



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

MONDAY 16TH FEBRUARY 2015
AT 6.00 P.M.

COMMITTEE ROOM, THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BURCOT LANE, BROMSGROVE

MEMBERS: Councillors L. C. R. Mallett (Chairman), R. J. Laight (Vice-Chairman), C. J. Bloore, J. S. Brogan, R. A. Clarke, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, P. Lammas, C. R. Scurrall, R. J. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, C. J. Spencer and C. J. Tidmarsh

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Arrangements

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.
3. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 21st January 2015 (Pages 1 - 12)
4. Action List (Pages 13 - 16)
5. Staff Survey - Update (Pages 17 - 20)
6. Quarter 3 Write Off of Debts Report (Pages 21 - 32)
7. Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/16 (Pages 33 - 48)
8. Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme (Pages 49 - 52)
9. Cabinet Work Programme 1st March to 30th June 2015 (Pages 53 - 58)

10. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

The Council House
Burcot Lane
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B60 1AA

5th February 2015



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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

21ST JANUARY 2015 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors L. C. R. Mallett (Chairman), C. J. Bloore, R. A. Clarke, S. R. Colella, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, C. R. Scurrrell, R. J. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, C. J. Spencer and C. J. Tidmarsh

Observers: Councillor M. A. Bullivant and Councillor M. J. A. Webb

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. A. Scarce and Ms. J. Bayley

97/14 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman explained that nominations were being sought for the position of Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board following the resignation of Councillor H. J. Jones from the Board. On behalf of the Board he thanked Councillor Jones for her hard work as Vice Chairman.

Nominations for Vice Chairman were received in respect of Councillors P. Lammas and R. J. Laight.

RESOLVED that Councillor R. J. Laight be appointed Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board for the remainder of the municipal year.

98/14 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence was received on behalf of Councillors J. S. Brogan and B. T. Cooper.

99/14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillor C. J. Spencer declared an other discloseable interest in respect of Minute No. 106/14 as a member of the Artrix Operating Trust and as a Parish Councillor at Finstall Parish Council.

Councillors R. A. Clarke, P. Lammas and R. J. Laight declared other discloseable interests in respect of Minute No. 106/14 as members of the Artrix Holding Trust and Councillor Clarke also declared an other discloseable interest in this item as a Parish Councillor at Wythall Parish Council.

Councillor C. R. Scurrrell declared an other discloseable interest in respect of Minute No. 106/14 as a Parish Councillor at Belbroughton Parish Council.

100/14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 3rd December 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd December 2014 be approved as a correct record.

101/14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 15th December 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 15th December 2014 be approved as a correct record.

102/14 **LEISURE PROVISION TASK GROUP - CABINET RESPONSE**

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Leisure Services, Councillor M. Bullivant, presented the Cabinet's response to the Leisure Provision Task Group's recommendations. He explained that the Cabinet had accepted all of the group's recommendations subject to a minor amendment to the wording of the first recommendation.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet response to the Leisure Provision Task Group's recommendations be noted.

103/14 **ACTION LIST**

The latest version of the Board's Action List was considered by Members. Officers explained that a number of actions had been completed since the previous meeting of the Board and written updates had been circulated for consideration by email. A number of points were subsequently discussed in more detail.

Staff Survey

A response had been received to the Board's questions regarding the staff survey, which were raised in June 2014, following publication of the agenda. The Chairman had been notified of the response and had determined that the subject should be considered in further detail at the meeting of the Board in February 2015.

Finance Updates

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources apologised for the delay in responding to various requests for further information about financial matters. She explained that the Financial Services team had been prioritising the budget setting process in recent months, however, she hoped to be able provide responses to the Board shortly.

Customer Service Savings

Members were advised that the Customer Access and Financial Support Service was projected to achieve a saving of £34,000 in 2014/15. This saving had been calculated based on the following information:

- A £20,000 over spend was anticipated for Customer Services due to a loss of HUB funding.
- A saving of £7,000 had been achieved through reducing hours and savings on operational budgets.
- A further saving of £47,000 would be reached following a review of the Fraud Service and vacancy management.

The savings could not have been predicted by Officers when the budget had been set because there were a number of factors that the Council had not been aware of at that time. This included:

- The timing of the introduction of the Single Fraud Investigations Services (SFIS).
- The timetable for the rollout of Universal Credit and other welfare reforms.

Staff who currently worked on housing benefit fraud and Council Tax support fraud would be transferred to the Department of Work and Pensions once the full changes to the benefits system in the district had been implemented. Whilst this had already occurred in other parts of Worcestershire the transfer had been delayed in Bromsgrove and Redditch.

RESOLVED that the Action List be noted.

104/14

QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

The Board considered the latest edition of the Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Recommendation Tracker. During consideration of the tracker a number of key points were discussed in detail.

Planning Policy Task Group

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Services had confirmed that through service transformation a review and mapping process had been carried out in respect of planning and she had offered to provide this work for the board's consideration. Members agreed that this would be a suitable subject to investigate further at the February meeting of the Board.

Detailed responses had been provided to the group's fourth and ninth recommendations and it was therefore agreed that these items could be removed from the tracker.

Youth Provision Task Group

Members were advised that the Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor J. M. L. A. Griffiths, had not yet delivered a presentation on the subject of the

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group's findings at a meeting of CALC. This was largely due to CALC only meeting on a quarterly basis and had key topics to discuss at each meeting. However, Members noted that following recent changes to the provision of youth services in the county it would be useful for this presentation to take place and Officers were asked to draw this recommendation to the attention of CALC.

Air Quality Task Group

The Board were advised that no further updates had been received following publication of the agenda. A detailed review of the recommendations was due to take place during the April meeting of the Board and this would provide Members with an opportunity to discuss the matter in further detail.

Members noted that they had not yet requested an update from Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) regarding reminders to taxi drivers about leaving their engines running when waiting for a customer. However, some Members noted that they had observed taxi drivers running their engines in taxi ranks in recent months and therefore it was considered timely to request an update on this matter. The Board discussed a number of actions that could be taken by the Council and WRS to discourage this type of behaviour by taxi drivers and it was agreed that any suggestions should be raised with WRS Officers when they attended a future meeting of the Board.

Artrix Outreach Provision Task Group

The Chairman of the group, Councillor S. P. Shannon, and Head of Leisure and Cultural Services had met with the new Artistic Director of the Artrix following her appointment. There had been a positive response to the group's recommendations and it was anticipated that these would be implemented. The group's second, fourth and ninth recommendations had already been acted on and for this reason Members agreed that no further updates would be required. Members also noted that the Artrix continued to make activities available during school holiday periods.

Leisure Provision Task Group

Councillor R. J. Shannon confirmed that he had agreed to award some of his ward funding to finance the installation of an additional noticeboard. However an update was requested regarding the noticeboard referred to in recommendation 3a.

Recommendations Arising from meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Members were advised that the recommendation concerning the Dolphin Centre business case and finances for the new leisure centre had been rejected by the Audit Board and could therefore be removed from the tracker.

Joint WRS Scrutiny Task Group

The Board was advised that during consideration of the group's recommendations by the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee a number of the group's recommendations, primarily concerning the governance of the service, had been rejected. These recommendations could therefore be removed from the tracker. The Overview and Scrutiny Board would be expected to track implementation of the remaining as the Council was the host authority for the shared service.

Members discussed arrangements for the operational management of WRS following the departure of the Head of Regulatory Services. Officers confirmed that the Chairman of the WRS Management Board would provide a strategic lead to the service during the interim period whilst the governance and budget for the service was reviewed.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Recommendation Tracker be noted.

105/14 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS - QUARTERLY BACKLOG DATA**

The Board considered information that had been provided regarding the backlog with processing planning applications. The Chairman expressed some disappointment regarding the substance of the update that had been provided and Members agreed that further information was required to facilitate constructive scrutiny of the matter. The following additional information was therefore requested:

- An explanation of what qualified as a backlog.
- Clarification regarding action being taken by the Planning Department to address the backlog.
- A breakdown of data by size of application and the length of delay per application.
- An explanation of the reason why combined data had been provided for Bromsgrove and Redditch.
- Comparative data for Redditch Borough Council's planning applications.

Members briefly discussed the current position regarding the Planning Department and whether it was officially in special measures. Officers explained that the Planning Department would be in a better position to clarify the current position of the Council and the implications for the planning process.

106/14 **BUDGET SCRUTINY REPORT**

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/16 to 2017/18. She explained that the financial position for the Council had altered slightly since the agenda had been published and for this reason she provided an update on the revised position.

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During presentation of the report the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The government grant allocation for 2015/16 was £500,000 less than the settlement for 2014/15 and had fallen by approximately 50 per cent since 2011.
- Officers were assuming that the Council would lose at least 5 per cent of the revenue grant over the next few years, though there were concerns that the figure could be higher.
- Bromsgrove District Council would receive £23,000 from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Business Rates Pool.
- Officers had not yet allocated any of the New Homes Bonus settlement to the community as no decision had been made on this subject by the Council.
- The budget included an assumption that there would be an increase in Council Tax of 1.9 per cent.
- The previous 10 year funding agreement with the Artrix was due to end. Officers were proposing to allocate a grant of £60,000 to the Artrix in future years.
- In February 2014 Members had agreed to share the Parish Grant Precept to provide Members with a ward funding scheme. This had been a relatively labour intensive scheme though there had been some positive outcomes.
- A number of savings had been achieved. The focus of Officers in forthcoming years would be on how the Council could achieve further efficiency savings.
- The budget position for 2015/16 had changed since the publication of the report as figures for Council Tax had subsequently revealed a higher surplus than anticipated.
- There was one bid to support the Essential Living Fund (ELF). The settlement from the Government for the fund had decreased resulting in a reduction. Whilst the bid would help to support the fund the budget would be much lower than in previous years and therefore could only provide minimum support.
- Officers calculated that the pay award for an Officer would increase in the first two years of their employment as the employee rose through their incremental pay. Once the Officer reached the top of their scale they could only expect to receive the standard pay increase.
- Further detail would be provided for the Board's consideration in February, including an update on the Cabinet's recommendations for the budget.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of points in further detail:

- The reasons why the Ward Members' Fund scheme was labour intensive. Officers explained that the application process was relatively simple, however, the process for transferring funds was quite complicated.
- The distribution of Council Tax funding to relevant public sector bodies. Officers confirmed that the district Council received 14 per cent of the Council Tax, the Police received an equivalent amount, the Fire Service

received approximately 6 per cent and Worcestershire County Council received the remainder.

- Changes to the recording of savings achieved through vacancy managers, which had been made at the request of Members in previous years.
- The notice provided to the Artrix regarding the reduction in funding at the end of the 10 year agreement and the funds to be allocated to outreach work.
- Whether the Artrix was responsible for the maintenance costs to the building.
- The turnover of staff retiring or taking redundancy and the number of new employees who would be at the bottom of their scales.
- The costs of borrowing. Members were advised that the majority of the borrowing costs for the leisure centre would be met from balances.
- There would be costs from borrowing for replacement of fleet vehicles.
- The Council would also be borrowing in the first year after the move to Parkside to cover costs, though it was anticipated that this would be recouped relatively quickly through the sale of the Council House site.
- Interest in the Council House site for development, and the designation of the site as housing land in the Area Action Plan.
- The need for a market rate to be achieved for the sale of the Council House site.
- The potential for multi-year budget settlements to be announced by the Government in future years.
- The impact of the New Homes Bonus in terms of both funding and housing development. Officers confirmed that the New Homes Bonus had had a positive impact from a financial perspective, however, the impact on housing development needed to be discussed further with the planning department.
- The need for Councils to plan to be financially dependent by 2018/19, due to the possibility that the Government grant would be withdrawn altogether in the long-term.
- The implications for Heads of Service and fourth tier managers who were accountable for managing budgets and the need for careful planning.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

107/14 **CAR PARKING SHORT SHARP REVIEW REPORT**

The Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor S. P. Shannon, presented the group's final report. He explained that the group had undertaken a comprehensive review, gathering evidence from a variety of sources, including comparative data for similar districts and information about parking trends. Members had also taken into account the findings of the previous Recreation Road South Car Park Task Group.

A key source of the evidence had been a survey undertaken by Councillor R. J. Shannon as a member for St John's ward. He had surveyed businesses located in a number of the streets in the town centre to find out about opening arrangements during the evening and on Sundays. This survey had revealed

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that a significant number of businesses were not open on a Sunday, though might open if there was an increase in footfall.

During consideration of this report the following matters were also discussed by Members:

- The decision that had been taken by Council on 19th January to permit free parking in the evenings in Bromsgrove, which would cost an estimated £60,000.
- The timing of the decision that had been made on Monday and whether it would have been more appropriate for a decision on this matter to be postponed until the Car Parking Short, Sharp review had been completed.
- The costs involved in offering free parking on a Sunday for a trial six month period, which were estimated to be approximately £30,000, and the extent to which the Council could afford to offer this free provision in addition to the costs for free evening parking.
- The need for Cabinet to determine how to fund both schemes.
- Methods that would be used to assess the impact of free parking provision. Officers explained that the Council would need to consult with local businesses to find out about the impact of free parking provision on business in the evening. A similar method could be used to assess the impact of free parking on a Sunday and the feedback could be compared to baseline data gathered by the group.
- The second recommendation had originally been proposed by the Recreation Road South Car Park Task Group and Members had felt that due to slow progress it should be proposed for a second time.
- The potential to expand the pay on foot system to more car parks in the Town Centre Regeneration Programme as part of any resurfacing and maintenance works.
- The extent to which the car parking permit scheme had been used by working people when the process had previously been in place.
- The potential income that could be accrued by the Council following the reintroduction of a car parking permit scheme for the over 65 year olds as well as the potential benefits to day time business from increased custom.
- The concerns of the Older People's Forum regarding car parking charges and the extent to which this reflected general concerns amongst senior citizens.
- The availability of season parking tickets for people working in Bromsgrove.
- The benefits of proposing strong recommendations that required action from Officers. For this reason Members agreed to amend the group's third recommendation which had originally proposed that consideration should be given to re-introducing the car parking permit scheme.

RECOMMENDED that, subject to the amendment detailed in the preamble above, the three recommendations in the report be approved by the Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

108/14 **WCC HEALTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

In the absence of the Board's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. T. Cooper, a copy of the minutes of its latest meeting had been attached for Members' consideration.

The Chairman noted that the Board had agreed that the subject of GP Practices covered by a Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in Birmingham should be raised for the consideration of HOSC. To ensure that this occurred at the following meeting of HOSC in Councillor Cooper's absence Officers were asked to notify the lead Scrutiny Officer at Worcestershire County Council of this proposal.

Members were advised that a public meeting of the Redditch and Bromsgrove CCG was due to take place in the Council House the following evening, interested Members were urged to attend this meeting.

109/14 **CABINET WORK PROGRAMME 1ST FEBRUARY TO 30TH APRIL 2014**

The Chairman explained that following publication of the Cabinet Work Programme an urgent item had been added concerning the Hanover Street and George House site. This would be considered at a special meeting of the Cabinet on 18th February and the Chairman had requested that the report also be provided for the Board to pre-scrutinise in February.

Members discussed the content of the plan and commented that it would also be useful for the Board to receive an update on the Modifications to the Bromsgrove District Local Plan, which was scheduled for the Cabinet's consideration on 1st April.

110/14 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Members were advised that a Topic Proposal Form had been received following publication of the agenda and would be considered alongside general updates on the Board's Work Programme.

Officers explained that at the meeting of the Board in February 2015 Members were due to undertake budget scrutiny and would receive a briefing on the subject of the staff survey, it would also be pre-scrutinising the report concerning the Hanover Street and George House site.

Officers were proposing to present the Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report for the consideration of the Board in April rather than in June, due to the potential for a change in membership of the Board following the elections in May 2015.

Members were advised that Democratic Services were keen to prepare appropriate Overview and Scrutiny training for Members in the new municipal year as part of the induction process. The Board agreed that as part of the

planning process for this training it should have an opportunity to contribute towards this during the April 2015 meeting.

Topic Proposal – Introduction of Ipads to District Councillors

Councillor R. J. Shannon presented a topic proposal form which detailed suggested terms of reference for a review of the introduction of Ipads for the use of district Councillors. He explained that, following discussions with other Councillors and the debate at the Council meeting on 19th January, it appeared that the subject of Council Ipads might be suitable for further scrutiny. A Short, Sharp Review of the subject could be completed prior to the elections and any findings could assist Officers in providing a high quality IT support service to new Members.

During consideration of this topic proposal form Members discussed the following points:

- The available capacity of the Democratic Services team to facilitate a Short, Sharp Review of this subject.
- The validity of the topic as a subject for scrutiny.
- The need to limit the number of Members appointed to any scrutiny group at this stage in the municipal year to ensure that meetings could be arranged and the review completed prior to the elections.
- The need for Members to be open minded about the potential outcomes of a review of this subject.
- The mixed experiences of Members when using their Ipads. A number of Members reported that they had experienced no problems.
- The timing of the proposed review, in particular as to whether sufficient time had been provided for Members to realise the full capacity of the Ipads.
- The functionality of the Ipads and the restrictions placed on access to various forms of email attachment.
- The availability of IT support to assist Members experiencing problems with their Ipads and the need for Ipads to be transported to Redditch Town Hall in order for problems to be resolved.
- The impact in terms of Officer time, in both the IT and Democratic Services teams, of resolving problems that had been reported with Ipads.
- The complexity of the Council issued Ipads compared to similar equipment used in various workplaces.
- Limitations placed on the potential for Members to print from their Ipads, an option that was only available at the Council House.
- The impact that limited access to Ipads could have on a Member's access to their emails and the potential to miss an opportunity to respond to constituents' concerns when the Ipad was not working.
- The need for Councillors to ask the IT team to create new folders on their Ipads when needed.
- Councillor R. J. Laight reported that he had consulted with members of his group and they had reported that they were satisfied that any problems experienced with the Ipads had been resolved quickly.

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- The value of the good software in terms of equipment security and the need to respond to Government requirements concerning data confidentiality and encryption.
- The impact of training on the potential for Members to use their Ipads.
- The reasons why Councillors could not use their personal Ipads if good software was installed.

Following further debate it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that a short sharp review would not be carried out; and
- (b) the Portfolio Holder for Enabling (including Finance and Governance), the Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development and the IT Manager be invited to attend a future meeting of the Board to discuss Members' Ipads.

The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.

Chairman

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ACTION SHEET - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD 21st January 2015

ITEM	GENERAL COMMENTS	ACTION	OFFICER DEALING	DATE REQUIRED BY	RESPONSE PROVIDED AND DATE PROVIDED
Item 9 – Budget Scrutiny Report	Members consider the Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/16 – 2017/18	Clarification as to who was responsible for the maintenance of the Artrix building.	Executive Director, Finance and Resources.		
Outstanding Actions 15th December 2014					
Item 5 – Quarter 2 Finance Monitoring Report	Members considered the Quarter 2 report.	(a) Revenue budget – breakdown of capital projects, interest expected and actual. (b) Breakdown of the actual savings estimated at £29k. (c) An explanation of the reasons for the variance in expenditure for Customer Access and Financial Support. (d) Further information to be provided at a future meeting about the reduction in funding for customer services from Worcestershire County Council and the potential impact on demand for services in the district.	(a) and (b) Executive Director Finance and Resources. (c) and (d) Head of Customer Access and Financial Support.		To be provide provided within 7 days of meeting (21/01/15). Information emailed to Members 28/01/15 (c) and (d) Verbal update to be provided at Board meeting on 21/01/14 – written response provided and copy sent to Members 29/01/15.

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ITEM	GENERAL COMMENTS	ACTION	OFFICER DEALING	DATE REQUIRED BY	RESPONSE PROVIDED AND DATE PROVIDED
Outstanding Actions 17th November 2014					
<p>Item 5 – Quarter 2 Write Off of Debts Report</p> <p align="center">Page 14</p>	<p>Members considered the Quarter 2 report.</p>	<p>(a) The allocation of recovered debt from previous years (for example collected in 2014 but was in respect of debt from 2004).</p> <p>(b) Whether bailiff charges were included within the amount recovered.</p> <p>(c) How regularly are payment plans for bad debts reviewed?</p> <p>(d) A breakdown of the Aged Debt Profit for sundry debts for 61-90 days.</p> <p>(e) Details of the Council Tax arrears which would show whether these refer to the same debtors' year on year.</p>	<p>Head of Customer Access and Financial Support/ Executive Director, Finance and Resources</p>		<p>All items to be included within the Quarter 3 Report.</p>
<p>Item 8 – Medium Term Financial Plan – 2015/16 to 2016/17</p>	<p>Members considered the Medium Term Financial Plan Report and update.</p>	<p>(a) Any increase in Business Rates.</p> <p>(b) Breakdown of income in respect of CCTV.</p>			<p>To be provided at 21/1/15 meeting. Information emailed to Members 28/01/15</p>

ACTION SHEET - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD 21st January 2015

ITEM	GENERAL COMMENTS	ACTION	OFFICER DEALING	DATE REQUIRED BY	RESPONSE PROVIDED AND DATE PROVIDED
Outstanding Actions 13th September 2014					
<p>Item 5 – Overview of Budget</p> <p align="center">Page 15</p>	<p>Members considered a report on the Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/16 – 2017/18.</p>	<p>(a) The amount of the Pension Deficit. (b) A list of services the Council provide on behalf of WCC – there cost and how much WCC pay BDC. (c) Details of statutory services and the cost together with details of non-statutory services we provide and their cost.</p>	<p>Financial Services Manager – email request 14/10/14</p>	<p>As soon as possible.</p>	<p>To be provided at 21/1/15 meeting. Information emailed to Members 28/01/15</p>

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Staff Survey Update

Background

A staff survey was distributed to all staff both electronically and in hard-copy format in August 2013. A total of 384 responses were received which equated to roughly one third of all the staff across both Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council. The survey did not cover staff at Worcestershire Regulatory Services as they had recently undertaken a staff survey.

The purpose of the Staff Mood Survey was to capture a snap shot of how staff were feeling and dealing with the then levels of change; identify any particular issues and identify steps to address these. The aim was to use the survey to improve staff health and wellbeing and thereby increase employee engagement, motivation and performance. The survey was also to be used to identify areas for further exploration and identify where further, specific follow-up surveys could be carried out to get a better understanding of particular issues either corporately or within directorates and services.

A Working Group was established with staff from across the two organisations including a mixture of levels and office-based and non-office based roles. Four Key Themes were identified - Management, Communication, Working Environment and ICT. Sub-groups were set up to develop recommendations in January 2014. The subgroups reported back at the end of March 2014 and an Action Plan was established.

Since then work has been on-going to deliver the actions. Some have now been completed and others are in progress. Summary details can be found in Appendix 1.

It is intended that a further survey will be carried out in September 2015 using the same questions as the initial survey. This will allow a direct comparison between both sets of results to assess the success of the Action Plan.

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APPENDIX 1

What	Who	Status / Completion
Increase visibility and get a better understanding of the issues faced by staff by walking the floor, attending Team Meetings on a regular basis and ensuring that suitable one-to-one meetings are held	Members of CMT	In place
Improve communication to staff particularly around ICT issues, the work done to rectify them and Helpdesk usage	Deb Poole / Mark Hanwell	In place
Ensure that non-office based staff get paper copies of the Oracle newsletter	Anne Marie Harley	In place
Improve mechanisms for collecting data on issues relating to the working environment so that they can be actioned / monitored	Amanda de Warr / John Homer / Helen Mole	In place
Remind staff of the support options available – Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health, Phone-a-Friend etc built into workshops and into discussions with managers	Lindsey Wood	In place
Implement healthy lifestyle pilot workshop for staff – carried out on 9 th January 2015 and well received by delegates	Lindsey Wood	Completed
Clarify the role of managers in a “transformed” organisation – session held at the Managers’ Forum in September 2014	Lindsey Wood	Completed
Familiarise staff with the Strategic Priorities by making them into screen savers	Mark Hanwell	Completed
Make it easier for staff to find contact details for other members of staff via the Orb / Staff Finder	Mark Hanwell	Completed
Make the policy compliance process more user friendly by presenting staff with summaries of policies via NETconsent and not full policies	Lindsey Wood / Mark Hanwell	28 th February 2015
Ensure that staff are kept up-to-date on changes / developments via Staff Briefings and other methods of communication – reviewing approaches to ensure that they deliver what staff need. Next round of Staff Briefings arranged for late January / February 2014	Kevin Dicks / Anne Marie Harley	28 th February 2015
Increase the focus on staff wellbeing – initial programme of training for managers is in place which covers Mental Health awareness, mentoring skills and IOSH Managing Safely, and Wellbeing and Developing Personal Resilience for staff	Lindsey Wood / Laura Kerrigan	31 st March 2015

Agenda Item 5

What	Who	Status / Completion
Ensure staff have the skills they need to be able to deliver purpose / develop for the future – skills matrix developed and being tested with a view to being used to identify skills and development needs	Lindsey Wood	31 st March 2015
Establish an Equalities Training Plan – Plan in place for the remainder of 2014/15 and new one being developed for 2015/16	Becky Dunne	31 st March 2015
Re-establish an induction process for both authorities – outline developed and content being developed. Approach to be piloted in March 2015	Lindsey Wood	31 st March 2015
Improve the working environment where needed (subject to budget availability) and provide showers / a more suitable staff rest room at the Town Hall	Amanda de Warr / John Homer / Sharon Sharpe	Ongoing (Showers – in place)
Move towards having single systems across both authorities eg Finance, Procurement, HR etc	Mark Hanwell	Ongoing
Review Key Behaviours in a Customer Driven Organisation – superseded. Now looking at establishing Strategic Principles and underpinning practices and behaviours. These will incorporate the Key Behaviours	Kevin Dicks / Deb Poole	Ongoing
Provide clear guidance on the organisations' approach to performance management – a pilot currently under way using a new transformational approach in Planning and Business Transformation. This will be extended to a further Service area shortly	Deb Poole	Ongoing

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Overview & Scrutiny Board

16th February 2015

QUARTERLY MONITORING OF WRITE OFFS AND INCOME MANAGEMENT

- 1ST OCTOBER 2014 – 31ST DECEMBER 2014

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mike Webb
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Amanda de Warr, Head of Customer Access and Financial Support
Wards Affected	All

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

1.1 This report summarises the write off of debts during the third quarter of 2014/15 along with the profile and level of outstanding debt.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That subject to any comments, the Overview & Scrutiny Board NOTE the contents of the report.

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1. The current Write Off Policy requires officers to report to members the actual level of write offs and the profile of outstanding debt.

3.2. The current bad debts provisions are as follows:

	£
Housing benefit Overpayments	485,363
NDR	224,907
Council Tax	214,937
Sundry Debtors	31,493

Financial Implications

3.3 Details of written off debts during the period for Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates, and Sundry Debts, including a break down of the number of debtors, and Overpaid Housing Benefit are attached at Appendix 1.

3.4 A total of £127,625 of unrecoverable debt was written off during this quarter. This brings the total write off so far for 2014/15 to £237,526, which is within the bad debt provision.

3.5 The following table shows the value and number of accounts of write off for 2013/14 and to date this financial year.

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	2013/14				2014/15		
Quarter	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
Total Write off	*265,102		55,353	117,036	62,966	46,935	127,625
Number of Accounts	*863		115	1,162	244	102	161

* Quarters 1 and 2, 2013/14 were reported jointly.

SUNDRY DEBTS

- 3.6 Invoices to the value of £3,620,913 have been raised to date during 2014/15. £665,514 of debt was carried forward from 2013/14. It is important to mention that this was not necessarily overdue. During 2014/15 £3,386,928 has been collected to date.

- 3.7 An age profile of the outstanding sundry debts at the end of the quarter is attached at Appendix 2 (Tables 1 – 3). The data for the same period in 2013 is provided for comparative purposes where possible. Tables showing the debt and billing profile each month are also included.

- 3.8 Table 4 shows the significant increase in debt in November due to garden waste invoices being generated, but these do not become due until 1st February. Although many people pay in the intervening period many don't and it shows in the data as an increase in debt over 30 days old.

- 3.9 Changes to the way customers are billed will impact on the 'aged debt' data from 1st April 2015. In order to make it easier for customers, where an ongoing service is provided, customers will be billed once for the whole year but able to spread the payments over a variety of payment plans. This will mean that the value of debt will be greater at the start of the year and then reduce over the year. Officers will look at the most effective way of reporting this information.

- 3.10 Table 5 provided further detail about the numbers of invoices raised and outstanding and the numbers of invoices that are followed up by 1st and 2nd reminders.

- 3.11 1st reminders are issued 7 to 14 days after the due date giving a further 7 days in which to pay. Failure to pay results in a 2nd reminder being issued, which warns that failure to pay could result in court or legal action, or the withdrawal of service. This latter invariably prompts payment.

- 3.12 If payment is still not received this is reported to the service who then decides on next steps. Referral to bailiffs is very low and for this financial

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year to date only around 15 cases. The costs of bailiff collection is not currently passed on to the customer.

COUNCIL TAX AND NON DOMESTIC RATES

- 3.13 An analysis of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates arrears is attached at Appendix 3. This shows the current outstanding debt against each of those years which we continue to pursue.
- 3.14 All Council Tax and NDR becomes due on 1st April but reduces each month as instalments are paid. Arrangements are in place for much of the outstanding debt from recent previous years and therefore slowly reducing over time. Older debt tends to be in varying stages of recovery. We do not write off any debt until we have exhausted all possible avenues to recover.
- 3.15 1st reminder, 2nd reminder and final notices are sent around the 28th of each month, unless it is an account which previously had liability orders attached in which case reminders go out sooner on the 16th of the month.
- 3.16 If the account is brought up to date after the first reminder, but it falls behind for a 2nd time another reminder notice will be issued giving 7 days notice, if the account is brought up to date instalments will continue.
- 3.17 Regulations only allow for 2 reminders in any financial year therefore if an account is brought up to date but then falls behind for a 3rd time a final notice is issued.
- 3.18 The final notice cancels the right to instalments and the whole balance becomes due.
- 3.19 For accounts where there is a recovery history with liability orders having been previously applied a reminder is issued on the 16th of the month with a 2nd reminder run early in the following month. Non payment of instalments due will move these accounts to final notice stage.
- 3.20 We reinstate instalments if contact is made and a payment arrangement is agreed.
- 3.21 1st and 2nd reminder notices give 7 days to bring the account up to date and the final notice gives 7 days to pay in full.
- 3.22 If a final notice has been issued and no contact has been made a summons will be issued on the first available date following 7 days from the issue of the final notice.

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- 3.23 The exact timing for the issue of a Summons to appear at the Magistrates Court is dependent on court dates, which are set by the Court.
- 3.24 The court date will be 14 days after the summons has been served; and if the magistrate is satisfied that we have followed the correct procedures then a liability order is granted with costs, which are applied to the account thus increasing the debt.
- 3.25 A letter requesting details of income is issued the day after the liability order hearing. This notice also outlines the further action that we may take including an outline of enforcement agent costs. The account holder has 14 days in which to respond. Bailiff costs are also applied to the account.
- 3.26 All further action from this point is manual and there is no set timetable.
- 3.27 As previously requested details of the top 10 highest outstanding debts are attached at Appendix 4. The reasons for these debts are generally a refusal to pay.

Legal Implications

- 3.28 Members have previously requested that details of write off's be disclosed. Whilst it would be possible to disclose write-offs relating to some business accounts (excluding sole traders, as their private address is often cited), details relating to Council Tax, Housing Benefit Overpayments and many Sundry Debts cannot be disclosed under the principles of the Data Protection Act, detailed below:

Principle 1 - Customers would not reasonably expect anyone other than those processing Council Tax, to use their information. The only time it would be unexpected and lawful, is under Section 29, Collection of Taxes, when we can disclose information to the police or HMRC, etc for the prevention and detection of crime.

Principle 2 - The information was collected for a specific reason and it would be unlawful and unfair to share it or use it for another purpose.

Principle 6 – Data subjects have a right to claim damages for a breach of the Act. You have to demonstrate you took all reasonable care in the circumstances to avoid the breach as part of your defence. It may not cause damage, but it could cause distress.

Principle 7 – Security. Measures should be taken to prevent unauthorised and unlawful processing, i.e., people access data within the scope of their role.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.29 Changes to housing benefits as a result of the introduction of Universal Credit is going to have an impact on our ability to collect overpayment of housing benefits debts. It has been confirmed that outstanding overpayments will not transfer to DWP. The Council can continue to recover the debts but in reality the ability to do so will be significantly reduced as we will not be able to attach repayments to benefits being paid. Currently any overpayment recovered retained by the Council and not repaid to DWP. The value of the recovered overpayments are relatively small and taken over a long period of time, therefore the costs of the administrative work required to try recover overpayments is likely to be more than the money received.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.30 Every option is explored to recover outstanding debts and staff work with individuals to try to find suitable solutions. In some cases pursuing a debt is going to lead to such hardship that a write off is the most appropriate option. However, if circumstances change a case can be re-opened.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Due to the issues raised in 3.28 there is likely to be an increase in write offs in the coming years.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Write offs 1st July – 30th September 2014

Appendix 2- Debt Profile for Sundry Debts Arrears as at 31st December 2014

Appendix 3 - Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates Arrears Analysis

Appendix 4 – Top Ten outstanding debts

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers to this report.

AUTHORS OF REPORT

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Appendix 1

Write Offs - 1st October 2014 – 31st December 2014

Council Tax	Amount (£)	Number of Accounts
Gone away	729.11	2
Bankruptcy	12,586.25	18
Uneconomical to pursue	1,093.11	13
Other	327.37	2
Costs written off	995.97	16
Auto Balance Write Off (archived)	307.19	2
Total	16,039.00	53

NDR	Amount (£)	Number of Accounts
Gone away	61,259.84	28
Company dissolved	9,070.85	4
Bankruptcy	10,904.23	11
Liquidation	3,373.23	1
In Administration	10,992.19	2
Uneconomical to pursue	227.83	2
Other	4,227.11	5
Costs written off	2,024.00	23
Total	102,079.28	76

Sundry Debts	Amount (£)	Number of Invoices
No further Action due to value	25.00	1
Auto write off under £5.00	5.45	6
Legal Advised	722.80	3
Credit Write Offs	-14.68	3
Total	738.57	13

Housing Benefit Write Offs	Amount	No. of cases
Uneconomical to recover	1,413.19	10
Cannot trace	1,265.83	3
Old debt-recovery options ex	3,013.83	3
Not reasonable to recover	1,328.95	1
Deceased	1,746.81	2
TOTAL	8,768.61	19

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Appendix 2

SUNDRY DEBTS – PROFILE DATA

Table 1 - Aged Debt profile for Sundry Debts -

Age Debtors All	As at 31 st December 2014	As at 31 st December 2013
1 – 30 days (see below)	571,274	91,119
31 - 60 days	25,905	493,690
61 – 90 days	51,601	10,407
90 days +	103,068	96,938
Total	751,849	692,154

Table 2 – Number of outstanding invoices by age

All Debtors invoices outstanding	As at 31 st December 2014
1 – 30 days	13753
31 - 60 days	849
61 – 90 days	184
90 days +	308
Total	14340

Note: Garden Waste makeup 12,904 of the total in 1-30 days

Table 3 – Garden Waste Invoices Only

Age for Gardenwaste	As at 31 st December 2014
1 – 30 days	504,440
31 - 60 days	0
61 – 90 days	0
90 days +	665
Total	505,105

Note: Due date 1st Feb 2015

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Table 4 - Value of Outstanding Debt by Month

	1 - 30 days	31 - 60 days	61 - 90 days	90+ days	Outstanding Amount
Apr-14	143,307	185,451	7,572	117,421	453,751
May-14	861,762	77,199	126,218	118,608	1,183,786
Jun-14	375,084	246,968	18,367	148,842	789,260
Jul-14	123,994	20,683	19,496	145,180	309,353
Aug-14	126,917	66,454	13,139	144,698	351,208
Sep-14	199,996	57,226	56,442	138,750	452,414
Oct-14	355,196	26,871	22,514	131,104	535,685
Nov-14	692,760	23,361	18,343	108,309	842,773
Dec-14	74,870	559,251	14,731	102,998	751,850
Jan-15	0	0	0	0	-
Feb-15	0	0	0	0	-
Mar-15	0	0	0	0	-
TOTAL	2,953,886	1,263,464	296,821	1,155,910	5,670,081

Table 5 – Billing Profile

	Number of invoices raised	Number of invoices outstanding	Number of 1st reminders	Number of 2nd reminders
Apr-14	522	1976	164	58
May-14	466	1756	28	161
Jun-14	1320	2226	31	54
Jul-14	459	1458	97	34
Aug-14	290	1251	9	67
Sep-14	1591	2076	62	42
Oct-14	570	1172	186	47
Nov-14	18640	16537	31	137
Dec-14	1103	14342	35	49
Jan-15	0	0	0	0
Feb-15	0	0	0	0
Mar-15	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	24,961	42,794	643	649

Council Tax Arrears

Council Tax Arrears Analysis					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
	Total	Total	Total	Total	Annual debit
Year	£	£			£
1999/00	9869.03	8847.90	8403.57		25,836,407
2000/01	14722.72	14312.37	13791.81		26,419,700
2001/02	23350.36	22517.17	22044.82		29,487,929
2002/03	35427.20	33982.66	32829.91		35,962,692
2003/04	32054.31	29488.39	28594.00		40,922,548
2004/05	34384.86	32590.77	31484.97		41,770,011
2005/06	68403.58	64469.10	63127.53		44,059,868
2006/07	88198.00	84342.98	81809.13		46,683,333
2007/08	79731.62	76277.94	72829.08		49,061,780
2008/09	87063.83	83663.59	80427.10		51,592,006
2009/10	92186.06	88492.51	83866.32		53,577,097
2010/11	149444.01	148059.16	140249.95		55,298,276
2011/12	187955.74	179993.19	168903.62		55,399,069
2012/13	291776.21	275625.00	261728.00		55,882,474
2013/14	636847.28	570750.95	519451.98		56,565,040
2014/15	37372725.49	19574863.11	6907168.87		57,832,715
Total	39200023.54	19578686.25	8516710.66		

Non Domestic Rates Arrears

Non Domestic Rates Arrears Analysis					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
	Total	Total	Total	Total	Annual Debit
Year	£	£			£
2000/01	-1,442.12	-1442.12	-1442.11		17,415,978
2001/02	656.81	1018.24	410.18		17,232,868
2002/03	-1665.72	1018.24	78.70		17,175,162
2003/04	211.80	211.80	-742.79		17,345,890
2004/05	-331.53	-331.53	-890.22		17,854,642
2005/06	5633.06	5633.06	5633.06		18,803,202
2006/07	3562.52	2662.52	1662.52		19,823,744
2007/08	3026.97	3026.96	1262.64		20,822,010
2008/09	23528.11	23528.11	20656.86		23,586,234
2009/10	56573.05	55235.46	44862.80		23,829,603
2010/11	55886.01	50454.00	21030.52		23,233,864
2011/12	88683.27	82372.98	46887.61		25,205,206
2012/13	131380.32	109855.14	78636.68		26,984,821
2013/14	208162.79	167014.16	127596.83		27,558,863
2014/15	18890661.55	10764819.27	3395083.55		28,185,165
Totals	19464526.89	11265076.29	3740726.83		

Top 10 Outstanding Debts

Case 1 - Total owed £9,712.31 (there is an additional amount of £7,738.94 on the current account)

- The debt relates to the period 01.04.04 to 01.04.11 and then 01.04.11 to 01.04.15;
- BDC have instigated bankruptcy proceedings £9,712.31 plus £3,839.48 of the current account is included in the bankruptcy order;
- We are waiting for dividends to be paid by the insolvency practitioner, this can be a lengthy process;
- The balance of the current account has been sent to the bailiff for collection.

Case 2 - Total owed £11,428.05 (there is an additional amount of £3,011.13 on the current account)

- The debt relates to the period 03.04.07 to 27.10.2011;
- Property was a band G property transferred from father;
- 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 charges were not billed until February 2009;
- Although several arrangements have been made no payments have ever been received on this account;
- The account has recently been returned from bailiffs;
- The next action will be to investigate the possibility of bankruptcy.

Case 3 - Total Owed £10,417.27

- The debt relates to the period 01.04.07 to 17.09.13;
- Balances for 07-08 and 08-09 being collected by an attachment of earnings;
- Remaining balances are pending an application to deduct from earnings;
- We can only deduct on 2 liabilities at any one time.

Case 4 - Total Owed £9,126.84

- The debt relates to the period 01.04.07 to 31.03.15;
- Balances for 07-08 and 08-09 being collected by an attachment of earnings;
- Remaining balances are pending an application to deduct from earnings;
- We can only deduct on 2 liabilities at any one time.

Case 5 - Total owed £7,985.33

- The debt relates to the period 02.01.2010 to 31.03.15;
- Accounts all recently returned from bailiff unable to collect;
- Information to be gathered for the possibility of bankruptcy or charging order.

Case 6 - Total owed £7,710.54

- The debt relates to the period 01.04.10 to 31.03.14;

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- Accounts all recently returned from bailiff unable to collect;
- Information to be gathered for the possibility of bankruptcy or charging order.

Case 7 - Total owed £7,527.73

- The debt relates to the period 01.04.09 to 2.06.14;
- Accounts all recently returned from bailiff unable to collect;
- Information to be gathered for the possibility of bankruptcy or charging order.

Case 8 - Total owed £6,887.41

- The debt relates to the period 01.04.12 to 31.03.15;
- Accounts all recently returned from bailiff unable to collect;
- Information to be gathered for the possibility of bankruptcy or charging order.

Case 9 - Total owed £6,595.94

- The debt relates to the period 01.01.10 to 26.04.13;
- Accounts all recently returned from bailiff unable to collect;
- Information to be gathered for the possibility of bankruptcy or charging order.

Case 10 - Total Owed £6,501.30

- The debt relates to the period 01.04.08 to 01.04.15;
- £1662.00 still with bailiff being paid at circa £500.00 per month, therefore balance reducing rapidly;
- Once the above debt has been cleared the balance of the debt will be referred back to the bailiff for collection.

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MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2015/16 – 2017/18

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Michael Webb
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Jayne Pickering (Exec Director)
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	None specific

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To allow the Board to consider and comment on the revenue budget for 2015/16 – 2017/18.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **The Overview and Scrutiny Board is asked to consider the report and make any comments.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) provides the framework within which the revenue and capital spending decisions can be made over a 3 year period. The plan addresses how the Council will provide financial funding to the Strategic Purposes and ensure residents receive quality services to meet their needs in the future. The Purposes that drive the financial considerations are :
- Help me find somewhere to live in my locality
 - Provide good things for me to see, do and visit
 - Help me live my life independently
 - Help me run a successful business
 - Help me be financially independent
 - Keep my place safe and looking good
- 3.2 When reviewing the budget projections officers consider the impact of demand on service and the costs associated with this demand. This may result in additional costs (associated with maintaining current service delivery) or reductions in anticipated income revenue over the next 3 years.
- 3.3 As Members are aware there continue to be considerable pressures facing the Council over the next 3 years as a result of a number of issues including:

- Continued reduction in Government Grant
- Reduction in Council Tax Benefit Grant received
- Changes to welfare reform and the impact on the Council from residents service need
- Transfer from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit

3.4 Officers will continue to work with our partners to identify the costs that may be associated with some of these changes.

Formula Grant / Localised Business Rates

3.5 The provisional settlement that was received recently by the Council for 2015/16 was as indicated previously at £2.814m. However this confirms the £500k reduction in the grant allocated for 2014/15. The grant includes a number of allocations that were previously received as separate funding streams and therefore the cut is across all funding received by Central Government.

3.6 Forecasting Government funding beyond 2015/16 is challenging, the key issue will be the outcome of the next Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), due for publication after the General Election in May 2015. Recent Government and opposition announcements indicate that the austerity measures are set to continue into future years, in line with the Government's objective of achieving a budget surplus. Further estimated reductions on Formula Grant are therefore factored into the MTFP, in line with previous estimates.

3.7 The new localised regime on Business Rates (BR) took effect in April 2013. Bromsgrove is part of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Business Rates Pool, set up as a mechanism to retain more BR growth funding within the area, and to manage risk on BR losses on a shared basis.

3.8 In the first year of this new regime, all members of the pool benefited financially from being in the pool. A net £750k growth levy was retained in the area which would have been returned to Central Government and following allocation of £307k to the LEP Growth Fund and payment of a Safety Net contribution to one of the Councils Bromsgrove gained £23k from the pool which has been included as funding for use I 2015/16. This is higher than the comparable income that would have been available from the Worcestershire Pool.

New Homes Bonus

3.9 The Council has received notification that the New Homes Bonus (NHB) total grant for 2015/16 will be £1.298m. This includes the 2015/16 grant of £348k which is significantly higher than the £126k included in the original budget estimates. This is due to the number of

properties in the District increasing during 2014/15. A review of future years has been made and additional properties have been included in the medium term plan calculations. The Finance team will work more closely with Planning in the future to ensure that a more accurate estimate is used for projections.

- 3.10 As Members are aware all income received from New Homes Bonus grant is currently used within the General Funds of the Council and is utilised to offset the pressures facing the Council over the medium term. The petition to Council in April 2014 requested members look at the opportunity of allocating New Homes Bonus to the communities that were affected by housing growth.
- 3.11 A scheme for distribution of NHB funding was agreed at Cabinet and Full Council in January. It was proposed at the Cabinet meeting on 4th February 2015 that 25% of the £348k new funding for 2015/16 be allocated towards the NHB Scheme. This would equate to £87k and would be funded from balances in 2015/16. The scheme would be reviewed on an annual basis and agreement reached on an annual basis as to how much would be allocated to the scheme.

Council Tax

- 3.12 To ensure that necessary levels of funding are available given the large reductions in government grant highlighted above, the Council Tax increases will have to be sufficient to ensure that funding is available for the services that create value to the customer have appropriate levels of financial resource.
- 3.13 The government have offered a grant equivalent to a 1% rise in Council Tax for 2015/16 for councils who freeze their Council Tax in the next financial year. It was proposed at the Cabinet meeting on 4th February 2015 that the Council would freeze Council Tax for 2015/16 and accept the freeze grant from Government. The net cost of £63k for 2015/16 would be funded from balances.

Transformation

- 3.14 The significant reductions in funding are not anticipated to improve for a number of years and therefore officers have looked at alternative ways to deliver savings whilst improving services to the community. As previously reported the services provided by the Council are undergoing transformational change using a different approach to assessing the value provided by the service. This work will focus on the purpose of services to the community and will aim to realise savings and protect those services that create value to our customers.

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- 3.15 Members will be aware of the recent review to the provision of some services across a locality /place and the significant savings that have been identified whilst improving and enhancing the services to the community. In addition the work across customer services and departments continues to develop to ensure that an expert is on hand to support our residents.
- 3.16 Officers are focused on reducing costs of services that do not provide front line services to support the Strategic Purposes and will continue to drive out waste and redesign provision to reduce costs.

Current Position

- 3.17 Officers have also identified a number of budget pressures that have been deemed “unavoidable”. Unavoidable includes the ongoing effects of pressures identified during 2014/15 together with any issues that have been raised as fundamental to maintaining service provision as part of the budget process. In addition income shortfalls that cannot be managed by improved marketing or price increases have been addressed during the budget planning. These pressures are detailed in Appendix 1 and include :
- Shortfall in car parking income £62k resulting from a significant reduction in income from fixed penalty notices together with the impact of not increasing the charges in line with inflation (the initial budget included an element of inflationary increase)
 - Shortfall in garden waste income of £63k due to the increase in charge to £38 being less than the £45 originally anticipated
 - Reduction in funding from Worcestershire County Council in relation to funding for the customer service centre (HUB) of £26k.
 - Additional staffing resource within the Planning Service to meet demand

Building Control

As members are aware the Council currently hosts the Building Control Shared service which covers North Worcestershire. The service has been operating under this arrangement since December 2011. When the service was established the financial charging mechanism was based on the budget allocation that was passed over to Bromsgrove by each Council. A requirement of the legal agreement for the shared arrangement stated that the financial mechanism had to be reviewed to ensure that costs were being allocated on an activity basis rather than the initial budget method to reflect actual levels of service received rather than relying on historical budget information. An exercise has recently been undertaken and the resulting allocation as attached at Appendix 3 shows that Bromsgrove have a significantly higher

proportion of applications and activity than Wyre Forest or Redditch Borough Councils. Therefore it is proposed that the partner share percentage is revised with effect from 1st April 2015. The resulting pressure for Bromsgrove is included within the unavoidable pressures on the Appendices to this report. The legal agreement will need to be updated to make reference to the outcome of the review and the change to partner contributions, including the negative financial impact on Bromsgrove, and these changes and any future changes will need to be incorporated into the original agreement. Officers propose that this is achieved by the parties signing a Variation Agreement.

3.18 In addition to the unavoidable pressures two revenue bids have been identified.

- **Essential Living Fund £30k** - to continue to support this fund which will no longer be supported from any external grant allocations. The bid is for £30k will enable the Council to continue to provide support to the most vulnerable residents, through the provision of:
 - Short term help to pay energy costs;
 - Emergency food, clothing or other essentials; and
 - Basic furniture and/or electrical goods where a critical need has been identified.

In the last 2 years the funding received from County via the Government was £180k which was fully utilised. There remains pressure on the Government to reinstate the funding and officers will advise Members should any additional funding be made available.

- **Economic Development Projects £23k** – as part of the pooling arrangement with Greater Birmingham and Solihull the Council received £23k in 2014/15 from the levy allocation. It is proposed that this fund be allocated to support Economic Development activities across the District.

3.19 Officers have spent time reviewing how services are delivered across the Council to ensure that waste is eliminated and services are redesigned to reduce cost whilst ensuring that front line services adding value to the residents are protected. The schedule at Appendix 2 details the savings proposed to include:

- Reviews with Customer Services / Fraud £126k
- Place review – Environmental & Community Services £144k
- Reduction in election costs as shared with General Election £60k

Financial Position

3.20 The current summary position at 3.21 includes the financial impact of the above in addition to the following assumptions:

- 2.2% pay award in relation to the National Agreement in place
- General inflationary increases in relation to contract arrangements
- A estimate of reduction for 2016/17 (10%) & 2017/18 (5%) in Central Government Grant
- 3% increase in fees and charges (where appropriate)
- Borrowing costs for the development of Parkside and the new Leisure Centre
- Borrowing costs of new fleet and plant for the Depot Services
- An estimation of the New Homes Bonus income
- Additional growth income estimated in relation to the Business Rates receivable by the Council
- A new funding arrangement for the Artrix at £60k pa following the completion of the previous 10 year agreement

3.21 The revised position is shown below.

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
	£000	£000	£000
Departmental Expenditure (Starting Position)	11,314	11,323	11,369
Exclude impact of one off savings / pressures		80	40
Additional re pay award / incremental progression	123	188	140
Bids	53		
Unavoidable Pressures (new in year)	380		45
Savings (new in year)	-547	-222	-25
Net Service Expenditure	11,323	11,369	11,569
Investment Income	-36	-24	-24
Cost of Borrowing	382	750	1,342
Recharge to Capital Programme	-26	-25	-25
Net Operating Expenditure	11,643	12,070	12,862

	2015-16 £'000	2016-17 £'000	2017-18 £'000
Funding of borrowing costs for Dolphin Centre from balances	-123	-331	-506
Revenue Support Grant	-1,190	-1,058	-947
Business Rates Retention (Baseline Funding)	-1,585	-1,598	-1,598
Business Rates Growth	-176	-176	-176
Funding from Business Rate Pool	-23		
New Homes Bonus	-1,298	-1,554	-1,685
New Homes Bonus Community Scheme	87		
Collection Fund Surplus (Council Tax)	-127	-	-
Council Tax	-6,989	-7,157	-7,231
Council Tax Freeze Grant (1% 2015/16 only)	-69		
Funding Total	-11,493	-11,874	-12,144
Shortfall	150	196	718
Proposed Funding from balances	-150	-196	-718
Final Position	0	0	0

3.22 It is proposed that there is a release from balances to meet the shortfalls in 2016/17 – 2017/18. In addition any funds allocated for the New Homes Bonus Scheme will be released from balances. This will ensure that the Council has a sustainable funding position over the 3 year financial plan but officers will continue to review services with the aim to redesign them to meet customer demand and reduce costs.

General Fund Balances

3.23 The level of the general fund balance is currently £3.7m. As previously agreed over £1m will be used to support the first 2 years borrowing costs for the new Leisure Centre. The use of balances for 2015/16 - 2017/18 will reduce the level by a further £1m to £1.7m. The remaining level of balances will be sufficient to cover the increased risks that will

be placed upon the Council in the short term. However reliance on the balances is not sustainable in the longer term.

- 3.24 The estimated level of government funding over the MTFP will reduce more rapidly than the increase in Council Tax revenues. Consequently, there will be a continuing focus on transforming service delivery to reduce waste and to ensure that the funding available is aligned to the services that create value to the community of Bromsgrove.

Capital Programme

- 3.25 The Capital Programme is a 3 year rolling programme and officers are currently working to ensure that the level of expenditure falls within the current estimated project allocation. The majority of new schemes are funded from S106 and Reserves and therefore have no financial implications for the Council. The borrowing costs of the fleet replacement plan have been included in the projections and a schedule of all Capital projects will be reported to the next meeting of Cabinet to be included in the final budget approval report for 2015/16 – 2017/18.

Legal Implications

- 3.26 The Council has a statutory responsibility to set the level of Council Tax and a balanced budget for the following financial year. This will be presented to the next Cabinet and Council in late February 2015.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.27 The MTFP will enable services to be maintained and, where achievable, improvements to the community.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.28 The impact on the customer has been reduced due to the savings being realised by reduction of waste in the services and ensuring that all service that create value to the customer are resourced.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 To mitigate the risks associated with the financial pressures facing the Authority regular monitoring reports are presented to both officers and Members to enable proactive action being undertaken to address any areas of concern.

5. APPENDICES

Overview & Scrutiny Board

16th FEBRUARY 2015

Appendix 1 – Unavoidable Pressures (including income shortfalls)

Appendix 2 – Savings Proposed

Appendix 3 – Building Control Revised Allocation

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Jayne Pickering – Exec Director Finance and Resources

E Mail: j.pickering@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Tel: 01527-881400

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APPENDIX 1

STATEMENT SHOWS THE IMPACT OF THE NEW PRESSURES FOR EACH FINANCIAL YEAR

UNAVOIDABLE PRESSURES	2015/16 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2015/16 £'000	Comments
ENABLING				
Neighbourhood Referendum costs to the District	10	-	-	<i>To provide for the costs associated with the neighbourhood referendum - one year only</i>
Reduction in HUB funding from WCC	26	-	-	<i>Reduction in income resulting from further cuts from Worcestershire County Council on HUB funding</i>
Business Rate Increase - across number of buildings	10	-	-	<i>Various increases in Business Rate Liability across the Council owned assets</i>
Individual Electoral Registration	20	-	-	<i>Additional cost to be incurred in respect of Individual Electoral Registration</i>
Postage - additional postage costs	15	-	-	<i>Additional postage costs incurred to meet demand for information being sent across the District</i>
KEEP MY PLACE SAFE AND LOOKING GOOD				
Planning Staff	79	-	-	<i>To ensure capacity within the team to deliver service to customers</i>
Building Control	95	-	-	<i>To revise the charging mechanism for Building Control Shared Service to allocate costs based on activity</i>

UNAVOIDABLE PRESSURES	2015/16 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2015/16 £'000	Comments
Land Charges	-	-	45	<i>The Government is currently looking at changing the way land charges are provided from 2017/18 which may mean the income is no longer received by BDC</i>
Shortfall in garden waste income (£45 - £38)	63	-	-	<i>To meet the shortfall in income following decision to revise the charge for garden waste to £38 per year from the £45 included in the original budget projections</i>
HELP ME RUN A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS				
Car Parking Income - no inflationary increase	32	-	-	<i>The budget includes an element of inflationary increase - the charges are not increasing for 2015/16 therefore there will be a shortfall to the estimated income</i>
Car Parking Income - reduced income from enforcement	30	-	-	<i>There is a projected shortfall in income relating to enforcement as drivers are now parking in a more compliant way</i>
TOTAL PER SUMMARY ABOVE	380	0	45	

STATEMENT SHOWS THE IMPACT OF THE NEW SAVINGS FOR
EACH FINANCIAL YEAR

STRATEGIC PURPOSE SAVINGS	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Comments
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
ENABLING				
Customer Access & Financial Support - Service Review Fraud / Customer Services / General savings	-126	-	-	<i>Savings / additional income realised from service reviews to reduce the enabling costs of the Council including Fraud Customer services (£30k is for one year only)</i>
Elections - Sharing the election costs with General Election	-60	-	-	<i>Reduction in the budget requirement for the District Election as this can now be shared with the General Election - (one year only)</i>
Service Review of Resources within Enabling Services; HR, Legal & Democratic, Finance, IT, Business Transformation	-135	-100	-	<i>Restructure of the resources that provide enabling services / management across the organisation</i>
WRS Savings		-50	-	<i>Savings from further efficiencies in WRS</i>
KEEP MY PLACE SAFE AND LOOKING GOOD				
Place Review - Environmental Services & Community savings	-144	-47	-	<i>As part of the review of how the services can be delivered across the District meeting the needs of a locality / place significant savings can be made - Environmental Services</i>

STRATEGIC PURPOSE SAVINGS	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000	Comments
HELP ME LIVE MY LIFE INDEPENDENTLY				
Community Transport - renegotiation of contract	-16	-	-	<i>Saving offered from prior year renegotiation of contract</i>
Staffing Review across the Strategic Purpose	-20	-	-	<i>Savings estimated as a result of a review into the resource supporting the strategic purpose</i>
PROVIDE GOOD THINGS FOR ME TO SEE, DO AND VISIT				
Sports Dev Partnership change in arrangements for delivery of service to private organisation	-6	-	-	<i>No further payments to be made as the service is to be provided in an alternative way to support a number of sports and health activities across the County</i>
Staffing Review across the Strategic Purpose	-	-25	-25	<i>Review resources and service delivery across the Locality to link with the Strategic Purpose</i>
Dolphin Centre	-40	-	-	<i>Reduction in costs relating to the Dolphin Centre</i>
TOTAL AS PER SUMMARY ABOVE	-547	-222	-25	

Building Control Shared Service - partner share allocation

Appendix 3

BUDGETS	Original Budget Baseline		2012 / 2013		2013 / 2014		2014 / 2015
	£		£		£		
Bromsgrove	181,527	30%	154,645		146,565		129,855
Redditch	194,950	32%	166,072		157,395		147,399
Wyre Forest	225,100	37%	191,744		181,725		164,341
	601,577		512,461		485,685		441,595

APPLICATIONS	2012/13 No of Applications	% of Total	2013/14 No of Applications	% of Total	2013/14 No of Applications (to 2nd Q)	% of Total	Average %
Bromsgrove	601	48%	885	59%	337	47%	51%
Redditch	264	21%	259	17%	155	22%	20%
Wyre Forest	386	31%	363	24%	227	31%	29%

SUMMARY

	Original % Share	2014/15 Budget £	Revised % Share	Revised Payment - based on 2014/15 £	Difference £
Bromsgrove	30.18%	129,855	51.00%	225,213	95,358
Redditch	32.41%	147,399	20.00%	88,319	-59,080
Wyre Forest	37.42%	164,341	29.00%	128,063	-36,278
		441,595		441,595	

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

WORK PROGRAMME

2014-15

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board considers and agrees the work programme and updates it accordingly.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Date of Meeting	Subject	Additional Information
16th February 2015	Hanover Street & George House Report	
	Final Budget Report	
	Staff Survey Update	
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Update	
	Cabinet Work Programme	
	Action List	
	O&S Work Programme	
16th March 2015	Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Partnerships – Update North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership	
	Summary of Environmental Enforcement	
	Ipads – Background information and current position.	Requested at meeting 21/01/15
	Planning Applications – Backlog Data	
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Update	
	Cabinet Work Programme	
	Action List	
	O&S Work Programme	
13th April 2015	Planning Applications – Quarterly Backlog Data (to Review further need for this information.)	Requested at meeting held on 15/09/14
	Overview & Scrutiny Board Annual Report	
	Overview & Scrutiny – future training needs	
	Quarterly Recommendation Tracker	
	(WRS Officers to be invited in to discuss	

Date of Meeting	Subject	Additional Information
	outstanding Air Quality Task Group Report recommendations)	
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Update	
	Cabinet Work Programme	
	Action List	

Reports to be Received by the Board Quarterly – dates to be confirmed

Finance Monitoring - Quarterly
 Write Off of Debts - Quarterly
 Sickness Absence Performance - Annually
 Making Experiences Count - 6 monthly

Reports to be Received by the Board Annually

Summary of Environmental Enforcement (March 2015 meeting)

Scrutiny of Crime & Disorder Partnership

The Board must hold at least one meeting at which it considers the scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Partnership. This will be discussed at the meeting to be held on 16th March 2015.

Topics to be considered (as recommended by Task Groups)

The following topics were suggested by Task Group for further investigation. It is up to the Board to decide whether they wish these to be considered within its current Work Programme.

1. Provision of services available to disaffected young people and those not in education, employment or training within the District.
2. Review into CO2 emissions in the District.

When considering topics for investigations Members may wish to take into account the Council's Strategic Purposes as detailed below:

Our Strategic Purposes for Bromsgrove

Help me to live my life independently

Help me to be financially independent

Keep my place safe & looking good

Help me find somewhere to live in my locality

Provide good things for me to see, do & visit

Help me run a successful business

Support services enable us to deliver our purposes

Bromsgrove District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

For more information view the Council Plan at:
<http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/council-plan.aspx>

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CABINET LEADER'S WORK PROGRAMME

1 MARCH 2015 TO 30 JUNE 2015

(published as at 1 February 2015)

This Work Programme gives details of items on which key decisions are likely to be taken in the coming four months by the Council's Cabinet

(NB: There may be occasions when the Cabinet may make recommendations to Council for a final decision. E.g. to approve a new policy or variation to the approved budget.)

Whilst the majority of the Cabinet's business at the meetings listed in the Work Programme will be open to the public and media organisations to attend, there will inevitably be some business to be considered that contains confidential, commercially sensitive or personal information.. This is called exempt information. Members of the public and media may be asked to leave the meeting when such information is discussed.

If an item is likely to contain exempt information we show this on the Work Programme. You can make representations to us if you consider an item or any of the documents listed should be open to the public.

The Work Programme gives details of items on which key decisions are likely to be taken by the Council's Cabinet, or full Council, in the coming four months.

Key Decisions are those executive decisions which are likely to:

- (i) result in the Council incurring expenditure, foregoing income or the making of savings in excess of £50,000 or which are otherwise significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (ii) be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the district;

Key Decisions will include:

1. A decision which would result in any expenditure or saving by way of a reduction in expenditure of £50,000 provided the expenditure or saving is specifically approved in the Medium Term Financial Plan.
2. A virement of any amount exceeding £50,000 provided it is within any virement limits approved by the Council;
3. Any proposal to dispose of any Council asset with a value of £50,000 or more or which is otherwise considered significant by the Corporate Property Officer;
4. Any proposal to cease to provide a Council service (other than a temporary cessation of service of not more than 6 months).
5. Any proposal which would discriminate for or against any minority group.

The Work Programme is available for inspection free of charge at The Council House, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove, B60 1AA from 9am to 5pm Mondays to Fridays; or on the Council's web-site www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

If you wish to make representations on the proposed decision you are encouraged to get in touch with the relevant report author as soon as possible before the proposed date of the decision. Contact details are provided Alternatively, you may write to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, The Council House, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove, B60 1AA or e-mail: democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

The Cabinet's meetings are normally held every four weeks at 6pm on Wednesday evenings at The Council House. They are open to the public, except when confidential information is being discussed. If you wish to attend for a particular matter, it is advisable to check with the Democratic Services Team on (01527 881409 to make sure it is going ahead as planned. If you have any queries Democratic Services Officers will be happy to advise you.

The full Council meets in accordance with the Councils Calendar of Meetings. Meetings commence at 6pm.

CABINET MEMBERSHIP

Councillor M. A. Sherrey	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Services, Partnerships and Governance
Councillor C. B. Taylor	Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning Services and Housing
Councillor M. J. A. Webb	Portfolio Holder for Finance, Economic Development and Emergency Planning
Councillor D. W. P. Booth	Portfolio Holder for Enabling (excluding Finance and Governance)
Councillor R. L. Dent	Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre and Regulatory Services
Councillor M. A. Bullivant	Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Leisure Services

Decision Including Whether it is a Key Decision	Decision Taker including Details of Exempt Information (if any)	Date of Decision	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Consideration of outcome of scoring of Developer Presentations on Hanover Street/George House Site Key Decision	Cabinet (<i>parts of the report may be confidential</i>)	18 February 2015	Report of the Executive Director Finance and Resources	Jayne Pickering 01527 881400 Councillor R Dent
Disposal of The Council House Site, Burcot Lane – Update Key Decision	Cabinet (<i>parts of the report may be confidential</i>)	18 February 2015 (possible date for consideration)	Report of the Executive Director Finance and Resources	Jayne Pickering 01527 881400 Councillor M. Webb
Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/16 – 2017/18 Council Tax Setting Pay Policy	Cabinet (<i>with recommendations to Council</i>)	25 February 2015	Report of the Executive Director Finance and Resources	Jayne Pickering 01527 881400 Councillor M. Webb
Mobile Homes Act 2013 – New Policy relating to Licensing Fees	Cabinet (<i>possible recommendations to Council</i>)	4 March 2015	Report of the Head of Community Services	Derek Allen Housing Strategy Manager 01527 64252 ext 1278 Councillor K. Taylor
Outstanding Debt Write Offs	Cabinet	4 March 2015	Report of the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support	Amanda De Warr 01527 881241 Councillor M. Webb

Decision Including Whether it is a Key Decision	Decision Taker including Details of Exempt Information (if any)	Date of Decision	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Finance Monitoring Report Quarter 3	Cabinet	4 March 2015	Report of the Executive Director Finance and Resources	Jayne Pickering 01527 881400 Councillor M. Webb
Bromsgrove Townscape Initiative – 2 Heritage Grant Applications	Cabinet	4 March 2015	Report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration	David Thomas THI Project Officer 01527881343 Councillor R Dent
Setting of Fees for a Street Café Policy	Cabinet (<i>possible recommendations to Council</i>)	1 April 2015	Report of the Town Centre Regeneration Programme Manager	Richard Savory 01527 881281 Councillor R. Dent/ Councillor M. Webb
Modifications to the Bromsgrove District Local Plan	Cabinet (<i>recommendations to Council</i>)	1 April 2015	Report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration	Mike Dunphy Strategic Planning Manager 01527 881325 Councillor K. Taylor
Future Management of Bromsgrove/Redditch Outdoor Markets	Cabinet	1 April 2015	Report of the Chief Executive	Steve Singleton North Worcestershire Economic Development Manager

				01562 732168 Councillors M. Webb/ R. Dent
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