 parents and 3 children of the following age and sex:

- one girl aged 4
- one girl aged 6
- one boy aged 10

are eligible for a 3 bedroom property (one bedroom for the parents, one for the two girls and one for the boy).

A family with 2 parents and 3 children of the following age and sex:

- one girl aged 4
- one girl aged 16
- one boy aged 10

are eligible for a 4 bedroom property (one bedroom for the parents, one for the boy, one for the 4 year old girl and one for the 16 year old girl).

The appropriate Home Choice Plus senior officer within the Local Authority / agent may exercise discretion in deviating from the Bedroom Standard. Examples would include where an extra room is required to accommodate a carer on health grounds, or where the applicant is a registered foster carer.

The accommodation the applicant will be considered for may be determined by the individual Housing Association's criteria where there is a specific identifiable criterion for the number of persons able to occupy the property.

Housing Associations may have policies or local letting plans which allow properties to be under-occupied, especially on new build developments, where there are areas of very high density occupation, or where properties are deemed to be hard to let.

Gold Plus or Gold (please see below) will also apply to applicants needing to be re-housed on the application if they have no bed spaces available to them.

Evidence of overcrowding must be provided at the point of registration and allocation of accommodation.

Anyone with access to children will need to demonstrate their involvement in the care and supervision of the child. A senior officer within the Local Authority or their agent, will give consideration to factors including regularity of contact, who claims the relevant benefits for the child and any residency orders as well as legislation, codes of guidance and case law in determining which parent has responsibility for the children and therefore the size and type of accommodation required.

Please note: the bedroom standard assessment is for determining overcrowding and does not guarantee that you will be offered the exact property size for your household needs. In particular, where your housing need exceeds four bedrooms but there is a limited supply of larger properties within the Home Choice Plus partnership you are unlikely to be offered social housing that exactly meets your needs. Also households that include other adults rather than children may find it difficult to obtain social housing where they require larger properties normally allocated only to households with children, as priority is usually given for family houses to people with dependant children.

Silver Plus

(No Local Connection and High Housing Need – awarded for 6 months)

The Silver Plus band is awarded for the above Gold Plus preference categories where the applicant has no local connection to that participating Local Authority.

Gold

(Local Connection and Housing Need - valid for 12 months)

The following criteria will lead to Gold band being awarded:

Households who have been determined to have become homeless intentionally.

Where the local authority or its agent has carried out investigations under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and found the applicant intentionally homeless.

Households suffering from harassment

Applicants who cite harassment as the main reason for making the application will be asked to provide information about all the circumstances surrounding the application and each case will be assessed on its merits. Any enquiries will be made in a sensitive manner so as not to prejudice the safety of the applicant. Any claims of harassment should be substantiated by evidence from a third party e.g. Police, Housing Officer etc. If the harassment is deemed so severe that it isn't reasonable to

continue to occupy the accommodation, this will be investigated under the Homelessness legislation.

If you are suffering from domestic abuse it is likely that you will be treated as homeless and therefore awarded the appropriate homelessness-related bands.

Overcrowding or lacking required bedrooms

This applies to households who are overcrowded or lacking up to (and including) two bedrooms. Please see section above (under Gold Plus) regarding how overcrowding is determined.

Living in exceptional circumstances

This banding on Home Choice Plus should only be awarded in those instances where the applicant's living circumstances are considered to be exceptional given the prevailing housing conditions in the district and where no other banding criteria reflects or addresses the problem(s).

In reaching a decision to award the banding, account must be taken of the suitability of the current accommodation and the location of the accommodation in relation to the applicant's needs.

Examples are given below of potential situations where this banding may be granted – the list is not exhaustive and the decision lies with the Local Authority / agent assessing the application.

- The applicant is adequately housed but needs to give or receive support on the grounds of disability or illness that is substantial and ongoing and it is not possible for the person giving care to use public transport or their own transport to provide assistance.
- The applicant needs to move on welfare grounds e.g. hardship.
- The applicant's household is overcrowded, coupled with medical issues that do not accrue medical priority e.g. ADHD, autism.
- The applicant needs to take up or continue employment, education and/or training that is not available elsewhere and they do not live within reasonable commuting distance

Households with Children living in upstairs flats or maisonettes

This status is awarded to households with children under 10 and living in an above ground floor flat or maisonette.

Properties suffering from disrepair

Properties that are suffering from disrepair that isn't deemed to be severe or a threat to the health and safety of the occupier will be awarded this band following confirmation or notification from the appropriate Private Sector Enforcement Officer. Normally disrepair would be assumed to be Category 1 where a hazard awareness notice has been served, and Category 2 where category D (or equivalent) hazards

exist (as defined under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, part 1 of the Housing Act 2004) except for overcrowding and space assessment which is assessed separately under the Home Choice Plus overcrowding policy.

Home Choice Plus will need to liaise with the Private Sector Enforcement Officer on a regular basis to check that the property circumstances are still in disrepair prior to an offer of accommodation being made.

Silver

(No Local Connection – valid for 12 months)

The Silver band is awarded for the above Gold preference categories where the applicant has no local connection to that participating Local Authority.

Reduced Banding

(Reasonable preference but reduced priority)

This band will be used for households in reasonable preference categories where their priority is reduced for one of the following reasons;

Applicants will be banded according to their current housing need but demoted to the reduced priority band. This decision will be reassessed by the District Council or their agent after a period of six months, or at the applicant's request at any time.

1. Financial Resources

Owner Occupiers and people with sufficient financial resources available to them to meet their housing needs will be given reduced priority.

Applicants who have an household income of more than £60,000 per annum and / or savings/capital/assets/equity of £50k that will enable them to access and maintain private accommodation will be encouraged and supported to do so through our housing options service.

Applicants will be asked to give income and asset/savings/capital details at the point of application and if, at that stage, they exceed the threshold their banding will be reduced to a lower reasonable preference category (where they have a housing need). The income and assets/capital/savings details will also be considered at the point of offer to ensure the applicant is still on the correct banding.

Financial thresholds may also be determined by Registered Social Landlords and applicants should contact individual organisations where they believe income or capital may be an issue at the point they are made an offer of accommodation.

2. Deliberately worsening housing circumstances

Where there is evidence that an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances in order to qualify for higher priority on Home Choice Plus, this priority will be reduced. This would include circumstances where an applicant surrendered their tenancy, where it was reasonable to occupy and against the advice of the Housing Advice / Options Officer or where they moved to a property that was smaller than their requirements.

3. Housing related debts

Where households have housing related debts (including for a former tenancy) these will be assessed by the District Council, or their agent (excluding those owed to a mortgage company or private sector landlords). The applicants will be encouraged to make arrangements to pay and they will be placed within the reduced priority band until an arrangement has been reached with the Local Authority or Registered Social Landlord to whom they owe the money and the applicant is maintaining regular payments. The Local Authority will expect the debtor to demonstrate they have taken reasonable steps to resolve the issue prior to reducing the banding given.

4. Anti – social behaviour and other tenancy breaches

Where there has been a breach of tenancy such as anti-social behaviour, or due to the property condition, the applicant will be placed within the reduced priority band. The Local Authority will expect the landlord where the problems occurred, to demonstrate they have taken reasonable steps to resolve the issue prior to reducing the banding given.

Bronze Plus

(Local Connection – reassessed after two years where no bids placed)

All applicants who live, work or have a local connection as defined by s199 Housing Act 1996, to a particular district in the Home Choice Plus partnership and do not meet any of the reasonable preference criteria, as set out above, and have no or low housing need.

Bronze

(No Local Connection - reassessed after two years where no bids placed)

All applicants who have no local connection to any of the districts in the Home Choice Plus partnership and do not meet any of the reasonable preference criteria, as set out above, and have no or a low housing need.

Time Limited Bands

A number of the bands are awarded on a time limited basis, i.e. for 3, 6, 12 months and two years (where the applicant hasn't bid). At the end of the time limit, if an applicant has not been successfully housed, the Local Authority or its agent will reassess the application and contact the applicant to confirm their circumstances and/or bidding pattern. Please see the Reviews / Complaints Section on page 45 for more information.

Local Connection

Applicants are able to apply to Home Choice Plus from anywhere within the United Kingdom. However, in order to ensure that Home Choice Plus meets the needs of the local community, reduced priority will be given to those applicants without a Local Connection to the relevant Local Authority.

Example - Applicant with medical need with local connection to Bromsgrove but no other Local Authority area will be placed in Gold Plus when bidding within Bromsgrove and Silver Plus for all of the other Local Authorities.

Local connection will be assessed having regard to the definition of local connection contained in Section 199 Housing Act 1996. Applicants without a local connection will have their priority reduced to Silver Plus, Silver or Bronze Band until they acquire a Local Connection with the Local Authorities participating within the Scheme .

The following factors as set out in s199 Housing Act 1996 will be taken into consideration in determining whether or not an applicant has a local connection with the Local Authority area. An application is awarded a local connection if an applicant or a member of their household included in their application:

- has lived in the relevant Local Authority area by choice for a certain time (usually for six months out of the last 12 months or for three years out of the last five years);
- has close family living in the relevant Local Authority area, who have been permanently resident for at least the previous five years;
- has permanent employment in the relevant Local Authority area
- has special circumstances that give rise to a local connection

In determining permanent employment we will give consideration to the Local Government Association guidelines which state that this is employment other than that of a casual nature.

For the purposes of determining Local Connection, living in the Local Authority area will not include the following:

- Occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan where it is not their only or principal home
- Occupation of a holiday letting (which includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation) for the purposes of a holiday.
- Resident of a HMP, Bail Hostel or other such accommodation.
- In-Patient of Hospitals/specialist centres

Waiting Time

New applicants are placed into a bronze or bronze plus band, while we assess their housing need and their waiting time will be from the date of registration (the effective date); this will be the date the form is received and date stamped at the office of the Local Authority or its agent.

If an applicant is moved up into a higher band (following assessment) then the date they moved into that band will override the registration date (effective date).

If the applicant remains in or moves down to a Bronze or Bronze plus band then the registration date (effective date) will apply.

Change of Circumstances

All applicants are required to notify the relevant Home Choice Plus partner, with whom they are registered, immediately of any change to their circumstances which may affect their priority for housing. Applicants will need to provide proof of their change before it is assessed.

Applicants who have had a change of circumstances and have not informed Home Choice Plus may have their application status changed to 'application pending' whilst an investigation takes place in order to determine eligibility. The applicants' banding will be reassessed at the point that they submit the change of circumstances (not at the point when the circumstances change) and this will then determine their band start date. If an applicant does not respond to contact from Home Choice Plus within one month, their application will be closed.

Applicants should notify the Home Choice Plus Partner of any change in their circumstances either in writing, or online, using a secure log-in. For example:

- A change of address, for themselves or any other person on their application.
- Any additions to the family or any other person they would wish to join the application.
- Any member of the family or any other person on the application who has left the accommodation.
- Any confirmed pregnancy
- Changes of name
- Changes in financial circumstances
- Accommodation issues
- Medical or other housing needs

Most changes of circumstances can be completed online but evidence will still be required.

Members of the Armed Forces

Members of the Armed Forces who have been served with a cessation to occupy accommodation will be given housing advice and the appropriate banding and, if required, considered under the Homeless legislation (Housing Act 1996, Part VII and other relevant legislation). The Home Choice Plus Partnership will give consideration to the Military Covenant and any further legislation and guidance as applicable to this Allocations Policy.

6. Applying for a Property and Lettings

Looking for available Properties

Once applicants have been registered with Home Choice Plus and been notified of their registration number, they can start to look for a property of their choice.

Advertising

All Housing Association landlords are committed to advertising their available properties as widely as possible. Properties will be advertised on a weekly basis in the following ways.

- Website – available to anyone with access to the internet. The website enables applicants to view all available properties on line at www.homechoiceplus.org.uk
- Interactive (Digi) TV - available to anyone with an interactive digital television.
- Property Line - A local number for each area will be available for applicants to call to hear what properties are available. This service is particularly beneficial to disabled applicants, those who are blind or partially sighted, and for those who are unable to read.
- Hub, Landlord and Local Authority Offices – computers will be available to view and bid for available properties. Staff will be on hand to assist where needed.
- Community Outlet – newsletters will be displayed in many community outlets for example libraries, parish councils, supermarkets etc.

Adverts will provide information about the location, property type and size, rent level, and eligibility criteria.

How to Bid

Applicants can bid for properties in a number of ways. They will need to have ready their membership number, memorable date and the property reference number they wish to place a bid on.

- **On the Internet**
www.homechoiceplus.org.uk
- **On the Telephone**
Automated Bidding Line Number 0845 270 0557 a 24-hour automated service.
- **By Mobile Phone**
You can text your Bid from your Mobile Phone to 07784 486 644
- **In Person**
At any of the Contact Points as listed on Appendix 1
- **Interactive (Digi) TV/WAP enabled Mobile phones**

Press the Red button for interactive services through Virgin Media or Sky. Go to 'Looking Local' and find your area.

When to bid for a Property

Vacant properties will be advertised each Tuesday morning. Applicants can bid any time during that week until 12 midnight on the following Monday. This is called the weekly bidding cycle. The time that a bid is placed during the week does not make a difference to the shortlist position – it is not a 'first come first served' system.

Number of Properties an applicant can bid for

Applicants can make 3 bids each week as long as they match what the advert criteria asks for. Bids must be on separate properties that they are eligible for. Applicants can withdraw their bid if they change their mind and re-bid on a different property at any time throughout the bidding cycle.

Multiple Bidding

Applicants will be able to bid for a maximum of three vacancies during any given advertising period. If an applicant appears at the top of more than one shortlist in a bidding cycle, they will be contacted to discuss which property they wish to consider. The selected Housing Association will then 'Match Suggest' the applicant and further Housing Associations will then skip this applicant if they are at the top of their shortlist(s). If the Housing Association who has Match Suggested the applicant subsequently decides not to offer them the property, the Provider will inform the applicant of the reasons for this directly, but the applicant will retain their banding and be able to continue bidding. Please see reasons why an applicant may not be offered a property on page 35.

Applications from employees, Board Members and Co-optees

Staff, Board Members and Co-optees will be treated and assessed as any other applicant to the Housing Register.

Statutory Homeless Households

Applicants placed into the Priority Band on Home Choice Plus will have been accepted as statutorily homeless (where the full rehousing duty is owed) by a Local Authority in the Partnership area.

The allocation of this banding comes with certain requirements under the Home Choice Plus policy. We require applicants to try to secure suitable accommodation as soon as possible once they have received their s.184 acceptance letter and therefore would expect them to be bidding for as many suitable properties as available (up to three bids per week)

Failure to bid each and every week on all suitably sized properties (up to a maximum of 3) may result in the Local Authority or its agent, placing bids on an applicant's behalf to make sure its duty to the applicant as a homeless household is fulfilled.

Please note that if applicants choose to only bid on one property when there are three suitable properties advertised, the local authority or its agent may bid on the two remaining properties to ensure that the applicant is re-housed as soon as possible.

All bids in this banding must be on properties of a suitable size and type and must be within the local authority area where the homeless duty applies to meet the requirements of the policy.

When a successful bid is made for a property the applicant will be notified of this and, subject to rights of review under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, this will constitute an offer of housing under Part VI as a discharge of the Council's homelessness duty.

Should the applicant be rejected by the Housing Association under its own allocations criteria, the homelessness duty will not be discharged and they will remain eligible for a further offer.

Eligibility for types of dwelling

In certain circumstances the landlord will use their individual policies to determine an applicant's eligibility for a size and type of dwelling. Broadly the landlord will use the overcrowding standard to determine the appropriate size of property. However, in exceptional circumstances they may deviate from the overcrowding definition to advertise and allocate their housing stock.

Examples are:

- Where applicants require larger accommodation on health grounds. This will be considered on a case by case basis, taking into account the advice of a qualified medical advisor – this will be determined at the point of registration (please see section on overcrowding within the banding).
- Pregnant households will be recognised as a family by Home Choice Plus at 25 weeks, this will allow the applicants to apply for family sized accommodation.
- Where the applicant has been approved as a foster carer / to adopt by Children's Services, and so will need a larger property than normally required by the household (please see section on overcrowding within the banding).
- Where the applicant or a member of the household needs the support of a carer who will need to sleep in the home and cannot reasonably be expected to share a bedroom with another member of the household. See paragraph below for more information about including a carer in a housing application (please see section on overcrowding within the banding).
- Where the landlord or Local Authority wants to deliberately under-occupy a property and a Local Letting Plan is in place
- Where there is little or no demand for a particular vacancy and it is therefore difficult to let (at the point of advertising the property)
- Where no suitable applicants can be identified to make the best use of larger accommodation.

Selection process

The suitability of the property will be considered by the Housing Association, in accordance with its allocation policy, at the point of allocation.

All eligible bids for each property are placed in priority order. Priority is decided first by band and then by date within the band as follows;

- A bid for a property will not be considered if the applicant's household does not meet the size, age or disability requirements for that property unless there are exceptional circumstances which need to be taken into account.
- Pregnant households will be recognised as a family by Home Choice Plus at 25 weeks (or earlier in exceptional circumstances at the Local Authority or its agent's discretion).
- If more than one person from the same band bids for a property, the offer will be made to the person who has the longest waiting time within that band.

Partner landlords advertising properties will select and may interview the top applicant/s before an offer is made.

Applicants must note that individual Housing Associations will apply their own allocation policies.

A property will not always necessarily be offered to the applicant at the top of the shortlist if there are reasons why this applicant is not eligible or would not be suitable. Please see the 'Reasons why you may not be offered a property' section on page 35 for more details.

Successful applicants will be given the opportunity to view the property prior to tenancy sign-up.

If the applicant chooses to refuse the property, the reasons for the refusal will be recorded by the partner landlord advertising the property and their banding may be reassessed.

If an applicant is matched to a property they will not be able to bid for other properties until they have decided to either accept or refuse the offer.

If the applicant is at the top of the shortlist the local authority or landlord will check the application to ensure the banding is correct and there aren't any other factors that would limit offers of accommodation e.g. change of circumstances.

Reasons why you may not be offered a property

Time limited Temporary Accommodation

Some forms of temporary accommodation are let to statutory homeless households for a specific length of time e.g. 6 month assured shorthold tenancies within the private sector or under Housing Association as Management Agents (HAMA). To avoid the household incurring costs on two properties they will be advised not to bid for a minimum period and they are unlikely to be offered a property.

Applicants requiring an adaptation via a grant

Applicants who are applying for a disabled facility grant, which has been approved and works have commenced, may not be considered for an allocation on the Home Choice Plus scheme, to ensure that public funds are best utilised. There may be exceptional circumstances where an applicant will still be considered for a move, such as a significant change in circumstances. One example of this may be a further and serious deterioration in health meaning more suitable accommodation is required.

Restrictions on offers through the advert

Landlords may apply restrictions in order to identify suitable applicants in particular circumstances and these will always be specified in the advert. Where a property is advertised with certain restrictions, the letting will be made to the bidder who meets the criteria with the earliest band start date in the highest band as with usual lettings.

Some properties may be restricted for bidding as follows;

- Under agreements pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) imposing conditions on who is able to bid – normally a restriction to households with a local connection
- Housing Associations may adopt specific lettings criteria in relation to particular developments or areas in order to address identified problems and to create sustainable and balanced communities. In these circumstances a local lettings policy would apply.
- Partner Housing Associations will also be entitled to advertise properties with preference given to their existing tenants in order to facilitate transfers.

Refusing Offers of Accommodation

Households are expected to take reasonable care when bidding for a property to ensure it meets their needs. If, however, an applicant decides to refuse an offer of accommodation, the property will be offered to the next suitable applicant. An application may be reassessed if an offer of a property is refused. The Local Authority or its agent will take into consideration suitability of the property and reasonableness of the offer in any reassessment undertaken.

If an applicant in a time limited band refuses an offer of accommodation the application including the banding will be reassessed and may be placed in a lower band.

Refusals by Households to whom the full homeless duty is owed

If a homeless applicant refuses an offer of suitable accommodation, the local authority or its agent may decide that its duty under the Homeless Legislation is discharged, subject to the statutory review process and their banding will be reassessed.

Homeless applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions made by the local authority or its agent in respect of their homeless application. This includes the decision to bring to an end the full homeless duty by making a suitable offer of settled accommodation. The applicant has this right whether they refuse or accept the offer of accommodation. If the review finds in favour of the homeless applicant, the applicant will retain their Priority band (provided they are still homeless) and will

be able to place bids on alternative properties. However, if the reasonableness and suitability of the offer is upheld, the homeless duty will be ended and the applicant's banding will be reassessed. Homeless applicants are therefore advised to accept an offer, occupy the property and then request a review on these grounds.

Exempt Allocations – Accommodation provided for lettings that are not covered by this Scheme.

The following exempt allocations are covered by s160, Housing Act 1996;

The following are not allocations under this Policy:

- Succession to a tenancy on a tenant's death pursuant to s89 Housing Act 1985 (this will be dealt with by the landlord under the relevant legislation and policies).
- Assignment of a tenancy by way of mutual exchange.
- Transfer of the tenancy by a court order under family law provisions or under the Civil Partnership Act 2004.
- An introductory tenancy (including assured shorthold and starter tenancies) becoming an assured / secure tenancy.
- Transfers initiated by Council / Housing Associations (e.g. decant to alternative accommodation to allow for major works).
- Rehousing due to being displaced from previous accommodation by a Council or being rehoused by a Council pursuant to the Land Compensation Act 1973

The following allocations are deemed to be exempt as, although they may consider this allocation policy to some extent, they also require different decision making processes and criteria in making assessments and rehousing the applicant:

- A person being granted a family intervention tenancy
- Provision of non-secure temporary accommodation in discharge of any homelessness duty or power
- Supported accommodation
- Where a Housing Association needs to directly match a property (more details regarding this are included later in this policy)
- Extra care and some Very Sheltered accommodation
- Changes to joint tenancies which will include the granting of a new tenancy through changes from a sole to a joint tenancy and from a joint to a sole tenancy. The individual Housing Association will decide whether to allow a Joint Tenancy depending on the circumstances of the case.
- Households requiring a move through the Witness Protection Scheme or similar, at the formal request of the appropriate authority

- Some adapted properties may be held on a separate register specifically for people with disabilities

Local Lettings Plans

Home Choice Plus reserves the right to apply any criteria while still meeting the statutory obligations for Reasonable Preference when using Local Letting Plans. The Local Authority partners may, in the interests of promoting balanced and sustainable communities, agree with participating Housing Associations local lettings plans for specific areas, estates, or blocks. This is to ensure that lettings plans are tailored to the needs of an area, and protect the interests of existing residents and the wider community.

All local lettings plans will be published on the Home Choice Plus website.

The principles in applying Local letting Plan (LLPs)

- Local Lettings Plans may be developed to meet the particular needs of a local area.
- There must be a clear reason for having LLPs (this may take the form of recurring antisocial behaviour issues, high child densities or a concentration of older residents) and will be subject to reconsideration.
- LLPs must be developed and approved in accordance with an agreed procedure that must have specific aims and will be reconsidered on an annual basis.

The decision to implement a local lettings plan will be developed and approved by the Local Authority Senior Officer responsible for the relevant Home Choice Plus area and a Senior Manager of the relevant Housing Providers. Any decision to implement a local lettings policy will always take into account the implications for equal opportunities and the need to ensure that the Council is able to meet the allocation needs of those owed a reasonable preference.

Where a property is advertised in accordance with a Local Lettings Plan (LLP), the letting will be made to the highest bidder who meets the eligibility criteria of the LLP

Examples of possible Local Lettings Plans:

The following are examples of local letting policies that could be employed in Home Choice Plus covering an area, estate, or block:

- Age restrictions.
- Where the property forms part of a rural housing scheme on an exception site
- Restrictions on lettings to vulnerable households where there are already a concentration of supported tenants/residents.
- Lettings to childless households where there are high concentrations of children and young people living on a specific estate or scheme.

Direct Matching

Where possible all lettings should be made through the HC+ to ensure fairness and transparency in the system and to give our customers confidence. However, the Local Authorities understand that it may not always be possible to meet all housing needs, especially where they are urgent, through the banding mechanism and understand that Housing Associations will need to have the ability to undertake direct matching of applicants to properties where there is an urgent and exceptional need. In certain circumstances the direct matching might also occur because of the type of accommodation e.g. because of the adaptations. Direct Matches therefore, are not part of the allocations policy but are included in here to illustrate how the procedure will work.

To support this process the Home Choice Plus Partnership have developed this Direct Matching Procedure to outline where we believe it is appropriate and to give some indications of the process we would expect to be followed by officers. We would encourage all Housing Associations to give consideration to this procedure and, where they currently don't have a procedure of their own, to consider adoption of this one for all stock within our area.

However, some Housing Associations may already have individual Direct Matching Procedures that apply to the accommodation they set aside for moves within their own housing stock (e.g. transfers) and in this case the Home Choice Plus policy will only apply to applicants who wish to become rehoused through Home Choice Plus into accommodation owned by the Housing Associations but who do not currently hold a social housing tenancy within the districts covered by the scheme.

Direct Matching Categories

The following categories can be considered for direct matching subject to the process laid out below being followed;

- Those in fear of extreme incidences of domestic violence, harassment, hate crime or extreme neighbour nuisance / anti-social behaviour where there is a genuine risk to their health and well-being
- Successors left in a property too large for their needs or where a non-successor has exceptional needs / would be deemed to be owed a duty under Part 7 Housing Act 1996
- Those with critical health or social needs where an immediate move is necessary for their health and wellbeing and this can only be achieved through direct matching; such as a person requiring urgent adaptations whose property is not suitable for such adaptations
- Tenants who are required to decant from their premises due to re-designation, demolition or refurbishment
- To support a move through the witness mobility scheme or similar
- Employees (of the housing provider) coming out of tied accommodation when they retire

The Direct Matching Process

A report should be made (by the Housing Association or Local Authority requesting the direct matching) outlining the details of the case including the household circumstances, property required and reasons for treating the case as exceptional and passed to a senior officer / manager who has the authority to make a decision regarding the policy.

If the decision to direct match is made by a Housing Association then a designated senior officer / manager within the Local Authority (where the tenancy is) must also be passed the details of the case and support the decision. Please note that individual Local Authorities can decide that the Housing Associations, within their area, can have full delegated authority to make this decision without LA approval if necessary but this will be made clear by individual Local Authorities where it is the case. The direct matching process should only be followed where there is sufficient evidence to support the household's claims and where there is no other solution to the problem other than an immediate move. For instance a move on medical grounds should be supported by medical reports from health professionals, domestic abuse or harassment should be supported by the Domestic Violence Unit / Police and in each case should include a written statement expressing their support for a move.

The property offered will usually be based on what the HC+ allocation policy or Housing Association policy deem to be appropriate depending on the household's circumstances and requirements. Unfortunately it will not be possible for the household to specify areas or types of accommodation but the housing provider will try to meet applicants' needs and desires where possible and where this would not delay the re-housing process or cause undue suffering to other households on the waiting list.

Where large scale decanting projects are planned the Housing Provider should ensure Home Choice Plus applicants and tenants are made aware of how the decanting process will affect the ability of other people to be rehoused. For all other instances of direct matching anonymised reporting back of the direct match should be made as part of the bidding cycle on the Home Choice Plus website.

Some households might be excluded from consideration for direct matching due to their current tenancy conduct e.g. where there are substantial rent arrears or anti-social behaviour that has resulted in the serving of a notice. In these circumstance the household must be contacted and given an opportunity to correct their tenancy conduct e.g. by clearing arrears.

Where households request a direct match and are refused they do not have a right to request a review or appeal as these are lettings made outside of the scope of the allocations policy. However, applicants may make a complaint to the relevant Local Authority or Housing Association in line with that organisation's standard complaints procedure. Households will be able to appoint an advocate, and once appointed, the relevant partner will deal directly with the advocate. Should the outcome of the appeal still not satisfy the household they will still be able to complain to the Ombudsman, or their ward member / Member of Parliament.

7. Administration of the Scheme

Delegation of Authority

The Home Choice Plus Scheme operates alongside the separate allocation policies and activities of partner Housing Associations (please see Home Choice Plus website for further information).

The Council may delegate or contract out functions to Housing Association partner organisations and will not abrogate any of its legal duties and powers to any Housing Association partner.

The administration of the scheme is undertaken by the Local Authorities or their agents and they are also responsible for updating and improving the scheme in line with good practice and legislation, consulting with partners and customers and ensuring the scheme is followed.

Certain functions within the scheme can only be undertaken by a senior officer or manager and, where this is the case, this has been highlighted throughout the allocations policy.

Reassessment of Bandings

Applications to the Home Choice Plus Scheme will be reassessed on a regular basis. The timescale for this is determined by their banding and is conducted by their owning Local Authority or its agent.

An applicant will be notified of the reassessment. Failure to respond to correspondence in relation to the reassessment within one month will result in the application being closed. If good reason can be shown why there was a failure to respond to the reassessment then the application may be reinstated with the original band start date.

When the date is reached for reassessing the banding, the Local Authority or its agent will contact the applicant for confirmation of their circumstances. This contact may take the form of a letter, telephone call or email. If the applicant's circumstances have changed, they will be assessed and banded accordingly.

As part of the reassessment process, applicants will have the number and suitability of their bids reassessed. If the Local Authority or its agent considers that an applicant has not been using their priority and bids appropriately, a senior officer may, at their discretion, reduce the applicant's banding.

Bandings may also be reassessed when it is apparent there has been a change of circumstances.

Reduced Priorities

The process for reducing priority

Any applicant whose priority is reduced will be provided with written notification of the decision that will contain the following information:

- The reasons for the decision to reduce priority
- The Band that their housing circumstances would have warranted and the Band that they have been placed in as a result of the decision (the reduced priority band).
- What they have to do before they can be considered again for any higher Band warranted by their housing needs.
- That the applicant has a right to request a review against the decision which must be made in writing within 21 days of written notification of the decision being received

Closing of Registrations

Applications will be closed if applicants;

- Request their application to be closed.
- Do not respond to a request to provide updated information about their registration, or
- Do not make a bid within 2 years of applying to join the Scheme
- Circumstances have changed and they are no longer eligible under this allocations policy.
- Have not informed Home Choice Plus they have moved and given a forwarding address.

When an applicant is re-housed through Home Choice Plus, their application will be automatically closed. If an applicant is re-housed by a Local Authority or its agent outside Home Choice Plus (e.g. through a Rent Deposit Scheme), their application will be closed. If an applicant finds their own accommodation outside Home Choice Plus (e.g. a private rented property), they must inform the relevant Local Authority or its agent of their new circumstances.

Applicants will have to complete a new registration form if they want to continue to remain within Home Choice Plus.

Re-joining the Housing Register

Where a household wishes to re-join the Home Choice Plus housing register at a later date, their new date of application will be the date they re-register.

Equality and Diversity

Our aim is to implement and maintain services which ensure that no potential or current applicant is treated less favourably on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, age or sexual orientation, nor is disadvantaged by the application of a rule, condition, or requirement, which has a discriminatory effect which cannot be justified by law. Allocations will only be made to those persons who are eligible.

This policy will be subject to periodic equality impact assessments.

Confidentiality

The fact that a person is an applicant on the Allocation Scheme will not be disclosed (without their consent) to any other member of the public.

Data protection and information sharing

All information held is subject to the Data Protection Act 1998. Home Choice Plus will seek the express consent of applicants joining the Allocation Scheme to share personal information about the applicant, and any member of their household. Please be aware that the application and any information relating to it can be viewed by all key partners through the Home Choice Plus partnership.

Information sharing without consent

Information may be shared about the individual and their history irrespective of whether their consent has been obtained in exceptional circumstances which will include:

- In accordance with the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Section 115).
- Where there is a serious threat to the other party's staff or contractors.
- Where information is relevant to the management or support duties of the proposed landlord or support organisation to ensure the health and safety of the applicant, a member of his or her household, or a member of staff.

False statements or withheld information

It is a criminal offence for applicants and/or anyone providing information to this Scheme to knowingly or recklessly make false statements or knowingly withhold reasonably requested information relevant to their application (s171 Housing Act 1996). This includes but is not limited to information requested on the housing registration form, in response to correspondence at the renewal of the application, or relating to any other reassessment of the application. An offence is also committed if a third party provides false information whether or not at the instigation of the applicant. This would apply at any stage of the application process.

Where there is suspicion or an allegation that a person has either provided false information or has withheld information, the application will be placed under pending status during the investigation and will be excluded from this Allocation Scheme until an outcome is reached.

If the outcome of any investigation is that they did not provide false information or there was no withholding of information or such was not found to be withheld knowingly, then the application will be reinstated from the date of registration meaning the relevant applicant should not suffer prejudice.

However, where the investigation shows that false information was provided on the application form the application will be re-assessed. The applicant may also be liable to prosecution.

Ground 5 in Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the 1996 Act, s.146) enables the landlord to seek possession of a property where it has been granted as a result of a false statement by either the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's instigation.

If it is determined that an applicant directly, or through a person acting on his or her behalf, has given false information or withheld required information it will result in an applicant being removed from the Scheme and deemed Ineligible.

Monitoring Home Choice Plus

The full Home Choice Plus Partnership will meet regularly to monitor the outcomes being achieved (please see the Terms of Reference for the Home Choice Plus Partnership and associated groups).

The Home Choice Plus partnership will complete an annual report to Registered Social Landlords as part of regular monitoring

8. Reviews and Appeals

Information about decisions and reviews

The Local Authority, or its agent, makes the decision regarding the start dates and banding of every applicant.

An applicant to the Home Choice Plus scheme has a right to request a review from the owning Local Authority, or its agent, if unhappy with any decision including decisions to exclude from registration, the level of priority awarded or the way in which the application has been dealt with. The applicant should request an internal review within 21 days of the date of the decision letter. Applicants will be able to appoint an advocate, and once appointed, the Home Choice Plus partner will deal directly with the advocate.

Applicants have the following further and specific rights to information about decisions and rights of review of decisions:

- the right, on request, to be informed of any decision about the facts of their case which has been, or is likely to be, taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation to them
- the right, on request, to review a decision mentioned above, or a decision to treat them as Ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant
- the right to be informed of the decision on the review and grounds for it.

Applicants should request a review in writing within 21 days of being notified of a decision. We will determine the review within 56 days of the request or such longer period as may be agreed with the applicant. The applicant will be notified of the outcome of the review including the reasons if the original decision is confirmed. You will also have the right to seek judicial review or appeal to county court on a point of law or in the decision making undertaken by the Local Authority or its agent.

The Council's decision on review is final and any challenge to that decision can only be made through judicial review proceedings.

Reviews will be carried out by a senior member of staff within the Home Choice Plus partnership or delegated to an appropriate organisation and an officer who was not involved in the original decision.

Where the complaint concerns an issue with the letting of a property, the applicant should address their complaint directly to the relevant Housing Association and follow that organisation's complaint procedure.

Complaints

An applicant who is not satisfied with the service that they receive may register a complaint with the appropriate Home Choice Plus Partner by telephone, e-mail or in person. All complaints will be acknowledged and investigated. Please see the organisation's individual complaints procedure for details on how to complain and the

length of time to consider your complaint. You can ask someone else or an organisation such as Citizen's Advice Bureau to make a complaint on your behalf.

For those whose first language is not English, assistance can be made available.

Local Ombudsman

Having exhausted the Review or Complaints process applicants may also contact the Local Government Ombudsman or the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

9. Feedback on let properties

Home Choice Plus will publish details of the number of bids for each property on the website giving details of the successful applicant's band and their band start date.

This feedback will help applicants determine their prospects of success in obtaining housing.

Lettings are monitored by property type and household to demonstrate how the Home Choice Plus partnership meet their various aims and objectives. The Home Choice Partnership will share this information with the Full Partnership on an annual basis and will ensure it is published on the Home Choice Plus website.

We will also monitor the number of lettings to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups to ensure that we are reflecting the overall population and that all households are fairly accessing the system.

Appendix 1 Home Choice Plus Advice and Contact Points

Bromsgrove District

Bromsgrove District Housing Trust

Bromsgrove District Housing Trust, Buntsford Court, Buntsford Gate,
Bromsgrove, Worcs B60 3DJ
0800 0850 160 customer_services@bdht.co.uk
www.bdht.co.uk

Bromsgrove District Council

Customer Service Centre, School Drive, Bromsgrove, Worcs, B60 1AY
01527 881288
worcestershirehub@bromsgrove.gov.uk
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

Malvern Hills District

Elgar Housing Association

Partnership House, Grovewood Road, Malvern, Worcs, WR14 1GD
01684 579579
housingneeds@festivalhousing.org
www.festivalhousing.org

Malvern Library

Graham Road, Malvern, Worcs, WR14 2HU
01684 862151

Tenbury Wells Library

24 Teme Street, Tenbury Wells, Worcs, WR15 8AA
01684 862151

Upton upon Severn Library

School Lane, Upton upon Severn, Worcs, WR8 0LE
01684 862151

Stratford-on-Avon District

Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Elizabeth House, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon,
Warks, CV37 6HX
01789 260861/2
housingadviceteam@stratford-dc.gov.uk
www.stratford.gov.uk

Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Globe House, Priory Road, Alcester, Warks, B49 5DZ
01789 762216

Southam Library

High Street, Southam, Warks, CV47 0HB
01926 817560

Worcester City

Worcester City Council

Orchard House Complex, Farrier Street, Worcester WR1 3BB
01905 722233 housing@worcester.gov.uk
www.worcester.gov.uk

Wychavon District

Wychavon District Council

Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore, Worcs, WR10 1PT
01386 565020 housingneeds@wychavon.gov.uk
www.wychavon.gov.uk

Droitwich Community Contact Centre

44 High Street, Droitwich Spa, Worcs, WR9 8ES
www.wychavon.gov.uk

Evesham Community Contact Centre

Abbey Road, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 4SB
www.wychavon.gov.uk

Rooftop Housing Group

70 High Street, Evesham, Worcs WR11 4YD
01386 420800 www.rooftopgroup.org

Spa Housing Association

The Royal Exchange, 9 Queen Street, Droitwich Spa, Worcs, WR9 8LA
01905 823100 www.festivalhousing.org

Wyre Forest District

Community Housing Group

Oxford House, Oxford Street, Kidderminster, Worcs, DY10 1BQ
01562 732356 allocations@communityhg.com
www.communityhg.com

Wyre Forest District Council

Worcestershire Hub

Vicar Street, Kidderminster, Worcs, DY10 1DB
01562 732928
www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Wyre Forest District Council

Worcestershire Hub

Civic Centre, Stourport-on-Severn, Worcs DY13 8UJ
01562 732928
www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Wyre Forest District Council

Worcestershire Hub

6 Load Street, Bewdley, Worcs, DY12 2AF
01562 732928
www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Appendix 2 Home Choice Plus Partners' Contact Details

Name	Address	Phone Number	Email	Website
Advance Housing Trust	2 Witan Way Witney Oxon OX28 6FH	01993 772885	info@advanceuk.org	www.advanceuk.org
Anchor Trust	Milestone Place, 100 Bolton Rd, Bradford, BD1 4DH.	0845 140 2020		www.anchor.org.uk
Beth Johnson Housing Association	Sanctuary House, Chamber Court, Castle Street, Worcester, WR1 3ZQ.	01905 338600		www.sanctuary-group.co.uk
Bourneville Housing Trust	Estate Office, Oak Tree Lane, Bourneville, Birmingham, B30 1UB.	0121 472 3831	info@bvt.org.uk	www.bvt.org.uk
Bromford Housing Group	1 Venture Court, Broadlands, Wolverhampton, WV10 6TB.	0330 1234 031	customerservices@bromford.co.uk	www.bromfordgroup.co.uk

Bromsgrove District Housing Trust	Buntsford Court, Buntsford Gate, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B60 3DJ	0800 0850 160	info@bdht.co.uk	www.bdht.co.uk
Elgar Housing Associations	Partnership House, Grovewood Road, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR14 1GD.	01684 579579	housingneeds@festivalhousing.org.uk	www.festivalhousing.org
English Churches	2 Estuary Boulevard, Estuary Commerce Park, Liverpool, L24 8RF	0345 155 9029	info@riverside.org.uk	www.riverside.org.uk
Festival Housing Group	Partnership House, Grovewood Road, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR14 1GD.	01684 579579	housingneeds@festivalhousing.org.uk	www.festivalhousing.org
Fosseway Housing	1 Venture Court, Broadlands, Wolverhampton, WV10 6TB.	0330 1234 031	customerservices@bromford.co.uk	www.bromfordgroup.co.uk
Friendship Care & Housing	50 Newhall Hill, Birmingham, B1 3JN	0121 506 2800		www.fch.org.uk

Fry Housing Trust	43 Rowley Village, Rowley Regis, West Midlands, B65 9AS	0121 559 6406	admin@fryha.org.uk	www.fryha.uk
Gloucestershire Housing Association	2 St Michael's Court, Brunswick Road, Gloucester, GL1 1JB	0800 318522	info@gloscha.co.uk	www.gloscha.co.uk
Housing 21	The Triangle, Baring Road, Beaconsfield, HP9 2NA.	0370 192 4000	enquiries@housing21.co.uk	www.housing21.co.uk
Jephson Housing Association	Jephson House, Blackdown, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 6RE	01926 339 311	info@jephson.org.uk	www.jephson.org.uk
Marches Housing Association	Benedict Court, Southern Avenue, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 0QF	01568 610100	home@marchesha.co.uk	www.marchesha.co.uk
Mercian Housing	Gee Business Centre, Holborn Hill, Aston, Birmingham, B7 5JR	0121 322 7373	info@mercian.org.uk	www.mercian.org.uk

Midland Heart Ltd	20 Bath Row, Birmingham, B15 1LZ	0345 60 20 540	customer.servicecentre@midlandheart.org.uk	www.midlandheart.org.uk
Nexus Housing (West Midlands)	Apex 2, Wainwright Road, Worcester, WR4 9FN	01905 342600	nexus@wmhousing.co.uk	www.nexushousing.co.uk
Orbit Heart of England	10 Greenhill Street, Stratford upon Avon, WARKS CV37 6LG	0345 8 500 500	info@orbit.org.uk	www.orbitheartofengland.org.uk
Rooftop Housing Group	70 High Street, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 4YD	0800 0421 800	info@rooftopgroup.org	www.rooftopgroup.org
Sanctuary Housing	Sanctuary Midlands, 164 Birmingham Road, West Bromwich, Birmingham, B70 6QG	0800 131 3329	midlands@sanctuary-housing.co.uk	www.sanctuary-group.co.uk
South Shropshire Housing Association Ltd	The Gateway, The Auction Yard, Craven Arms, Shropshire, SY7 9BW	01588 676200		www.sshropsha.co.uk

Spa Housing Association	The Royal Exchange, 9 Queen Street, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire, WR9 8AL	01905 823100	housingneeds@festivalhousing.org.uk	www.festivalhousing.org
Stonham Housing Association	2 Gosforth Park Way, Gosforth Business Park, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8ET	0845 155 1234		www.homegroup.org.uk
Viridian Housing	41 Poplar Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7AA	0121 444 6666	wmids@viridianhousing.org.uk	www.viridianhousing.org.uk
Warwickshire Rural Housing Association	Whitwick Business Centre, Stenson Road, Whitwick Business Park, Coalville, Leicestershire, LE67 4JP	01530 278080		www.warwickshirerha.org.uk
Waterloo Housing Association	Waterloo House, 76-78 Boldmere Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B73 5TJ	0121 355 7771		www.waterlooha.org.uk

Worcester Community Housing	Progress House, Midland Road, Worcester, WR5 1DU	0800 197 2805	wchtalk@wchnet.co.uk	www.wchnet.co.uk
Wyre Forest Community Housing	3 Foley Grove, Foley Business Park, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY11 7PT	01562 733 000	information@communityhg.com	www.communityhg.com
Wyre Forest Sheltered Housing	3 Foley Grove, Foley Business Park, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY11 7PT	01562 733 000	information@communityhg.com	www.communityhg.com

REPORT TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE

11th November 2011

SOLAR PANELS – GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Kit Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillors Consulted	Not Applicable
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Members made a decision on 22nd June 2011 to support a scheme for the installation of Solar Panels at the Depot. This report is to advise of proposed changes to the feed in tariff and the impact on the installation at the depot.
- 1.2 Under the current project plan the aim is to complete installation by March 2012. However the Government is consulting on making urgent changes to the current solar photo voltaic (PV) feed-in tariff scheme. This will reduce the tariff Officers were expecting by 50%. This in turn will increase the payback time. Members were previously advised that the payback time would be 6.97 years; under the new rates (if implemented) this would be increased to 12.2 years. The proposed new tariff is 15.2 pence per kWh (kilowatt hour) generated (see Table 1) to be paid from 11th December 2011. Permission for the proposed solar PV scheme was based on a tariff sum of 34.1 pence per kWh generated.
- 1.3 The Government are also planning to introduce a new multi-installation tariff rate (for which we would qualify) from April 2012, further increasing the urgency of installing the schemes before 31st March 2012. Depending on the site, the relevant tariff ranges between 16.8 pence/kWh – 12.2p/kWh. In addition, from April 2012, any building applying for the feed in tariff will have to be energy efficiency rated (under the Energy Performance Certificate Scheme) C or above. The Depot is currently at E although the Salix funded improvements will probably have brought it up to a D rating. There would be further cost implications to bring the building up to a C rating.

Table 1: Summary of tariff (pence per kWh generated) possibilities per site

Site	Likely system size* (maximum)	Old tariff (actual index linked figure)	Proposed reduced tariff (from 12th December 2011?)	Proposed aggregated tariff (April 2012?)

REPORT TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE

11th November 2011

Depot	<49kWp	31.4 (32.9)	15.2	12.2
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2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Chief Executive under the delegation for urgent business agree to make the following decisions:-

- 1) That authority be granted to the Climate Change Manager, to respond to the consultation, such response to include the comments of the portfolio holder and the Cabinet.**
- 2) That officers be authorised to continue with the current project plan as approved by Cabinet on 22nd June 2011 taking into account the revised financial projections set out in Appendices 1 to 3 and noted at para 3, and on the basis that the sum of £68k should remain the figure invested.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 Over the last 2-3 months officers have worked with the procurement team and suppliers to ensure that the project can be delivered by March 2012. Due to a number of issues including having to pull out of developing procurement arrangements with one partner followed by uncertainty and instability of the market in light of the proposed changes has resulted in limited interest in the provision of the service.
- 3.2 Officers will continue to work with the network and framework with the aim to deliver the scheme by 31st March 2012.
- 3.3 Market testing based on the original procurement exercise has allowed more clarification on the financial projections. However due to the increased demand Nationally following the announcements, contractors' prices started to rise and it is impossible to predict what will happen to the market moving forward, these figures will be based on the initial procurement exercise, although should be considered with some caution.
- 3.6. Members should note that the figures given in Appendix 3 relate to quotes received directly from Contractors in October and are not based on the £68k agreed.

REPORT TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE

11th November 2011

- 3.7 The tables in Appendix 3 reflect the original position compared with the revised tariffs that may be effective from December 2011 and April 2012.
- 3.8 Despite the reduction in the tariff level there is still a benefit to the Council in the return on investment of between 5%-6%. Members are aware that the original return was significantly higher than this (approx 14%).

Legal Implications

- 3.9 The feed-in tariff is a statutory Scheme but this does not preclude the Government from amending its provisions, which is what it proposes to do.
- 3.10 The consultation closes on 23rd December and a final response should be available in mid-late January 2012. Despite this, the proposed reference date (implementation date) for changes is 12th December 2011.
- 3.11 The Government's decision could be challenged by an application to the High Court for a Judicial Review. However, there is no indication that any if the stakeholders is considering launching a legal challenge to the decision

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.12 Installation and generation of power is not possible before 12th December 2011.
- 3.13. If the Council continues along its proposed path with urgency, although the timescale is increasingly tight, it should be possible to install the schemes by 31st March 2012 as planned, subject to no procurement barriers arising.
- 3.14 Any further delay at this stage puts the scheme at severe risk of non-completion.
- 3.15 Even if the tariff is reduced by 50%, the arguments originally put forward for the original decision to invest in solar PV both to reduce carbon emissions and to reduce our vulnerability to rising electricity costs remain.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.16 There has been significant publicity about this scheme and the Council may risk reputational damage if it pulls out now, especially on the social housing scheme. However, there is no way that the Council could have anticipated this happening.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 In such a fast changing policy environment and consequent unpredictability of how the market will respond, the Council can only respond reactively.
- 4.2 It is unclear how the consultation will conclude – there is significant opposition from both the public and private sector as to the severity of a 6 week timescale to complete planned projects and the Government may decide that the original date for significantly reducing the tariff should remain fixed at 1st April 2012.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Original scheme finance details*

Appendix 2 – Scheme finance details if the 12th December date is agreed*

Appendix 3 – Scheme finance details if installations are not completed before 31st March 2012*

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Government Consultation Document (Department for Energy and Climate Change)

Previous published Council reports and minutes.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Ceridwen John, (Climate Change Manager)
E Mail: ceridwen.john@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 64252 x3046

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE

11th November 2011

Appendix 1 – Original scheme finance details / expected income*

Site	Likely system size* (maximum)	Expected annual generation yield (kWh)	Annual income from tariff (31.4p)	Fuel bill savings per year (assume 70% used)	Total income and savings per year	Payback time (years)	Total profit after 25 yrs once paid back capital
Depot	<49kWp	43'000	13'502	2709	16211	6.97	292'284

This provides a rate of return on the investment of 14%

Appendix 2 – Scheme finance details if the 12th December date is agreed and installation is completed before 31st March 2012

Site	Likely system size* (maximum)	Expected annual generation yield (kWh)	Annual income from tariff	Fuel bill savings per year	Total income and savings per year	Payback time (years)	Total profit after 25 yrs once capital paid back
Depot	<49kWp	43'000	(15.2p) 6536	2709	9245	12.2	118'336

This provides a rate of return on the investment of 6%

Appendix 3 – Scheme finance details if we do not complete our installation before 31st March 2012*

Site	Likely system size* (maximum)	Expected annual generation yield (kWh)	Annual income from tariff	Fuel bill savings per year	Total income and savings per year	Payback time (years)	Total profit after 25 years once capital paid
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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE

11th November 2011

							back
Depot	<49kWp	43'000	(12.2) 5246	2709	7955	14.20	85'914

This provides a rate of return on the investment of 5%

Assumptions

1. Fuel bill savings are based on our current cost of 9p/kWh bought.
2. For simplicity, factors that work in our favour and will reduce payback times and slightly increase income (the fact that the tariff is index linked, potential increases in fuel inflation costs and any energy exported back to the grid at 3p/kWp) have been ignored for the purpose of these calculations.
3. For simplicity, factors that may offset this such as interest paid on the loan, and small maintenance budgets have also been ignored.
4. Assumes 70% of energy is used on site (Monday-Friday).
5. This is based on a capital cost of £113,000 which is the maximum amount that can fit onto the Depot site. These figures have been used as they are based on very recent market prices
6. The Council has allocated £68,000 towards this project – it is difficult to scale down the costs accurately as contractors have not quoted at this level as contractor price for this sum and the bulk of the cost is not the panels themselves after you go above a certain size... but this should be indicative of the changes the Council are facing following the Government's announcements.

Future of Parish Forum – Parish Council’s response

Calc has sought feedback from the Parish Councils on the proposed changes to the Parish Forum as articulated in the communication “Future of Parish Forum” dated 3rd October.

The Parish Councils accept that any decision on the future of the forum lies with Bromsgrove District Council, however we would ask that you consider the feedback received from the Parish Councils and the recommendations based on this feedback.

Please note that time to respond to the proposed changes has been limited, our next Calc meeting is not until December and most councils meet monthly, and as such have not been able to make a formal response within the allocated timescale; 12 of the 20 Parish Councils have responded.

Summary

- The Parish Councils recognise the need for Bromsgrove District Council to make cost savings wherever possible due to the current economic climate and resulting financial pressures.
- The Parish Councils totally support Bromsgrove District Council’s statement: “It is very important to us as a Council that we work with and maintain strong links with our Parishes and we recognise the need for us to work together for our communities”.
- The Parish Councils therefore consider that it is of paramount importance that whatever changes are implemented do not compromise the achievement of the above objective.
- There was particular concern that these changes could negatively impact the working relationship at a time when the upcoming era of localism and neighbourhood planning (from the Government perspective) looks to be about bringing a new dynamic to District and Parish relationships.
- Of the 12 responses, 6 were broadly in favour of some change although they all had some concerns or misgivings. The remaining 6 were against any change as they consider that the purpose of the two meetings is different and that the forum provides a useful function in its own right.

Recommendation

The Parish Councils would like the district Council to give serious consideration to the following suggestions:

1. A specific Cabinet member is given responsibility for managing the relationship with the Parish Councils
2. This member of the Cabinet addresses the Bromsgrove Area Calc meeting on the changing relationship between BDC and the Parishes in the era of localism, ideally in December or at our first 2012 meeting.
3. A slot is included at the start of the Calc Area meetings, as described in the communication dated 3 October, where Council officers could attend to give presentations.
4. The District Council holds a meeting between the Parish Councils and District Council members (or the Cabinet member link) twice a year, but more often if the need arises, to discuss items of Council Policy that impact the Parish Councils, for example: Neighbourhood planning; Core Strategy; and potential changes to service provision as a result of funding constraints.
5. Any change is reviewed jointly before the end of the first twelve months to ensure that the District Council’s commitment to continue to maintain strong

links with its Parishes is met and the recognition of the need to work together for our communities is satisfied.

The individual concerns have been summarised below for information

Issues

- How would Parish Councils who are not members of CALC be accommodated (we currently have 100% membership, but this could not always be the case)
- At present, although BDC come up with some agenda items on their own, the CALC Area meeting has fed ideas to Andy for the Forum meeting as a result of discussions. How do we ascertain a consensus on what burning topics CALC members have, in order to ask Andy to get someone to the meeting without a prior discussion? Otherwise the topic is going to be 3 months old if we canvass the views at the previous meeting.
- Concern that the forum element could disappear altogether over time
- Calc meetings are already very full; any combined meeting would have to be carefully managed.
- Both meetings have full agendas and to and to merge them would mean that something would have to be curtailed leaving inadequate time to do justice to both meetings.
- What seems to be missing from the proposals is a dialogue with BDC - a forum for PCs to raise common issues or concerns.
- Feeling that the proposals will reduce the dedicated liaison between district and parishes.
- Concern that meetings could be held during the day when parish councilors are not available.
- When items of policy are discussed the portfolio holder should be present in addition to officers.
- The last Parish Forum meeting was very well-attended and provided a welcome opportunity to learn more about the proposed changes to planning procedures. It could not have been covered so comprehensively if it had been merely one item on a CALC agenda. If the regular Forum were to be discontinued then some mechanism whereby BDC would convene ad hoc meetings for specific topics at the request of parishes is required. A single item on a CALC agenda hardly represents a forum for regular consultations between the District and parishes."
- This is the only open forum which allows Parish Councils and the District Council to interact and provides a good medium for continued dialogue between the parties.
- It is a shame that the Parish Forum is apparently going to be downgraded when the upcoming era of localism and neighbourhood planning (from the Govt perspective) looks to be about a new dynamic in DC/PCs relationship.
- Efficiencies seem a weak peg to hang this proposed change on.
- What happened to the suggestion to appoint a parish council "champion" - someone with some clout to have the task of remembering PCs and what they do. Someone PCs could also approach collectively if something went wrong.
- Keep the forum but reduce frequency to 2 – 3 times per year

Cllr Sue Baxter
29 October 2011

Bromsgrove District Council Corporate Performance Report
Quarter 2, 2011/12 - Period Ending 30 September 2011

The following pages provide a report for all corporate performance indicators which are contained in the Council Plan, for which data was expected and provided in quarter 2 (July - September) 2011/12 and where there is comparative data available; the data relates to a year to date (April - September) comparison.

	Finance & Corporate Resources (FR)	Leisure, Environmental & Community Services (LEC)		Area of Highest Need (AOHN)	Policy, Performance & Partnerships (PPP)	Planning, Regeneration, Regulatory & Housing Svcs (PRRH)		Total
		%	%			%	%	
Total number of corporate performance indicators providing outturn data for quarter 2 where comparative data is available	6	14	0	%	0	4	24	%
Total number of indicators showing improvement compared to the same period last year	3	8	NO COMPARABLE DATA AVAILABLE FOR THESE PI'S		NO OUTTURNS EXPECTED THIS QUARTER	0	11	45.8%
Total number of indicators showing a decline compared to the same period last year	2	5	57.1%			4	11	45.8%
Total number of indicators showing no change compared to the same period last year	1	1	35.7%			0	2	8.3%

Key Findings for Quarter 2

This report shows that of the 24 indicators reported this quarter, 45.8% have improved when compared to the same period last year. By way of example, there has been increased usage of both BURT (Bromsgrove Urban Rural Transport) and the Shopmobility service, rising by approximately 19% and 14% respectively.

However there are also indicators which are highlighted as areas for concern; the numbers of people using the car parks continues to decline. When compared to the same period last year there have been 43,659 fewer users (approximately 5%); this may be due to the current economic climate. In addition, the number of households living in temporary accommodation has risen from 10 to 37. This shows a gradual increase and is a concern particularly when compared against last years figures. There is a slight increase in homeless applications but a more significant increase in homeless acceptances which have contributed to the number of households in temporary accommodation. Cases are presenting with more complex issues due to the economic situation and are taking longer to resolve that we would like. A meeting is arranged to discuss all cases in temporary accommodation as a matter of urgency.

The table below shows a key to terms and symbols used throughout this report.

Key to Terms and Symbols	
Improving performance compared to same period last year	☺ Positive Trend +ve
Worsening performance compared to same period last year	☹ Negative Trend -ve
No change in performance compared to same period last year	☺ To be confirmed TBC
No data available for the period	# Worcestershire Viewpoint Survey (WVP)
Not applicable for this indicator/period	NA Customer Service Centre CSC
Data is provisional	* Disabled Facilities Grants DFG's

Indicator Description	Current			History - Year End (where available)		Comments
	1 Apr 2010 - 30 Sep 2010	1 Apr 2011 - 30 Sep 2011	Direction of Travel (where applicable)	2009/10	2010/11	
Amount of housing benefit overpayments recovered as a % of all HB overpayments	84.28%	94.02%	😊	TBC	TBC	The rate of recovery has shown good improvement over the same period last year.
Time taken to process Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events (days)	12.6	10.7	😊	TBC	TBC	Processing time have improved due to Transformation. Claims are being processed while the customer is present which has reduced the time taken to process claims at the Customer Service Centre.
% of invoices paid by the Council within 30 days of receipt	99.04%	98.63%	😊	98.18%	99.06%	Although 0.41 percentage points down on this time last year due to staff absence, we are still within our service target of 98%. We are one of the best authorities in the district for paying our invoices, helping to support local suppliers with their cash flow.
Number of working days / shifts lost to the local authority due to sickness absence per FTE staff members (days)	3.70	3.76	😊	TBC	10.77	The minor increase in sickness could be due to the degree of change within the organisation. In addition there has been a recognisable increase in long term sickness cases at the Depot, however these have been actively managed and it is expected this will be reflected in the quarter 3 figures.
% of council tax collected by the authority in the year	59.15%	59.15%	😊	98.50%	TBC	Q2, 2011/12 outturn is down by just 0.05% on projection, and is equal to the same period last year.
% of customers satisfied with the service received (CSC)	97.37%	99.61%	😊	NA	97.23% (Q1-Q3 only)	Customer feedback for this quarter remains extremely positive during this period with very little negative comment received. This performance is consistent with same period last year and supports the overall consistent performance of the customer service delivery team. The sample size has fallen because of staff leave during this period and also staff taking part in transformation projects.
% of complaints handled within the agreed time frames	69.49%	72.84%	Contextual	NA	71.51%	Performance is similar to the same period last year however this is disappointing as the response timescales have since been extended from 10 to 15 days to ensure that customers get a quality response. Delays in response are for planning objections and car park appeals. We are working with teams to improve the response rates.

Key to Terms and Symbols	
Improving performance compared to same period last year	😊 Positive Trend
Worsening performance compared to same period last year	😊 Negative Trend
No change in performance compared to same period last year	😊 To be confirmed
No data available for the period	# Worcestershire Viewpoint Survey (WVP)
Not applicable for this indicator/period	NA Customer Service Centre
Data is provisional	* Disabled Facilities Grants
	DFG's

Bromsgrove District Council Corporate Performance Report
Quarter 2, 2011/12 - Period Ending 30 September 2011

Indicator Description	Current			Direction of Travel (where applicable)	History - Year End (where available)		Comments
	1 Apr 2010 - 30 Sep 2010	1 Apr 2011 - 30 Sep 2011			2009/10	2010/11	
Number of affordable homes delivered	40	67	Contextual	80	56	Perryfields scheme is slipping due to difficulties with gas installation. At least 31 will now be delivered in 2012-13. However we have improved our performance compared to the same period last year, two other schemes are on target to complete before year end and we fully expect to exceed the previous years overall performance.	
Number of British Crime Survey comparator crimes reported	1,443	1,252	☺	2,808	2,595	The total of 644 BCS comparator crimes in Q2 is slightly higher than Q1 (up 6% or 36 offences) but is 15% lower than Q2 last year, and the year to date total for 2011/12 is 13% lower than the same period in 2010/11 - indicating an overall decreasing trend over time, despite small increases in the last few months. However, despite this seemingly positive performance, Bromsgrove is still ranked 15th in a group of 15 similar areas, suggesting performance is significantly worse than peers.	
Number of people using the BURT service	894	1,066	☺	NA	2,007	There is an increase in usage of the community transport when compared to same period in 2010/11. This is due to increased public knowledge of the service which has led to an increase in the number of registered users.	
Number of people using the Shopmobility service	1,057	1,208	☺	TBC	2,157	There has been a slight increase (151) in the number of people using the Shopmobility service. There is an expectation that this will continue to rise in the run up to Christmas.	
Avg time (weeks) from referral to completion Cat 1 DFG's	44.58	64.52	☹	35.12	55.73	When comparing the Category 1 timescales with the previous years Quarter 2, the timescales have substantially increased. There is approximately a 26 week increase from last quarter as a result of two cases where the disabled needs of the client continually altered during the diagnosis stage and the deterioration of a client, which has delayed the process whilst developing the plans.	
Avg time (weeks) from referral to completion Cat 2 DFG's	58.13	64.82	☹	63.43	64.32	The timescales when compared with the previous years second quarter are consistent (Q2, 2010/11 - 56.83 weeks; Q2, 2011/12 - 55.29 weeks). Timescales are still significant however as a result of the ACOIP (Worcestershire) for DFG which places all category 2 cases on a 6 month waiting list, whilst resources and funds are directed to higher priority needy Category 1 cases.	

Bromsgrove District Council Corporate Performance Report
Quarter 2, 2011/12 - Period Ending 30 September 2011

Indicator Description	Current			Direction of Travel (where applicable)	History - Year End (where available)		Comments
	1 Apr 2010 - 30 Sep 2010	1 Apr 2011 - 30 Sep 2011			2009/10	2010/11	
Avg time (weeks) from referral to completion Cat 3 DFG's	87.93	77.91	☺		72.75	95.75	The timescales when compared with the previous years second quarter are consistent (Q2, 2010/11 - 82.71 weeks; Q2, 2011/12 - 81.64 weeks). Timescales are still significant however as a result of the ACOP (Worcestershire) for DFG which places all category 3 cases on a 12 month waiting list, whilst resources and funds are directed to higher priority needy Category 1 cases.
Private dispersed Lifeline customer numbers - net	653	716	☺		TBC	689	There has been an increase in the number of private dispersed lifeline customers due to continued promotion of the service. In the last quarter we have attended 2 open day events and delivered leaflets around the district. An article has also appeared in the local paper and Together Bromsgrove.
% of lifeline calls answered within 1 minute	99.40%	99.40%	☺		NA	99.24%	This is within Telecare Services Association TSA target of 97.5%
% of CCTV incidents which are proactive monitoring	NA	17.67%	NA		NA	NA	2011/12 is the baseline year for this new performance indicator.
Number of CCTV evidential seizures	NA	18	NA		NA	NA	2011/12 is the baseline year for this new performance indicator.
Attendance at community events	NA	905	NA		NA	NA	This is a new performance indicator, as such no comparative data is available. The events are broken down by month: July - St John's Ambulance Music Event = 102 attendees; August - Rubery Festival = 544 and Buggy Charity Event = 153; September - Pippa and Buddy 'Britain's got Talent' Birthday Party = 106 attendees.
Attendance at sports development sessions	NA	13,717	NA		NA	NA	Successful holiday programme, although need for casual recruitment impacted on amount of provision possible. School project has been restricted due to lack of casual staff; this is being worked on and recruitment will begin soon. Sport Unlimited project cut impacted greatly, as well as the completion of the gymnastics coach post (All of this work is still continuing with over 200 members, but is now led independently). Multi skills clubs are struggling and the programme is being refreshed and launched in January 2012. The PSI programme and disability projects are still successful and increasing in attendances. Contact is being made with Community Safety Partnership regarding direction for delivery of diversionary community coaching sessions.
Attendance at arts development sessions	21,513	22,151	☺		NA	NA	Service target exceeded. The Jubilee Bandstand programme hosted this months Austin Ten Drivers Club and Bandstand Marathon as part of the national programme in the Cultural Olympiad Calendar.

Indicator Description	Current			History - Year End (where available)		Comments
	1 Apr 2010 - 30 Sep 2010	1 Apr 2011 - 30 Sep 2011	Direction of Travel (where applicable)	2009/10	2010/11	
Number of people attending 'Age Well' scheme	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	This PI is to be removed from Corporate Reporting. Development post completed September 2011. Project discussions in place to continue programme moving forwards with BARN (Bromsgrove and Redditch Network). Action plan to be produced for physical activity aspect and volunteers identified to continue project. Sustainable referral pathway to be established through a partnership approach in collaboration with other health programmes. Once established, indicators will be reported next financial year.
Artrix usage (community use)	14,900	15,946	☺	60,250	69,561	Service target exceeded. The Artrix has performed particularly well with attendances at live events, workshops, cinema screenings and the number of performances promoted by Bromsgrove Arts Alive forum.
Dolphin Centre usage	194,413	199,225	☺	415,407	369,521	The overall performance for year to date is good, however we have identified some areas for improvement. By way of example; forthcoming plans include introducing junior activities and offering discounted hire of the sports hall to encourage clubs and casual usage. Work is also continuing with clubs to ensure they have support during this tough economic time, including reduced rates for some clubs and promotion on our website.
Residual waste per household (kgs)	273.96	274.30	☹	581.00	539.15*	Slight increase on kg of residual waste (0.34 kgs) but, there is a reduction on the previous quarter (Q1 - 138.13 kgs; Q2 - 136.17 kgs). Recycling campaign runs November-January.
% of household waste re-used, recycled or composted	45.40%	44.77%	☹	37.40%	42.54%	Slight decrease of 0.63 percentage points in the amount of household waste re-used, recycled or composted when compared to the same period last year. Recycling campaign runs November-January.
Improved street and environmental cleanliness - levels of litter	NA	TBC	NA	NA	NA	This is a new indicator. It is expected data will be available at the end of October. This performance indicator has previously been reported using a different methodology and as such the historic data is not comparable.
Improved street and environmental cleanliness - levels of detritus	NA	TBC	NA	NA	NA	This is a new indicator. It is expected data will be available at the end of October. This performance indicator has previously been reported using a different methodology and as such the historic data is not comparable.

Indicator Description	Current			History - Year End (where available)		Comments
	1 Apr 2010 - 30 Sep 2010	1 Apr 2011 - 30 Sep 2011	Direction of Travel (where applicable)	2009/10	2010/11	
Number of fly-tipping incidents dealt with	TBC	453	NA	NA	TBC	A significant reduction in fly tips compared with quarter 1 (250). Officers are currently reviewing the data to establish if there is a reason for this. A major flytipping campaign starts after Christmas as part of our ongoing programme of campaign works.
Number of fly-tipping enforcement actions	TBC	4	NA	NA	TBC	No enforcement actions undertaken this quarter. A new Environmental Enforcement Service has been set up with Community Safety to move forward in future with Environmental Enforcement issues.
Town centre car park usage (avg per month)	770,279	726,620	☹️	TBC	1,503,562	National decline in car parking usage. Officers are exploring opportunities for positive publicity following Scrutiny review.

Key to Terms and Symbols	
Improving performance compared to same period last year	☺️ +ve Positive Trend
Worsening performance compared to same period last year	☹️ -ve Negative Trend
No change in performance compared to same period last year	☺️/☹️ To be confirmed
No data available for the period	# Worcestershire Viewpoint Survey
Not applicable for this indicator/period	NA Customer Service Centre
Data is provisional	* Disabled Facilities Grants
	DFG's

Indicator Description	Current			History - Year End (where available)		Comments
	1 Apr 2010 - 30 Sep 2010	1 Apr 2011 - 30 Sep 2011	Direction of Travel (where applicable)	2009/10	2010/11	
Number of households living in temporary accommodation (Snapshot)	10	37	☹	TBC	31	This gradual increase is a concern particularly when compared against last years figures. There is a slight increase in homeless applications but a more significant increase in homeless acceptances which have contributed to the number of households in T/A. Cases are presenting with more complex issues due to the economic situation and are taking longer to resolve that we would like. A meeting is arranged to discuss all cases in temporary accommodation as a matter of urgency.
Processing of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks	71.43%	66.67%	☹	TBC	68.57%	2 applications went over time being subject to planning committee decision
Processing of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks	92.24%	83.78%	☹	TBC	89.69%	The number of applications received is consistent with same period of previous year but resource has reduced 33% due to long term illness (1 Officer) and secondment (1 Officer).
Processing of other planning applications determined within 8 weeks	94.92%	88.78%	☹	TBC	93.61%	The number of applications received is consistent with same period of previous year but resource has reduced 33% due to long term illness (2 Officers)

Key to Terms and Symbols	
Improving performance compared to same period last year	☺ Positive Trend +ve
Worsening performance compared to same period last year	☹ Negative Trend -ve
No change in performance compared to same period last year	☺ To be confirmed TBC
No data available for the period	# Worcestershire Viewpoint Survey (WVP)
Data is provisional	* Disabled Facilities Grants DFG's

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