



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER 2012
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 4th July 2012 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 16th July 2012 (Pages 9 - 16)
 - (a) To receive and note the minutes
 - (b) To consider any recommendations contained within the minutes
5. Minutes of the meetings of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 28th June 2012 and 11th July 2012 (Pages 17 - 22)
 - (a) To receive and note the minutes
 - (b) To consider any recommendations contained within the minutes
6. Minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 12th July 2012 (Pages 23 - 26)
 - (a) to receive and note the minutes

- (b) to consider any non-confidential recommendations contained within the minutes
7. To receive verbal updates from the Leader and/or other Cabinet Members on any recent meetings attended in an ex-officio capacity (Pages 27 - 28)
 8. Bromsgrove District Housing Trust Strategic Asset Disposal to 2017 Report (Pages 29 - 36)
 9. Countywide Homelessness Strategy for Worcestershire (Pages 37 - 84)
 10. Fly Posting Policy Report (Pages 85 - 100)
 11. Land Disposal Policy Report (Pages 101 - 104)
 12. Finance Monitoring - Quarter 1 2012/2013 (Pages 105 - 124)
 13. Monitoring of Write Offs - Quarter 1 2012/2013 (Pages 125 - 132)
 14. Local Council Tax Support Scheme Report (Pages 133 - 138)
 15. Business Rate Pooling Background Report (Pages 139 - 142)
 16. Bromsgrove Partnership's Annual Report 2011/2012 (Pages 143 - 162)
 17. 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
 18. To consider, and if considered appropriate, to pass the following resolution to exclude the public from the meeting during the consideration of item(s) of business containing exempt information:-

"RESOLVED: 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 following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, as amended, the relevant paragraph of that part, in each case, being as set out below, and that it is in the public interest to do so:-

<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Paragraph(s)</u>
19	3
20	1 and 4 "

19. Appendices to Agenda Item No. 8 (Pages 163 - 170)
20. Recommendations of the Shared Services Board held on 12th July 2012 and 23rd August 2012 (Pages 171 - 184)

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

The Council House
Burcot Lane
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B60 1AA

28th August 2012



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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 4TH JULY 2012 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

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Ms. S. Hanley, Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. J. Godwin, Mrs. S. Sellers, Ms. S. Morgan and Ms. R. Cole.

10/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

11/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D. W. P. Booth JP declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda item 14a relating to Fields in Trust Dedication on the basis that he is the owner of land in the vicinity of Housman Close, Charford. Councillor Booth left the meeting during the consideration of this item.

12/12 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 6th June 2012 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

13/12 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 18th June 2012 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the recommendation contained in minute 6/12 relating to the Draft Fly Posting Policy be approved;
- (b) that in relation to minute 7/12 in respect of Longbridge Statement of Principles Affordable Housing Provision, it be noted that the minute did not accurately reflect the confrontational approach taken by some Members to the discussion which had unfortunately resulted in the curtailment of the consideration of this item; and
- (c) that the remainder of the minutes be noted.

14/12 **AUDIT BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit Board held on 21st June 2012 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

15/12 **VERBAL UPDATES FROM THE LEADER AND/OR OTHER CABINET MEMBERS ON ANY RECENT MEETINGS ATTENDED IN AN EX-OFFICIO CAPACITY**

Councillor M. A. Bullivant reported that he had recently attended a Meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee.

16/12 **PLANNING POLICY TASK GROUP RESPONSE TO CABINET**

The Cabinet considered the response of the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Planning Policy Task Group to the Cabinet's Interim Response in respect of Recommendations 1(a), 3 and 6 of the Task Group Report.

RESOLVED that the response to each of the amended recommendations of the Planning Policy Task Group be as set out below:

Recommendation 1(a)

That a mechanism be put in place to ensure that where conditions have been attached to a planning application and monitoring is required then the Planning and Enforcement Team should allow for this to be discharged fully to the required level of detail that the condition(s) specify within their work. This should be carried out irrespective of the cost, to ensure that the conditions are met and where appropriate, enforced.

(N.B. The lack of resources to enforce a condition on a planning application would not be sufficient to either refuse the application or not to include the condition if it was deemed a necessary part of the planning permission. It may be prudent to estimate the cost of monitoring or enforcement before a decision on an application is made, in order that a decision as to who meets that cost can be determined and to ensure that any monitoring is carried out effectively.)

Cabinet Response

The recommendation as amended was noted. It was still felt however that there should be a mechanism whereby Planning officers would consult in advance with the Finance Department regarding the likely costs of enforcing particular conditions and the availability of a budget to meet these. In addition it was queried whether financial constraints on the Authority or the applicant would be a valid consideration when determining a planning application.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning undertook to discuss this further with the relevant officers.

Recommendation 3

It is recognised that on occasion there will be a need for some form of community engagement for example a public meeting(s). This will act as a forum to improve lines of communication and is to be developed between senior officers and residents in respect of larger more complex planning applications. This would be a recommendation from the Planning Committee and reviewed periodically by that Committee.

Cabinet Response

This was agreed

Recommendation 6

That a mechanism be put in place to ensure that enforcement cases are recorded and regularly up dated with an audit trail of actions and documents and correspondence on the electronic system available via the Council's "Orb".

Cabinet Response

This was agreed.

17/12 **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME**

The Cabinet considered a report on revised arrangements in respect of the Local Development Scheme. This revised scheme gave details of the updated programme for the preparation of planning policy documents and reflected the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

In relation to the indicative timetable it was noted that the Core Strategy (or Local Plan) would be likely to be submitted to Members for approval in October 2012.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the report and amendments to the Local Development Scheme be noted; and
- (b) that subject to the amendment referred to above, Appendix A to the report be approved as the Council's forthcoming programme for planning policy documents from 4th July 2012.

18/12 **FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2011/2012**

Members considered a report on the authority's financial position for the year ended 31st March 2012. Members considered the summary of financial information on both Revenue and Capital Budgets.

It was noted that due to savings made by officers and the generation of increased income there had been an underspend on the Revenue Budget of £1,050,000 and that the new level of balances was £2,579,000.

The carry forward of elements of the Capital Budget had been recommended for approval by Council at the previous Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED that the outturn financial position for 2011/12 in respect of Revenue and Capital Budgets as detailed in the reports be noted, together with the transfer to balances of £638,000.

19/12 **INCOME MANAGEMENT AND PAYMENT CARD INDUSTRY COMPLIANCE**

The Cabinet considered a report on the need to upgrade/replace the Council's current income management system in order to ensure that the system used is compliant with the Payment Industry Data Security Standard.

It was reported that the Standard related to the environment in which card transactions take place in particular the storage and accessibility of card details. In addition it was noted that the current income management software would shortly cease to be supported by the company.

It was noted that it was anticipated the cost of the upgrade/replacement would be up to £25,000 and that this could be met from an existing provision of £10,000 within the Revenue Budget with up to £15,000 being met from Capital Receipts.

RECOMMENDED

- (a) that, in order to achieve compliance with the Payment Industry Data Security Standard, the upgrade/replacement of the Council's existing Income Management System be approved;
- (b) that the sum of £25,000 be included in the 2012/2013 Capital Programme to be funded from £10,000 included in the Revenue Budget and up to £15,000 from capital receipts; and
- (c) that, in order to achieve best value, a joint procurement exercise be undertaken with Redditch Borough Council.

20/12 **UPGRADE OF THE PUBLIC REALM - BROMSGROVE TOWN CENTRE**

The Cabinet considered a report on the proposed upgrade of the public realm along Bromsgrove High Street, Worcester Road and other parts of the Bromsgrove Town Centre. Plans illustrating the proposals were displayed at the meeting.

It was noted that the works were scheduled to be undertaken by Worcestershire County Council with a phased programme of discrete projects covering a period of one to four years, commencing in Summer/Autumn 2012.

Members were reminded that the funding for the project was to be met from a number of sources including the sale of capital assets, funding from Worcestershire County Council and Section 106 contributions.

Members felt this was a significant step forward for the Town Centre Project and emphasised it was important that the traders and the public be kept informed of the proposals. It was noted that it was hoped to make use of premises in the High Street in this regard.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the design drawings in respect of improvements to the public realm be approved and be taken forward to the construction phase; and
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Director of Planning and Regeneration and the Town Centre Regeneration Programme Manager to agree (i) the costing of scheme elements; and (ii) any revisions to the design in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, on the basis the revisions do not fundamentally alter the nature of the agreed scheme.

21/12 **LOCALISM ACT - COMMUNITY RIGHT TO CHALLENGE**

Members considered a report on the Community Right to Challenge which was contained within the Localism Act 2011.

It was reported that the Community Right to Challenge enabled communities to submit expressions of interest to deliver Council services. Authorities such as County and District Councils must consider expressions of interest in respect of relevant services from relevant bodies such as voluntary or community bodies, Parish Councils or charities. Where expressions of interest were accepted, a procurement exercise must then be undertaken.

The report proposed arrangements for a process by which expressions of interest could be managed. It was noted that in addition, officers were currently developing an internal process for assessment of any expressions of interest received. Following discussion it was

RESOLVED that the arrangements for managing the Community Right to Challenge, as set out in the report be approved.

22/12 **ANNUAL REVIEW OF REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT**

The Cabinet considered an Annual Report on the operation of the Council's policy on Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA).

Members considered the information on applications made for authorisation under the RIPA policy. It was noted that all of the 7 applications during 2011/12 had been from the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Trading Standards Team. It was also noted that training on the RIPA policy was provided to the relevant staff on a regular basis.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

23/12 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 4**

The Cabinet considered a report on Corporate Performance for the period ending 31st March 2012.

Members noted the performance improvements highlighted in section 3.5.3 relating to a reduction in the time taken to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims and increased usage of the Dolphin Centre, the Artrix and BURT. Members also noted the position relating to the usage of car parks in the Town Centre together with the proposals for addressing this.

RESOLVED that the report on the position relating to key performance indicators in respect of the period ending 31st March 2012 be noted.

24/12 **FIELDS IN TRUST DEDICATION**

(The Chairman agreed to the consideration of this item as a matter of urgency as a decision was required prior to the next meeting of the Cabinet).

The Cabinet considered a report from the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services in relation to the proposed dedication of a number of areas of open spaces/playing fields for inclusion in the Fields in Trust Programme as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. This would enable the purpose and title of the sites to be protected as local outdoor spaces, specifically as playing fields for sport, play and recreation.

It was reported that the consideration this item had been brought forward from the original scheduled date of September 2012 in order to facilitate the previously approved development of land at Housman Close by Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) for affordable housing. Fields in Trust would be agreeable to releasing the Housman Close site from "Fields in Trust" status on the basis that replacement alternative sites are offered. There was a deadline for BDHT to acquire the land at Housman Close in order to qualify for Homes and Communities Agency funding for their proposed development.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the 7 sites listed within the report at section 1.1 be formally dedicated for use as playing fields by way of a Covenant/Deed of Dedication under the Fields in Trust programme; and
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services together with the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to take the necessary steps to finalise the agreement with Fields in Trust in relation to the 7 sites and to complete the Deeds of Dedication.

25/12 **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 disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act the relevant paragraph 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>
26/12	3

26/12 **DEVELOPMENT BIRMINGHAM ROAD/STOURBRIDGE ROAD**

Cabinet considered a report on the proposed development of land at Birmingham Road/Stourbridge Road, Bromsgrove which would involve the disposal of the Council's car park at Stourbridge Road.

Members discussed the report in detail and had particular regard to the proposed terms for disposal of the site, the advice of the District Valuer and the strategic importance of the development as part of the regeneration of the Town Centre.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted;
- (b) that the disposal of the freehold of the land at Stourbridge Road car park to the developer on the terms set out in the report and in accordance with the report of the District Valuer attached as Appendix 1 to the report be approved;
- (c) that the arrangements in respect of the lease back to this Council of part of the car park together with the receipt of a proportion of future income therefrom and for the future management by this Council of the car park as set out in the report be approved; and
- (d) that delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director (Planning and Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) to agree the final terms for the disposal of the land with the developer and to enter into the necessary legal agreements required for the purposes of implementing recommendations (b) and (c) above.

The meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.

Chairman

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

MONDAY, 16TH JULY 2012 AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillor C. B. Taylor and Councillor M. A. Bullivant

Officers: Mr. J. Staniland, Ms. D. Poole, M. Stanley, M. Bough, Ms. J. Bayley and Ms. A. Scarce

16/12 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, S. P. Shannon and Mrs. C J. Spencer.

17/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor J. S. Brogan disclosed an interest in respect of item No. 4 as an employee of a Health Trust and in respect of item No 12 which made reference to his employer.

18/12 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 18th June 2012 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

19/12 JOINT SERVICE REVIEW - THE FUTURE CONFIGURATION OF ACUTE SERVICES IN WORCESTERSHIRE

The Board received a presentation in respect of the Worcestershire NHS Joint Services Review, Worcestershire hospitals – fit for tomorrow, from representatives of Worcestershire Acute Health Trust (WAHT). Members were reminded that a number of pre-prepared questions had been forwarded to WAHT. The presentation was an overview on the case for change of the Joint Services Review and provided information on the models of care which were currently being developed together with details of the project's planned timetable and any associated governance issues in relation to it. Members were informed that this was a joint review between the commissioners, NHS Worcestershire and the Acute Hospital, which commenced in March 2012 with

the aim of a final business case being prepared by January/February 2013. The review was for the whole of WAHT's services which operated from 3 sites plus 4 community hospitals.

It was a clinically led review and covered 4 work streams, Women and Children, Emergency Care, Elective Care (planned care) and Elderly Care. Representatives from each of these work streams had been involved from primary care and secondary care, together with clinicians from a whole range across the community including ambulance services, nursing and general practitioners. The Models of care, which had been identified and which were explained in detail to Members, would then be appraised in order to assess which should be put forward as final options. It was emphasised that, in all the Models identified, outpatients, diagnostics and primary care facilities would be maintained and provided exactly as they were at the moment in all parts of the County. The Models were focused on the acute in-patient or emergency admission type of work.

The evaluation framework was explained to Members in detail, together with the non financial and financial criteria and weightings that would be considered when creating the shortlist of options which would be included in the final consultation. It was stressed that this was a clinically led and patient centred review and every opportunity was being taken to involve the public in the engagement process. There would be continued external scrutiny through the Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the National Clinical Assessment Board and Stakeholder Reference Board. Details of the revised project timetable were provided together with details of the governance arrangements, accountability and decision making process which would be followed in order to reach the formal public consultation stage in Autumn 2012.

(A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix 1 for information.)

The representatives in attendance were:

Christine Fearn – Joint Service Review Project Director

Dr. Angus Thompson – Consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist, Clinical Director for Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

Dr. Anthony Kelly – General Practitioner from Droitwich.

The Board discussed the following areas in detail and the representatives from WAHT responded to questions:

- The potential closure of the Accident and Emergency department at the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch. (Specific statistics had been requested in respect of admissions and it was confirmed that these would be provided to the Board with an explanatory briefing paper.)
- The increase in life expectancy of the population and the affect this had on the way services were delivered and the changes that needed to be

made in order to support those with long term chronic conditions and which it was felt could best be managed within the community.

- Travel (for example by public transport) and accessibility concerns, including traffic congestion (particularly in Bromsgrove) and what were viewed as excessive parking charges at hospitals for patients, visitors and staff and the inclusion of this as part of the modelling process. The WAHT representatives confirmed that these issues had and would continue to be considered in any decisions that were made. However evidence from across the country was being researched where the outcomes still appeared to be better despite such problems, particularly in respect of trauma where increased travel time did not have an adverse clinical effect on patients.
- Particular areas of specialist care already being centralised at specific hospitals within the County and the current provision of two trauma units within the County.
- Any impact that the Joint Services Review could have on the Princess of Wales Hospital in Bromsgrove. It was explained that this was not part of the review as it was looking at acute hospital services and not community hospitals.
- Details of the external assessment and the experts involved.
- The levels of units in respect of midwifery and the role of a midwifery led unit and details of Model B, Members were informed that a similar model to this had recently been put in place at Cheltenham and Gloucester.
- Details of the finances which had led to this decision and of the budgetary position of WAHT together with any overspend and efficiencies of the hospitals concerned and necessary efficiency savings. (Information on PFI was available on the WAHT website.)
- The role and experience of junior doctors nationally and how this was managed and the involvement of consultants on a more regular basis with junior doctors.

The Chairman thanked the representatives of WAHT for a detailed and informative presentation.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

20/12 **THE COUNTYWIDE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2012-17**

The Board received a presentation from the Housing Strategy & Enabling Team Leader in respect of the Worcestershire Joint Homelessness Strategy 2012-17.

The strategy had been produced following the relevant guidance and a comprehensive review of services being undertaken in 2011 by a specific project team. The Housing Strategy & Enabling Team Leader highlighted both national and current local issues which could have an affect on homelessness, including the Comprehensive Spending Review, the impact of the Localism Act, the increase in rough sleeping across the County and links to childhood life experiences such as domestic abuse and relationship breakdown. The

Board's attention was also brought to the 4 strategic goals of the strategy and the work which would be carried out in order for those goals to be met.

- Provide a pathway to a housing solution for everyone
- Create strong partnerships to tackle homelessness
- Take effective action to prevent anyone new to the streets having to sleep out for more than one night
- Reduce financial deprivation within our communities to minimise homelessness.

The Housing Strategy & Enabling Team Leader responded to questions and the Board discussed the following areas in detail:

- Links between health, especially mental health and homelessness
- Available support from staff based at Bromsgrove
- Providing accommodation for homeless persons from outside of the district.
- The Choice Based letting system
- An increase in the number of young people being housed in sheltered accommodation and whether this was a temporary measure – officers agreed to investigate and provide Members with further information.

The Board were informed that the Joint Homelessness Strategy had completed its consultation on 6th July 2012 and would be presented to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting to be held on 5th September 2012.

RESOLVED that the presentation on the Worcestershire Joint Homelessness Strategy 2012-17 be noted.

21/12 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT QUARTER ENDING 31ST MARCH 2012**

The Board considered the Quarter 4 Corporate Performance Report and received a brief summary of its content from the Head of Business Transformation. It was highlighted to Members that of the 16 performance indicators included in the report 10 had improved and 6 had declined. Improvements had been seen in the use of Bromsgrove Urban Rural Transport (BURT) scheme and Shopmobility and increased attendance at the Artrix Centre. The area which was causing the most concern was the decline in usage of the town centre car parks. The Head of Business Transformation confirmed that a marketing campaign was being prepared in conjunction with the car park management team, Wychavon District Council.

The Board discussed the following areas in detail and the Head of Business Transformation responded to questions on those areas:

- The decline in the use of the car parks and the financial implications to the Council – Members queried whether this was due to an increase in parking charges which may have occurred. (Officers to seek

clarification of any increase in charges and details of financial implications.)

- Details of the marketing campaign to promote the car parks and the aims and objectives, financial implications and reasoning behind working with Wychavon District Council.
- The increase in usage of the Artrix and the financial support provided by the Council. (Officers to clarify whether a review would be possible.)
- The processing of benefits and the improvements which could be expected from the transformation programme.
- The reasons for the delay in payment of invoices by the Council (Officers to seek further clarification on this point).
- Reference was made within the body of the report to 2 national indicators in respect of air quality and climate change, however further information was not given. Members requested Officers to provide further information in respect of those indicators.
- The recording of complaints and the inclusion of the recommendations from the Planning Policy Task Group.

The Executive Director, Planning and Regeneration, Regulatory Services, Housing Services responded to points raised by Members in respect of the processing of planning applications and the comments provided within the report in respect of the delays which had occurred. It was expected that improvements from the transformation process would have an impact on the figures for the first quarter of 2012/13.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Corporate Performance Report Quarter 4 be noted; and
- (b) that the Board receive a detailed report in respect of Car Parking, to include details of the marketing campaign, the financial implications of the reduction in usage and the aims and objectives and any cost implications of working with Wychavon District Council, at the meeting to be held on 10th September 2012.

22/12 **SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE AND HEALTH QUARTER 4 REPORT**

The Board considered the Sickness Absence Performance and Health report for Quarter 4, which included statistics for the 12 month period ended 31st March 2012. The acting Shared Human Resources & Organisational Development Manager informed Members that a new format for the report had been used which should be more useful and informative; however Members comments and feedback would be welcomed. It was also the final quarter before the majority of shared services had been put in place. The movement of staff between sites had presented some difficulties as no comparable data was available, from April 2012 there would be an opportunity for Members to access details of shared services which were not hosted by the Council.

The following areas were highlighted and discussed by Members:

- A 20% reduction in absence for quarter 4.

- The modifications made to the pie chart used to highlight categories for absence.
- The statistics for the full year 2011/12, which were below the corporate target.
- Seasonal absences and work being done to identify reason for peaks in absences at particular times throughout the year.
- Long term absences compared to short term and the relevance to particular areas of work, for example Environmental Services.
- Targets for 2012/13 and the inclusion of this within the review of sickness reporting. (This would be circulated to the Health & Safety Committee for discussion.)

The Board discussed and the acting Shared Human Resources & Organisational Development Manager responded to questions in respect of the following areas:

- Any established patterns identified in respect of short term sickness absence (particularly in respect of Environmental Services).
- The inclusion of agency staff sickness absences within the figures provided for Environmental Services. (Officers to clarify whether this was the case and if not the reasons for not including this information.)
- The training events which had been held to assist managers in the understanding and dealing with mental health issues in the work place. The Board were informed that these had been provided by a staff member who was appropriately trained and therefore funded from existing budgets.
- Stress related absences in relation to transformation and other work related issues.
- Members noted that within the pie chart used to highlight categories of absence there was a category classed as “unknown” – the acting Shared Human Resources & Organisational Development Manager agreed to clarify this point.

RESOLVED that the Sickness Absence Performance and Health Quarter 4 Report be noted.

23/12 **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS 1ST JULY TO 31ST OCTOBER 2012**

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions was considered by the Board. Members commented on the slippage which had occurred in respect of the Fly Posting Policy and the Land Disposal Policy, both of which should have been received by Cabinet at its meeting on 6th June 2012 and were now scheduled in for the Cabinet meeting on 5th September 2012. Officers agreed to investigate and report back to Members.

24/12 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSALS**

The Chairman reminded the Board that at the meeting held on 18th June 2012 Members were requested to submit any completed Overview and Scrutiny

topic proposals for consideration and inclusion within the Work Programme. Members were provided with copies of five such proposal forms and following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that a report and presentation be received at the Board meeting to be held on 10th September 2012 in respect of the Local Strategic Partnership;
- (b) that a report and presentation on the Shared Services – Value for Money? Topic proposal be scheduled into the Work Programme as soon as practicably possible; and
- (c) that CCTV Shared Service, Regulatory Services and Impact of the Localism Act on Bromsgrove District be scheduled in to the Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

25/12 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board considered the Work Programme and it was

RESOLVED that subject to the amendments detailed in Minute No. 24/12 the Work Programme be noted.

26/12 **WCC HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA AND MINUTES**

Councillor Dr. B. T. Cooper, the Council's representative on the Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) informed Members that as the Board had already received an in depth presentation on the Joint Service Review he would not go into detail on the recent HOSC meetings, however he was happy to respond to questions from Members either within the meeting or outside if members wished to email him. Councillor Dr. Cooper did confirm that the majority of the financial queries raised early in the meeting were answered on page 11 of the HOSC meeting Minutes dated 22nd May 2012.

The meeting closed at 8.37 p.m.

Chairman

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 28TH JUNE 2012 AT 4.24 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors M. A. Bullivant, Mrs. B. Behan, M. Braley, Mrs. L. Hodgson, J. Riaz, Mrs. E. Stokes, P. Harrison and A. N. Blagg

Observers: Mr. V. Allison, Deputy Managing Director, Wychavon District Council and Ruth Mullen, Corporate Director, Service Delivery, Worcester City Council

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. S. Jordan, Ms. C. Flanagan, M. Kay and Mrs. P. Ross

1/12 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor M. Hart, Wyre Forest District Council be elected as Chairman of the Joint Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

2/12 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor D. Thain, Worcestershire County Council be elected as Vice-Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

In the absence of Councillors M. Hart and D. Thain it was agreed that Councillor Mrs. L. Hodgson, Worcester City Council be elected as Chairman for the meeting.

3/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. B. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council, P. Mould, Redditch Borough Council, D. Thain, Worcestershire County Council, K. Jennings, Wychavon District Council and M. Hart, Wyre Forest District Council.

4/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received. However, Councillor Mrs. L. Hodgson, Worcester City Council declared a prejudicial interest during the discussion on Agenda Item 6 (Worcestershire Regulatory Services Budget Monitoring April 2011 – March 2012) as Cabinet Member, Worcester City Council with regard to Appendix 3, Acting Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Services Manager's Opinion on the Effectiveness of the System of

Internal Control at Bromsgrove District Council for the Year Ended 31st March 2012. Worcester City Council was the host council for the Internal Audit Shared Services.

5/12 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 23rd February 2012 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

6/12 **WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGET MONITORING**
APRIL 2011 - MARCH 2012

The Committee considered a report which detailed the financial position for the period April 2011 to March 2012.

The Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources, Bromsgrove District Council introduced the report and in doing so informed the Committee that for the financial year 2011/2012 the body (Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee) had been classified as a small relevant body by the Audit Commission as its income was less than £6.5 million. As a result of this classification the requirement of the formal accounting statements had been limited to the return as detailed at Appendix 2 to the report. At this stage in the meeting the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources, Bromsgrove District Council provided Members with an amended version of Appendix 2 to the report and in doing so explained the amendments to Members.

At this stage in the meeting Councillor Mrs. L. Hodgson, Worcester City Council declared a prejudicial interest during the discussion on Agenda Item 6 (Worcestershire Regulatory Services Budget Monitoring April 2011 – March 2012) as Cabinet Member, Worcester City Council with regard to Appendix 3, Acting Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Services Manager's Opinion on the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control at Bromsgrove District Council for the Year Ended 31st March 2012. Worcester City Council was the host council for the Internal Audit Shared Services.

The Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources, Bromsgrove District Council responded to Members' questions with regard to the following:

- Proposal to set aside £35,000 to fund an enhanced development programme for managers.
- Underspend due to salary savings arising from two Grade B posts.
- Environmental Protection increase in expenditure.
- Agency Staff and Contractors / Consultants

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services responded to Members' questions with regard to agency staff and contractors / consultants and in doing so informed Members that agency staff had been engaged to "backfill" for staff whilst contractors had been engaged for specific projects. Moving

forward agency staff would be engaged to “backfill” for staff involved in the ICT project.

At this stage in the meeting and with agreement from Joint Committee Members, the Chairman for the meeting signed the amended version of Appendix 2 to the report - Audit Commission, Small Bodies in England, Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2012.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that, in response to the questions raised as detailed in the preamble above, The Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources, Bromsgrove District Council be tasked to check the accounting codes used with regard to agency staff and contractors / consultants;
- (b) that the financial position for the period April 2011 to March 2012, be noted;
- (c) that a reserve of £35,000 to fund a leadership development programme for senior managers, be approved;
- (d) that the refund of the remaining balance of the 2010/2011 reserve of £301,000 together with the underspend of £267,000 from 2011/2012 to the participating Councils, to be allocated on the % basis as detailed in the Business Case 2010/2011. The total of £568,000 to be repaid in 2012/2013, as set out below, be approved;

Council	% Share	Refund of savings
		£
Bromsgrove	11.05%	62,801
Malvern Hills	9.58%	54,447
Redditch	11.31%	64,279
City of Worcester	11.11%	63,142
Wychavon	16.55%	94,059
Wyre Forest	10.82%	61,494
Worcestershire	29.58%	168,114
		568,336

- (e) that the Annual Return to include the Accounting Statements for the Joint Committee for the period 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012, be approved; and
- (f) that the Internal Audit Manager’s assurance statement for the financial year 2011/2012, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, be noted.

7/12

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2011 / 2012

The Committee considered the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report for the period 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012.

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) informed the Committee that under the Worcestershire Shared Services Partner Agreement the Joint Committee was required to receive the annual report at its annual meeting. He then thanked the Chairman and Committee Members for their support during a challenging and busy year.

The Head of WRS informed Members that the report covered the performance of the new service and a number of significant milestones which had been achieved. Strong management of performance was vital to the success of the service to ensure that customers were satisfied and partners were reassured by the delivery of the service on their behalf. The WRS leadership team was committed to driving performance forward so that a high standard of service delivery would be maintained. The Head of WRS also thanked the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources, Bromsgrove District Council and officers for their support and assistance with the financial management of the service.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that, subject to the following amendment, as agreed at Minute Number 6/12, Table 5 – Budget Outturn for 2011/2012 be amended to include a reserve of £35,000 to fund a leadership development programme, the report be noted; and
- (b) that a copy of the amended WRS Annual Report 2011/2012 be forwarded to the Chief Executive / Managing Director of each member authority.

The meeting closed at 5.15 p.m.

Chairman

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 11TH JULY 2012 AT 4.35 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors M. Hart (Chairman), D. Thain (Vice-Chairman),
M. A. Bullivant, C. B. Taylor (during Minute No 10/12 and part of 11/12),
Mrs. B. Behan, M. Braley, P. Mould, Mrs. L. Hodgson, J. Riaz,
K. Jennings, Mrs. E. Stokes and I. Hardiman (Substituting for P. Harrison)

Officers: Mr. S. Jorden, Ms. C. Flanagan, Mr. M. Thomas and
Mrs. P. Ross

11/12 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Blagg,
Worcestershire County Council and P. Harrison, Wyre Forest District Council.

12/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

13/12 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

RESOLVED that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, as amended, the relevant paragraph of the part, as set out below, and that it is in the public interest to do so:-

<u>Minute No.</u>	<u>Paragraph</u>	
11	3	“

14/12 **IT PROJECT - ITT EVALUATION REPORT**

The Committee considered a report on the procurement of an integrated IT solution that would enable Worcestershire Regulatory Services to deliver its functions and priorities more effectively.

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and Mr. M. Thomas, ICT Project Manager responded to Members' questions with regard to the evaluation undertaken and the conclusions reached as detailed in the IT

Project – ITT Evaluation Report - July 2012. Following further discussion it was

RESOLVED: that the recommendation from the Management Board to appoint the preferred supplier, as detailed in the IT Project – ITT Evaluation Report – July 2012 for the delivery of an integrated IT solution for Worcestershire Regulatory Services, be approved.

The meeting closed at 5.22 p.m.

Chairman

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL AND
BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

SHARED SERVICES BOARD

12th July 2012 at 5.30pm

COMMITTEE ROOM 2, TOWN HALL, REDDITCH

Present: Councillors Bill Hartnett (Chair), Michael Braley (substitute for Cllr Carole Gandy) Greg Chance, Debbie Taylor, (Redditch Borough Council)

Mark Bullivant (substitute for Cllr Hollingworth), Steve Colella and Mike Webb (Bromsgrove District Council).

Officers: Ruth Bamford, Kevin Dicks, Sue Hanley, T Kristunas, Helen Mole, Deb Poole, Guy Revans and Liz Tompkin

Notes: Denise Sunman

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Cllrs Hollingworth, Sherrey (BDC) and Cllr Gandy (RBC).

2. MINUTES

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting of the Board held on 19th April 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 MATTERS ARISING

In response to a Member's query regarding the contract for the ICT Helpdesk (Cllr Colella), Officers confirmed that the contract with Tamworth Council had not been terminated but would be in the near future.

CONFIDENTIALITY

These notes are an open public record of proceedings of the Board.

[Meetings of the Board are not subject to statutory Access to Information requirements; but information relating to individual post holders and/or employee relations matters would nonetheless not be revealed to the press or public.]

3. **REVENUES – SHARED SERVICE BUSINESS CASE**

The Board considered a report and presentation by Mrs Kristunas on the business case for a shared Revenues Service between Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC).

It was **AGREED** that

- 1) **the report and presentation be noted; and**
- 2) **the Board recommends to both Redditch Borough Council's Executive Committee and Bromsgrove District Council's Cabinet that the business case for a shared Revenues Service be approved for implementation.**

4. **PRESENTATIONS**

4.1 Planning

Mrs Bamford gave a verbal update on transformation of the planning application process. She reported that collection of information from a variety of sources had started in February and had identified possible ways of improving the system.

She reported that the next stage would be to pilot a new process but at the same time keep the old one running thus allowing Officers to identify best practice from both.

Members were informed that the new process would give Officers more time and opportunities to involve other professionals and the public at an earlier stage in the planning application process.

4.2 Environmental Services

Mr Revans gave a presentation on Environmental Services transformation. He reported that the process was at an early stage having started on 14th June. Two areas had been identified to undergo transformation:

- Waste Collection / Management
- Stores

In respect of Waste Transformation work had begun on gathering demand and data collection for waste transformation. The information gathered would be used in the project for route optimisation which would be carried out over the next 6-8 months. The team had looked at service requests but had found that these did not show the whole picture. Identification of latent demand had shown that proactive, planned works were not being carried out on time and this failure was adding to service requests received.

A strategic purpose had been identified as 'keep my place safe and looking good'.

In respect of Stores Transformation Mr Revans reported that planning work had been undertaken and work was expected to start in August. The intervention team would include, among others, staff from Stores and Housing. The Heads of Environmental and Housing Services would both be involved in the intervention and it was anticipated that the process would be relatively quick with implementation within a month of the start date.

4.3 Rent & Welfare & Housing Options

Mrs Tompkin gave an update on transformation in Housing, with a particular focus on Housing Options. Using the Vanguard Model checks had been made on the following areas:

- Housing Advice / Homelessness
- Special Needs Housing
- Housing Allocations
- Customer Services

In March 2012 a trial was undertaken which involved a multi-disciplinary team of Officers from the One Stop Shop (OSS), Benefits, Special Needs and Housing Advice. New demands were dealt with at the first point of contact until completion using a common purpose and principles as follows:

Common Purpose: 'Help me find somewhere to live that meets my needs, when I need it.'

Principles:

- Take time to listen and understand my problem
- Help me find a solution
- Don't leave me until my problems is resolved

5. NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next meeting of the Board would be held on **Thursday, 11th October 2012 at Committee Room 2, Redditch Borough Council** commencing at **5.30 pm**, as previously.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.40pm

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Agenda Item 7

THERE ARE NO ENCLOSURES FOR THIS AGENDA ITEM

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CABINET

5th September 2012

AFFORDABLE HOMES/BDHT STRATEGIC ASSET DISPOSAL STRATEGY TO 2017

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Del Booth
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Sue Hanley, Executive Director of Leisure, Environment & Community Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Key Decision : Yes	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The report sets out the proposed development programme and strategic Asset Disposal Strategy to 2017 which is being proposed by our major Registered Provider BDHT.
- 1.2 Members are asked to consider the strategy which will result in the disposal of up to 30 units of accommodation (to 2017), many of which may result in a loss of stock from properties in rural locations of the District.
- 1.3 The overall gain in respect of affordable housing provision is expected to be 170 dwellings as a result of the programme.
- 1.4 BDHT are seeking support to the strategy prior to a submission to the Homes & Community Agency (HCA) who are the regeneration delivery agent and social housing regulator for England.
- 1.5 The report seeks to advise Members in totality of the implications of the development and disposal programme and the potential consequences in the delivery of an affordable housing programme.
- 1.6 The report advises of the financial and legal implications in Members agreeing to the strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND:

- 2.1 **That Members note the Business Plan/Development Programme that BDHT propose to submit to the HCA in which they seek the Council's support for the delivery of an affordable homes programme to 2017;**

AND

- 2.2 **That Members approve the disposal of 30 units of BDHTs property stock for reinvestment into an affordable homes programme in Bromsgrove in support of the strategy;**

OR

- 2.3 **That Members approve the disposal of up to 30 units of BDHTs property stock up to a value of £4m for reinvestment into an affordable homes programme in Bromsgrove in support of the strategy.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 Registered Provider bids or submissions to the HCA are expected to include and detail the commitment of resources the Registered Providers, and any other public or private contributions can make. This would include free or discounted land, local authority grant, S106 contributions and in this proposal, retention of the full capital return on disposal of stock. All of the disposals as a result of this asset disposal strategy would be considered to be exempt stock disposals and the total capital reinvested in affordable housing by BDHT.
- 3.2 It is a reasoned assumption that no further HCA grant will be available beyond 2015. For BDHT to develop, without grant, an additional 200 affordable housing units between now and 2017 they will require a contribution to the programme for a sum of £4m from the sale of existing units/stock.
- 3.3 Following discussion with BDHT it is proposed that Bromsgrove District Council support disposal of properties up to a maximum of 30 units or a number of disposals to the value of £4m to support the development programme. (See recommendations 2.2 or 2.3).
- 3.4 In treating all the disposals as exempt disposals would equate to Bromsgrove District Council's financial contribution to the programme to be £2m (retained 50% capital receipt).

Legal Implications

- 3.5 The relationship between the Council and BDHT regarding the management of former Council housing stock is set out in the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) agreement dated 29th March 2004.

- 3.6 Clause 3.2 of the LSVT agreement required BDHT not to dispose of any part of those properties without:
- 1) giving the Council 14 days notice in writing of its intention to make a disposal; and
 - 2) accounting for and giving the Council a claw-back sum calculated at 50% of the price received from the disposal, less some specified amounts.
- 3.7 The Transfer Agreement sets out in Schedule 2, a list of 14 specific circumstances where the obligation would not apply but the disposal would be regarded as an “exempt disposal” and includes at (xiv) p7:
- “where it can be demonstrated that the net proceeds are to be entirely invested in a specific Social Housing development that meets the needs identified within the Council’s approved housing strategy from time to time and the Council gives its approval which shall not be unreasonably withheld in the event that the application is supported by evidence that would have qualified the project for Local Authority Social Housing Grant had such grant still been available”.
- 3.7 The governments framework for the delivery of affordable housing from 2011 (and set out in the “*Affordable Homes Programme Framework*”) changed the way that social housing was to be delivered and rather than a specific social housing development (as envisaged by the LSVT agreement) delivery is based on proposals submitted and approved by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) the body which took over the regulation of social housing in England on the 1st April 2012.
- 3.8 The BDHT Strategic Asset Disposal policy is the strategic element of its compliance with its delivery options for the period to 2017 to be submitted to HCA.
- 3.9 In committing to the principles of the bid, Members will be agreeing to the full capital receipt from the stock disposals being strategically invested in the development of new affordable housing provision on the basis of any proportion of the capital receipt that could be due to the Council would be waived as a Council contribution towards the development bid for new affordable units.
- 3.10 The requirements for consent on disposals remains. The detailed arrangements that have been agreed are set out below.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.11 The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is the national housing regeneration and social housing regulatory agency for England. The current HCAs Affordable Homes Programme Framework will consider

submissions and bids within the national framework to deliver a supply of affordable housing in the future.

- 3.12 In the previous bidding round in April 2011 Bromsgrove District Council Cabinet accepted that BDHT would have to sell 20 units of stock as a financial contribution in order to build 200 new affordable homes. As BDHT only received 28% of what they bid for in the programme, the disposals were proportionately scaled down to six disposals as this was all that was necessary to build the 57 units that the grant was awarded on. The Council supported the programme.
- 3.13 To date BDHT have sold four properties, with a further one approved/ agreed following consultation with Bromsgrove District Council.
- 3.14 BDHT are to propose to the HCA a future development programme for the delivery of affordable housing to 2017.
- 3.15 BDHT Corporate Improvement Plan strategic initiative is to access additional finance to provide a further 200 affordable homes by 2017. The provisional development programme has been provided and is enclosed for Members at Appendix 1.
- 3.16 BDHT have also provided to the Council their Board report which outlines the methodology in assessment of the return on assets and approach to disposal. This includes a projection of the sale of 30 units and other assets to generate £4m capital receipts by the 31st March 2017 (Appendix 2).
- 3.17 In order for the Council to give its full commitment to the principles of the strategy and the programme, there are some sensitivities to be addressed, which include:-
 - a) The loss of social housing in particular in rural areas through stock disposal;
 - b) The level and degree of involvement of the Council in the disposal programme. Officers have recently met with the Chief Executive of BDHT and have agreed the following:-
 - i) The previous commitment given to the Council will be maintained in the future programme:

“Where BDHT disposes of a rural asset, being a property within a small settlement (as defined in Table 2 of the District’s settlement hierarchy, Bromsgrove District Council, Core Strategy 2), 50% of the capital receipt, after the deduction of reasonable and properly incurred BDHT expenses, will be ring fenced by BDHT, for a period of 30 months, to be dedicated to a Rural Exception scheme,

where there is a commitment by the District and Parish Councils and a strategic acknowledgement by the Planning Department of a need, as opposed to a demand, for the development.”

- ii) BDHT have agreed to the strengthening of the disposal process at an Officer level so that the Council will be consulted to ensure that the property/properties considered for disposal has gone through a full impact assessment. The impact assessment will take into account known housing needs for the property and number of remaining units of affordable housing in the area and any impacts the loss of the unit will have on the Council’s homelessness duty and welfare reform.

3.18 To support the delivery of a programme of an additional 200 affordable homes in Bromsgrove it will require BDHT to sell properties with a high value and/or likely to sell quickly. Undoubtedly this will deplete stock in the rural areas. Officers will work with BDHT to mitigate the loss of stock and try to prevent unreasonable depletion of stock, however, there may be areas which are disproportionately affected as there is little control as to which properties become available first. The Council will need to commit to responding quickly to any requests and discussion regarding the impact assessment. Whilst there will still be the required approval of the Council’s Chief Executive to disposals, a greater involvement of the Housing Strategy Team is envisaged.

3.19 In considering support to the programme for the delivery of affordable housing by BDHT the following issues also need to be taken into account:-

- a) The Strategic Housing Market Assessment shows that the turnover of social lettings alone within Bromsgrove District is insufficient to meet the continued need for affordable housing. As a result, delivery of new affordable housing will be necessary if the authority is to meet the housing needs of its residents. The Housing Market Assessment shows that an additional 219 units of affordable housing are required per year to meet the district’s housing need.
- b) Welfare Reform has the potential to significantly impact the Council’s Homelessness duty which could have severe financial consequences. Our research shows that over 300 households will be affected by changes to the Local Housing Allowance pricing them out of the Private Rented Sector. Due to the need to move residents to smaller accommodation (due to the reduction of housing benefit for under occupying social housing) the impact could result in the Council having over 100 homeless households in temporary accommodation within the next two

years. The potential cost to the Authority could be in excess of £1m.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

3.20 The actions and recommendations set out in this report identify the Council's support to the housing needs of Bromsgrove and to assist BDHT as the primary Registered Provider to invest in affordable housing in accordance with identified needs and priorities.

3.21 There could be an impact on the availability of affordable housing in rural areas as a result of the disposal strategy.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 Should the strategy be agreed by the Council, the risks can be identified as primarily:-

a) Depletion of stock, particularly those in rural areas;

4.2 Should the strategy not be supported by the Council, the risks can be identified as primarily:-

a) The development programme could still be considered by the HCA and agreed, without the support of the Strategic Housing Authority (Bromsgrove District Council).

b) Risk of lack of affordable housing to meet the needs of the residents of Bromsgrove;

c) Potential increased homelessness costs with added pressures on accommodation/ stock, due to Welfare Reform proposals.

4.3 On balance Officers consider the risks of not supporting the programme of delivery of affordable housing to be greater than the loss of existing stock.

4.4 It is considered that with strengthened consultation arrangements, prior to disposal, the risks can be mitigated.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 BDHT Provisional Development Programme

Appendix 2 BDHT Return on Housing Assets & Approach to Disposal

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Terms of LSVT 29th March 2004

- Affordable Homes Programme Framework – Cabinet Report 6th April 2011
- Support to Principal Preferred Partner Registered Providers in the Delivery of Affordable Housing – Cabinet Report 5th October 2011

7. AUTHOR OF REPORT

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5th September 2012

COUNTYWIDE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY FOR WORCESTERSHIRE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Del Booth
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Deputy Chief Executive
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	Not Applicable
Key Decision - Yes	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The report brings before Members a Draft Countywide Joint Homelessness Strategy for approval (Appendix 1). The document is currently in the process of being finalised following consultation.
- 1.2 The Strategy replaces the previous Countywide Homelessness Strategy and considers how austerity measures might adversely impact on homelessness and the measures that are needed to mitigate the impact of these.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Members note the content of the report**
- 2.2 **That the Draft Countywide Joint Homelessness Strategy and action plan attached at Appendix 1 be approved and delegated authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to agree any final minor changes from the consultation process.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 A Countywide Homelessness Co-ordinator Post is jointly funded by the Worcestershire local authorities and Supporting People.
- 3.2 Where actions within the action plan are set to assess or investigate the potential implementation of certain new services and local funding would be required, a bid would have to be submitted for consideration under the Council's corporate annual budget process.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local authorities to publish a homelessness strategy and this must be now in accordance with the 2007 Code of Guidance on Homelessness Strategies. The legislation prescribes that prior to the Homelessness Strategy being written a review into the nature and extent of homelessness in the local authority area is required.

5. SERVICE/OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In 2002 the Homelessness Act introduced the requirement for local authorities to review homelessness in their area and produce a Homelessness Strategy. This legislation acted as a catalyst for the strategic planning of homelessness services and helped local authorities move from reactive services to services that are planned, proactive and preventative with a strong emphasis on partnership working.
- 5.2 The first Countywide Homelessness Strategy 'Working Together to Change Lives' facilitated greater partnership working not only between local authorities but other key partners involved with service users who at some point in their life are likely to require some support to secure accommodation that meets their needs. Since 2007, the Worcestershire authorities have been successful in preventing homelessness and this has led to a decline in the number of homeless decisions and acceptances.
- 5.3 This Worcestershire Joint Homelessness Strategy replaces the previous strategy and considers homelessness in a setting of austerity, radical welfare reforms and the impact that these reforms may have on services. The strategy has been produced in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, the Code of Guidance (2007), Homelessness Strategies: A good practice handbook (2002), and more recently a CLG specialist advisors circular entitled "36 things to think about – developing a homelessness strategy in a changing world."
- 5.4 A separate comprehensive review of homelessness was carried out to analyse the nature and extent of homelessness across the County.
- 5.5 Officers and partners are currently developing a Bromsgrove Homelessness action plan to supplement the Countywide Joint Homelessness Strategy.

6. WHO IS THE STRATEGY AIMED AT?

- 6.1 The strategy is aimed at anyone with an interest in tackling and preventing homelessness within the County. Its objective is to influence thinking, policy making and action at a County and local level to provide homelessness services and to support Local Housing Authorities in attracting resources into Worcestershire.
- 6.2 Central to the strategy is the promotion of partnership working with customers, other agencies and across boundaries to ensure a synergy in approach that leads to maximum efficiency in the light of significant cuts in Central Government funding. The strategy identifies the importance of working with a range of partners including Supporting People and Health Services. Financial deprivation and worklessness are also key issues identified in the development of the Strategy. Lack of accommodation is identified as an issue and making better use of the private rented sector as a housing option for those who are socially excluded is considered a priority. In addition, a personalised approach to rough sleeping where services are proactive and responsive, offering a holistic approach that meets the needs of the individual to ensure No Second Night Out and tackles entrenched rough sleeping.

7. WHO AND WHAT HELPED TO SHAPE THE STRATEGY?

- 7.1 Stakeholders were central to developing the strategy and a consultation event was held on 12th July 2011. This 'Home Truths' event was well attended by key partners and commissioners. Service users who have lived through the experience of homelessness, shared their stories and ideas to improve the delivery of services. Workshops were held to develop an understanding of priorities and these priorities were incorporated into the strategy and delivery plan. In depth research into the journeys of homeless households was carried out to place the customer at the heart of the strategy development and look holistically at the root causes and consequences of homelessness. In addition, a survey was sent out to both customers and stakeholders in order to develop an understanding of key issues from the coal face.
- 7.2 The consultation feedback on the draft Strategy ended on the 6th July 2012 and whilst this feedback has yet to be incorporated, the main issues raised related to making a stronger link between homelessness and mental health issues with outcomes that relate to confidence building and tackling low self esteem. Making stronger links to specific groups such as ethnic minorities and gypsy travellers. Develop closer working with CCG's, Healthy living action group and health and Well Being Boards, ensuring

accessibility of services to all minority groups and building better relationships with employment services.

- 7.3 It is intended that the new Countywide Joint Homelessness Strategy will sit alongside the existing Worcestershire Housing Strategy and the Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy, which are closely aligned.

8. KEY ISSUES WITHIN THE NEW COUNTYWIDE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

- 8.1 The vision for Worcestershire is **'to ensure that everyone has access to a place they can call home, where they can close their door and feel safe'**. To achieve this vision the main focus is on preventing homelessness from happening at all. Where homelessness cannot be prevented, the aim is to ensure that appropriate support is in place for people whilst finding a new home and beyond, to ensure that people have a firm foundation from which to create a new home and develop the skills to make it sustainable.

- 8.2 The Strategy identified four primary goals:

Goal 1 – Providing a pathway to a housing solution for everyone that accesses our services.

This goal looks at how authorities can maintain and improve existing services whilst providing value for money. It's aims are to increase the number of households prevented from becoming homeless, ensure that there is a pathway into housing for everyone accessing services, to maximise the supply and use of new and existing accommodation and develop a range of holistic initiatives to tackle the root cause of homelessness.

Goal 2 - Creating strong partnerships to tackle homelessness

This goal looks at the relationship between homelessness and partner agencies. It's aims are to look at how agencies might work together in the commissioning of services, to ensure effective cross agency working to rise to the challenge of localism and create more housing opportunities in the private rented sector.

Goal 3 – Taking effective action to prevent anyone new to the streets having to sleep out for more than one night.

This goal takes a personalised approach to rough sleeping to offer support and services tailored to the individual's needs and aspirations. It's aims are to develop a No Second Night Out standard for Worcestershire, reduce the incentives for people to remain in a street lifestyle, ensure that

there is a flow through supported accommodation and tackle entrenched rough sleeping.

Goal 4 – Tackling the financial deprivation of those affected by benefit reform, welfare reform and worklessness

This goal considers the impact of welfare reform and the recession. It's aims are to minimise the effects of welfare reform, provide good quality advice and signposting, assisting customers to maintain their accommodation and tackling worklessness.

9. CUSTOMER/EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The actions set out within the document are designed to enhance the Council's response to homelessness and those threatened with homelessness and support the local authority in carrying out it's statutory Duty under homelessness legislation.

9.2 The strategy and consultation process has been carried out in accordance with corporate equality and diversity policy. An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out on the Strategy to ensure that any adverse impact is identified and where possible mitigated or where this is not possible the reasons for this. An underpinning goal of the strategy is to ensure that initiatives are put in place to meet the diverse needs of our communities.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

10.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:

The ability to retain suitably qualified and experienced staff to implement the strategy and action plan.

The ability to maintain continued commitment and support from partners in addressing the actions identified.

10.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

Risk Register: Community Services
Key Objective Ref No: 4 - Effective, efficient and legally compliant Housing Service

11. WARDS AFFECTED

All

12. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Countywide Joint Homelessness Strategy Document and Action Plan.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Homelessness Review available electronically upon request, includes information on:

- The Review document which informs the Strategy includes information on:
 - The nature and extent of homelessness across the County
 - A profile of those who have experienced homelessness including data on the most vulnerable homeless groups.
 - Factors that will have impact on future levels of homelessness in the County.
 - Information on support, accommodation and resources available.
 - Outcomes from the previous strategy
 - Analysis of consultation undertaken

14. KEY AUTHOR OF REPORT

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Draft Worcestershire Joint Homelessness Strategy v3

2011-2016

Bromsgrove District Council

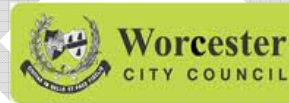
Malvern Hills District Council

Redditch Borough Council

Worcester City Council

Wychavon District Council

Wyre Forest District Council



1. [Foreword](#)
2. [Executive summary](#)
3. [Development of the strategy](#)
4. [Strategic framework](#)
5. [Homelessness review conclusions and new strategic objectives](#)
6. [Governance of the strategy](#)

Appendix: [Strategy delivery plan](#)

Appendix: [Future considerations for the strategy delivery plan](#)

Appendix: Resources available

Appendix: [Ongoing commitments](#)

Appendix: [Achievements from the previous homeless strategy](#)

Appendix: Homeless Pathways
Research, November 2011

The full homelessness review document will be available shortly via the districts websites.

Foreword

As Chairman of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (WSHOG) I am very proud to introduce this update to the Countywide Homelessness Strategy which will guide service development within Worcestershire over the next 5 years.

The vision for Worcestershire is **‘to ensure that everyone has access to a place they can call home, where they can close their door and feel safe’**. We know that this is an ambitious vision and will only be achieved by working together.

To achieve this vision we are focussing on preventing homelessness from happening at all. Where homelessness cannot be prevented, we aim to ensure that appropriate support is in place for people whilst finding a new home and beyond, to ensure that people have a firm foundation from which to create a new home and develop the skills to make it sustainable.

We have strong working relationships within the County with our key partner agencies including Supporting People, Housing Associations, Social Care, Primary Care Trusts, Police, voluntary sector partners and others. This means that we can achieve holistic outcomes for our customers and deliver efficiencies by ensuring that services compliment each other.

We have made sure that our customers have been able to influence the priorities within this strategy through consultation. They have been able to tell us about the things we have

done well and where we could do better. They have also told us about their fears and aspirations so that we can understand what causes people’s accommodation situation to break down or helps them sustain it. This means we can put into place the support and services our customers need to ensure that their future is secure.

We believe that in order to tackle the root causes of homelessness we need to ensure that services are person centred for each individual and provide a holistic approach to meeting their needs.

I am confident that the outcomes from this strategy and our working together will positively change people’s lives.

Elaine Salter

Chairman

Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group

1. Executive Summary

To be finalised once consultation responses have been taken into account

3. Development of the strategy

This strategy was developed by a Project Team of senior housing staff from each of the local authorities in Worcestershire, commissioned by the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (WSHOG).

The strategy has been produced in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, the Code of Guidance (2007), Homelessness Strategies: A good practice handbook (2002), and more recently a CLG specialist advisors circular entitled "36 things to think about – developing a homelessness strategy in a changing world."

Homelessness review

A comprehensive review of information has been carried out by the Project Team during 2011 to analyse the nature and extent of homelessness across the County.

This included Local Authority data, partner agency data, and research into the areas of need and resources available.

This review is available as a separate document and can be viewed at _____. A summary of the main conclusions of the review is included in this document.

Home Truths Event

To ensure stakeholders were central to developing the strategy, a consultation event was held on 12th July 2011. The event was well attended by key partners and commissioners. Also people who have lived through the experience of homelessness, shared their stories and ideas to improve the delivery of services. Workshops were held to get direct feedback, which has been fed into the strategy and delivery plan.

Homeless Journey Mapping

The Project Team were pleased to secure additional funding from each of the district housing departments to carry out in depth research into the journeys of homeless households. This provided a real opportunity to place the customer at the centre of the strategy development.

RRR Consultancy, a social research company, was commissioned to deliver the report on behalf of the Project Team. A copy of the report can be found at Appendix ?.

Customer and stakeholder surveys

In addition to the face to face feedback received via the Home Truths event and the Homeless Journey Mapping, a survey was sent out to both customers and stakeholders.

Key messages and analysis of feedback from the Home Truths event, Homeless Journey Mapping and the surveys are contained within the homelessness review document.

4. Strategic framework

The national framework - the Comprehensive Spending Review

The Comprehensive Spending Review has a number of implications on Government Departmental budgets and expenditure on welfare and tax credits. The key changes are:

- A national 7.1% decrease in annual council funding, leading to a cumulative £28.4% cut by 2014/15
- End to ring fencing of all Local Authority grants (few exceptions) including Supporting People funding no longer being ring fenced
- Supporting People funding cuts, locally this equates to 20%
- Homelessness Grant funding remains stable at approximately £400m between 2011-15
- A new, smaller Places of Change scheme with £37.5m additional investment from April 2012
- Increasing the age threshold for the Shared Room Rate in Housing Benefit from 25 to 35 years old
- Potential increase in social housing rents to 80% of market rents for new tenancies, alongside substantial 74% cut in affordable housing budget.
- 19 million fund 2012/13 to enable local authorities to help homeowners at risk of repossession

In light of the unprecedented cuts to public spending, which were announced in the last

Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010, Local Authorities are experiencing considerable pressure on their finances.

Some Local Authorities within the Worcestershire area need to make difficult decisions regarding where spending should be cut and that has resulted in a growing need to engage with local people by giving them a say in decisions that affect them and the services they use.

Localism and the Big Society

The Coalition Programme for Government 2010 set out the Coalition Government's commitment to the devolution of power from Central Government to those at a more local level. Integral to their approach is their wish to reduce social expenditure and develop local services that better reflect the needs of local people.

To do that they believe that local people need to be more actively involved in the communities where they live and work and that this will best enable them to address the perceived culture of welfare dependency in the United Kingdom and strengthen civil society by improving community relations.

The proposals for how change can be driven are detailed in the Localism Act and Welfare Reform Bill.

The Localism Act includes the introduction of directly elected mayors and police commissioners, greater devolved financial

powers to local governments and reforms to the social housing market.

Proposals in the Welfare Reform Bill include the introduction of a 'Universal Credit' to replace a range of existing means-tested benefits and tax credits for people of working age; the introduction of Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) to replace Disability Living Allowance; restrictions on housing benefit entitlement for social housing tenants in under-occupied accommodation and overall benefit caps on the amount that households can claim.

The Government's 'Big Society Agenda' is being coordinated through the Cabinet Office which works across all government departments to deliver policies which aim to engage more citizens in developing their communities and offers support to community groups wishing to assume greater control in public service delivery. The involvement of the Third Sector has been further encouraged by the creation of the Big Society Bank which offers charities, social enterprises and neighbourhood groups additional funding.

Impact for Worcestershire

The key policy and resource changes announced by the Government which will have a direct impact upon Homelessness in Worcestershire and the delivery of the strategy are:

Resources

- Government funding to Local Authorities will go down by 28% over the next four years
- Councils no longer have to monitor Local Area Agreement targets
- Homelessness Grant was confirmed to Local Authorities for 2011-12 and 2012-13 with the majority of Worcestershire local authorities receiving a substantial increase, however it is no longer ring fenced.
- Nationally £6bn has been allocated to funding the Supporting People programme over four years. However, this is not ring fenced and the allocation has been made to Worcestershire County Council.
- Provision for Disabled Facilities Grants will rise with inflation but Local Authorities will be given more discretion for their allocation
- The Regional Growth Fund will be extended to three years and increased to £1.4bn
- The Homes and Communities Agency will provide capital investment to support the building of up to 150,000 new affordable homes over the next 4 years
- Introduction of the New Homes Bonus scheme will mean communities benefit from new housing and economic development – matching the additional council tax from each new home for each of the following 6 years. Permission for homes granted now will count for the bonus and the Government are consulting on whether reuse of empty homes will also qualify them to develop policies regarding the type and length of tenancy granted and the circumstances relating to this.

- Investment via the Decent Homes programme will continue

Localism

- Citizens and volunteers will be supported to play a bigger role in shaping and providing services within communities
- Local Enterprise Partnerships have been set up to help drive growth and develop the local economy in partnership with local business and communities
- The creation of a 'Big Society Bank' will provide charities, neighbourhood groups and social enterprises with sustainable funding and allow them to play a greater role in delivering public services and tackling deep-rooted social problems
- Reform of the planning system will put local authorities and local people in charge of decisions on new house-building in their local areas, increasing housing supply

Homelessness

- The changes to the way that rough sleepers are counted will assist in providing a more accurate picture of the number of people in need.
- The Government has given Local Authorities more scope to discharge their Statutory Homeless Duty through placing households into private sector accommodation.

Social Housing

- The Government wants to make social housing more responsive, flexible and fair so that a greater number of people are able to access social housing in a way that reflects their needs and changing circumstances. Under the

Localism Act there is a requirement for Local Authorities to develop Tenancy Strategies to provide Registered Providers with guidance to enable

- Social housing will be reformed to provide a more tailored response to individual need at a low cost
- Housing associations will introduce a new intermediate rent tenure called 'affordable rent' to social tenants
- Government reform of the National Register of Social Housing will reduce reporting requirements on social landlords

Welfare Reform and Local Housing Allowance Changes

- £2 billion will be allocated over the next four years to fund the implementation of a Universal Credit aimed at simplifying the benefit system
- Household benefit payments for families will be capped at around £500 per week from 2013
- The age threshold for the Shared Room Rate in Housing Benefit has increased from 25 to 25 year olds.
- A one-year time limit will be introduced for contributory Employment and Support Allowance for those in the Work Related Activity Group
- The Warm Front Programme is being scaled down over the next two years with a budget of £110 million in 2011/-12 and £100 million in 2012-13

Fuel Poverty

- From 2013, the Green Deal will replace Warm Front, and a new obligation will be imposed on energy providers – this will help households improve their energy efficiency with no up-front

costs. Phasing out Warm Front is estimated to save £345 million by 2013-14.

- The Government has also announced an independent review of the fuel poverty target and definition before the end of the year

regular review as the true impact of social reforms unfold.

The cuts to public sector finances and legislative reforms are far reaching and will have a significant impact on both the housing market overall and homelessness within Worcestershire. In particular benefit reforms such as the reduced Local Area allowance rate for single applicants aged between 25 and 35 years old, proposals to include Housing Benefit in the new 'Universal Credit' and the introduction of an overall benefit cap. These proposals have been met with criticism from many who believe that reforms on this scale and so quickly, will likely mean an increase in homelessness.

Reduced public sector investment is also likely to result in reduced delivery of new affordable housing in Worcestershire, and reduced public revenue spending may impact upon the number of public sector staff available to support those at risk of homelessness. It remains to be seen whether the increased resources within the voluntary sector that are generated through the Big Society Agenda will be able to meet the increased demand for services to assist those at risk of homelessness. The strategy has been developed at a time of unprecedented change and uncertainty within the housing market and the action plan attached will require

Links with Other Strategies

National Policy Framework	Regional Policy	Worcestershire Strategies
Sustainable Communities Plan 2003	West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy	County Housing Strategy 2007-11
Housing Act 2004	West Midlands Spatial Strategy	Worcester City Rough Sleepers Strategy 2007-11
Homelessness Act 2002	West Midlands Leaders Board Priorities	County Housing Strategy
Localism Act 2011	Local Enterprise Partnerships	Sustainable Community Strategy
Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) Homes for the future, more affordable, more sustainable.	HCA Single Conversation	Local Investment Plan
Housing & Regeneration Act 2008	Regional Economic Strategy	Supporting People Strategy and strategic reviews (inc. domestic abuse, young people, people with chaotic lifestyles, single homeless people and mental health)
Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities 2008	Regional Homelessness Strategy	Children & Young Persons Strategy
Council Housing: A Real Future (2010)		Telecare Strategy
No Second Night Out – policy to end Rough Sleeping		Older Persons Strategy
Drug Strategy		Mental Health Strategy
Breaking the cycle: Reducing re-offending green paper		Housing Strategy – Learning Disabilities
Welfare Reform Bill 2011		Domestic Abuse Strategy
Big Society Agenda		Joint Commissioning Strategy
		Substance Misuse Strategy
		County Council’s Corporate Plan 2011-16
		Community Safety Partnership Plans 2008-11

5. Homelessness review conclusions and new strategic objectives

During 2011 the Project Team responsible for the development of the strategy carried out a homelessness review into the nature and extent of homelessness in Worcestershire. This is a statutory requirement within the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Code of Guidance.

The key positive findings of the review are;

- Worcestershire has a good track record in preventing homelessness.
- The Redditch Trailblazer has led to a huge decrease in statutory homelessness in Redditch.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation has decreased dramatically since 2007, and customers experience a relatively short length of time in temporary accommodation today.
- There is good customer satisfaction with housing advice services across the County.
- Partners say there is good access to housing options services in Worcestershire

- Homeless Pathways Research participants were generally positive about the support they received from agencies across the County.

It is important to bear in mind when considering these positive findings that homelessness is on the increase locally and nationally. Therefore it is essential that we maintain and improve on our work in these areas to rise to the challenge of increased demand for our services.

The key areas that pose a new or continuing challenge will be summarised under the four goals of the strategy;

- 1. Providing a pathway to a housing solution for everyone that accesses our services**
- 2. Creating strong partnerships to tackle homelessness**
- 3. Taking effective action to prevent anyone new to the streets, having to sleep out for more than one night**
- 4. Tackling the financial deprivation of those affected by benefit reform, welfare reform and worklessness**

Within these goals, a number of overarching objectives have been set out to meet the challenge of key areas identified for change. These are outlined in more detail within the delivery plan in Appendix ?.

It has become apparent throughout the development of this strategy that there are many changes on the horizon e.g changes to government policy and legislation, as well as the shifting financial landscape and the continuing threat of recession.

Therefore, this aims to be a very flexible strategy, able to respond to any changes efficiently. The overarching goals and vision will remain the same, but it is likely that the actions within the deliver plan and possibly the objectives will change over the life of the strategy.

Goal 1 – Providing a pathway to a housing solution for everyone that accesses our services

The first goal we have set to achieve our vision centres around building on our successes in preventing homelessness and creating efficiencies. We want to achieve consistency in preventing homelessness across **all** client groups and empower our customers to take an active part in finding their own housing pathway. This is particularly important in the face and increased demand for our services with local and national increases in homeless decisions and acceptances.

In order to do this, however, we need to ensure that

- there are a range of credible, and “barrier free” housing pathways for people to access
- there is wide knowledge of these services amongst agencies and especially front line housing teams
- the homelessness prevention culture is truly embodied by front line staff, regardless of whether someone is priority or non priority homeless

- on line housing advice and assistance is of high quality and widely promoted

By empowering customers needing only low level advice and assistance to prevent their homelessness, we will ensure that we free up time to make sure that vulnerable people receive the higher level of advice and support that they need.

The main conclusions from the review that led to the forming of this goal are;

1. Although there are some similarities in the way in which housing advice teams across the county operate, there are also some real differences. This makes it difficult to compare the efficiency of services.
2. There is a gap in the knowledge of how each of the districts works, and what data each authority collects in order to inform working practices, policy and homelessness grant spend. Redditch works in a very different way to the rest of the County and has dramatically reduced their homeless decisions and acceptances over recent years. Therefore lessons can be learnt from this way of working.
3. We do not know enough about the homeless prevention pathways for all

the different client groups that we work with across the County. Due to reduced budgets we need to prioritise resources which will mean that there will be changes to how services are delivered and potentially some service reductions or closures. Therefore, we need to remodel existing provision.

4. The Localism Act offers the opportunity for a fundamental change to allocations policies which need to be considered across the County. Changes to be considered include
5. Customer and stakeholder feedback is not collected and analysed on a regular basis consistently across the county.
6. The Homelessness Pathways Research identified that information that would assist customers in preventing their own homelessness is not presented in a consistent way and easily accessible.
7. The Homeless Pathways Research also identified a need for officers to be more empathetic and to communicate more effectively.
8. A large proportion of customers are still approaching housing advice services as “homeless on the day.” This suggests that customers still don’t know how we can prevent their

homelessness and why we need as much time as possible. We need to consider a marketing strategy to combat this.

9. More and more customers are experiencing barriers to accessing accommodation due to poor tenancy histories, not just financial barriers such as lack of a deposit.
10. Anecdotally, housing advice teams are reporting that they are dealing with more and more vulnerable customers. This could be a result of cuts to other support services (both statutory and non statutory). Supporting People hasn't cut capacity of services, but some charities have lost grants and cuts to other funding they receive. We need to consider ways of demonstrating the impact of this to partner agencies and working together to tackle the needs of those to whom we have joint responsibility.
11. The Homelessness Pathways Research identified that many of our customers have mental and physical health problems but do not meet the threshold of social care services.
12. Analysis of the Home Choice Plus housing register and Redditch Home Choice shows that demand for social

housing is high in all districts but most acute in Worcester City, Wychavon and Wyre Forest. Therefore, there is a need to improve customers understanding of the demands on social housing and also the Choice Based Lettings system as a whole in order to get a realistic picture. We need to provide statistics on the numbers of properties becoming available for relet on an annual basis, and broken down by district so people's expectations are reasonable.

13. There has been a downward trend in lettings to statutory homeless households. This could be attributed to prevention methods but does warrant further investigation.
14. Analysis of CORE data shows that a high proportion of tenants vacating social housing tenancies do so to go into the private rented sector. Homeless Pathways Research suggests that Social Housing makes customers feel more secure about their future than Private Rented housing. This demonstrates the need for further investigation into this area through a survey of tenants.
15. There are more social housing evictions in Wyre Forest and Worcester City. We need to expand

on existing proactive evictions policies and procedures on a county wide basis across supported and general needs accommodation.

16. Addressing the root causes of homelessness continues to be a challenge in times of reduced budgets and staffing levels. The benefits of more proactive work need to be widely promoted.
17. The Homeless Pathways Research highlighted the need to be more of a focus on the individual (life events, support needs) to make an accurate assessment of their needs, provide a holistic approach to their situation and to understand how we can effectively prevent their homelessness.
18. Accessing to training, education or employment is essential for customers once primary housing need is addressed. We need to improve links with Job Centre Plus. Few of the clients interviewed as part of the Homeless Pathways research were employed and those that were, received relatively low incomes. Aspirational outcomes are the key to tenancy sustainment and preventing the cycle of future homelessness.

We will address these findings through the following strategic objectives;

- Ensure housing options services provide Value For Money in order to attract and retain investment to maintain and improve service levels.
- Increase the number of households prevented from becoming homeless by making housing options services as accessible and effective as possible.
- Ensure there is a pathway for each group of people accessing our services which is developed and supported by partners
- Maximise the supply and use of new and existing accommodation.
- Develop a range of holistic initiatives to tackle the root causes of homelessness

Goal 2 - Creating strong partnerships to tackle homelessness

If we are to truly tackle the root causes of homelessness, it is vital to create strong and effective partnerships, especially at a time of real pressure on resources.

This goal aims to strengthen existing partnerships, forge new partnerships and maximise synergies to meet the diverse needs of homeless people.

We want to ensure that each organisation and sector with a role in tackling homelessness in Worcestershire is clear about the contribution they make to the delivery of the strategy, as well as our contribution to their related strategies.

The main conclusions from the review that led to the forming of this goal are;

1. Many of our customers experience mental health problems, and indeed this is often an underlying cause of their homelessness. The Homelessness Pathways Research identified that many of the social economic or health problems faced by participants had roots in early life. In addition debt and money

issues were a source of emotional problems and family conflict.

2. It is not clear if front line staff in housing advice teams fully aware of how to recognise the signs of mental ill health and what services to signpost people to for help.
3. There appears to be an increasing demand for housing from customers with autistic spectrum personality disorders, ADHD, and
4. Substance Misuse
5. There are some examples of good joint working across the county for some client groups e.g. 16/17 year old protocol, MAPPA and MARAC. However, further protocols & liaison meetings are needed particularly with – multiple needs, mental health, substance misuse, housing benefit and Registered Social Landlords
6. Many vulnerable adults are presenting with complex needs and dual diagnosis. There is no consistent way of meeting their needs across the county as there is with the Common Assessment Framework for children and young people. We need to consider implementing an Adult CAF style

framework in line with the Every Adult Matters framework being piloted.

7. From discussions with participants through the Homeless Pathways Research, it became evident that a range of factors let or contributed to homelessness: including domestic abuse, family conflict and Breakdown, mental health and substance misuse.
8. Supporting People Strategic Reviews including single homelessness, young people, mental health, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, domestic abuse and chaotic lifestyles will have a major impact on how we work together to prevent homelessness.
9. More than one third of the Homelessness Pathways Research participants were victims of domestic abuse which influenced the ways in which they formed relationships.
10. A major cause of homelessness continues to be the loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancies. However it is clear that we need to increase our use of the private rented sector in

order to meet demand for housing. We need to investigate ways to make these tenancies more sustainable.

11. Customers are more receptive to accessing private rented accommodation than originally thought (according to the customer survey) but often a lack of life skills and poor mental health causes the loss of it. The Homeless Pathways Research highlighted that many of the participants housing situations had in the past changed frequently and that all participants emphasised the importance of having a secure tenancy. In addition participants' relationships with the local areas, and proximity to support networks, played a significant role in determining feelings of security
12. There are many barriers to accessing private rented accommodation e.g. financial, poor tenancy histories, fear of poor landlord or property, and affordability.
13. Figures suggest that Landlord repossession is on the increase. There has also been an increase in landlords selling their buy to let

properties due to the downturn in the economy.

14. Private rented accommodation is not accessible in some parts of county where it has become unaffordable.
15. Single people who are affected by the Under 35 LHA rate will find self contained private rented accommodation unaffordable.
16. Communities and Local Government recommend that 40% of officer time should be spent sourcing accommodation, and less resources should be directed at casework.
17. Social lettings agencies and deposit bond schemes are proving to be very successful in locating and maintaining private sector tenancies.
18. The key to good partnerships is agreeing common principles and objectives. Therefore, we need to consider a single county logo or branding, a county marketing campaign throughout the year with activities to raise awareness, a single county homelessness prevention assessment and action plan template (completed on

individual basis), a greater consistency standard information on websites.

19. We need to develop our strategic work including joint strategic reviews to plan services through joint commissioning and joint funding of services. We need to have multi agency project teams to deliver projects and services to meet the challenge of Localism.

We will address these findings through the following strategic objectives;

- Demonstrate the links between homelessness and partner agency responsibilities to ensure joint working and commissioning of services.
- Ensure effective cross agency working through a range of protocols and liaison meetings to rise to the challenge of Localism
- Engage with the Private Rented Sector to create housing opportunities and tackle homelessness from Assured Shorthold Tenancies

Goal 3 – Taking effective action to prevent anyone new to the streets, having to sleep out for more than one night.

This goal will bring Worcestershire into line with the governments No Second Night Out agenda.

Unfortunately, homelessness amongst single people appears to be on the increase nationally and in some areas of the County. Furthermore, the impact of Housing Benefit and welfare reform is likely to hit this client group the hardest.

We need to work on having a credible housing offer or pathway for everyone that walks through our door regardless of whether they are deemed to be statutory priority homeless or not.

If we do this successfully, it will avoid the revolving door syndrome and a pathway to priority need in the future e.g. a single person who sleeps rough will in a large proportion of cases end up becoming statutory priority homeless at some point in the future.

The main conclusions from the review that led to the forming of this goal are;

1. There has been an increase in rough sleeping across the county, with approximately 40 cases across the county. The largest

proportions of these are situated in Worcester City and Wychavon. We need to collect more in depth data especially on the district/area/country of origin.

2. Rough sleeping is on the increase across the county, despite the fact that provision for this client group has been increased throughout the life of the previous homeless strategy. One reason for this increase is the increasing number of Eastern Europeans sleeping rough, especially in Wychavon. In addition to the information coming out of the SP single homeless review, we need to consider carrying out a Prompt Analysis (Homeless Link) to identify if there are gaps in provision or if the provision is sufficient but needs remodelling. We also need to review if there are there (well intentioned) existing incentives in operation that enable a street lifestyle. The potential data on this client group that can be generated from Worcestershire Link Up is vital to informing service provision, policy and attracting funding. Therefore continuation of this service is also vital.

3. How can we increase the strategic response to this across the county and implement a No Second Night Out Standard? We need all partners to understand and sign up to a protocol.
4. The Move On Plan Protocol is still outstanding from the previous strategy. Bed blocking in hostel and supported accommodation continues to be an issue and needs to be addressed. The use of private rented sector accommodation for those moving from supported housing should be increased.
5. Information sharing and access to accommodation and support for single homeless people has been improved through the implementation of Worcestershire Link Up. However, this does need to be built upon as there was a general feeling throughout the research carried out that agencies are still working in silos.
6. Partners feel that there is too much of a concentration of services for single people in Worcester City. We need to ensure there is adequate provision across the County and robust reconnection policies are

implemented. We also need to consider decentralisation of services from Worcester City to smaller scale satellite services across the county.

7. The No Second Night Out standard does not address the needs of entrenched rough sleepers across the county. The county should research good practice to address this client group, this could include personalisation budgets.

National research indicates an increase in rough sleepers with mental health complaints. The county will be required to work closely with other partner agencies such as the mental health trust and the Primary Care Trust to address these issues.

Female rough sleepers have specific needs and can find unisex services intimidating; this can disadvantage female rough sleepers from using a unisex service. Worcestershire should investigate female rough sleepers needs and potential services to address the findings.

We will address these findings through the following strategic objectives;

- Develop a No Second Night Out standard for Worcestershire
- Reduce the incentives for people to remain in a street lifestyle
- Make the best use of existing resources to ensure a flow through supported accommodation
- Tackle entrenched rough sleeping

Goal 4 – Tackling the financial deprivation of those affected by benefit reform, welfare reform and worklessness.

We are experiencing a time of unprecedented change

The main conclusions from the review that led to the forming of this goal are;

1. Affordability of maintaining their homes is a major concern for our customers for a variety of reasons such as debt, benefit changes, and the cost of utilities. All 30 participants interviewed for the Homeless Pathways Research identified themselves as experiencing financial difficulties.
2. An analysis of the economic status of the households in social housing across the county demonstrate that a higher proportion of tenants in Malvern, Redditch and Wychavon are working full time, whilst in Bromsgrove and Worcester a higher proportion of tenants are unemployed or job seeking, and in Wyre Forest it is

those not seeking work. The Homelessness Pathways Research identified that families containing working members were as equally likely to face financial problems as those without.

3. Wyre Forest also have the highest proportion of social housing tenants on the lowest income of £40-£59 per week.
4. Single people living in social housing tenancies in Redditch, Wychavon and Wyre Forest have seen a drop in their income over time – this ties in with the areas which have been most hit by redundancies. Lone parents across the county have the second lowest average income, only greater than single people.
5. We need to do more to target those who perhaps have not used our services before – but who are being affected by the economic downturn and cuts to services
6. Benefit reform will have a major impact on customers accessing and maintaining accommodation. Especially in the case of the Under 35 rate.

7. Better joint working to mitigate the impact of benefit reform across the County
8. We need to improve joint working between housing advice teams and housing benefit departments. workshops with HB & housing officers, targeting those at risk, open day for landlords
9. Customers are worried about debts, benefit reform, increased costs of living, utilities
10. Economic factors – worklessness, unemployment especially in young people, redundancy, low incomes will all impact on levels of homelessness. The Homelessness Pathways Research identified that debt and money issues were a source of emotional problems and family conflict.
11. Mortgage rescue
12. Debt appears to be on the increase across the County according to figures from the CAB.

We will address these findings through the following strategic objectives;

- **Identify of those at risk of homelessness due to the reforms and the downturn in the economy**
- **Minimise the effects of welfare reform, housing benefit reform and the downturn in the economy on levels of homelessness.**
- **Provide good quality advice and sign posting at the right time**
- **Assist customers to maintain accommodation at risk due to financial factors**
- **Tackle worklessness to minimise its effect on levels of homelessness.**

6. Governance of the strategy

The Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership will be responsible for managing the implementation of the strategy.

The County Homelessness Implementation Group will be responsible for implementing operational actions.

Both Groups will consist of a core team of local authority strategic housing officers and officers from Registered Social Landlords who are contracted on behalf of Local Authorities to carry out the housing advice function.

Both groups will have wider membership from other agencies with a responsibility for tackling homelessness.

It is also likely that specific task and finish groups will be set up to carry out specialised or intensive tasks.

Performance indicators to measure the success of the strategy are;

- Increase the number of cases where positive action is successful in preventing homelessness
- Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation
- Reduce the number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation
- Reduce the number of rough sleepers
- Reduce repeat homelessness by ?

Regular communication on the success of the strategy will be via the County Homeless Strategy Steering Group reports, each individual districts homeless forums and websites.

Appendix ? The Strategy Delivery Plan (Years 1&2)

[Back](#)

Key	
B&B	Bed and Breakfast
CHIG	County Homeless Implementation Group
CHSC	County Homeless Strategy Co-ordinator
CLG	Communities and Local Government
DAAT	Drug and Alcohol Action Team
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payments
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
FIP	Family Intervention Project
HB	Housing Benefit
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HCP	Home Choice Plus
HQN	Housing Quality Network
LA	Local Authority
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnerships
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
NAC	Night Assessment Centre
NSNO	No Second Night Out
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SAR	Shared Accommodation Rate
SP	Supporting People
TA	Temporary Accommodation
UC	Universal Credit
WHABAC	Worcester Housing And Benefit Advice Centre
WHSP	Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership

Goal 1 – Providing a pathway to a housing solution for everyone that accesses our services

Strategic links– Worcestershire Housing Strategy, Worcestershire Strategic Market Assessment, Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy, ST Housing Service Plans, Homelessness Code of Guidance, Home Choice Plus and Allocations Policies, Worcestershire Tenancy Strategy
PI's: The number of cases where positive action was successful in preventing homelessness per quarter (E10). the number of statutory household temporary accommodation at the end of each quarter (E6), the number of rough sleepers.

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	Timescale	Link to Change
1.	Ensure housing options services provide Value For Money in order to attract and retain investment to maintain and improve service levels.	Implement the HQN toolkit to benchmark cost effectiveness of services and obtain better understanding of cost, customer satisfaction and performance.	Existing staff resources	Worcester City	Year 1	Homelessness funding
2 Page 64	Increase the number of households prevented from becoming homeless by making housing options services as accessible and effective as possible.	Implement the CLG DIY diagnostic tool to ensure we are getting the basics right and identify gaps in services.	Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities	Years 1&2	CLG grant
		Align practices across the County with the CLG Housing Options Toolkit model	Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities	Years 1&2	CLG grant
		Consider implementation of the Enhanced Housing Options Model on a countywide basis to free up resources to assist those vulnerable clients who need handholding.	Existing staff resources, cost of software packages	All LA's	Years 1&2	CLG grant
		Enhance the range of advice and information on housing options, using a variety of media, and ensure it is continually reviewed and updated.	Existing staff resources	CHIG	Years 1&2	
		Agree a consistent logo/branding for homelessness prevention across the county.	Existing staff resources	CHIG	Years 1&2	
		Improve online information on all district websites (including agreeing one set of generic information about homelessness prevention with different local elements)	Existing staff resources	CHIG	Years 1&2	
		Develop existing customer satisfaction feedback methods, capturing relevant information & used in a meaningful way.	Existing staff resources	CHIG	Year 1	
		Investigate ways to assist customers to overcome the barriers to accessing accommodation e.g. life skills training, tenant accreditation scheme	Existing staff resources, homelessness grant	CHIG	Years 1&2	

Goal 1 – Providing a pathway to a housing solution for everyone that accesses our services

Strategic links– Worcestershire Housing Strategy, Worcestershire Strategic Market Assessment, Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy, ST Housing Service Plans, Homelessness Code of Guidance, Home Choice Plus and Allocations Policies, Worcestershire Tenancy Strategy

PI's: The number of cases where positive action was successful in preventing homelessness per quarter (E10). the number of statutory household temporary accommodation at the end of each quarter (E6), the number of rough sleepers.

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	Timescale	Link to Change
		Develop access to mediation services across the county	Existing staff resources, CLG grant funding	CHIG, CHSC	Years 1&2	
		Develop a front line staff training programme to ensure culture change of preventing homelessness regardless of priority need.	County training group	CHIG	Year 1	
3	Ensure there is a pathway for each group of people accessing our services which is developed and supported by partners	Review the prevention pathways (housing and support) for; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • families • people with mental health issues (intermediate housing) • people with a physical disability (to include temporary accommodation) • people with a learning disability • ex forces personnel with support needs • teenage parents • migrant workers Groups not mentioned either have existing protocols to be reviewed or new ones to be developed (covered in Goal 2)	Existing staff resources, homelessness grant funding,	SP WSHP	Years 2-5	
		Investigate the feasibility of county wide Rent Deposit Scheme for those people who without early intervention may become statutory priority homeless.	Homelessness & prevention grant funding	CHIG WHABAC	Year 1	
4	Maximise the supply and use of new and existing accommodation.	Develop agreements with RSL's to ensure that their response to flexible tenancies and affordable rent schemes does not increase homelessness.	Existing staff resources	WSHOG, HCP Steering Group	Years 1&2	-
		Enable more shared accommodation particularly for under 35's, such as HMOs, lodging schemes or shared social housing initiatives.	Social lettings agency and Homelessness Grant Funding	CHIG	Years 2-5	Welfare reform

Goal 1 – Providing a pathway to a housing solution for everyone that accesses our services

Strategic links– Worcestershire Housing Strategy, Worcestershire Strategic Market Assessment, Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy, ST Housing Service Plans, Homelessness Code of Guidance, Home Choice Plus and Allocations Policies, Worcestershire Tenancy Strategy

PI's: The number of cases where positive action was successful in preventing homelessness per quarter (E10). the number of statutory household temporary accommodation at the end of each quarter (E6), the number of rough sleepers.

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	Timescale	Link to Change
5	Develop a range of holistic initiatives to tackle the root causes of homelessness	Support the Working Families Everywhere pilot delivered through the WFIP supporting families with multiple and complex needs access education, training and employment by encouraging housing providers to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify families with multiple needs with intergenerational benefit dependency •Link in with shared training opportunities around benefits and welfare advice. 	Existing staff resources	SP FIP	Years 1&2	
		Develop joint training for staff and other agencies, both locally and county-wide	Existing staff resources	County Training Group	Years 1&2	-
		Look at developing county-wide education project based on existing pilot in North Worcestershire run by St Basils	Existing staff resources, Homelessness Grant funding	CHIG, St Basils	Years 1&2	-

Goal 2 – Creating strong partnerships to tackle homelessness

Strategic links: Supporting People Strategy, Worcestershire Mental Health Strategy, Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse Strategy, Homelessness Benefit Service Plans, Local Private Sector Renewal Strategies

PI's: Supporting People Outcomes, the number of homelessness preventions through access to private rented sector (E10)

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	Timescale	Link to Change
1	Demonstrate the links between homelessness and partner agency responsibilities to ensure joint working and commissioning of services.	Develop a communication strategy to demonstrate how better relations with different directorates and partner agencies will result in tackling the holistic needs of joint client groups.	Existing staff resources	WSHP and WSHOG	Years 1&2	
		Mental health Develop links to Increased Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) across the County to signpost vulnerable clients.	Existing staff resources	CHIG	Year 1	Health wellbeing agenda
		Raise awareness of mental health issues to help signposting to other services and identify risks to frontline workers and other clients	Existing staff resources	CHIG	Years 1&2	
		Investigate opportunities for Mental Health First Aid training for front line officers.	Existing staff resources, County Training Group	County Training Group	Year 1	
		Physical health Undertake the Homeless Link Health and Homelessness Audit	Existing staff resources	CHSC, SP	Year 1	Health wellbeing board
		Work with PCT to role out Health Chat programme across County.	Existing staff and training resources	CHIG and PCT	Year 1	
Young people Snapshot survey Universal access to all components						
Substance Misuse and Alcohol Continue to identify the gaps in accommodation and support provision across the County.	Existing staff and key partners	CHIG, SP, DAAT and LinkUP	Year 1	-		

Goal 2 – Creating strong partnerships to tackle homelessness

Strategic links: Supporting People Strategy, Worcestershire Mental Health Strategy, Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse Strategy, Housing Benefit Service Plans, Local Private Sector Renewal Strategies

PI's: Supporting People Outcomes, the number of homelessness preventions through access to private rented sector (E10)

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	Timescale	Link to Change
Page 68		Conduct a mapping exercise across the County to identify the numbers and needs of those accessing drug & alcohol treatment, but not accessing housing advice.	Existing staff and key partners	SP, DAAT, CHIG and LinkUP	Year 1	
		Collection of data relating to housing need and or drug or alcohol use, to identify areas of highest need, profiled by district. Analysis of this data will allow for planning and commissioning of future services.	Existing staff and key partners	CHIG, SP, DAAT and LinkUP	Years 1-2	
		Co ordination of accommodation, treatment and mental health services to ensure successful sustainment of tenancies.	Existing Staff and resources	CHIG, DAAT, PCT and SP	Years 2-3	
		Prison leavers Research incentives given to landlords to encourage them to house offenders into private rented accommodation (Walsall model) Roll out Redditch offender info packs across County.	Existing staff and key partners	WSHOG CHIG	Year 1	-
2	Ensuring effective cross agency working through a range of protocols and liaison meetings to rise to the challenge of Localism	Devlop protocols <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health and housing Substance misuse and housing Housing Benefit and Strategic Housing Departments 	Existing staff resources	WSHP, CHSC	Years 2&3	-
3	Engage with the Private Rented Sector to create housing opportunities and tackle homelessness from Assured Shorthold Tenancies	Investigate the feasibility of developing more private tenancy leasing schemes to improve access private landlords and encourage them to work with local authorities.	Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities	Years 1-3	-
		Develop an accreditation scheme (already in operation in some districts) for lettings agents and private landlords.	Existing staff resources	All Local Authorities	Years 1-3	-
		Maximise the potential of Home Choice Plus by offering private landlords an opportunity to advertise properties.	Existing staff resources	HCP Partnership	Year 1	-

Goal 3 – Taking effective action to prevent anyone new to the streets, having to sleep out for more than one night

Strategic links – No Second Night Out National Strategy, Worcestershire Community Safety Action Plan, Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy
PI's: Rough sleepers counts and estimates, Number of referrals to Worcestershire Link Up, Number of users accessing the Night Assessment Centre
Supporting People Outcomes

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	Timescale	Link to Change
1	Developing a No Second Night Out standard for Worcestershire	Development of a single homeless hub (with accommodation provision and satellite provision for rural areas) to provide a coordinated and holistic response to tackling rough sleeping.	HCA funding, LA Homelessness Grant, SP funding, DAAT funding,	NAC Project Team	Year 1-3	NSNO
		Development and implementation of No Second Night Out policy and reconnection policy in each of the districts.	Existing staff resources, successful provider for NAC	NAC Project Team	Year 1	NSNO
		Improve the visibility of the outreach team and public rough sleeping support systems	Existing staff resources	St Paul's Hostel, Link Up, CHIG	Year 1	
		Create a county wide single homelessness forum	Existing staff resources, successful provider for NAC	NAC Project Team	Year 1	
2	Reduce the incentives for people to remain in a street lifestyle	Map the provision of free food and provisions across the county to see how services can link more effectively.			Year 1	
		Consider a "Killing with kindness" marketing strategy in line with Thames Reach to reduce begging and enablement of a street lifestyle.			Year 2	
3	Make the best use of existing resources to ensure a flow through supported accommodation	Carry out PROMPT analysis (Homeless Link) to identify where they may be gaps in services	Existing staff resources	NAC Project Team	Year 1	
		Work with partners to implement the Move On Protocol Plan (MOPP).	Existing staff resources	CHSC	Year 1	
4	Tackle entrenched rough sleeping	Develop a Countywide Rough Sleepers action plan (to include tackling A8 rough sleeping).	Existing staff resources	CHIG	Year 1	
		Set up a personalisation project				
		Ensure the ongoing funding for the WHIT service post Jan 13.	Existing staff resources	NAC Project Team	Year 4	

Goal 4 – Tackling financial deprivation of those affected by benefit reform, welfare reform and worklessness

Strategic links – Worcestershire Financial Inclusion Strategy, Housing Benefit Department Service Plans,

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Change
1	Identify of those at risk of homelessness due to the reforms and the downturn in the economy	Make links with local employers who are making major redundancies, and strengthen links with LEP's.	Existing staff resources	All LA's Chamber of Commerce, LEP	Year 1&2	-
		Provide targeted housing advice for first time Housing Benefit claimants				-
2	Minimise the effects of welfare reform, housing benefit reform and the downturn in the economy on levels of homelessness.	Develop a county wide action plan to minimise the effects of welfare reform	Existing staff resources	CHSC	Year 1	- Welfare Reform
		Information and education campaign on welfare reform including universal credit and housing benefit changes.	Existing staff and publication resources	CHIG	Year 1&2	
		<p>Improve joint working with Housing Benefit Departments;</p> <p>Implement good practice identified by CLG in responding to benefit reform.</p> <p>Promote on line resources to calculate the local housing allowance for those accessing the Private Rented Sector</p> <p>Work with Housing Benefits about issuing a notice of entitlement to Local Housing Allowance</p> <p>Ensure that all front-line staff have welfare benefits awareness training.</p> <p>Develop an effective referral process with housing benefit to ensure that all DHP claimants have gone through housing options service.</p>	Existing staff resources	Redditch Borough Council, CHSC	Year 1	Welfare benefit reform
		To raise awareness amongst members of the importance of the delivery of the Social Fund for supporting homeless people in Worcestershire. – make this clearer	Existing staff resources	WHSP, CHIG	Year 1&2	-

Goal 4 – Tackling financial deprivation of those affected by benefit reform, welfare reform and worklessness

Strategic links – Worcestershire Financial Inclusion Strategy, Housing Benefit Department Service Plans,

Ref	Challenge	Action	Resources	Lead Partner	By When	Link to Change
		Develop a common process for administering the social fund in all Local Authority Areas within Worcestershire				-
		Investigate new funding opportunities such as the Big Society Bank to fund additional resources in the Voluntary sector required to support vulnerable households applying for universal credit				-
Page 71	3 Provide good quality advice and sign posting at the right time	The promotion of benefits and support available to a new client group who are affected by the economic downturn.	Existing staff and publication resources	CHIG	Year 1&2	-
		Undertake more pro-active work linking people into money advice earlier, offer advice sessions outside normal office hours, make information available on line.	Existing staff resources	CHIG	Year 1&2	-
		Signpost to alternatives that will fill the gap left by the Credit Union	Existing staff resources	CHIG	Year 2	-
		Increase provision and quality for debt advice within the County	Existing staff resources, LA homelessness grant	CHIG	Year 2	-
		Provide more opportunities to increase budgeting skills	Existing staff resources	CHIG	Year 2	-
		Develop a partnership arrangement with a suitable lender to ensure easier opening of a bank account				
5 Tackle worklessness to minimise its effect on levels of homelessness.		Improving access to employment and training opportunities	Existing staff resources to link in with key partners	CHIG	Year 1&2	-
		Promotion of care to learn childcare support and other childcare provision to support parents back into education training or employment.	Existing staff resources to link in with key partners	CHIG	Years 2&3	-

Future considerations for the delivery plan from years 3-5

[Back](#)

As detailed throughout this document, the delivery plan needs to be achievable and flexible enough to respond to changes in the economic and political climate. Therefore this section sets out actions that are planned for the future, but which will be reviewed on an annual basis to decide if and when they should feature in the delivery plan.

Goal 1

Investigate the feasibility of expanding the out of hours homeless emergency service to link with emergency support.	Current provider contracts	WHSP	Years 2&3	
As a result of the prevention pathways review, develop or remodel existing provision of accommodation and support services for homeless or potentially homeless clients with additional needs. This could include the provision of dispersed units of accommodation.		WSHP	Years 3-5	
To continue to provide and expand re-settlement packages appropriate to peoples needs (including e.g. furniture and white goods).	Existing staff resources, SP funding	CHIG SP	Years 3&4	Welfar
Investigate the feasibility of extending the countywide tenant matching service based on Both Ways model.	Existing staff resources	CHIG SP	Years 3&4	-
Work with the Home Improvement Agency to: make better use of existing adapted accommodation through use of current database of clients and adapted properties; and to ensure those who may otherwise become or are currently homeless are offered appropriate accommodation to meet their needs.	Existing staff and stock, HIA	All Local Authorities HIA	Years 3&4	
Consider ways to expand the Family Intervention Project service cross tenure	Existing staff resources	SP, FIP	Years 3&4	-

Goal 2

Behavioural - Investigate the feasibility to increase the provision of outreach workers for clients with autistic spectrum, personality disorders, ADHD, and Aspergers.	Investigate potential funding streams	SPCB WSHP CHIG	Years 3&4	Health wellb
Domestic abuse - Work with Community Safety to review Sanctuary Scheme and Homesafe				
Consider the implementation of a Countywide Clean Break module.	Existing Staff, Homelessness Grant and other funding streams	CHSC, SP and DAAT	Years 3-5	-

Introduce multi agency assessments for vulnerable adults similar to Common Assessment Framework	Existing staff resources, Worcestershire Link Up	Link Up Vulnerable Adults Team	Years 3-5	-
Investigate the feasibility of a County-wide co-ordinator post to work with LA's and the Voluntary Sector regarding the Localism Agenda & Big Society	Investigate funding streams with key partners	All Local Authorities	Year 3	

Goal 3

Investigate the potential for social enterprise projects led by service users.	Existing staff resource, HIA	SP Voluntary Sector	Years 3&4	-
Develop Supporting People positive activities for street homeless and substance misusers etc.	Existing staff resources, SP funding	NAC Project Group	Years 3&4	-

Goal 4

Look at different models of accommodation and support relating to affordability and disincentives to work through subsidised rents or use of DHP.	Existing staff resources	CHIG	Years 2&3	-
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Ongoing commitments

[Back](#)




There are a number of commitments identified during the development of the strategy that will be assumed as everyday work. These will not be specifically included in the action plan as they are not SMART, however, they are listed below to ensure continued commitment;

- Monitor and respond to allocations policy changes and the challenges this may present for customers and in terms of preventing homelessness, in the light of draft revised Code of Guidance on Allocations and changes arising from the Localism Act
- Monitor and respond to threats to LA Homelessness Grant (exit strategies).
- Identify and bid for relevant funding opportunities in conjunction with statutory and voluntary agencies.
- Support the work of the Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse
- Support Worcestershire Link Up in the development of a web based directory of housing and health related services for Worcestershire.
- Work with existing advocacy services to raise awareness of their services across the county, and increase signposting.
- Improve relationship with council/RSL housing management teams to try and prevent homelessness through evictions
- Continue to support the development and sustainability of the Family Intervention Project by encouraging housing providers to identify families with complex needs who may be facing eviction due to ASB or rent arrears, and assist in addressing issues.
- Work with Supporting People to identify the need for Countywide Homelessness Mental Health Workers.
- Promote integrated working between housing and substance misuse services, ensuring the continuing engagement of housing professionals accessing drug and alcohol training.
- Manage supporting people budget reductions by supporting strategic service reviews including single homeless, mental health, learning disability, physical disabilities, domestic abuse and chaotic lifestyles.
- Support the implementation of the Supporting People Strategy
- Ensure the continuation of Worcestershire Link Up to ensure a single point of access to accommodation and support for single homeless people.
- Consider the impact of the personalisation agenda when developing or reviewing strategic housing procedures, policies, service improvement plans and strategies.


Appendix ? – Achievements from the last strategy

[Back](#)



Action Plan – Year One (2007-08)

Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes	Achieved/Comments
Establish a County wide Multi Agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: CHOG Partners: CHOG Plus Nacro/ Probation Community Mental Health Teams, Women's Aid Voluntary Agency reps	Opportunities: To monitor and evaluate the successful implementation of the action plan and improve service delivery to the customer Risks: To fail to achieve comprehensive multi agency representation	Officer Time	Target: Paper written and circulated for discussion May 2007. Agreement to new structure July 2007. Quarterly meetings est. Bi-annual progress report on the action plan to be prepared	To provide a formalised approach between agencies on homelessness. To deliver a seamless service to homeless or potentially homeless customers.	 Group was set up to monitor last strategy and is now working on revising document.
Develop and implement joint protocols and regular liaison meetings with key agencies	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: CHOG/HOG Partners: PCT, Probation, Nacro, CMHTs, Women's Aid, refuges, Supporting People	Opportunities: Better working relationship with partners. Improved service for customers Risks: Clients not being correctly signposted to services. Increased Homelessness due to prevention mechanisms not being accessed at an early enough stage. Regular training and ensuring use of protocols	Officer Time	Target: Hospital Discharge Protocol - April 2007. Housing and Probation Protocol – July 2007	Improved access to services and customer satisfaction. Improved performance in prevention of homelessness.	 Carry this item over Different groups have been set up to develop and monitor various protocols and working practices, and liaise with different agencies. As a result a number of documents have been produced and a range of meetings take place, but others are still needed (more specific details further on).
Develop joint training and job shadowing initiatives across the county	To share good practice and knowledge of the delivery of housing advice, homeless prevention and other related services	Lead: HOG Partner agencies County Training Group	Opportunities Improved relations and understanding of roles Risks Having time available to organise and release staff	Officer time	Target: July 2008 scope project with ES and HOG. August contact relevant organisations. September 2008 begin training and shadowing initiatives	Improved working relationships between statutory and voluntary organisations. Improved knowledge of services on offer to people who are threatened with homelessness for all providers involved.	 Carried out through County Training Group. Also initiatives take place such as mystery shopping.





Page 75





Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes	Achieved/Comments
Investigate provision of another direct access hostel, Nightstop and Foyer in the county to address differences in current provision	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: WFDC/ Wychavon Partners: Supporting People, Nightstop, Bromsgrove Youth Homeless Forum, Centrepoint Foyer Federation, Connexions	Opportunities: Improve supply of accommodation with training and support Risks: Targeted group remaining in unsuitable TA Risk of tenancy failure	SP Budget Housing Corporation	Supported accommodation bids to HC – June 2007. Ongoing research into needs. Target: March 2008 Completion of SP homelessness review – Target: March 2008	Expansion of Nightstop in South Worcestershire Provision of at least 1 new Foyer in County	 Nightstop set up in south of county, and foyer in Bromsgrove






Action Plan – Year Two (2008-09)

Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes	Achieved/Comments
Introduce a county wide, cross agency web based data collection package for single homeless people	To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection for homelessness information	Lead: WCC Partners: Centrepoint WHABAC	Opportunities; Improve data collection for the county to inform strategies, work plans and bids inc removing double counting Risks; IT package, current data	Officer time	Target: August 2007 website to go live. September 2007 training to all users. March 2008 end of first 6 month report.	To support bids for funding from other organisations based on empirical evidence. Improved understanding of issues enabling for co-ordinated service delivery across agencies.	 Achieved as part of Worcestershire LinkUp project – also will be expanded to collect more info re all single homeless
Develop a county wide data capture system for standardised housing and homelessness information	To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection for homelessness information	Lead: County Homeless Strategy Group Partners: County Council Research & Intelligence Unit	Opportunities; Improve data collection for the county to inform, update & monitor success of the strategy and actions Risks; Difficulties in developing services flexible enough to cope with changing demands	Officer time	Target: Establish sub-group to examine current data collection methods and agree type and system by December 2007. Ongoing quarterly reporting to strategy group.	Regular meetings to update statistical data. Measure the success of the County Homeless Strategy by seeing decreasing numbers of approaches and acceptances. Development of data recording system to inform policy decisions.	 Achieved through Worcestershire LinkUp project, and data is also available through HomeChoicePlus

Page 76





Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes	Achieved/Comments
Develop the existing customer satisfaction survey to capture information from all homeless clients	To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection for homelessness information	Lead: County Homeless Strategy Group	Opportunities; Improved data on service users perceptions that will led to real engagement and improvement in service delivery Risks; Difficulties in developing services flexible enough to cope with changing demands	Officer time Prize money to encourage participation - £100 per authority	Target: December 2007 once P1Es for 2006/07 completed. September to meet to discuss format. October to distribute and collate responses. November to produce report. December to feedback responses to strategy group / committee.	Data captured on homeless households not accepted for statutory re-housing. Production of standardised customer information to assist with service delivery options.	 Although surveys have been carried out, most recently as part of the consultation for the Strategy, they need to be undertaken on a regular basis Needs to be carried over
Review the homeless application process	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: Bromsgrove Partners: All district LAs	Opportunities: Improvements in accessibility and consistency. Risks: None	Officer Time	Target: To review the current homeless application process across the county by September 2007. To identify appropriate changes and produce report by December 2007. To implement changes by March 2008.	Improved application or applications tailored to client groups as appropriate and compliant with equalities requirements. Ensure efficiency and practicality of system	 Needs to be undertaken to develop good practice and to include Equality Impact Assessment Needs to be carried forward
Develop resettlement packages appropriate to people's needs	To empower customers to make a positive change to their lives	Lead: Supporting People Partners: County Homeless Strategy Group HOG	Opportunities Increasing the sustainability of tenancies and longer term homelessness prevention Risks Lack of resources to develop new services	Supporting People budget	Completion of supporting people homeless review Target: 2008-09	Reduction in the number of failed tenancies.	 Although a number of initiatives have been developed, to cover budgeting, life skills, accessing Social Fund etc, more work needs to be done in this area Needs to be carried over
Work with support providers and to key strategies to equip people with the skills to sustain a tenancy.	To empower customers to make a positive change to their lives	Lead: Worcester City Council Partners: HOG	Opportunities Increasing the sustainability of tenancies and longer term homelessness prevention Risks Lack of resources to provide courses	Officer time Cost of delivering training courses	Target: To undertake research in county with group of homeless households by July 2008. Identify training providers and costs by October 2008. Evaluation and feedback by February 2009 with view to establishing rolling programme and securing funding.	Improved experiences of households in temporary accommodation Reduction in the number of repeat or cross-generational homelessness Equipping people with the skills to make a house a home, avoid debt , be effective parents and have a healthy and happy life	 As above Needs to be carried over





Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes	Achieved/Comments
Encourage the best use of existing stock by - increasing the % of RSL lettings to homeless households and other vulnerable groups (ASB) - tackling under occupation and empty homes - reducing the number of evictions/abandonments	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: Wychavon Partners: Other LAs, partner RSLs, Private Sector Fora, North Worcs Care and Repair Agency	Opportunities: Increase supply and provision of Affordable Housing Risks: Vulnerable groups will remain in unsuitable accommodation	Officer time	Work with prevention officers group to look at best practice examples. Target: September 2008 Under-occupation schemes set up across the county. Target: March 2009	Ensure that a minimum of 30% general needs lettings going to homeless households across County. Empty homes back into use – targets according to each local authority. Reduce the number of homeless approaches due to eviction to less than 5 per annum across the county.	 Information on lettings collected from CORE data Empty homes data collected as part of county Housing Strategy Difficult to achieve as dependant on factors outside realm/scope of this strategy
Ensure all temporary accommodation provided is good quality, self contained and where support can be accessed if required.	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: Malvern/ Bromsgrove Partners: Other LAs, Supporting People/ support providers, RSLs	Opportunities: Standardise quality of temporary accommodation across County Risks: Unsuitable accommodation without support remaining	Officer time	Mapping exercise completed by July 2008. Further research to follow after above completed	Reduction in the number of failed tenancies. People able to maintain employment, education etc whilst occupying temporary accommodation. No detrimental effects on health and well being through occupying temporary accommodation.	
Improve mechanisms to record the longer term outcomes of homelessness prevention	To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection for homelessness information	Lead: Prevention officers group Partners: Support providers Voluntary & community agencies	Opportunities; Improve data collection for the county to inform and update the strategy Risks; Difficulties in developing services flexible enough to cope with changing demands	Officer time	Target: Attend prevention officers group to launch project by July 2008. Identify remit of project and analyse information by Dec 2008. Produce report for consideration by strategy group by March 2009.	Monitor the long term effectiveness of homelessness prevention across the county to inform use of resources and policy decisions	 Through Abrisas and P1E information
Encourage the best use of existing stock by - remodelling/re-designation of stock - loft conversions	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: Wychavon Partners: Other LAs, partner RSLs, Private Sector Fora, North Worcs Care and Repair Agency	Opportunities: Increase supply and provision of Affordable Housing Risks: Vulnerable groups will remain in unsuitable accommodation	Officer time	Work with RSLs to consider remodelling options. Target: March 2009 Work with private sector officers group to look at best practice examples. Target: September 2008	Less popular stock remodelled for alternative client groups / supported accommodation. Families able to remain in own home and extend living space to reduce overcrowding through	 Although some districts have done this, others haven't Needs to be carried over

						loft conversion grants.		
Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes	Achieved/Comments	
Research and improve links with private sector landlords to prevent homelessness and overcome issues of access	To better understand the needs of key client groups for the delivery of appropriate housing services and to prevent homelessness	Lead Worcester CC Partners Other DC's HB teams Private Sector Landlord Forums County Council	Opportunities Increasing the availability and quality of private rented stock Risks Increasing number of vulnerable homeless	Officer time	Target: Autumn 2008	Reducing the number of homeless acceptances due to the end of AST's and preventing homelessness through improving access to the PRS		Has been achieved, but needs to be updated for next Strategy, to include initiatives such as Social Lettings Agency Needs to be carried over
Investigate the feasibility of a countywide youth homelessness service for young people	To better understand the needs of key client groups for the delivery of appropriate housing services and to prevent homelessness	Lead Worcester CC & Wyre Forest DC Partners Bromsgrove Youth Homeless Forum Centrepoint, YMCA Nightstop Other DCs, Connexions	Opportunities Increasing range of affordable housing Risks Failure to identify a provider or resources	Officer time	Target: Spring 2008	Reduction in youth homelessness across the district A better, more co-ordinated and holistic service for young people		Feasibility work was undertaken as part of SP Young People Strategic Review – led to development of The Bubble in the south, & St Basils/foyer in the north
Consider the need to develop support services to tackle social exclusion for those who fall through the net of statutory agencies	To better understand the needs of key client groups for the delivery of appropriate housing services and to prevent homelessness	Lead Worcester CC Partners Other DC SP Social Services	Opportunities Tackling rough sleeping & chaotic clients with complex needs and thereby reduce costs incurred by PCT, Police etc Risks Increasing numbers of homelessness, particularly rough sleepers	Officer time initially Financial resources from Supporting People, Community Safety and Voluntary Agencies	Outcomes from SP Homeless Review Target: December 2008	Reduction in social exclusion and homelessness for chaotic client groups. Reduction in costs for PCT, Police etc		Range of initiatives have been developed e.g. LinkUp, WHIT, Night Assessment Centre, SP single homeless review. NB Needs to be carried over (for continuation of NAC and work around "No Second Night Out")
Develop and implement joint protocols and regular liaison meetings with key agencies	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: CHOG/HOG Partners: PCT, Probation, Nacro, CMHTs, Women's Aid, refuges, Supporting People	Opportunities: Better working relationship with partners. Improved service for customers Risks: Clients not being correctly signposted to services. Increased Homelessness due to prevention mechanisms not being accessed at an	Officer Time	Target: Mental Health and Housing Protocol – 2008 / 09 Domestic Violence Protocol – 2008 / 09 Adult Services protocol – 2008 /09	Improved access to services and customer satisfaction. Improved performance in prevention of homelessness.		Although some protocols have been produced (probation, domestic abuse, 16/17 year olds, hospital discharge) others are still needed (countywide rough sleepers/NAC, mental health, severe weather, ex-servicemen) Needs to be carried over





early enough stage.
Regular training and ensuring use of protocols

Action Plan – Year Four (2009-10)

Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes	Achieved/Comments	
Page 69	To develop a housing advice toolkit (to include homelessness prevention and good practice directory)	To share good practice and knowledge of the delivery of housing advice and homeless prevention services	Lead: Malvern Hills District Council / Elgar Housing Partners: County Homeless Strategy Officers Group	Opportunities Comprehensive & consistent range of services available across the county Risks Officer time to develop	Officer time Printing costs	Target: To meet with MHDC and review progress on their housing advice toolkit by July 2009 To consider research into prevention methods undertaken in previous year. To develop draft by January 2010. To circulate to each council by February 2010. Toolkit agreed by March 2010.	Comprehensive and consistent county wide housing advice delivered to service users through a variety of organisations across the county Increase in officer knowledge of cross boundary services	 Needs to be carried forward – develop along lines of Homeless Link orange pages?
	To develop comprehensive homelessness awareness raising in schools	To share good practice and knowledge of the delivery of housing advice and homeless prevention services	Lead: Homeless Officers Group Partners Centrepoint, Schools, Connexions	Opportunities Early prevention Risks Officer time / resources may not be available Schools not interested in delivering training	Officer time Training materials	Develop appropriate training package by June 2009. Contact schools for new academic year by September 2009. Deliver sessions throughout December – March 2010.	A reduction in the number of under 25 approaching as homeless and increasing the number of preventions to this age group	 Needs to be carried forward – also liaise with Education Department at County Hall, to ensure put on to curriculum for PHSE
	Use knowledge to develop specialised projects such as good practice in DHP and HB administration, mediation services across all client groups etc.	To share good practice and knowledge of the delivery of housing advice and homeless prevention services	Lead: Wychavon County Homeless Strategy Officers Group	Opportunities Early intervention and prevention Risks Barriers from other departments and organisations	Officer time Resources for new schemes e.g. £60k for relate mediation project	To develop in conjunction with prevention toolkit. Target: 2009 - 10	Developing a range of services to support the prevention toolkit. Delivery of high quality and consistent services across the county.	 Although some projects were set up e.g. for mediation, these weren't maintained (but now being re-established). Other issues increased priority due to impending welfare reform Needs to be carried forward
	Undertake regular county benchmarking exercises	To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection for	Lead: County Homeless Strategy Officers Group	Opportunities Ensure cost effectiveness of services Risks Service becomes to	Officer time	Develop new set of measures that are activity based. December 2009 Collect data and analyse by March 2010	Possible cost savings and efficiencies identified	 Although this has been undertaken as part of the homeless review, needs to be carried out regularly e.g. by using HQN package and

	homelessness information		cost driven					reviewing Action Plan annually Carry over
Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes	Achieved/Comments	
Work with Supporting People to review the support provision specifically to homeless households	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: Worcestershire Supporting People Partners: DCs RSLs Other Statutory and Voluntary Sector organisations	Opportunities: Timely strategic review Risks: To transform services may be long term	Staff time Realignment of funding Worcestershire hire Supporting People funding	Participation in the strategic review Joint ownership of the strategic targets Target: March 2010	No pre-determined outcomes Strategic targets will be based on partnership and customer feedback to the review team		Carried out on ongoing basis, and will continue into new strategy Needs to be carried over
Develop a comprehensive range of supported housing options	To empower customers to make a positive change to their lives	Lead: SP & CHOG		Supporting People	3 SP schemes to secure HC capital funding in the 2008-10 bidding round	To meet the objectives of the Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy		Projects set up such as foyer in Bromsgrove and accommodation in Worcester. Needs to be carried over as ideas include wet hostel
Increase the supply of supported accommodation for victims of domestic violence	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: Redditch/ Bromsgrove DC. Partners: Other LAs, County DV Forum, Supporting People, Women's Aid	Opportunities: More suitable and appropriate accommodation Risks: To remain in unsuitable temporary accommodation	SP Strategic Review	Target: July 2009	Need to await outcome of SP reviews – increase in types of accommodation available to occupy including refuge spaces, self-contained safe houses and sanctuary schemes.		Safe houses and sanctuary scheme have been set up
Implement Choice Based Lettings model based on Wychavon's model throughout the county	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: Wychavon D C Partners: DCs RSLs	Opportunities: DCLG funding To build on success of existing scheme Risks: Managing the changeover to CBL scheme on an individual district basis	Staff time DCLG funding and direct funding from DCs and RSL partners	Gaining support of politicians and stakeholders Bid submission Partnership approach to developing model and implementation Target: March 2010	Successful implementation of the CBL scheme across the county Increased choice for local people People having sufficient understanding of housing issues and a range of options to be able to exercise choice effectively		HomeChoicePlus has been implemented across the county

Action Plan – Year Four (2010-11)

Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes	Achieved/Comments
Increase the supply of move-on accommodation for substance misusers	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: Worcester Partners: Other LAs, CDT, Supporting People, SMAT	Opportunities: More suitable and appropriate accommodation Risks: To remain in unsuitable temporary accommodation	SP Strategic Review	Feasibility work completed Target: March 2011	Need to await outcome of SP reviews. Reduce the use of inappropriate accommodation, including where people are occupying supported or emergency accommodation they no longer require.	 Ongoing - projects established through WHABAC and bids have gone in to HCA Needs to be carried over
To support the development and delivery of related strategies to ensure strategic relevance	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: HOG	Opportunities: Improved service for clients Risks: Conflict with district council priorities could lead to failure to deliver objectives	Officer time	As per individual strategy	Ensure strategic fit with Supporting People 5 year plan, Children and Young persons plan, Domestic Violence strategy, Worcestershire Youth Homeless Partnership strategy, Teenage pregnancy strategy, county parenting strategy. Ensure strategic ownership of the strategy	 County Homeless Strategy Steering Group and other partnership working mean have contributed to new strategies and action plans
Develop appropriate housing services for migrant workers and gypsies based on outcome of the SHMA research	To better understand the needs of key client groups for the delivery of appropriate housing services and to prevent homelessness	Lead Wychavon DC Partners Other DC Planning sections County Council	Opportunities To utilise resources effectively across the county Risks Additional service demands but limited resources	£3,000 per district and county	Target: December 2007 for research to be completed. Sites identified as part of Joint Core Strategy July 2008 – October 2010. Submitted to secretary of sites in January 2009. District councils to develop policies for dealing with migrant workers and gypsies and travellers by March 2011.	South HMA Partnership to work together to consider and develop additional sites and services relating to housing and health based on identified need.	 MIRA project set up for migrant workers/no recourse to public funds.  Need for sites for permanent pitches Needs to be carried over

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CABINET

Date 5th September 2012

REPORT TITLE Fly-posting Enforcement Strategy

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Mike Webb
Portfolio Holder Consulted	√
Relevant Head of Service	Guy Revans
Wards Affected	All Wards
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with details of the proposed strategy and policies for dealing with fly-posting (the term commonly used for illegal advertising).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND to the Council that the Joint Fly-posting Strategy and associated policies attached at Appendix 1 be approved.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications; dealing with fly-posting is carried out within existing resources by Community Safety Enforcement Officers.

Legal Implications

- 3.2.1 The local authority has powers to take action against those responsible for fly-posting, those who benefit from the advertising and the owner/occupier of the property where the fly-posting occurs. The legislation that applies is as follows:

3.2.2 **The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003**

Empowers local authorities to issue a fly-posting removal notice on the owner of a relevant surface, and a fixed penalty notice where the offence can be identified.

3.2.3 **The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005**

Sets the range of fines for a fixed penalty notice at £75 payable within 14 days, which can be reduced to £50 if paid within 7 days and makes it an offence to give a false name and address to an authorised officer proposing to issue such a notice, it also changes the defences available to companies benefiting from fly-posting.

3.2.4 **The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (s.224)**

Makes it an offence for any person to display an advertisement in contravention of the regulations. Any person contravening the legislation is liable on summary conviction to a fine (currently) not exceeding £2,500.

3.2.5 The Highways Act 1980 (s.132)

Makes it an offence for any person to paint or in any way inscribe or affix any picture, letter or sign on the surface of a highway or on any tree or structure without the consent of the Highways Authority. Currently anyone found guilty of an offence is liable to a fine of up to £1,000 and, in the case of a second offence, up to £2,500.

- 3.3 The Legal Team has been consulted with regard to the legal implications.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.4 Fly-posting is generally regarded as any advertising material displayed on private and/or public property without the consent of the owner and that does not meet the requirements of the Town and Country (Control of Advertisement) Regulations 2007. It can be referred to as 'horizontal litter' and have a negative impact on the quality of the local environment.
- 3.5 Advertisements may be professionally produced or hand written on pieces of paper and may be found pasted on buildings, attached to lamp-posts, hoardings, railings, and street furniture, left under windscreens wipers on motor vehicles, and displayed on placards at roundabouts or along highway verges. 'A' boards can also constitute fly-posting if displayed without consent.
- 3.6 Fly-posting is an illegal activity which is not only unsightly, but also gives an impression of neglect and can attract other forms of vandalism and anti-social behaviour leading to the decline of an area. It creates litter which spoils the 'clean and green' environment the Council is seeking to maintain and it can obscure important traffic signs or create an obstruction to pedestrians and/or motorists.
- 3.7 In 2004 a task group produced a fly-posting policy and procedure and this was endorsed by Cabinet in December 2004. The adopted procedure included evidence gathering and the issuing of a standard warning letter and visit to offenders to request the removal of the fly-post. In cases of repeat offences, a fine or Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) was to be issued.
- 3.8 Since the adoption of this approach, the Community Safety Team through its Neighbourhood Warden scheme has continued to follow this procedure which has generally been effective in tackling fly-posting. Whenever practical, Neighbourhood Wardens have hand

delivered warning letters to the proprietor of businesses which have benefited from the fly-posting. The warning letters insist that fly-posts be removed within a given timescale and that offenders desist from conducting their business in such a manner in the future.

- 3.9 However, it should be noted that the latter stage of the procedure with the option of a fine or ASBO has never been implemented as this action has not been warranted and deemed a disproportionate course of action to take.
- 3.10 The current policy does not differentiate between private land and the highway and Community Safety's efforts have been primarily focused on public land and land owned by Bromsgrove District Council. Advertising on private land without advertising consent is covered under the Town and County Planning Act and dealt with by Planning services.
- 3.11 Since 2004, the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act has come into force and this provides an alternative and more practical option of issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) to fly-posting offenders. FPNs are issued under Section 43 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- 3.12 With these legislative changes and the introduction of the environmental enforcement service working alongside community safety, there is a need to revise the policy and procedure to ensure that it takes into account the different approaches needed based on land ownership and that the Council's strategy and policy for tackling fly posting is up to date and effective.
- 3.13 The proposed Strategy and associated policies is included at Appendix 1. The strategy gives further details of how fly-posts are defined and how the Council will tackle fly-posting.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.14 Worcestershire County Council and North Worcestershire Environment Group have been consulted in the development of this strategy including colleagues from Planning Services, Community Safety and Legal Services.
- 3.15 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out and taken into consideration in the development of the new strategy and policy.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Not having an effective approach to tackling fly-posting can result in a poor quality local environment with an increase in the amount of 'horizontal litter' that fly-posts can be seen to be.

CABINET

Date 5th September 2012

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Joint Fly-Posting Enforcement Strategy

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Fly-posting Scrutiny Report April 2005
Joint Environmental Enforcement Strategy adopted by the Council in 2011

7. KEY

FPN – Fixed Penalty Notice

CNEA – Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

ASBO – Anti-Social Behaviour Order

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Joint Fly Posting Enforcement Strategy

DRAFT version 1.2

DRAFT

Contents

1. Introduction
2. What is fly-posting?
3. The problems associated with fly-posting
4. How advertisements are controlled
5. What we mean by positive action
6. The legal powers available to deal with fly-posting
7. Reporting fly-posting
8. Recording reports of fly-posting
9. How we respond to reports of fly-posting
10. The steps we will take to prevent fly-posting
11. How we will enforce the law
12. How the Council will work across departments including Community Safety, Planning and Legal
13. How the Council will work with Parish/Town Councils, County Highways, Highway Agency, the Police and other external partners and agencies

1. Introduction

The Council has a statutory duty to keep the district clean. Fly-posting (the term commonly used for illegal advertising) makes an area look untidy and if not removed, it can give the impression that an area is unkempt and will attract other environmental crime and anti-social behaviour such as litter and criminal damage. Fly-posts also have the potential to distract motorists causing road traffic collisions. In addition, the businesses involved in this practice are gaining an unfair advantage over their law-abiding competitors by not paying for advertising space.

This Strategy clarifies the Council's approach to tackling fly-posting through its enforcement activities. It explains how the Council works with partners and other agencies to tackle illegal advertisements and promote advertising within the parameters of the law.

2. What is fly-posting?

Fly-posting is generally regarded as any advertising material displayed on private and/or public property without the consent of the owner and that does not meet the requirements of the Town and Country (Control of Advertisement) Regulations 2007.

The advertisements may be professionally produced or hand written on pieces of paper and may be found pasted on buildings, attached to lamp-posts, hoardings, railings, and street furniture, left under windscreens wipers on motor vehicles, and displayed on placards at roundabouts or along highway verges. In addition, 'A' boards situated on the public highway are also subject to the above Regulations and, if displayed without the necessary consents, constitute fly-posting and will be dealt with under this strategy.

3. The problems associated with fly-posting

- Fly-posting is an illegal activity which is not only unsightly, but also gives an impression of neglect and can attract other forms of vandalism and anti-social behaviour leading to the decline of an area.
- It creates litter which spoils the 'clean and green' environment the Council is seeking to maintain.
- It is a drain on local authority resources and an unwelcome expense for other landowners who are required to remove the advertisements from their property.
- It is a very cheap form of advertising which puts those who advertise legally at an unfair disadvantage.
- It can obscure important traffic signs or create an obstruction and distraction to pedestrians and/or motorists.
- It can cause injury if a placard or heavier-type sign dislodges from its fixings.

4. How advertisements are controlled

The Local Planning Authority is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the advertisement control system and for deciding whether a particular advertisement should receive advertising consent or not.

Some advertisements are excluded from control, whilst others benefit from deemed consent. The rules on advertising including details of those adverts that are exempt or have deemed consent are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007.

ALL forms of advertisements (including those with deemed consent and those excluded from control) MUST comply with the following standard conditions:-

1. Be kept clean and tidy
2. Be kept in a safe condition
3. Have the permission of the owner of the site on which they are displayed including the Highways Authority if the sign is to be placed on highways land.
4. Not obscure or hinder the interpretation of official highway, rail, waterway or aircraft signs or otherwise make hazardous the use of these types of transport.
5. Be removed carefully where so required by the Planning Authority

5. What we mean by 'positive action'

This Strategy and policies promote lawful advertising. It is not a blanket ban on advertising but gives the Council the ability to deal with the variety of fly-posting problems that can occur.

Policy Statement 1

The Council will always take positive action to tackle fly posting that has an adverse affect on communities and environments, in line with relevant legislation and its own strategy.

In all cases where advertisements are allowed, the standard conditions outlined in Section 4 of this strategy and any other specific conditions required by legislation must be met.

6. The legal powers available to deal with fly-posting

The local authority has powers to take action against those responsible for fly-posting, those who benefit from the advertising and the owner/occupier of the property where the fly-posting occurs. The legislation that applies is as follows:-

- **The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003**
This Act empowers local authorities to issue a fly-posting removal notice on the owner of a relevant surface, and a fixed penalty notice where the offence can be identified.
- **The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005**
This Act sets the range of fines for a fixed penalty notice at £75 payable within 14 days, which can be reduced to £50 if paid within 7 days and makes it an offence to give a false name and address to an authorised officer proposing to issue such a notice, it also changes the defences available to companies benefiting from fly-posting.
- **The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (s.224)**
It is an offence for any person to display an advertisement in contravention of the regulations. Any person contravening the legislation is liable on summary conviction to a fine (currently) not exceeding £2,500.
- **The Highways Act 1980 (s.132)**
It is an offence for any person to paint or in any way inscribe or affix any picture, letter or sign on the surface of a highway or on any tree or structure without the consent of the Highways Authority. Currently anyone found guilty of an offence is liable to a fine of up to £1,000 and, in the case of a second offence, up to £2,500.

7. Reporting fly-posting

Incidents of fly-posting can be reported in a variety of ways through the Council's Customer Access Points.

For Bromsgrove District Council reports can be made:-

Online at www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

By Telephone on 01527 881 288 or

In person at Bromsgrove District Customer Service Centre, School Drive, Bromsgrove, B60 1AY

For Redditch Borough Council reports can be made:-

Online at www.redditchbc.gov.uk

By Telephone on 01527 534 123 or

In person at Redditch Customer Service Centre, Town Hall, Walter Stranz Sq, Redditch, B98 8AH

Batchley One Stop Shop, Batchley Shopping Centre, 183 Batchley Road, Redditch, B97 6JB – Mon/Tues/Fri 09.00 – 12.30 and Weds/Thurs – 13.30 – 17.30

Winyates One Stop Shop, Unit 3 Winyates Centre, Redditch, B98 0NR
Mon/Tues 13.30 – 17.00 and Weds/Thurs/Fri – 09.00 – 12.30.

Woodrow One Stop Shop, Woodrow Shopping Centre, Studley Road, Redditch, B98 7RY – Mon/Tues 09.00 – 12.30 and Weds/Thurs/Fri – 13.30 – 17.00

8. Recording reports of fly-posting

Details of fly-posting reports are logged on the Council's database and referred to the appropriate officer(s) for action.

Records will be maintained of those issued with consent to display advertisements, as well as those issued with advice, warning letters, notices, fixed penalty notices and those who have had court proceedings commenced against them.

9. How we respond to reports of fly-posting

The Council responds to reports of fly-posting in different ways depending whether it is on the highway, on council owned land or private land.

All reports of fly posting will be initially investigated by the Community Safety Enforcement Team. The team will identify whether the advert has advertising consent, is in contravention to the Town and County Planning Act 1990 and/or the Highways Act 1980, and details of the advert owner, advertising beneficiary and the land owner will be ascertained.

Policy Statement 2

If the reported advert(s) is located on the highway or on land owned by the Council; and does not contain the details of the advert owner or beneficiary or this information cannot be obtained through reasonable enquiry, it will be removed instantly.

As part of their daily cleansing duties the Council's Street Cleansing Teams will remove any illegal advertisements from the public highway, where the details of the advert owner and/or beneficiary are not present or cannot be obtained through reasonable enquiry.

Any advert which is deemed hazardous to the public will also be removed instantly.

If the advert owner and/or beneficiary can be identified a 48 hour notice to remove the item(s) will be given. Should the advertising remain after the 48 hour deadline, enforcement action will be taken and the fly posting removed and retained by the Council for 14 days before it is destroyed.

Enforcement action will be taken immediately against all those who have already received a 48 hour notice for prior incidents or have had previous enforcement action taken against them.

On private land where the advert owner or advertising beneficiary cannot be identified, the Council will seek to take positive action against fly posting with the land owner, under the guidance of the Council's Planning Enforcement Team.

At the discretion of the Community Safety Enforcement Officers, incidents of fly posting involving large quantities or large structures erected for the purpose of advertising may also be referred to the Council's Planning Enforcement Team to take additional action.

10. The steps we will take to prevent fly-posting

Policy Statement 3

The Council will:-

- Provide advice and information on advertising regulations to support businesses and individuals to advertise legally
- Include a 'no fly-posting' clause in council facility hire contracts and within the conditions of Street Trading Consents
- Request applicants for Temporary Event Notices to give an undertaking not to fly-post
- Refer any entertainment venues that habitually flout fly-posting legislation to the licensing team as persons 'not suitable' to hold a premises licence.
- Carry out fly posting enforcement activity in line with legislation and the Council's Enforcement Policy.
- Publicise enforcement action taken to deter other potential offenders
- Work with neighbouring authorities to tackle persistent offenders
- Publish this policy

11. How we will enforce the law

Formal action may be taken in respect of any illegal advertising that is reported or identified through community safety patrols; enforcement will be delivered in line with the Council's Joint Environmental Enforcement Strategy.

The following is an extract from the Joint Environmental Enforcement Strategy which outlines the types and levels of enforcement available to officers:

"The interface between giving advice and more serious enforcement action is critical. In Bromsgrove and Redditch a staged approach is used as outlined below:

<i>Stage 1</i>	<i>Advice given</i>
<i>Stage 2</i>	<i>Verbal warning</i>
<i>Stage 3</i>	<i>Written warning</i>
<i>Stage 4</i>	<i>Fixed penalty notice¹</i>
<i>Stage 5</i>	<i>Court proceedings</i>

¹ Fixed Penalty Notices for fly posting can only be issued by the authorised officers within the Community Safety Enforcement Team

Environmental Enforcement Officers are given complete discretion towards the severity of the penalty. It should also be noted it is not necessary to progress through the stages and offences can be taken to stage 5 on a first account if this is considered appropriate.

The authorities will use the power whereby a discount on a FPN can be offered for early payment.

The standard period for payment of fixed penalties is set in the legislation at 14 days. Once a FPN has been issued, an authority cannot prosecute for the alleged offence if the fixed penalty is paid within this period and this must be stated on the notice itself. For this reason, the period during which a discount for early payment is offered, must be less than 14 days and to avoid confusion, guidance recommends that it should not be more than 10 days.”

12. How the Council will work across departments including Community Safety, Street Cleansing Teams, Planning and Legal

An effective approach relies on good communication between those departments that have the powers to enforce legislation relating to fly-posting. Officers from Community Safety, Planning and Environmental Services will liaise and work with each other and, where necessary, Legal Services to tackle fly-posting problems in a consistent manner.

13. How the Council will work with Parish Councils, County Highways, the Police and other external partners and agencies

Policy Statement 4

Worcestershire County Council will be consulted with regards to any application to display outdoor advertisements within the district.

Worcestershire County Council will inform the Council of any consent they give to advertise on the highway.

Intelligence on persistent offenders and information on any enforcement action taken by the Council will be shared with the Hereford and Worcestershire Environmental Group.

Where necessary the Council will work together with the police, neighbouring authorities and other agencies to tackle persistent offenders.

The Council has the power to serve notice on utility companies and educational establishments to remove fly-posting from their property; however, this course of action will only be taken if informal approaches fail. This approach in dealing with defacement on property owned by utility companies and educational establishments is in line with DEFRA guidance.

Utility companies and educational establishments will be informed of any fly-posts seen on their property. If permission is given and the adverts are readily accessible they will be removed. Persistent fly posting problems on structures and land owned by utility companies and education establishments will be tackled through partnership working.

Parish Councils are encouraged to report fly-posting within their areas to the Council as are Neighbourhood Watch schemes and resident groups; the Council will feedback any positive outcomes that arise from these reports.

14. Non Commercial Advertising

Non commercial advertising is advertising for purposes that are not for profit or gain or to promote a commercial organisation. This normally consists of advertising which is sponsored by or for a charitable purpose or civic, religious or political organisation. Non commercial advertising may include but not exclusively local community events organised by youth groups, schools, churches, or voluntary organisations.

Policy Statement 5

The Council will not take enforcement action against unlawful non commercial advertising on the first occasion an organisation has been identified. The Council will provide advice to such organisations on how to advertise lawfully and gain the necessary consents. Once an organisation has been given advice there will be an expectation that advertising consent and consent from the land owner will be in place for all of its future advertising. Failure to advertise lawfully following receipt of advice and guidance will result in enforcement action being taken as would be applied to unlawful commercial advertising.

All non commercial advertising must adhere to the 5 standard advertising conditions, (see Section 4). Advertisers must have consent from the land owner including the Highways Department if placed on a road, path, verge or piece of highway furniture. Contact with the Highways Department at Worcestershire County Council should be made at least 4 weeks in advanced of advertising on a highway to allow advertising consent to be granted.

Further Information

The legislation that applies to advertising is complex and, if in any doubt, you are advised to seek advice from the Councils Planning Enforcement Team on what steps you need to take to ensure that you are acting within the law. Telephone enquiries can be made to the Council's Planning Enforcement Team. (See Customer Contact information at Section 7).

For further information on this policy, please contact Environmental Services. (See Customer Contact information at Section 7).

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CABINET

5TH September 2012

LAND DISPOSAL POLICY

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Bullivant
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Teresa Kristunas, Head of Finance & Resources
Wards Affected	All
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Members are requested to approve the Minor Land Disposal Policy and associated fees and charges, and to delegate authority to the Head of Finance & Resources to progress any applications that fall under this Policy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is requested to RECOMMEND that:

subject to any comments the draft Minor Land Disposal Policy included at Appendix 1 and the fees and charges included at Appendix 2, be approved, and

authority is delegated to the Head of Finance and Resources to progress any applications that fall within the Minor Land Disposal Policy, and

that the Scheme of Delegation be amended accordingly.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1. From time to time the Council is approached to dispose of relatively small pieces of land. The purpose of this report to clarify the position regarding the disposal of land and introduce a scale of fees for Minor Land Disposals.
- 3.2. Authority has been delegated to the Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources to determine applications for the purchase and lease of small areas of land owned by the Council and to sell buildings and land at the best price reasonably obtainable in accordance with the Assets Management Plan and relevant legislation.
- 3.3. Any land or buildings not covered by the Minor Land Disposal Policy will be referred to Members to be declared surplus.

Financial Implications

- 3.7 Capital receipts of less than £10,000 can be treated as revenue and they represent a one-off addition to revenue in the relevant financial year. Capital receipt in excess of this level can be used to support the capital programme.

Legal Implications

- 3.8. There are no legal implications.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.8 The Minor Land Disposal Policy will clarify the position regarding land disposals.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.10. The draft policy provides for appropriate consultation.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are no significant risks.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Draft Minor Land Disposal Policy
Appendix 2 – Fees and Charges

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

7. AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Teresa Kristunas, Head of Finance and Resources
E Mail: t.kristunas@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: (01527) 881748 (ext 3295 internal)

Minor Land Disposals Policy

Definition

For any land and/or building to fall under this policy it shall be less than half a hectare in size and have a value of £49,999 or less plus VAT/fees. The disposal shall include grants of easements, rights of way and other minor licences. It shall however include all garden licences or grazing licences regardless of size of land.

Before proceeding with any disposal, consultation with all relevant officers will take place. The relevant Ward Member will be advised accordingly. Where there may be more than one interested party, the other party will be given the opportunity either to bid for the land or to negotiate an appropriate agreement to sell part to each. Restrictions on use of the land will be included where considered appropriate. In the event of a dispute the matter will be referred to the Cabinet.

Most disposals are likely to require planning permission for change of use and it will be a requirement that this is obtained before completion of the sale can take place. Under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, any disposal of open space must be advertised and objections considered.

Fees

All freehold (or long leaseholds with a premium) disposals (excluding licences) of the above will attract a minimum fee towards the Council's administrative/surveyor/legal costs subject to a non-refundable fee in the case of abortive work.

If the land concerned has been used as public open space (other than verges and surround strips of land on housing estates) the purchaser will also be responsible for any necessary advertising costs.

Appendix 2

Fees and Charges 2012 – 2013

Non refundable administration fees

Item	Fee	Total + VAT
Fee 1 - Request for information only		
a) If query can be answered quickly from existing records	Free	Free
b) If query requires retrieval and interpretation of deeds	£40.00	£48.00
Fee 2 – Application fee	£300.00	£360.00

Payable on application.

Land purchase price

Agreed price for land in question, payable upon completion.

Other fees payable, as a guide only

Payable upon completion, if application is approved.

- Council's Surveyors fees - £400.00 approx (ex VAT)
- Council's Solicitor's fees - £400.00 approx (ex VAT)

Surveyors and Solicitors fees are based upon the value and complexity of the transaction. Applicants will be advised at the appropriate time of the fees that will apply to your transaction. Applicants will be expected to pay the Councils fees as well as your own if the matter proceeds.

Cost of statutory advertising for proposed disposals of Open Space

- Advertising costs - £500.00*

*Approximation only. This fee is set by the advertiser at the time of placing the advertisement. The above is a guide only. Applicants should ask for a quote at the appropriate time.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

APRIL - JUNE (QUARTER 1) FINANCE MONITORING REPORT 2012/13

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Roger Hollingworth
Relevant Head of Service	Teresa Kristunas Head of Finance and Resources
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To report to Cabinet on the Council's financial position for the period April - June 2012 (Quarter 1 – 2012/13)

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the current financial position on Revenue and Capital as detailed in the report and requests officers to consider actions to enable the predicted overspend to be as mitigated as possible.
- 2.2 That £50,000 be released from the ICT Refresh Reserves Budget and be approved for planned capital expenditure for the purchase of XP Sunray Servers and additional corporate electronic storage capacity
- 2.3 That £70,000 from the revenue budget be approved for capital expenditure for the purchase of Sunray Devices, Upgrade to Office 2010 and new ESX Servers.
- 2.4 Additional capital funding has been secured from County £20,000 and a grant offered by the Rotary club £15,000 to further improve quality and range at Sanders Park, officers recommend that the budget is increased to reflect these
- 2.5 Approve a virement of £29,000 detailed in appendix 1.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 This report provides details of the financial information across the Council. The aim is to ensure officers and members can make informed and considered judgement of the overall position of the Council.
- 3.2 A separate finance report for each department plus a council summary is shown on the following pages.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Revenue Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 – Overall Council

Service Head	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Budget April - June £'000	Actual spend April – June £'000	Variance to date April - June £'000
Environmental Services	4020	252	376	124
Community Services	2,481	421	342	-79
Pre-Regulatory Services	817	64	55	-9
Leisure & Cultural Services	1,979	501	484	-17
Planning & Regeneration	1,051	93	149	56
Customer Services	-29	115	101	-14
Finance & Resources	2,097	491	462	-29
Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	1,275	229	207	-22
Business Transformation	7	493	468	-25
Corporate Services	648	161	135	-26
SERVICE TOTAL	14,346	2,820	2,779	-41
Interest Payable	9	2	0	-2
Interest on Investments	-75	-18	0	18
COUNCIL SUMMARY	14,280	2,804	2,779	-25
Financial Commentary				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">At the end of quarter 1 and underspend of £25K has been identified by officers. The variances are detailed in the tables below.				

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Capital Budget summary Quarter 1 (April - June) 2012/13 – Overall Council

Department	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Budget April – June £'000	Actual spend April – June £'000	Variance To date April – June £'000
Business Transformation	10	10	0	-10
Environmental Services	761	58	58	0
Planning & Regeneration	1,538	9	3	-6
Regulatory Services	116	0	0	0
Community Services	1,102	275	229	-46
Leisure & Cultural Services	611	50	50	0
Budget for Support Services Recharges	100	25	25	0
Total	4,238	427	365	-62
Financial Commentary: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no significant variances on capital at the end of the first quarter.				

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Environmental Services	Quarter 1 (April - June) 2012/13
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Revenue Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 – Environmental Services

Service Head	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Profiled Budget April - June £'000	Actual spend April - June £'000	Variance to date April - June £'000
Waste Management Policy	-4	-1	0	1
Depot	13	253	252	-1
Car Parks / Civil Enforcement Parking	-576	-112	-31	81
Cemeteries	96	13	24	11
Highways	262	44	42	-2
Street Cleansing & Public Conveniences	1298	208	199	-9
Grounds Maintenance	612	99	85	-14
Transport & Waste	2319	-252	-195	57
TOTAL	4020	252	376	124

Financial Commentary

- Car parking income is lower than expected; officers believe this is partially due to the inclement weather conditions experienced so far this year. Actual ticket sales (footfall) reduced by 5101 across all sites, compared to the same period last year. The most significant reduction has been at Recreation Road North Car Park where individual ticket sales reduced by 3800, it is believed that people visiting the new medical centre are using either the medical centre's own car park, or Parkside which has shown an increase in footfall however not the extent that lost.
- The variance to budget within cemeteries is due to reduced income.
- Vacant posts in Grounds and Street Cleansing are providing short term savings, however these posts will be filled this year.
- Officers are working to promote the trade waste and cesspool services to increase income.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Capital Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 Environmental Services

Service	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Budget April – June £'000	Actual spend April – June £'000	Variance To date April – June £'000
Depot Site Security	65	0	0	0
Vehicle & Equipment replacement programme	592	58	58	0
North Cemetery Phase 2	79	0	0	0
Cemetery Toilets	25	0	0	0
TOTAL	761	58	58	0
Financial Commentary: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small plant has been ordered or delivered, the remaining vehicle purchases or additional freighters is planned for later in the year.				

Community Services	Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13
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Revenue Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 – Community Services

Service Head	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Profiled Budget April - June £'000	Actual spend April – June £'000	Variance to date April - June £'000
Housing Strategy	1,764	224	207	-17
Community Safety & Transport	676	179	117	-62
Community Cohesion	41	18	18	0
TOTAL	2,482	421	342	-79
Financial Commentary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing Strategy is showing a small underspend which is due to a manager vacancy within the department which is due to be filled shortly.• There is an under-spend on Community Safety and Transport due to efficiency				

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

savings achieved by the shared provision of the CCTV and lifeline service

Capital Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 Community Services

Service	Revised Budget 2011/12 £'000	Budget April – June £'000	Actual spend April – June £'000	Variance To date April – June £'000
Strategic Housing	1,102	275	229	-46
TOTAL	1,102	275	229	-46

Financial Commentary:

- Applications for Disabled facilities grants continue to be approved although as in previous years take up is slower at the beginning of the financial year.
- Expenditure has been incurred on the Perryfields Housing scheme into 12/13 which is progressing as planned to the 4 year development programme with BDHT.

Revenue Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 – Leisure and Cultural Services

Service Head	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Profiled Budget April - June £'000	Actual spend April - June £'000	Variance to date April - June £'000
Parks & Open Spaces	440	19	18	-1
Allotments	50	0	0	0
Promotions	209	40	40	0
Sports & Recreation Development	281	24	19	-5
Property, Assets & Facilities	149	281	273	-8

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Management				
Leisure Services	850	137	134	-3
TOTAL	1,979	501	484	-17
Financial Commentary				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Running in line with the Shared Service business case and no major variances have arisen in the first quarter of 2012/13 within the service.				

Capital Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 Leisure and Cultural Services

Service	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Budget April – June £'000	Actual spend April – June £'000	Variance To date April – June £'000
Sports Facilities	379	50	50	0
Sanders Park	60	0	0	0
Play Areas	118	0	0	0
Other Schemes	54	0	0	0
TOTAL	611	50	50	0
Financial Commentary: Additional funding has been secured from County and a grant offered by the Rotary club to further improve Sanders Park, this money is specifically for Sanders Park officers recommend that the budget is increased to reflect these contributions.				

Planning and Regeneration	Quarter 1 (April - June) 2012/13
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Revenue Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 – Planning and Regeneration

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Service Head	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Profiled Budget April - June £'000	Actual spend April - June £'000	Variance to date April - June £'000
Building Control	-40	-37	-32	5
Development Control	376	-7	45	52
Strategic Planning	440	90	86	-4
Economic & Tourism Development	244	45	40	-5
Emergency Planning	10	3	3	0
Land Charges	-75	-27	-16	11
Town Centre Development	96	26	23	-3
TOTAL	1,051	93	149	56

Financial Commentary;

- Income from planning application fees is lower than budgeted levels, which has resulted in an overspend within Development Control.
- The overspend within Land Charges is due to income from search fees being lower than budgeted levels and a legislative requirement stating that any income in excess of expenditure must be reinvested within the service.

Capital Budget summary Quarter 1(April – June) 2012/13 Planning and Regeneration

Service	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Budget April – June £'000	Actual spend April – June £'000	Variance To date April – June £'000
Town Centre Development - Project Management	38	9	0	-9
Town Centre Development – Public Realm	1,000	0	0	0

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Parkside school - new offices	500	0	0	0
TOTAL	1,538	9	0	-9

Financial Commentary:

- Worcestershire County Council have not yet invoiced any project management costs for 2012/13.
- Work has started on the Public Realm but no costs have yet been incurred as at Quarter 1.

Regulatory - Client	Quarter 1 (April - June) 2012/13
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Revenue Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 – Regulatory Client

Service Head	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Profiled Budget April - Dec £'000	Actual spend April - Dec £'000	Variance to date April - Dec £'000
Environmental Health	994	91	83	-8
Licensing	-177	-27	28	-1
TOTAL	817	64	55	-9

Financial Commentary:

- . Environmental Health transferred to Regulatory Services 1st June 2010.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Worcestershire Regulatory Services	Quarter 1 (April - June) 2012/13
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The main revenue expenditure relating to Regulatory Services is reported on a quarterly basis to the Joint Committee and reflects the total costs associated with providing the service across all of the participating Councils.

Capital Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 Regulatory Services

Service	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Budget April – June £'000	Actual spend April – June £'000	Variance To date April – June £'000
Worcestershire Enhanced Two Tier Programme (WETT)	116	0	0	0
TOTAL	116	0	0	0

Financial Commentary:

- The expenditure is jointly funded by all partners to the Joint Committee in accordance with the business case. The budget for 12/13 is £1,049k, BDC share at 11.05% £116k

Customer Services	Quarter 1 (April - June) 2012/13
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Revenue Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 – Customer Services

Service Head	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Profiled Budget April - June £'000	Actual spend April - June £'000	Variance to date April - June £'000
Customer Services	-29	115	101	-14
TOTAL	-29	115	101	-14

Financial Commentary;

The underspend within Customer Services is due to a number of vacancies within the department.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Finance and Resources	Quarter 1 (April - June) 2012/13
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Revenue Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 – Finance and Resources

Service Head	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Profiled Budget April - June £'000	Actual spend April - June £'000	Variance to date April - June £'000
Central Overheads	865	216	216	0
Accounts & Financial Mgmt	55	154	148	-6
Human Resources & Welfare	0	53	50	-3
Grants & Donations	96	80	78	-2
Revenues & Benefits	1,081	-12	-30	-18
TOTAL	2,097	491	462	-29
Financial Commentary				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The underspend within the Revenues and Benefits section is due to a number of vacancies within the department.				

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services	Quarter 1 (April - June) 2012/13
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Revenue Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 – Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

Service Head	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Profiled Budget April – June £'000	Actual spend April - June £'000	Variance to date April - June £'000
CMT	0	12	12	0
Democratic Services & Member Support	1,104	119	110	-9
Elections & Electoral Services	164	32	21	-11
Legal Advice & Services	7	66	64	-2
TOTAL	1,275	229	207	-22
Financial Commentary; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no other major variances that have arisen in the first quarter of 2011/12 within the service.				

Business Transformation	Quarter 1 (April - June) 2012/13
--------------------------------	---

Revenue Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 – Business Transformation

Service Head	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Profiled Budget April - June £'000	Actual Spend April - June £'000	Variance to date April - June £'000
IT Services	7	446	426	-20
Business Transformation	0	15	14	-1
Policy & Performance	0	32	28	-4
TOTAL	7	493	468	-25

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Financial Commentary

- The underspend within the department is mainly due to vacancies within the department but this is due to utilised in quarter 2

Capital Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 Business Transformation

Service	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Budget April – June £'000	Actual spend April – June £'000	Variance to date April – June £'000
Member ICT Facilities	10	10	0	-10
TOTAL	10	10	0	-10

Financial Commentary:

- Reviews are currently being made for the members IT requirements.

Revenue Budget summary Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012/13 – Corporate Services

Service Head	Revised Budget 2012/13 £'000	Profiled Budget April - June £'000	Actual Spend April - June £'000	Variance to date April - June £'000
Corporate Resources	648	96	82	-14
Corporate Admin / Central Post / Printing	0	65	53	-12
TOTAL	648	161	135	-26

Financial Commentary

- There are some small underspends, which are expected, in the first quarter of 12/13 these will be utilised going into quarter 2

3.3 Sundry Debtors

Sundry Debt is raised by the Council to ensure effective recovery of debts owing. The outstanding balance at 30/06/12 was £519k, net of credit balances (Balance to 31/03/12 was £455k) which includes:-

Type of Debt	Amount £'000
Car Parking Fines	12
Lifeline debts	39
Rents/Hire Charges	28
Building Regulations	2
Trade Waste and Cesspool emptying	67
Housing Schemes	25
Elections	14
Licensing	15
Shared Services	277
Garden Waste	27
Miscellaneous	13

The age of the debt is represented as follows:

Age of Debt	Balance as at 31/03/12 £'000	Balance as at 30/06/12 £'000
Under 30 days (not yet due)	334	264
Up to 1 month	18	156
1 – 2 months	7	6
3 – 6 months	50	46
Over 6 months	46	47

Debt recovery is originally carried out by the Exchequer Section with 2 reminders being sent to debtors. Debts over 90 days are currently under review and recovered by the legal team.

4. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

The Council's Treasury Management Strategy has been developed in accordance with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance prudential indicators and is used to manage risks arising from financial instruments. Additionally treasury management practices are followed on a day to day basis.

4.1 Credit Risk

Credit risk arises from deposits with banks and financial institutions, as well as credit exposures to the Council's customers. Credit risk is minimised by use of a specified list of investment counterparty criteria and by limiting the amount invested with each institution. The Council receives credit rating details from its Treasury Management advisers on a daily basis and any counterparty falling below the criteria is removed from the list.

The Council has not had and does not expect any default losses by any of its counterparties in relation to investments.

Due to market conditions the Council has reduced its credit risk for all new investments by only investing in the highest rated instruments and has shortened the allowable length of investments in order to reduce risk.

The credit criteria in respect of financial assets managed in-house by the Council are as follows:

Financial Asset Category	Criteria (Fitch ratings)	Maximum Investment
Deposits with banks/building societies	Long Term: minimum 'A-'	£3million
Deposits with Debt Management Account – Deposit Facility (DMADF)		£no upper limit *

Fitch Ratings is an international credit rating agency (one of three nationally recognised rating agencies alongside Moody's and Standard & Poor's). Fitch Rating's long-term credit ratings are set up along a scale from 'AAA' to 'D' where 'AAA' designates the best quality companies, reliable and stable through to 'D' where the company has defaulted on obligations and Fitch believes that it will generally default on all or most of its obligations.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

At 30 June short term investments comprise:

	31 March 2012 £000	30 June 2012 £000
Deposits with DMADF*	2,750	0
Deposits with Banks/Building Societies	6,000	12,200
Total		

- *Investments with the DMADF are guaranteed by HM Treasury. Following advice from the Council's treasury advisors, from a credit perspective no upper limit was imposed on investments with the DMADF.

4.2 Income from investments

An investment income target of £75k has been set for 2012/13 using a projected return rate of 0.75% – 1.50 %. During the past financial year bank base rates have remained 0.5% and current indications are projecting minimal upward movement for the short term.

In the 3 months to 30 June the Council received income from investments of £18k.

5. REVENUE BALANCES

5.1 Revenue Balances

The revenue balances brought forward at 1 April 2012 were £2.580m (subject to audit). Excluding the impact of any projected over or under spends it is anticipated that £113k will be transferred from balances during 2012/13 to fund revenue expenditure; giving a current projected balance at 31 March 2013 of £2.467m.

6. CAPITAL RECEIPTS

- 6.1 The Capital Programme was approved by Members in January 2012, the effect of the level of Capital Spend to 2014/15 on capital receipts is estimated below:

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Capital Programme	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Balance b/fwd	3,358	896	-3961
Actual funding to date (April – June)	219	0	0
Estimated use for the remainder of the year	2,343	4,957	5,253
Received in year	100	100	100
Balance c/fwd	896	-3,961	-9,114

- 6.2 The figures in the above table include general capital receipts for the funding of projects throughout the District. In addition, an estimate of capital receipts has been made of £100k per annum in relation to any sales of assets. The opening capital receipts balance is subject to Audit by the Audit Commission.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None

8. SERVICE/OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Already included above

9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 Risk considerations covered in the report. There are no Health & Safety considerations

10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Performance Improvement is a Council Objective

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Virements to be approved

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Available from Financial Services

13. KEY

None

AUTHORS OF REPORT

Sam Morgan Financial Services Manager
Kate Goldey Senior Business Support Officer

	Virement From:			Virement To:			
Is the virement for 2012/13 Only or for future years?	Account	Cost Centre	Amount £	Account	Cost Centre	Amount £	Reason for virement
Ongoing	D88 – Misc Expenses	CM99	29,000	A01 – Salaries	CC01	-29,000	Allocation of savings to correct service area

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CABINET

5th September 2012

QUARTERLY MONITORING OF WRITE OFFS – 1ST APRIL – 30TH JUN 2012

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Hollingsworth
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Teresa Kristunas, Head of Finance & Resources
Wards Affected	All

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Members are requested to consider the action taken by officers with respect to the write off of debts during the first quarter of 2012/13 and to note the profile and/or level of outstanding debt.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is requested to RESOLVE that:

Subject to any comments, the contents of the report be noted.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1. Members approved a revised Write Off Policy which changed the process for the reporting and approval process for the writing off of debts due to the Council. The revised Policy requires officers to report to members of the actual level of write offs and the profile of outstanding debt.

- 3.2. The current bad debts provisions are as follows:

	£
Housing Benefit	521,480
Council Tax	227,470
NDR	12,400
Sundry Debtors	<u>46,740</u>
Total	<u>808,090</u>

Financial Implications

- 3.3 The current bad debt provisions are adequate in relation to level of write offs and the level of outstanding debt.

Legal Implications

- 3.4. There are no legal implications.

Service / Operational Implications

CABINET

5th September 2012

3.5 No direct implications.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

3.6. No direct implications.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are no risks identified.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Write offs 1st April 2012 – 30th June 2012

Appendix 2 - Aged Debt Profile for Sundry Debts Arrears
Council Tax Arrears and Business Rates Arrears as at 30th
June 2012.

Appendix 3 – Write off of Overpaid Housing Benefit 1st April 2012 – 31st
March 2012

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers with this report.

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CABINET

5th September 2012

**Write Offs of Sundry Debtors -
1st April 2012 to 30th June 2012**

Sundry Debts	Reason	01/04/2012- 30/06/2012 £
GA	Gone Away	0.00
LB	Liquidation/Bankrupt	51.00
NFAV	No further Action due to value	3,013.35
D	Deceased	110.00
AWO	Auto write off under £1.00	3.85
LA	Legal Advised Write Off	931.72
PPAW	Part paid advised Write Off	4,568.84
	Total	8,678.76

CABINET

5th September 2012

Appendix 2

Aged Debt profile for Sundry Debts - 1st April 2012 to 30th June 2012

Age	Sundry Debts
	£
1 – 30 days	195,341.14
31 - 60 days	29,288.89
61 – 90 days	181,228.82
90 days +	122,196.80
Total	528,055.65

Council Tax Arrears

**Council Tax Arrears Analysis as at
30/06/2012**

Year	Total £	Annual debit £
1997/98	3,810	
1998/99	5,524	
1999/00	13,095	25,836,407
2000/01	23,137	26,419,700
2001/02	33,799	29,487,929
2002/03	50,436	35,962,692
2003/04	48,158	40,922,548
2004/05	54,750	41,770,011
2005/06	96,880	44,059,868
2006/07	136,456	46,683,333
2007/08	141,646	49,061,780
2008/09	130,450	51,592,006
2009/10	150,404	53,577,097
2010/11	276,984	55,298,276
2011/12	<u>509,695</u>	55,399,069
	<u>1,675,224</u>	

Note: the above arrears figures will reduce over time.

Non Domestic Rates Arrears

**Non Domestic Rates Arrears Analysis
As at 30/06/2012**

Year	Total £	Annual Debit £
1997/98	3,586	
1998/99	2,572	
1999/00	1,688	
2000/01	195	17,415,978
2001/02	2,163	17,232,868
2002/03	1,018	17,175,162
2003/04	1,035	17,345,890
2004/05	1,228	17,854,642
2005/06	20,965	18,803,202
2006/07	39,654	19,823,744
2007/08	*305,195	20,822,010
2008/09	77,693	23,586,234
2009/10`	224,377	23,829,603
2010/11	232,534	23,233,864
2011/12	<u>520,498</u>	25,205,206
	<u>1,434,401</u>	

Note: the above arrears figures will reduce over time.

* Bill for £279,520 in dispute. £195k paid in August, balance to be written off.

CABINET

5th September 2012

Appendix 3

Write off of Overpaid Housing Benefit – 1st April 2012 to 30th June 2012

Housing Benefit Write-Offs		
Reason	Amount £	No. of cases
Possible Write back	Nil	Nil
Deceased	142.97	1
Debt Relief Order	166.00	1
Bankruptcy	1802.48	1
Person Abroad	Nil	Nil
Hardship/Compassion	Nil	Nil
Not reasonable to recover	1976.50	1
Uneconomic to recover	707.77	4
Debt matching	Nil	Nil
Cannot trace	Nil	Nil
No prospect of recovery	Nil	Nil
Old debt – recovery options expired	1229.72	2
Totals	£6,025.44	10

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CABINET

5th September 2012

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Roger Hollingworth
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Teresa Kristunas, Head of Finance & Resources
Wards Affected	All

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The report advises members of the proposals for the Localisation of Council Tax Support and the need to undertake consultation prior to implementation from 1st April 2013.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE

- **that consultation on a local council tax support scheme and technical reforms to council tax commence with key stakeholders for a minimum 8 week period on the basis set out in the report.**
- **notes that a further report on council tax support and technical reforms to council tax be submitted for Cabinet consideration following the consultation and that recommendations on this will be made to full Council.**

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1. From 2013/14 the Council will only be reimbursed 90% of the cost of granting Council Tax Benefit (CTB). For Bromsgrove this equates to around £478k, based on total CTB expenditure of £4.8 million. If the Council took no action the amount of the shortfall that would fall on Bromsgrove District Council would be around £61k which would then have to be met through other savings. The changes to funding mean that billing authorities are required to adopt a new scheme for Council Tax Support by 31st January 2013 to come into operation for 2013/14.
- 3.2. Council tax support will be made available as a discount rather than a benefit. The grant, funding 90% of a forecast level of demand, will be paid to billing and major precepting bodies to offset reductions in the Council Tax Base. The impact on the respective precepting authorities is shown below.

Authority	£'000	%
Bromsgrove District Council	61	12.8
Worcestershire County Council	331	69.2
West Mercia Police Authority	57	11.9
H & W Fire and Rescue Authority	23	4.9
Average parish council	6	1.2
Total	478.0	100.0

- 3.3. The total funding gap across the County is estimated at £3.8m. Given other financial pressures facing councils and other preceptors, there is a need to support the need to minimise the additional funding burden presented by these changes. The proposal therefore is to reduce the impact of the reduction in grant through using the Councils discretion in granting Council Tax Exemptions which are currently available. The proposals aim to reduce the gap by 50% with a potential review to deliver further savings in 2014/15.
- 3.4. The Government has, following consultation, made some changes to the Council Tax Regulations. These changes do not form part of the Council Tax Discount Scheme but it is proposed that any savings generated through these exemptions may be used to offset the reduction in grant. The exemptions where the Council now has some flexibility are:
- **Class A and Class C Exemptions** (temporary, for vacant dwellings) being replaced with discounts of up to 100%, for billing authorities to determine;
 - **Class L Exemptions** will be abolished and mortgagees in possession of empty dwellings will become liable for council tax on them;
 - Billing authorities will have the power to levy up to full council tax on **second homes** (currently the discount is 10 – 50%);
 - Billing authorities will be allowed to levy an **empty homes premium** over and above full council tax liability in respect of dwellings which have been left empty for, say, two years or more.
- 3.5. Officers from across Worcestershire authorities have been working together to help to mitigate the impact of the changes on residents and agree a framework for a Worcestershire wide scheme by 31 January 2013. Whilst the financial target of half of the financial gap was set as an aspiration, the way in which each District Council may choose to alter their local scheme may be different.
- 3.6. There is a particular complication for districts with parishes as a result of council tax benefits becoming discounts. The Government is proposing

CABINET

5th September 2012

that the grant attributable to town and parish precepts, reflecting the 10% reduction, will be allocated to the relevant billing authority. Billing authorities and town / parish councils will then be expected to work together to managing any issues.

- 3.7. In addition to changes proposed to Council Tax exemptions to mitigate the reduction in grant the HWTA have also been looking at simple changes to the benefits system. This has included capping the benefit at Band D and limiting council tax support for all working age claimants to 90%. Claimants who are of pension age are to be protected from any changes to the benefits system.
- 3.8. It is proposed that consultation should be undertaken on the following:

Change	Implications	Additional council tax
1. Limiting support to Band D Council tax levels	For working age claimants only but need to consider impact on other vulnerable groups	£20,000
2a. Short term (up to 6 months) empty property Class C exemption - reduce from current 100% to 60%	This will apply to all taxpayers. An equality impact assessment will be necessary.	£200,000
2b. Short term (up to 6 months) empty property Class C exemption - reduce from current 100% to 50%	As an alternative to 2a. Council tax is based on 50% property and 50% persons, so there is some logic for this proposal.	£250,000
3. Reduce discount on second homes to nil	Currently second homes qualify for a 10% discount.	£44,000

- 3.9 It is not proposed to amend the current Class A (12 month) council tax exemptions for uninhabitable properties e.g. following flooding and RSL's

CABINET

5th September 2012

will continue to benefit from Class B exemptions from council tax in respect of their empty properties.

- 3.10 Similar proposals / consultation processes are being pursued for other Worcestershire billing authorities with the exception of Wyre Forest District Council who are proposing wider changes to council tax benefits / support in 2013/14.
- 3.11 The District Council's consultation paper will be available on the Council's website and our taxpayers will be invited to respond. We will draw attention to this via media releases etc. In addition, we will also consult directly with all preceptors (including parish councils), Registered Social Landlords operating in our area, CAB and other relevant voluntary sector organisations.
- 3.12 The full Council is required to adopt the new council tax support scheme. A further report will therefore be prepared following the consultation exercise for consideration by the Cabinet, who will then make recommendations to full Council. Any update on business rates pooling can be included as part of that same report.

Financial Implications

- 3.11 The Council needs to put arrangements in place to meet the funding gap of around £478k imposed through the decision of central government to only reimburse councils for 90% of the expenditure on Council Tax Benefits from April 2013. The impact for Bromsgrove of this gap is currently £61k with the remainder falling on the precepting bodies.

Legal Implications

- 3.12 The Council is required to consult the major precepting authorities and other persons as are likely to have an interest in the discount scheme.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.13. No significant implications, However, software changes may be required for amendments to the benefits system.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.14. Some property owners will face increased bills.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are a number of risks concerning the changes to be implemented in a relatively short timescale.

CABINET

5th September 2012

5. APPENDICES

None.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Various consultation documents issued by the DCLG available from the DCLG website.

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CABINET

5th September 2012

LOCAL RETENTION OF BUSINESS RATES GROWTH

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Roger Hollingworth
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Teresa Kristunas, Head of Finance & Resources
Wards Affected	All

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The report advises members of the proposals for the local retention of Business Rates growth from April 2013 and the options for pooling or remaining independent.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND participation in either,

- 1) the Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP pool, or**
- 2) the Worcestershire Business Rates Pool from the 1st April 2013.**

Or alternatively, remain independent of either pool for the purpose of the local retention of Business Rates from 1st April 2013.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1. From April 2013 the Government is proposing that local authorities will be able to retain a far larger proportion of the revenue raised locally and be able to retain a share of growth in business rates. Local authorities are being offered the opportunity to group together voluntarily to “pool” their business rates, giving them the scope to smooth the impact of volatility in rating income and generate growth through collaboration. It is also felt that groupings based around Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) could reinforce the LEP-wide economic strategy.
- 3.2. Under the proposals for the local retention of growth in business rates, the Government has assessed that some local authorities need more resources than their locally raised business rates whilst others need less. Local authorities that are assessed to need less will be charged a tariff to reduce their overall income. The sum of these tariffs will be distributed to those individual authorities assessed as needing additional funding in the form of a ‘top up’.
- 3.3. The Government intends to place a levy on authorities to ensure that a 1% growth in business rates does not result in more than a 1% increase in spending power. For Bromsgrove, this might result in 82% of any

business rates growth being lost from the local area through the levy mechanism. By pooling with other councils the amount of levy paid could be reduced or eliminated meaning more of our growth is retained locally.

- 3.4 As an example of the impact of the levy saving, recent estimates indicate that £100,000 business rates growth in each of the 6 districts in Worcestershire (£600,000 in total) would result in only £112,000 of this being retained within Worcestershire. The central Government share under this scenario would be £300,000 or 50% and a further £188,000 would be lost under current levy proposals. For Bromsgrove, only 7% or £7,000 of each £100,000 growth in business rates would come to the District Council. Therefore a mechanism whereby the levy payment can be avoided would be beneficial.
- 3.5. The starting position for each District Council will be different. This will be dependent on the current income from Business rates compared to the five year average and therefore the above example remains indicative due to the methodology that will be used to assess each organisational Business Rate Baseline.
- 3.6 The Government propose to put in place a mechanism to support authorities when a significant reduction in business rates revenue arises. A safety net payment is made to support Councils who have lost a significant amount of Business Rates. However, as pooling effectively treats all councils within the pool as one authority for business rates purposes, then the ability of any one council to qualify for safety net payments is reduced if that council is a member of a pool. An assessment has been made on the impact of this and your officers opinion that these risks are more than offset by the benefits of being in a pool.
- 3.7 Any group of local authorities can enter into a pooling arrangement as long as they meet the criteria laid down by the Government. The criteria are as follows:
- any entry into a pool must be voluntary;
 - assurance around governance and workability must be provided and these must have been signed off by all relevant Chief Executives and Section 151 Officer;
 - if the pool dissolves then each local authority reverts to their individual tariff and top up positions; and
 - lower tier authorities do not have to join in the same pool as their associated upper tier authority.
- 3.8 No additional incentives will be provided to pools of authorities (other than those self-generated by the pool) so that those who choose not to pool are not disadvantaged.

- 3.9 The methodology by which funding is distributed across a pool will be agreed via the governance arrangements. . There are a range of potential methods by which resources could be distributed across a pool. These could range from “full pooling” with a local resource distribution system that helps to drive economic growth and appropriately funds local services to a smaller scale approach that pools less resources.
- 3.10 The approach adopted to distribute resources could be reviewed by agreement periodically to ensure it fits within the pool priorities.
- 3.11 All authorities were required to express an interest in participating in a Business Rates Pool by the 27th July 2012. In the absence of a financial appraisal to reflect the comparison between the Birmingham Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) pool and the Worcestershire pool Bromsgrove District Council have expressed an interest in both. However, the Council have now been advised that a final decision needs to be made by the 10th September 2012. The initial date for decisions was the 19th October. The revised timetable has significantly reduced the time available for technical analysis and the preparation of advise and guidance for members.
- 3.12 Officers are in the process of preparing options appraisals for members based on the proposals for the GBSLEP pool and the Worcestershire Business Rates pool. The option appraisal for each LEP will be presented to Members at this meeting.

Financial Implications

- 3.14 The advantage of pooling is to share risk of business rates volatility with other councils in the pool, provide economic advantages of working together and to reduce the levy payable on business rates growth.

Legal Implications

- 3.15 The reforms regarding Business Rate retention are set out in the Local Government Finance Bill. In a pooling situation the Government requires authorities to nominate one member to act as lead authority which would be the channel for payments from, or to, the pool under the rates retention scheme. The lead authority would be responsible for supplying any information on behalf of the pool in connection with the operation of the business rates retention scheme. Each member of the pool would be jointly and severally liable for any payments required to the DCLG.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.16 No significant changes identified. Most of the administrative burden will fall on the accountable authority for the chosen pool.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.17 No direct implications.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

In deciding whether or not to join a “pool” the Council will have to balance the smoothing of any volatility that a pool could offer against the potential rewards or otherwise that could be experienced from remaining independent. There is a greater risk to the authority of remaining outside a pooling arrangement due the levy.

5. APPENDICES

None.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Various consultation documents issued by the DCLG available from the DCLG website.

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CABINET

5th September 2012

BROMSGROVE PARTNERSHIP'S ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor R. Hollingworth, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Partnerships and Economic Development
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes, as Chair of the Bromsgrove Partnership Board
Relevant Head of Service	Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive
Wards Affected	All wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	The Annual Report will be circulated to all Councillors once it has been considered by the Cabinet
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To present to the Cabinet the Bromsgrove Partnership's Annual Report 2011/12 which sets out the work of the Partnership over the past 12 months.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Cabinet is requested to approve the Bromsgrove Partnership's Annual Report 2011/12.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 Apart from printing costs which are budgeted for, there are no financial implications directly relating to the report attached at Appendix 1 as it simply provides an overview of Partnership work that has taken place over the past year.
- 3.2 Draft strategic purposes of the Council link to the wider strategic priorities contained within the Bromsgrove Partnership section of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Capital and revenue budget provision in future years will reflect Council purposes.
- 3.3 Partnership working is crucial at any time to meet the needs of our residents in a more effective and efficient way than simply working alone. However, in light of reduced resources, due to the current economic climate, partnership working is even more crucial. It can allow resources to be pooled and partners to work together in a more joined up way to achieve better outcomes. The Bromsgrove Partnership is seen as essential in co-ordinating this.

Legal Implications

- 3.4 Under the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is a non-statutory partnership and the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and associated Action Plans is the delivery mechanism for the LSP.
- 3.5 The Department for Communities and Local Government announced its intention to repeal the statutory duty to prepare a SCS and this statement was included in the Best Value Statutory Guidance published on 2 September 2011. When the legislation is repealed authorities will be able to opt to continue to have a strategy, but it will no longer be a statutory requirement and the duty to report back information will cease. For the time being until these changes are introduced the Council remains under a statutory obligation to prepare an SCS.
- 3.6 The Government has revoked the whole statutory guidance 'Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities', which required the SCS to be agreed at Full Council. However, the Strategy remains in this Council's Constitution as a policy document which needs Full Council endorsement. The Annual Report does not require Full Council approval but it will be circulated to all District Councillors for their information.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.7 LSPs act as a mechanism for working better together to deliver joined up outcomes. It enables local organisations to come together and address issues that are important to the local communities in a more effective and cohesive way.
- 3.8 A SCS sets out the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental well-being of a local area. Draft strategic purposes of the Council link to the wider strategic priorities contained within the Bromsgrove Partnership section of the single Worcestershire SCS.
- 3.9 The Annual Report shows how the Bromsgrove Partnership is progressing against the Bromsgrove District section of the single Worcestershire SCS. The annual report was approved by the Bromsgrove Partnership Board at its meeting held on 26 July 2012. By formally endorsing the Bromsgrove Partnership's Annual Report, it demonstrates that Bromsgrove District Council is working in partnership to address the needs of residents of the District and it is ensuring that future plans and resources are included in the relevant strategic plans.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.10 In terms of customer implications, working in partnership delivers joined up outcomes, which is of great benefit to our customers.
- 3.11 An equalities impact assessment has been completed for the Bromsgrove District chapter of the single SCS for Worcestershire.
- 3.12 The Bromsgrove Partnership receives the minutes of the Bromsgrove Equalities and Diversity Forums at their Board meetings.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 The Council will not be able to meet customer needs without working in partnership, therefore having an effective LSP is vital.
- 4.2 Key partner organisations are involved and kept informed of progress throughout the development of the existing and revised SCS, thus gaining buy in. The contents of the Annual Report prove that partners are committed to the SCS and its key deliverable outcomes.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Bromsgrove Partnership’s Annual Report 2011/12.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

7. KEY

LSP – Local Strategic Partnership (known as the Bromsgrove Partnership)
SCS – Sustainable Community Strategy

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Page 147

Bromsgrove Partnership
Your District Your Future

Bromsgrove Partnership **Annual Report**

2011/2012

Bromsgrove
Your District Your Future Partnership

Contents

1

Introduction Page 1

Background Page 2

- Information about the Partnership
- Structure in 2011/12

Economic Growth Page 4

- Town Centre Regeneration
- Marketing of Bromsgrove District
- Encouraging Business Growth

Balanced Communities Page 6

- Health and Wellbeing
- Older People
- Positive Activities for Young People
- Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Better Environment Page 10

- Reduce CO2 Emissions
- Improve Biodiversity and Nature
- Cohesive Delivery of Shared Priorities

Areas of Highest Need Project Page 12

- The Trunk

Looking to the Future Page 14

Introduction

Welcome to the 2011/12 annual report of the Bromsgrove Partnership which provides an overview of activities and achievements over the last twelve months.

In 2011, we reviewed our vision, priorities and structure and a new single Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Worcestershire was also published. The SCS contains a chapter for Bromsgrove District which includes the Bromsgrove Partnership priorities which are: Economic Growth; Balanced Communities; and Better Environment.

The Trunk, our Areas of Highest Need Project, is going from strength to strength and I would particularly like to thank Debbie Roberts from EPIC, our project co-ordinator, for her continued hard work and commitment. However, we must not become complacent so over the past year, we have focussed on sustainability to ensure the longevity of the project.

All partners have worked hard together to deliver on our priorities and add value. Often partnership working is complex but by working in a more joined up way, we are better able to meet the needs of the local communities we serve.

We are all working in a difficult financial climate and with further reductions in resources still to come, as well as organisational changes, strong partnership working is even more crucial.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Bromsgrove Partnership, on the Board and on its Theme Groups, who have contributed their valuable time and effort over the past year to help make a difference.

Roger Hollingworth
Chair of the Bromsgrove Partnership Board
and Leader of the District Council



Background

2

What is the Bromsgrove Partnership?

The Bromsgrove Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for our District which brings together different organisations from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

What does the Bromsgrove Partnership do?

Instead of each organisation working in isolation, Bromsgrove Partnership provides a forum for local organisations to come together and address issues that are important to those living, working and visiting Bromsgrove District in a more effective and cohesive way.

Page 149



What is a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)?

A Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) sets out the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental well-being of the local area and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) are tasked with delivering it. The aim is to provide a co-ordinated approach to address issues that matter to local people and improve the quality of life for everyone.

Is there an SCS for Bromsgrove District?

In September 2010, the Worcestershire Partnership (the LSP for the County), in consultation with the District LSPs (including the Bromsgrove Partnership), decided there should be a new single countywide SCS for Worcestershire. This was published in November 2011 and it contains a chapter for Bromsgrove District which includes the Bromsgrove Partnership's vision and priorities. A copy of the SCS can be viewed using the following link: www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/lsp.

What are the Bromsgrove Partnership's Vision and Priorities?

In June 2011, the Bromsgrove Partnership reviewed its vision and priorities. Its revised vision and three priorities are shown in the diagram on the next page.

How is the Bromsgrove Partnership structured?

At the same time as reviewing its priorities, the Bromsgrove Partnership reviewed its structure to ensure it was fit for purpose. As shown in the diagram over the page, there is one Board and in 2011, the number of Theme Groups was reduced to four. The Board membership in 2011/12 is shown below.

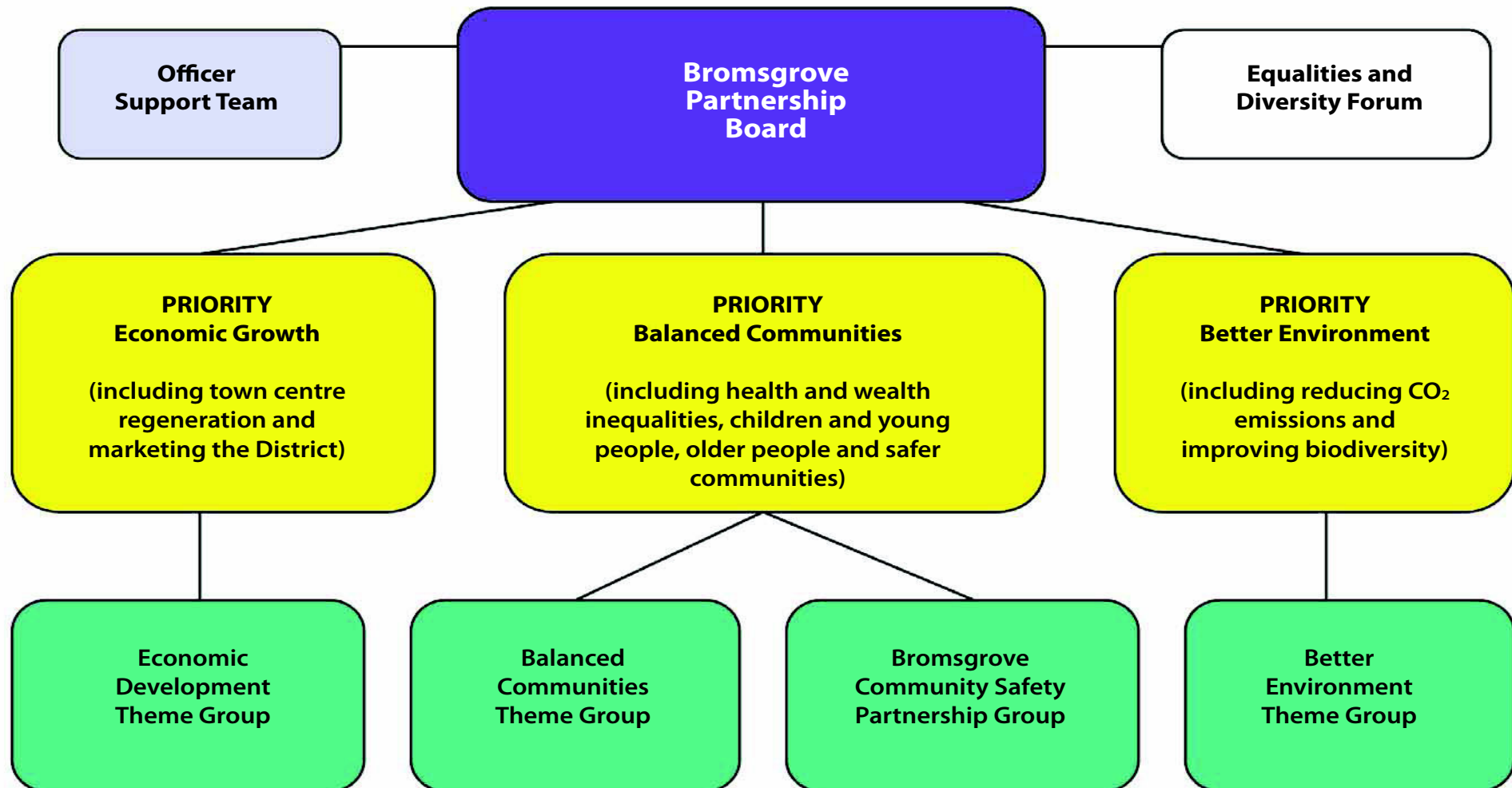
- Bromsgrove District Council
- Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN)
- Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT)
- NHS Worcestershire
- North East Worcestershire (NEW) College
- Small and Medium Business Representative
- West Mercia Police
- West Mercia Police Authority
- Worcestershire County Council
- Parish Councils (County Association of Local Councils (CALC))
- Act on Energy

Many more partners are engaged as members of the Theme Groups.

Background

Structure of the Bromsgrove Partnership in 2011/12

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



Economic Growth

4



Page 151

Due to the economic climate, the **Economic Development Theme Group** was reviewed in 2011 to ensure it was fit for purpose going forward. It is chaired by and includes private sector representatives and its focus is to oversee the town centre regeneration, successful marketing of the District and to encourage business growth.

With regards to the town centre regeneration, during the past year indicative site plans for some strategic sites have been drawn up by appointed planning architects and these sites have been marketed. Developers have shown significant interest in all the sites and there have been discussions regarding possible schemes, some of which involve leading retailers. Planning permission was granted for the proposed **Sainsbury's development** and the new combined **Police and Fire Station**, and local residents were invited to various consultation events earlier this year to have their say on the **improved public realm design**.



Feedback has been incorporated into the final design.

A **Bromsgrove Traffic and Parking Management Study**, commissioned by Worcestershire County Council, was undertaken and information from it is starting to emerge. This will, amongst other things, identify traffic bottlenecks and junction capacity issues and suggest where improvements to the road network are needed.

A funding proposal for the new **improved Bromsgrove Train Station** has been agreed in principle with Department for Transport (DfT) and whilst there are a number of outstanding design issues that the rail authorities need to resolve, discussions have commenced with Council officers regarding the layout and future management of the car park. Following public consultation, and subject to planning permission being granted, it is anticipated that the station will open in 2015.

Economic Growth

5

Page 152



Following the success of the Theme Group obtaining £20,000 from Bromsgrove District Council to launch a marketing campaign, an expenditure plan was approved and a new '**Building a Better Bromsgrove**' website has been developed to promote inward investment into the District. The branding, site map, wire frame and test site were completed and the website went live in July 2012.



The Theme Group includes representation from Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP and the North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration Team. The North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration Team have supported business growth in Bromsgrove through activity to help grow the business base - helping new businesses to be established, existing businesses to expand and creating the conditions for new and indigenous investment. New businesses are able to access free start up advice tailored to their individual needs and a £750 grant. In the past year, **31 grants to new businesses** were awarded and training provided to many more. To help existing businesses to expand and grow, **business booster grants have been provided to 5 companies** over the past year as well as sign-posting businesses to a range of business support services to help them access new markets.

To attract inward investment and provide the infrastructure for existing firms to grow, activity has been undertaken to bring forward strategic regeneration sites as well as participation in the Worcestershire Property Service; a commercial property finding service that is a key tool in attracting inward investment. Partnership activities have also been undertaken with both LEPs to secure funding for further business support activities in the coming years.



Balanced Communities

6



Page 153

Under the 'Balanced Communities' priority, there is the Balanced Communities Theme Group and the Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership.

The **Balanced Communities Theme Group** was established a year ago and combines the former Children and Young People Theme Group and the Health and Wellbeing Theme Group.

In relation to health, the Theme Group supports local efforts to **promote healthy lifestyles** amongst local residents. Priority areas for the group include reducing alcohol misuse and smoking, encouraging people to adopt a healthy diet and take plenty of exercise, improving perceptions of mental health issues and, due to the ageing population, addressing the needs of older people in particular. With regards to children and young people, the Theme Group has been working towards becoming officially recognised as the **Bromsgrove District's Local Children's Trust (LCT)**. It is expected that the LCT will play a key role in advising and supporting local commissioners who will be deciding how funding for delivering positive activities for children and young people should be spent in the District in the future.

During this year, local businesses have been encouraged to sign up to the **Worcestershire Works Well** scheme, designed to enable local businesses to improve the health and wellbeing of their workforce. The Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) was one of the first organisations in the county to achieve level 1 status. Other partners who have signed up include Bromsgrove District Council, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) and Oakland International Ltd.



Balanced Communities

7



Page 15

Health Chats training has been delivered to a number of organisations across Worcestershire including NEW College, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT), Worcestershire County Council's Adult and Community Services, Homestart, Foster Care Association and Stroke Association. The training is part of the national **Every Contact Counts programme**, encouraging wider dissemination of healthy lifestyle messages to the public. **Healthy eating training** has also been developed to ensure front line staff are passing on consistent evidence based messages about eating a healthy diet. Several courses have run across Worcestershire, and from Bromsgrove District, staff from Children's Centres, The Trunk and the Basement Project have attended the course.



An Older People's Subgroup has been established to focus efforts on addressing the needs of **older people**. Priorities for the group include local implementation of the countywide falls strategy and the promotion of healthy nutrition in older people. **Postural Stability** has maintained a steady stream of referrals and courses have been delivered all across the District, with very positive results. Older men's exercise classes have been piloted with a positive response, with plans to develop across the locality.

Sport England's Active People Survey highlighted Bromsgrove District as the most active in the County and had shown the 10th biggest increase nationally. July 2011 saw another successful **High 5 Event** at Sanders Park for promoting local groups, sports clubs and community organisations. Around 2000 residents attended to enjoy demonstrations, displays, workshops and taster sessions. The **2011 Bromsgrove District Sports Awards** evening was also a great success, highlighting outstanding performance, dedicated coaches and volunteers and school sport.

HIGH 5

A successful **programme of sports and activities** was delivered over the summer across Bromsgrove District by the Sports Development team including Gymnastics, Athletics and free Activity Sessions in local parks. The activities were extremely well received, many of them being fully booked. Other activities to date include our bi-annual Multi Skills Festival, School Sport Games and School Festivals as well as other successful community sessions and projects.

Balanced Communities

8



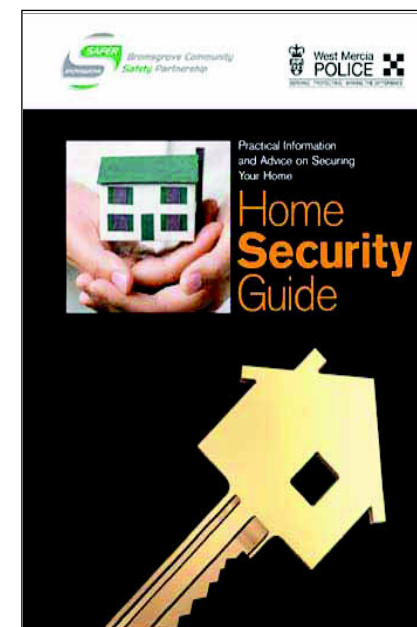
Page 155

Multi award winning 'Keep on Moving' for adults with disabilities has been sustained and continues to thrive. The Funshine Festival, the popular sports club event, was well attended. The **Bromsgrove Boars Boccia Club** was selected as a preferred club for the Playground to Podium Paralympic pathway and awarded a grant from Boccia England. **Bromsgrove Hotshots Wheelchair Basketball Club** achieved 27 members and was awarded funding from the Wheelchair Basketball Association following the successful affiliation to a competitive league. They are now applying for clubmark accreditation. New **specialised trike bikes** were launched in Spring last year and were so successful, they were made available to hire through the winter from the Ryland Centre.

Earlier this year Bromsgrove Partnership obtained its share of £250,000 from the Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to fund various health related initiatives across both Bromsgrove and Redditch. The Theme Group will be overseeing the implementation of the Bromsgrove District projects over the next 12 months. The **Healthy Horizons Activity Referral Programme** has been successfully sustained at the Dolphin Centre with additional funding from the CCG to sustain gym membership. Also through the Dolphin Centre, Wychavon Leisure Trust have been piloting a **Drug and Alcohol Referral Programme** in Bromsgrove District.

Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is responsible for ensuring that local communities are safe and feel safe. During 2011/12 the Partnership's priorities were focused around three key themes: Secure Homes, Safer Streets and Places, and Protecting Communities. Under these themes the CSP supported and delivered initiatives to tackle dwelling burglary, youth related anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, and town centre disorder.

At **crime prevention events** held in Bromsgrove and Rubery in November 2011, the CSP launched the **Home Security Initiative** aimed at residents who wanted to protect their homes from burglary. A **comprehensive home security guide** was produced to assist those residents who wanted to make home security improvements themselves and the guide has already been accessed by over 700 households through the internet, local libraries and neighbourhood watch groups. In addition, further support is available for those residents who need it, as officers in the District Council's Community Safety Team have been trained to carry out home security assessments.



Balanced Communities

9

Page 156



Under the Secure Homes theme, the CSP also conducted a three month study to establish the benefits of using **forensic property marking solutions on valuables** within the home to increase the chance of stolen items being returned to their owners following domestic burglaries. This study involved products being tested by over 100 households, including every victim of a burglary within the three month study period. The results were positive and will be used to develop a strategy for the wider availability of the product to residents across the District.

Throughout 2011/12 over 250 young people accessed additional positive activities which were funded and supported by the CSP. These included **angling sessions**, for pupils identified as needing support to improve their concentration and attention levels, and **table football events** at Sanders Park for all young people, which also provided an opportunity to promote other youth services available. Using an allocation from the Health Improvement Fund, a 10 week **urban arts project** was delivered in Catshill by the TRUNK which gave young people the opportunity to explore health issues that affect them through the medium of urban music, fashion and art. The Urban Art Project also marked the reopening of the Catshill Youth Centre.

Town Centre disorder was tackled by re-branding and re-launching the **Bromsgrove Against Night-Time Disorder (BAND) and PubWatch initiative**. This initiative brings together landlords from Bromsgrove High Street premises, working in partnership with the Police, District Council and each other to keep troublesome and violent people out of their establishments and out of the town centre. The initiative works by sharing intelligence to enforce a 'banned from one, banned from all' policy, using radios linked through the Council's CCTV monitoring centre to quickly identify and take action against troublesome individuals.



Other work undertaken by the CSP includes **CCTV improvements in Sanders Park**, and the delivery of the two day 'Freedom Programme for Professionals' to increase the skills and confidence of local professionals to identify and **support victims of domestic abuse** within the community.

Latest iQuanta data shows that **total crime has decreased in the District** over the past year and there has been a 25% reduction in domestic burglary. Crime and disorder linked to night time economy has also decreased substantially with 26% fewer offences in 2011/12 compared to the previous year. Reductions in recorded domestic abuse and offences related to graffiti have also been seen.

Better Environment

10



The **Better Environment Theme Group** continues to focus on its key priority area of **addressing Climate Change and its associated issues.**

Each year data is produced to show the CO2 levels across the District. The data is broken down by sector and the latest data set is shown in the table.

The latest data released from the Department of Energy and Climate

Change show that **emissions across all sectors have decreased** with per capita emissions figure of 8.8 tonnes of CO2. This overall decrease is predominantly due to the UK economic climate.

To help address the Theme Group's key priority the following actions have taken place:

- Implementation of a **free insulation scheme** for private sector and private rented housing. This scheme is ongoing and will run until the end on 2012.
- Working with partners across the County through **Warmer Worcestershire** to ensure delivery of **Cold Weather Plans** and to ensure information is accessible to local residents. This has included the production of thermocards, training to front line staff and home visits to vulnerable households.

LA Region Name	Year	Industry and Commercial	Domestic	Road Transport	LULUCF*	Total	Population ('000s, mid-year estimate)	Per Capita Emissions (t)
Bromsgrove	2005	153	247	494	8	902	91	9.9
Bromsgrove	2006	162	250	494	7	913	92	10.0
Bromsgrove	2007	156	243	494	7	900	92	9.7
Bromsgrove	2008	156	241	477	7	882	93	9.5
Bromsgrove	2009	134	217	462	7	820	93	8.8



Better Environment

11



Page 158

- Partners are actively involved with the implementation of the Government's new flagship policy, the **Green Deal**, at both a Worcestershire and ultimately a Bromsgrove District level, to ensure that both householders and local businesses can access and benefit from the new policy.
- To help address issues of biodiversity across the District, members of the Bromsgrove Partnership's Better Environment Theme Group have been involved with the **countywide plan to become a Local Nature Partnership** to ensure that partners work together to protect and enhance the natural environment.
- The Council has installed 141 Photo Voltaic (PV) panels on the Depot that have a generating capacity up to 33.84KWp.
- Across the District, there have been a further **368 installations of PV panels**, 362 of which were installed on Bromsgrove homes.
- Partners have organised various events throughout the District which have helped to promote energy efficiency/saving, climate change, waste reduction etc. These have included electric blanket testing events, dedicated energy advice surgeries, community action days at Charford, community street theatre events, tenant events and landlord forums.
- The waste team at Bromsgrove District Council has continued to promote its key areas of concern, including recycling, and in doing so has maintained its **high recycling rate of 37%** over the past year. It has also continued its rolling promotion campaign which includes: fly tipping; dog fouling; and food waste.



Areas of Highest Need Project - The Trunk

12

Page 159



There has been a significant development and growth in the range of services delivered from **The Trunk** over the last twelve months which is helping to ensure the sustainability of this project.

EPIC is a Community Interest Company which was commissioned by Bromsgrove Partnership in 2009 to run and deliver services from The Trunk for residents of Charford and Sidemoor primarily, and in 2010, the outreach programme was extended to include Catshill.

The centre is split into: **The Trunk**, a community resource; Club Youth, offering youth services in Charford; and the Starlight Café, which is the base for a UKONLINE centre to provide access to the internet and offer training and work placement opportunities for local people.

This year EPIC has gained two further contracts with Worcestershire County Council to deliver a **reablement service around mental health** and also a **short breaks service for disabled children and their families**. Both projects are progressing well and have expanded service delivery to different client groups. Funding was also received from Worcestershire County Council to start a **'More than Meals' project** in Charford where we will be running a weekly lunch club for older people and using a team of trained volunteers to deliver fresh hot meals to isolated older residents.



Areas of Highest Need Project - The Trunk

13



Page 160

There has been an **expansion of agencies delivering their services** from *The Trunk* and this includes CAB, NHS Worcestershire, Job Centre Plus, West Mercia Probation Trust and NEW College, to name a few. Over the past year there have been closer working relationships with agencies supporting people with **drug and alcohol issues** and there has also been additional support for people to gain **skills leading to employment**.

We have further developed our work with young people over the last year, particularly in Catshill, and the young people have enjoyed a **youth residential experience** which developed their confidence enormously and was very well received.

EPIC and the **Starlight Café**, which opened in March 2011, have expanded the range of **volunteering opportunities** offered to local people. There are now 20 regular volunteers attending as well as people completing their community payback hours through Probation. The work with HMP Hewell continues to expand to offer community experience to prisoners prior to their release.

EPIC has taken over the management of the **Sidemoor Healthy Eating Development (SHED)**, which is focused upon a piece of land in Perryfields. Local community members now have their own allotment plots and attend healthy eating workshops. Future plans include the development of a **'Health Hub'** for Sidemoor offering community members access to cookery classes, exercise groups and healthy lifestyle options.



Looking to the Future

14

Our Vision:

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

Our Priorities:

- **Economic Growth**
(including the town centre regeneration, marketing the District and encouraging business growth)
- **Balanced Communities**
(including addressing health and wealth inequalities, the needs of older people, children and young people, crime and anti-social behaviour)
- **Better Environment**
(including reducing CO2 emissions and improving biodiversity)

There are challenging times ahead for everyone but the Bromsgrove Partnership is ready to adapt to the ever changing environment it finds itself in.

Partnership working is not often straightforward, however, it is only by working together that we can truly meet the existing and future needs and aspirations of our local communities, in the most effective and efficient way. We will continue to review our working arrangements to make sure we are in the best position to fulfil our aims.



The Bromsgrove Partnership is committed to making its vision for the District a reality and it will aim to overcome any barriers it encounters whilst striving towards making Bromsgrove District the place to live, do business and to visit.

If you would like any further information, please contact:

**Della McCarthy, Bromsgrove Partnership Manager, on 01527 881618
or email d.mccarthy@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk**



Bromsgrove
Your District Your Future **Partnership**

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