



**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**WEDNESDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY, 2008 AT 6.00 PM**

**COMMITTEE ROOM, THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BURCOT LANE, BROMSGROVE**

**AGENDA**

MEMBERS: Councillors R. Hollingworth (Leader), Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths (Deputy Leader), Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP, G. N. Denaro, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., R. D. Smith, Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP, M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

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 9th January 2008 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 8th January 2008 (Pages 9 - 12)
5. To receive the minutes of meeting of Performance Management Board held on 22nd January 2008 (Pages 13 - 14)
6. To consider the following notice of motion submitted by Councillor Mrs C. M. McDonald and referred to Cabinet by Council on 16th January 2008 "The Council's Allocation Policy for the letting and allocation of rural affordable housing developed under "Exception Site" policy cannot be supported by its own Equality and Diversity Policy. In the light of this the Council no longer supports such a policy." (Pages 15 - 36)
7. Variation to Car Parking Order (Pages 37 - 46)
8. Homelessness Grant Funding (Pages 47 - 60)
9. Response to the Draft Sustainable Community Strategy for Worcestershire 2008-2013 (Pages 61 - 154)

10. Improvement Plan Exception Report (November 2007) (Pages 155 - 172)
11. Customer First Strategy Review (Pages 173 - 232)
12. 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

25th January 2008

# Agenda Item 3

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 9TH JANUARY 2008 AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillors R. Hollingworth (Leader), Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths (Deputy Leader), Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP, G. N. Denaro, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., R. D. Smith, Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillors P. M. McDonald and C. J. K. Wilson

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. T. Beirne, Mr. P. Street, Mr. H. Bennett, Mr. M. Bell, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. J. Godwin, Mr. D. Hammond, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. J. Pitman, Ms. D. Poole, Mr. M. Dunphy, Ms A. Darroch and Ms. R. Cole.

#### 115/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M. J. A. Webb.

#### 116/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor G. N. Denaro declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (Medium Term Financial Plan 2008-2009 to 2010-2011), as a member of Wythall Community Hall Trust.

Councillor Mrs J. Dyer M.B. E. declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (Medium Term Financial Plan 2008-2009 to 2010-2011), as a member of the Amphlett Hall Management Committee and of Wythall Community Hall Trust.

Councillor Mrs J. M. L. A. Griffiths declared a personal interest in item 9 (Medium Term Financial Plan 2008-2009 to 2010-2011), as a member of the Operating Trust of Bromsgrove Arts Centre and member of the Amphlett Hall Management Committee and in agenda item 11, (Concessions Policy for Users of Council Services) as a close relative may benefit from Council Concessions.

Councillor Mrs. M. A. Sherrey declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (Medium Term Financial Plan 2008-2009 to 2010-2011), as a member of the Operating Trust of Bromsgrove Arts Centre.

Councillor R. D. Smith declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (Medium Term Financial Plan 2008-2009 to 2010-2011), as a member of the Operating Trust of Bromsgrove Arts Centre.

#### 117/07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5th December 2007 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

118/07 **SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

The minutes of the meetings of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 4th December and 20th December 2007 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be noted.

119/07 **AUDIT BOARD**

The minutes of the Audit Board held on 10th December 2007 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting be noted.

120/07 **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING PARTY**

The Minutes of the Local Development Framework Working Party held on 13th December 2007 were submitted. The Portfolio Holder for Planning also reported the latest position regarding housing allocation figures which it was hoped would be clarified shortly.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting be noted and the recommendations approved.

121/07 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The minutes of the Performance Management Board held on 18th December 2007 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting be noted and the recommendations approved.

122/07 **AIR QUALITY SCRUTINY REPORT**

The Cabinet considered recommendations made by the Scrutiny Steering Board based on the report of the Task Group set up to scrutinise issues relating to Air Quality. The Leader acknowledged the detailed work undertaken by the Task Group together with the excellent quality of the final report. He thanked the Chairman of the Task Group for its efforts in undertaking the exercise. The Chairman of the Task Group referred to the thorough exercise which had been undertaken, and highlighted the consultation which had taken place with a variety of individuals and agencies as part of the scrutiny process. Following detailed discussion, it was

**RESOLVED:**

(a) *that recommendation 1 relating to a request to the County Council for the introduction of Low Emission Zones (LEZ) to cover certain roads in*

*the District be deferred until further information is available, following the introduction of such zones in other areas of the Country and the implications for the adjacent road network;*

- (b) that the Council remain committed to improving Bromsgrove Railway Station including the Park and Ride facility;
- (c) *that it be noted that whilst the Cabinet is minded to support the future recommendations of the Public Transport – Buses Scrutiny Task Group which relate to the improvement of local bus services, full consideration will need to be given on receipt of the recommendations and this will be subject to any financial implications;*
- (d) that a request be made to the appropriate authority to alter the traffic signals on the A38 North into Bromsgrove (*including the possibility of part-time signals*) to reduce exit blocking and improve traffic flow near the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and that the area be monitored by the Environmental Health Team and the appropriate external agencies before and after the alterations;
- (e) that the Environmental Health Team be requested to monitor the AQMA before and after the amendment of the yellow box markings on the roundabout at M42 junction 1 at gridlock to investigate whether there has been an reduction in air pollution *and that the police be requested to monitor the misuse of the yellow boxes;*
- (f) that the Highways Agency be requested to monitor the area of the M42 Westbound to M5 to find out if the scheme involving changes to signage and road markings has been successful in reducing the number of incidents;
- (g) that the Town Centre Redevelopment Steering Group (LSP Theme Group) be requested to consider air pollution caused by traffic congestion when looking at redeveloping the town. This to include considering the possibility of vehicles accessing The Strand from Birmingham Road and investigating, in partnership with the County Council, whether it may help decrease traffic congestion and therefore lower air pollution at this location;
- (h) that the County Council be requested to review the timing of the traffic signals located at the top end of the High Street near the Strand with a view to reducing the build up of stationary traffic and, that if this is agreed, the County Council and the Environmental Health Team be requested to undertake monitoring of the position before and after the alteration in respect of traffic congestion and air quality respectively;
- (i) that the Head of Planning and Environment be requested to consider the best ways of discouraging development within an AQMA and to produce an air quality guidance note to try to control and mitigate the impact of property development on air quality;
- (j) that there be ongoing communication with local residents who own and/or reside in a property located within an AQMA to ensure they are fully aware of the situation and the County Council be requested to erect a sign in the AQMA (i) informing the public that it is an AQMA and that the District Council is working with other agencies to reduce air pollution in the vicinity; and (ii) posing the question “Is your journey necessary?” to encourage the public to think about their travel habits and the impact on air pollution;

- (k) that the Environmental Health Team be requested to update the Air Quality information on the Council's website and to ensure it is regularly updated in future;
- (l) that the Environmental Health Team be requested to work in partnership with Worcestershire PCT (and local GP's surgeries) to ensure they are kept up to date on the areas which have poor air quality to assist with the further investigation of the correlation between poor air quality areas and illnesses such as asthma and that Worcestershire PCT be requested to work closely with GPs to ensure the criteria used for diagnosing and recording data relating to asthma is standardised wherever possible to enable the analysis of data to be more meaningful;
- (m) that the Environmental Health Team be requested to actively discourage bonfires (with the exception of social events on and around 5th November) through promotion, similar to that undertaken by Birmingham City Council including ensuring that members of the public are aware of how to report bonfires which are a nuisance;
- (n) that the Head of Street Scene and Waste Management be requested to further investigate and assess options available (such as the use of bio fuel in refuse and recycling vehicles) which could assist the Council in contributing to improving air quality;
- (o) that the newly established Energy Efficiency Project Group be requested to progress the Council's Staff Travel Plan as a matter of urgency and to work together with the LSP Better Environment Theme Group;
- (p) that training be offered to all Members and all staff on air quality and other green issues to improve their awareness of the impact their behaviour at home and at work can have on air quality, the training to include the showing of the film "An Inconvenient Truth" at the Council House and that specific training be provided to refuse and recycling crews relating to the parking of refuse vehicles in locations which do not lead to traffic congestion with engines turned off during breaks;
- (q) that the Licensing Section be requested to remind taxi drivers not to leave their engines running whilst waiting for the next fare at the taxi rank;
- (r) that car parking spaces be reserved for those Council staff who join the County Council Car Sharing Scheme, that the Communications Team ensure that staff are frequently reminded and encouraged to join the Car Sharing Scheme as well as using alternative ways of travelling to work such as walking, cycling or public transport and that the numbers joining the Scheme be monitored;
- (s) that further investigations be carried out by the Human Resources Section into the possibility of establishing a pool of Council owned environmentally friendly cars for essential and casual car users or a loan/lease scheme to assist and encourage staff to convert their own car to alternative fuel;
- (t) *that investigations be undertaken into the revision of the current car allowance pay scales to include the possibility of paying a flat rate for all users regardless of engine size ; and*
- (u) that the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development be requested to report to Corporate Management Team on the

Development of a Home Working Policy to reduce staff travel between home and workplace.

**(Note: where the Cabinet's decision differs from the recommendation of the Task Group this is shown in italics)**

123/07 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2008/09 TO 2010/11**

Consideration was given to the Medium Term Financial Plan (revenue budgets) and to the Capital Programme for 2008-2009 to 2010-2011. Following discussion it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) that the budget pressures identified as unavoidable and high in Appendix A of the report be included within the Medium Term Financial Plan as follows:

2008-2009	£1.670m
2009-2010	£2.265m
2010-2011	£2.264m

- (b) that the recommended savings/additional income generation identified in Appendix A of the report be included within the Medium Term Financial Plan as follows:

2008-2009	£1.424m
2009-2010	£1.803m
2010-2011	£1.881m

- (c) that officers undertake a review of alternative methods of service delivery to achieve savings as identified in Appendix A;
- (d) that the Capital Programme for 2008-2009 to 2010-2011 be approved comprising all existing schemes and new "High" priority as detailed in Appendix G. In addition the programme be increased as follows:

2008-2009	by £360,000 to £9.166m
2009-2010	by £100,000 to £2.153m
2010-2011	by £100,000 to £1.557m

- (d) that authority be delegated to the Head of Financial Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the appropriate Heads of Service, to release capital funds subject to the receipt of a robust business case and an option appraisal demonstrating that value for money is being achieved;
- (e) that the capital scheme to replace the hot water system at the Dolphin Centre in 2007-2008 at a cost of £45,000 as set out in 16.3 of the report be approved; and
- (f) that the cost in respect of early retirement and redundancy be funded from balances.

124/07 **COMMITTEE PROGRAMME 2008/09**

Consideration was given to the draft programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2008-2009. It was reported that it was intended to make recommendations to Council on the Medium Term Financial Plan at the Cabinet meeting on 7th January 2009 and therefore there would not be a requirement for a special meeting of Cabinet on 18th February 2009.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Committee Programme for 2008-2009, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved subject to the deletion of the special Cabinet meeting on 18th February 2009.

125/07 **CONCESSIONS POLICY FOR USERS OF COUNCIL SERVICES**

Consideration was given to a report on the standardisation of concessions offered by the Authority on a range of services. It was reported that consultations with groups involved had been undertaken and the possibility of free car parking for those in receipt of mobility allowance had been raised. Additional representations had subsequently been received from Age Concern. Following discussion it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) that Option 3 set out in the report be approved;
- (b) that officers be requested to investigate further the possibility of extending parking concessions to those in receipt of a mobility allowance, those who are unable to access public transport and to address the issues raised by Age Concern;
- (c) that a further report be submitted in due course.

126/07 **IMPROVEMENT PLAN EXCEPTION REPORT (OCTOBER 2007)**

The Cabinet considered the updated Improvement Plan Exception Report for October 2007, together with the corrective action being taken.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the revisions to the Improvement Plan Exceptions report and the corrective action being taken be noted and approved; and
- (b) that it be noted that of the 167 actions highlighted within the Plan for October 2007, 85% of the Plan was on target (green), 9.6% was one month behind (amber) and 1.8% was over one month behind (red). 3.6% of actions had been rescheduled or suspended with approval.

127/07 **DOLPHIN CENTRE AND HAYBRIDGE SPORTS CENTRE**

The Cabinet considered a report on the latest position regarding the transfer of the Dolphin Centre and Haybridge Sports Centre to the Wychavon Leisure Community Association Limited (WLCAL). Following discussion it was

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the progress made towards the transfer of the Dolphin Centre and Haybridge Sports Centre to WLCAL as detailed in the report be approved;



- (b) that authority be delegated to the Executive Director – Partnerships and Projects, the Section 151 Officer and the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Culture and Community and Finance, to take all actions and decisions required to ensure the transfer of the centres to WLCAL subject to the finalisation of a satisfactory business case and transfer agreement;
- (c) that the delegation set out in (b) above may only be exercised on the basis that the overall savings to the Council as included in the Medium Term Financial Plan are exceeded or met.

**RECOMMENDED** that in respect of the transfer, the Council's Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules relating to procurement issues be suspended.

128/07 **MARKET HALL REDEVELOPMENT**

Consideration was given to a report on the redevelopment of the Bromsgrove Market Hall site and adjacent areas together with the transfer of the market itself to an outdoor venue. Following discussion it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) that the Market Hall site be redeveloped as an initial element of the town centre regeneration;
- (b) that the Market Hall site be developed as a prime retail site focusing on a style of design and quality of retailer capable of setting the tone for future regeneration of the town centre;
- (c) that redevelopment option model 3 be pursued as it is considered to be the most appropriate to the Council's capacity and needs;
- (d) that the consultants previously engaged to prepare the Market Hall brief in 2004 be requested to support the Council in refreshing the brief and to undertake the work involved in bringing the site to market;
- (e) that the sum of £90,000 be released from Capital receipts in 2008-2009 to bring the site to market;
- (f) that authority be delegated to the relevant officers to undertake the appropriate procurement exercise to identify a developer to carry out the work associated with the redevelopment of the Market Hall site;
- (g) that the market hall business be transferred to an outdoor venue and that £17,000 be included in the revenue budget for 2008-2009 as part of the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- (h) that authority be delegated to the relevant officers to enter into negotiations with the County Council to enable the market stalls to be relocated to an outdoor site in the High Street.

129/07 **LONGBRIDGE AREA ACTION PLAN - SUBMISSION**

Consideration was given to the report on the Longbridge Area Action Plan (AAP). A slightly amended version of the AAP was submitted together with a Consultation Statement Technical Summary. It was reported that Birmingham City Council had now approved the AAP and that the provision of sound attenuation measures in Rubery (and on other sections of the A38 if necessary) had been included. Following discussion it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) that the Longbridge AAP together with the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal be approved and submitted to the Secretary of State; and
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Executive Director – Partnerships and Projects to make any minor textual changes to the documents.

The meeting closed at 8.06 pm

Chairman

# Agenda Item 4

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD

TUESDAY, 8TH JANUARY 2008 AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), J. T. Duddy (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. M. Bunker, R. J. Deeming, B. Lewis F.CMI, D. L. Pardoe and C. B. Taylor

Observers: Councillors G. N. Denaro, Mrs. R. L. Dent, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, D. Hancox, Mrs. H. J. Jones, D. McGrath, C. R. Scurrrell, Mrs. C. J. Spencer, E. C. Tibby and C. J. Tidmarsh

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. T. Beirne, Mr. P. Street, Mr. M. Bell, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. D. Hammond, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. J. Pitman, Ms. D. Poole, Mrs. S. Sellers and Ms. D. McCarthy

Before the meeting commenced, the Chairman welcomed the new Executive Director - Services, Mr. Beirne.

#### 67/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

#### 68/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were made.

#### 69/07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 4th December 2007 and the special meeting held on 20th December 2007 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of both meetings held in December 2007 be approved as correct records.

#### 70/07 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

A report listing scrutiny recommendations was considered. It was clarified that recommendations listed in the report were those which had been put forward by the Board since it had been agreed to track recommendations using the tracker report method.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

71/07    **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2008/09 - 2010/11**

Members received a presentation from Ms. Pickering, Head of Financial Services, on the Medium Term Financial Plan 2008/09 to 2010/11. The presentation covered key areas including key budget pressures and savings.

The Chairman allowed questions from all Members including those present as observers. All questions put forward were answered by Ms. Pickering and relevant Heads of Service as required.

**RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted.

72/07    **JOINT COUNTYWIDE SCRUTINY ON FLOODING**

The Board received a report on the proposed joint scrutiny on flooding issues in Worcestershire.

Members were informed that further details of the draft joint scrutiny proposal had been received from officers at Worcestershire County Council on 7th January 2008 for Overview and Scrutiny Committees of each District Council to consider and these were tabled. It was explained that the intention was to agree the final scope of the scrutiny at the next joint meeting which was likely to be held late January or early February.

Councillor Lewis stated that although previously it was anticipated that he might act as the representative for this Council on the joint countywide scrutiny group, he informed the Board that he had to turn down this opportunity and there was a brief discussion on who would be available to take on this task.

**RESOLVED**

- (a) that Bromsgrove District Council participate in the joint countywide scrutiny on flooding in Worcestershire;
- (b) that the suggested arrangements paper be supported;
- (c) that Councillor McDonald be nominated as this Council's representative to serve on the joint countywide scrutiny group;
- (d) that Councillor McDonald's wish not to be nominated to Chair the scrutiny investigation at the present time, pending the outcome of the next joint meeting, be supported; and
- (e) that any comments on the joint scrutiny proposal tabled be passed on to the Committee Officer as soon as possible.

73/07    **UPDATES ON SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS**

(i)    **Public Transport – Buses Task Group**

Councillor Lewis, Chairman of the Public Transport – Buses Task Group, informed the Board that the scrutiny report with recommendations was in the process of being compiled and finalised.

(ii) Refuse and Recycling Task Group

A brief update from Councillor Scurrall, Refuse and Recycling Task Group Chairman, was read out to the Board. Members were informed that the Task Group had been provided with additional information in relation to NVQ training for refuse and recycling crews and further responses from Parish Councils on fortnightly waste collections had also been received. It was reported that the relevant Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mrs. Sherrey, was expected to attend the next meeting to respond to questions from the Task Group. Finally, it was confirmed that Task Group recommendations had been considered and approval of the final report was expected at the last meeting of the Task Group scheduled to be held on 28th January 2008.

The Chairman of the Board stated that he had concerns over the work of the Task Group and questioned whether Members should look at Value for Money as the terms of reference included "Identifying issues affecting the efficiency and performance of the service..." The Chairman proposed that the Task Group be requested to ensure that they investigated this key issue.

However, reasons against this proposal were put forward from other Members of the Board. It was pointed out that the Task Group was at the stage of completing its report and recommendations and therefore extending the work of the Task Group at such a late stage would delay current recommendations due to be put forward.

After some discussion over various options, it was proposed that this issue be referred to the Task Group to consider.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the updates given on the progress of each of the Scrutiny Task Groups be noted; and
- (b) that the Refuse and Recycling Task Group be requested to consider investigating Value for Money issues.

74/07 **SCRUTINY PROPOSALS**

The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services stated that there was an operational issue which affected the Committee Services Team and impacted on support that would be available for scrutiny task groups established over the next couple of months. It was understood that at the present time, the team was working at full capacity and were servicing three task groups. The Board was also aware that the Air Quality Task Group could not be disbanded until the outcome of discussions by the Cabinet relating to the Air Quality Scrutiny Report were known.

Councillor Mrs. Bunker referred to information contained within the report relating to the suggestion of scrutinising issues surrounding older people. It was stated that following the last ordinary meeting of the Board when this was considered, Councillor Mrs. Bunker had discussed this matter further with Mr. Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive. It was believed that the best way forward would be for Mr. Bennett to set up focus groups to find out the areas

of concern from older people themselves with a view to using the findings from the focus groups to narrow down the specific issues that could be scrutinised. Members of the Board supported this course of action.

**RESOLVED** that consideration of scrutiny proposals received be postponed until the next meeting of the Board in February.

75/07 **CABINET'S FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Cabinet's Forward Plan which contained the key decisions scheduled to be made over the next few months.

It was clarified that with regard to item number 21, Value for Money Strategy, the Cabinet was due to consider an update at its meeting in March 2008.

The Board was informed that it was anticipated that the Cabinet's Forward Plan would be developed and improved in the near future to make it more meaningful to the Scrutiny Steering Board.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the Cabinet's Forward Plan be noted; and
- (b) that the Value for Money Strategy be circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Steering Board.

76/07 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme for the Scrutiny Steering Board was considered. It was confirmed that, as usual, the work programme would be updated to reflect decisions made by the Board at this meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

77/07 **CALL IN PROCEDURE**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer, Mrs. Sellers, informed the Board that following the recent call in of a Cabinet decision, it had come to light possible improvements which could be made to the procedure, such as providing more guidance to Members who wished to call in a decision to enable them to more easily identify reasons for the call in. It was reported that this would be picked up as part of the Constitution Review and any comments Members of the Board wished to make in this respect would be welcomed.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that any comments Members of the Board wished to make in relation to improving the Call In procedure should be directed to the Deputy Monitoring Officers, Mrs. Sellers and Mrs. Warren; and
- (b) that the update be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm

Chairman

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BOARD

TUESDAY, 22ND JANUARY 2008, AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillors J. T. Duddy (Chairman), C. B. Taylor (Vice-Chairman),  
A. N. Blagg, Mrs. M. Bunker and Mrs. C. M. McDonald

Observers: Councillor G. N. Denaro (Portfolio Holder)  
Chief Inspector Tony Love, West Mercia Police

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. H. Bennett, Ms. J. Pickering and Mr. A. Jessop

#### 68/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs. A. E. Doyle.

#### 69/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

#### 70/07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Performance Management Board held on 18th December 2007 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

#### 71/07 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - PERIOD 8 (NOVEMBER 2007)

The Board gave consideration to a report on the Council's performance as at 30th November 2007. With regard to Paragraph 3.7 of the report, the Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Tony Love of West Mercia Police to the meeting and invited him to share with members an overview of current crime statistics for the District, which had been an issue of concern at a recent in-house performance clinic.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) that it be noted that 78% of indicators were improving or stable at the period end, compared to 56% in Period 7;
- (b) that it be noted that 81% of indicators were achieving their targets at the period end, compared to 71% in Period 7;
- (c) that the successes outlined in Section 3.5 of the report be noted and celebrated;

- (d) that the potential areas of concern set out in Sections 3.6 and 3.7 of the report, together with the corrective action being taken, be noted; and
- (e) that, as the sickness absence issue remains a concern, a copy of the Council's Sickness Absence Management Policy document be considered at the next meeting of the Board.

**RECOMMENDED** that, in an endeavour to assist partner agencies to work more closely together to help reduce crime and disorder throughout the District, the Cabinet be requested to liaise with the relevant Portfolio holder, Council officers and the Police on improved enforcement issues resulting from the recent introduction of de-criminalisation of parking legislation.

72/07 **VALUE FOR MONEY REPORT ACTION PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Council's Value for Money Action Plan.

**RESOLVED** that, from time to time, the Board carry out reviews of targeted Value for Money projects.

73/07 **IMPROVEMENT PLAN EXCEPTION REPORT (NOVEMBER 2007)**

Consideration was given to the Improvement Plan Exception report for November 2007, together with the corrective action being taken as set out in the Appendix to the report.

**RESOLVED**

- (a) that the revisions to the Improvement Plan Exception report, together with the corrective action being taken, be noted; and
- (b) that it be noted that for the 159 actions highlighted within the Plan for November, 86.9% of the Improvement Plan was on target (green), 7% was one month behind (amber), and 3.1% was over one month behind (red). 3.1% of actions had been re-scheduled or suspended with approval.

74/07 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to a report setting out the Board's work programme for 2007-08.

**RESOLVED** that subject to (i) Evaluation of Area Committee Pilots, and (ii) Council Plan 2008-2011 and Medium Term Financial Plan being deferred until the March meeting of the Board, the report be approved.

The meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.

Chairman



## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET

FEBRUARY 6<sup>TH</sup> 2008

#### CRITERIA AND ALLOCATIONS POLICY FOR THE LETTING OF RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPED UNDER 'EXCEPTION SITE' POLICY

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor P. J. Whittaker
Responsible Head of Service	David Hammond

#### 1. SUMMARY

1.1 The report relates to the following motion that was submitted to Full Council in January by Councillor Mrs. C. M. McDonald:-

“The Council’s Allocation Policy for the letting and allocation of rural affordable housing developed under ‘Exception Site’ policy cannot be supported by its own Equality and Diversity Policy. In light of this the Council no longer supports such a policy.”

1.2 The matter was referred by Full Council for consideration by the Executive Cabinet and accordingly this report:

- Sets out the background to the introduction of a Local Lettings Criteria for the allocation of newly developed rural housing.
- Provides a recent example of the policy in operation.
- Explains the Rural Affordable Housing Programme
- Examines possible conflict with Equality and Diversity policy and national guidance.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Members are asked to consider the motion submitted by Councillor Mrs C.M. McDonald relating to the Council’s allocation policy for rural housing.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the meeting of Bromsgrove District Council on January 16<sup>th</sup> 2008, the following motion that was submitted Councillor Mrs. C. M. McDonald:-

“The Council’s Allocation Policy for the letting and allocation of rural affordable housing developed under ‘Exception Site’ policy cannot be supported by its own Equality and Diversity Policy. In light of this the Council no longer supports such a policy.”

The Council, without discussion, referred the matter for the consideration of the Executive Cabinet.

#### 4. **BACKGROUND TO THE INTRODUCTION OF A LOCAL LETTINGS CRITERIA**

- 4.1 Planning Policy guidance encourages the provision of affordable rural housing that contributes to, and helps maintain sustainable rural communities through a positive and proactive approach that is informed by evidence.
- 4.2 The guidance states that local planning authorities should consider allocating and releasing sites solely for affordable housing, including using a Rural Exception Site Policy thus enabling small sites to be used, specifically for small scale development of affordable housing in rural communities that would not normally be used for housing, for example where they are subject to policies of restraint.
- 4.3 The guidance recommends that a Rural Exception Site Policy should seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection, whilst also ensuring that rural areas continue to develop as sustainable, mixed, inclusive communities.
- 4.4 This Council’s Local Plan therefore allows for consideration to be given to Green Belt land being released for the provision of appropriate levels of affordable housing to be provided to meet locally identifies rural housing needs.
- 4.5 This Council’s General Allocations Policy and Housing Register includes a clause:

*that allows “Applications for dwellings that are provided to meet a specific housing need under specific planning policy or other conditions to be subject to local lettings policy. A local lettings policy may be applied to limit access to such dwellings by way of a set criteria, as may be adopted form time to time, with or without reference to the point’s scheme”.*

This clause was approved by Executive Cabinet in March 2005 to allow for the Rural Exception Site Policy to be used to enable affordable

housing to be provided to meet locally identified needs in rural areas on Green Belt Sites.

4.6 In accordance with this, An 'Allocation Criteria and Rural Lettings Policy For Use Where Affordable Housing Schemes Are Developed Under Exception Site Policy' was considered by Executive Cabinet in March 2005, The Parish Council's Forum in April 2005, all Parish Councils by way of written consultation and was considered and amended by the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Committee before gaining final approval by Executive Cabinet in January 2006.

4.7 **The Criteria and Allocations Policy For The Letting And Allocation Of Rural Affordable Housing Developed Under 'Exception Site' Policy** is set out at Appendix 1 of this report.

In summary, to qualify for a newly built affordable housing unit built on an 'Exception Site', the criteria requires the applicant to either be resident in the parish with a minimum of 5 years residence or have previously resided in the parish (for at least 5 out of the past 15 years) and need to return (and cannot afford to do so) because they are employed in the parish or to give support or receive support from a close family member.

For the protection of the RSL owning the accommodation, in the event of the RSL being unable to let or part sell a vacant dwelling to a qualifying person with a connection to the parish in which the dwelling is situated then the criteria allows a cascade out to qualifying persons with a connection with the immediately surrounding parishes, and in the event of this failing the whole District and ultimately beyond.

## **5.0 THE POLICY WORKING IN PRACTICE**

5.1 A recent example of the policy being put into practice is the development of 15 units of affordable housing at The Glebe, Belbroughton.

5.2 When considering the planning application for the development, the Planning Committee approved that delegated powers be granted to the Head of Planning & Environment to determine the application subject to a number of conditions including:

"Receipt of an acceptable unilateral undertaking to reserve the affordable housing for local needs in perpetuity"

5.3 This was in accordance with Sect S16 of the District Council's Local Plan – Affordable Housing in the Green Belt – which states that "proposals for affordable housing in rural areas to meet local needs may be granted as an exception to normal restrictions operating as a result of Green Belt constraints"

5.4 Accordingly a Unilateral Undertaking was drawn up between BDC and West Mercia Homes Ltd under which the Housing Association covenants and undertakes to allocate the affordable housing units in accordance with the Lettings Criteria and Policy.

## **6.0 THE RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME**

6.1 All of the districts in Worcestershire work in partnership with the Rural Housing Enabler who's role is to enable rural housing to meet local needs by working with Parish Councils, RSLs and local authorities to identify local housing needs and seek sites upon which to provide affordable housing to meet those needs. In most instances this requires the release of Green Belt land by planning authorities under Exception Site Policy and thus the application of a local lettings criterion.

6.2 The work of the Rural Housing Enabler, the rural survey work and consultation with local communities is all based upon providing affordable housing for local people. If the local lettings criteria were not applied:

- i. Planning permission would not be forthcoming on small village Green Belt sites.
- ii. There may be a lack of support to the provision of affordable housing in rural locations by Parish Councils and local communities as they may be averse to seeing green belt sites allocated to non local applicants or applicants with no past local connection.
- iii. Objections to local development are likely to increase and site owners may be less likely to come forward with sites for sale. Sites for affordable housing under Exception Site Policy value at a significantly lower level than open market value so the financial incentive to sell is already not great.

6.3 Accordingly, if a local lettings policy is not in place, our inability to assure local communities that local people would have priority for the dwellings would severely curtail the rural enabling programme.

6.4 It is important to consider the reasons behind the implementation of the rural housing programme in this District. Existing affordable housing stock (ex Council housing and now BDHT stock) in rural settlements has never been subject to a local lettings policy. Therefore these dwellings have always been, and continue to be, allocated to anyone on the Bromsgrove Housing Register, subject to housing need (the point's scheme). Accordingly, over the years a high proportion of these dwellings have been allocated to people who do not have a local connection with the rural settlement because they go to the applicants

with the highest housing need. The Local Allocation Criteria attempts to redress this imbalance when newly built dwellings are let.

- 6.5 The development of affordable housing on 'Exception Sites' offers another pathway of choice for local people who, over the years, have themselves been precluded from being able to live in their local areas due to the allocation of social housing in villages being allocated to people from the wider Bromsgrove District or beyond on the basis of housing need. The Rural Affordable Housing Programme aims to redress this imbalance and offer local people an opportunity to overcome their otherwise exclusion from housing in their locality (i.e. both due to affordability and wider / general lettings policies that has favored non local people for tenancies because they had a higher housing need.)

## **7. THE POTENTIAL CONFLICT WITH THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY AND THE CRE CODE OF PRACTICE ON RACIAL EQUALITY IN HOUSING**

- 7.1 The request for the Executive Cabinet to consider the motion submitted provides a useful opportunity for Members to review the rural lettings policy it approved in 2005 against the National Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing that became operative in October 2006.
- 7.2 As with any restriction placed upon the delivery of a service, the danger of there being any indirect discrimination (which can sometimes be justified by objective criteria) presented by the operation of a local lettings criterion needs to be considered against the purpose for which it was developed.
- 7.2 The National Code of Practice on Racial Equality in sets out recommendations and guidance on how to avoid unlawful discrimination and the legal obligations of housing organizations.
- 7.3 Section 2 of the Code of Practice focuses upon Indirect Discrimination and identifies two definitions of indirect discrimination, depending on the grounds of discrimination. Which definition applies depends on the nature of the discrimination, and on the racial group that is disadvantaged.
- 7.4 **Grounds of race or ethnic or national** Indirect discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice which, on the face of it, has nothing to do with race or ethnic or national origins, and is applied equally to everyone:
- a. puts or would put people of a certain race or ethnic or national origin at a particular disadvantage when compared with others; and

- b. puts a person of that race or ethnic or national origin at that disadvantage; and
- c. cannot be shown to be a 'proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'.

7.5 **Grounds of colour or nationality** Indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently non-discriminatory requirement or condition, which applies equally to everyone:

- a. can only be met by a considerably smaller proportion of people from a particular racial group than the proportion not from that group who can meet it; and
- b. puts a person from that group at a disadvantage because he or she cannot meet it; and
- c. cannot be justified on non-racial grounds.

7.6 The Code of Guidance provides an example (Example 8) below that addresses the issue under consideration.

## Example 8

A rural housing organisation decides to reserve some affordable housing (for rent or purchase) for people with local connections in the community. The aim of the policy is to encourage younger people, in particular, to remain in the area. The housing organisation has objective evidence that younger people are being forced to move away because of the lack of affordable housing.

The organisation recognises that its policy could disproportionately disadvantage newcomers and outsiders without any local connections, and that if the newcomers who want houses are from different racial, ethnic or national backgrounds to people in the local community, the policy could have a discriminatory effect. To strike a balance between the legitimate aims of the policy and any discriminatory effects it might have, the housing organisation considers the following questions, to determine the scale of any possible discrimination.

- a. How many people in need of affordable housing are excluded by the policy, and what proportions are excluded on racial grounds? How restrictive is the policy in denying access to the housing in question? The more restrictive it is (for example, in the length of residence required), the more likely it is to be unreasonable, and therefore to result in unlawful indirect discrimination.
- b. What type of local connection is required? For example, does the applicant have to be born in the area, or have extended family living in the area, or have a job in the area? The more ways an applicant can demonstrate eligibility, the less likely the requirements are to be indirectly discriminatory.
- c. Are there other ways, besides having a local connection or being a resident, to qualify for the housing? Again, the more restrictive the criteria, the more likely they are to be indirectly discriminatory.
- d. Do the restrictions apply to all affordable housing or only a portion of it? If all the affordable housing provided, or a large proportion of it, is bound by restrictions, the more likely the practice is to be indirectly discriminatory.

In considering the four questions set out in Example 8 the following officers comments are provided for Members guidance:

- a) The majority of applicants on the Housing Register are excluded from the allocation of newly built affordable housing under the Exception Site policy if they do not have the required local connection with the parish. None are considered to be excluded on racial grounds. Members need to consider whether a current residential qualification of 5 years or a past residential qualification of 5 out of 15 years is unreasonably restrictive.

- b) The local connection allows for:
  - i) Current residence.
  - ii) Previous residence where:
    - There is a need to return to the parish to receive support from a close family member
    - There is a need to return to the parish to provide support to a close family member.
    - The applicant is employed in the parish.
    - The applicant has a confirmed offer of employment in the parish.
- c) No, only applicants qualifying under the criteria can access the new rural affordable housing.
- d) No, the policy restrictions do not apply to all affordable housing in rural areas, they are designed to only apply where new dwellings are developed under 'Exception Site' policy on Green Belt Land that would otherwise be restricted for any form of development. Existing RSL and former Council Housing (transferred to BDHT) remains available to anyone (subject to the housing needs points system of allocation) in the District and beyond who is registered on the Housing Register. Whether the new development represents a small or large proportion of the affordable housing in a rural area varies from parish to parish. However it is reasonable to say that the vacancy rate and turn over of rural affordable housing is generally very low.

7.6 The Code of Practice recommends that when assessing the justification for policies and practices that could have a disproportionate effect on a racial group (or groups); it would be useful to consider the following questions, in the order given below.

- a. Does the provision, criterion, practice, requirement or condition correspond to a real need?
- b. Does the need pursue a legitimate aim; for example, health and safety?
- c. Are the means used to achieve the aim appropriate and necessary?
- d. Is there any other way of achieving the aim in question?
- e. Is there a way of reducing any potentially unlawful discriminatory effect?



Again the following officers comments in respect of the above questions are provided for guidance:

- a) Yes, the lettings criteria and policy is implemented to respond to the local housing need identified in the Rural Housing Surveys carried out in the villages where it is intended to be applied.
- b) Yes, the legitimate aim is to help achieve sustainable rural communities.
- c) The officers consider the means used to be appropriate and necessary to achieve the aim.
- d) Not within the limited amount of development that is deliverable or without being restrictive in the allocation of existing affordable rural housing.
- e) Only by continuing to allow the allocation of existing rural affordable housing to remain un-restricted.

7.7 The Code of Practice advises that a key question to be answered when assessing a potentially discriminatory rule or practice is whether it strikes a proportionate balance between avoiding a racially discriminatory effect and meeting the legitimate aim of the rule. Ultimately only the courts can decide whether a practice is lawful or unlawful. In the absence of case law on this subject, housing organisations and agencies should consider questions similar to those listed in Example 8 above. Housing organisations should aim for a high standard and examine all their practices to make sure they do not put anyone at a disadvantage on racial grounds.

## **8.0 A RECENT COUNSEL'S OPINION**

8.1 It may be helpful to make reference to a report that was considered by the Midlands Rural Housing Board (a consortium of RSLs providing housing in rural areas) in June 2007 in which counsel's opinion had been sought relating to the possible conflict between the use of local letting policies for rural housing and the Commission For Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice.

8.2 In summary the outcome of the counsel's opinion was as follows:

- *Counsel's opinion is that there is no incompatibility between an obligation entered into via a Sect 106 agreement requiring applicants to satisfy a local connection criteria, and the over arching requirements of the RRA (and the code). However, a local connection condition is capable of being in directly discriminatory where it is not considered to be justifiable. In short, the condition*

*applied to achieve the objective should not be disproportionate in its discriminatory impact.*

- *In setting conditions in S106 Agreements, Planning Authorities themselves have to be mindful of their position from a discriminatory perspective. They must not unlawfully discriminate, and in discharging their functions have regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote equality. Consequently, they too are bound by the principle of utilising a proportionate means to achieve a legitimate aim. This requirement has an impact on the way in which Section 106 Agreements are drafted.*
- In giving consideration to a number of local lettings criteria presented to him, Counsel went on to state:
  - *In effect the 'legitimate aim' of providing housing for people with a local connection is supported by evidence, and qualitative assessment of its impact has been undertaken (via an assessment of need). However, the issue is the application of the qualifying criteria and its justification in pursuit of the legitimate aim. If this cannot be justified, a court could be compelled to find that the RRA (and, therefore, the code) has been breached.*

*In this context, the length of the residency criteria is a concern. Two of the examples of lettings criteria are considered to have proportionate qualifying times attached (i.e. 12 months). However other examples are considered to be very restrictive, with a strong possibility of a court finding that it infringes the RRA due to the application of 'a strong local connection' and '10 year residence' criteria. In effect this could be deemed to be disproportionate to achieving the legitimate aim. (In short, do you need such strict criteria to ensure that people with a local connection are rehoused? Does this criteria mean a significant group of people, with a local connection are excluded? Does it, therefore, follow that this is unjustified indirect discrimination?)*

- 8.3 In conclusion therefore it would seem that the principle of utilising a local lettings criteria is reasonable provided that it is backed up by evidence of need. However the issue is within the application of the qualifying criteria which should not be overly restrictive in the context of the Code.

## **9.0 OFFICERS CONCLUSIONS**

- 9.1 For Members guidance, the officers conclusions in respect of the implications for the Council's Equalities and Diversity Policies are set out below:
- 9.2 In deliberating the risk of unfairness, the conclusion is that the application of the policy does present a risk of unfairness but that this is justified as the legitimate aim cannot be met in any other way.
- 9.3 The means of achieving the legitimate aim is considered to be proportionate, i.e. 'fair and balanced' taking into account different groups and their needs.
- 9.4 The policy is seen to be a reasonable approach towards achieving a balance between the aims of meeting need and developing a local cohesive community as opposed to meeting the wishes of others to reside in a rural area based upon a personal preference and lifestyle choice.
- 9.5 Members will recognise from considering the questions posed by the CRE Code of Practice and the points raised by the Counsel acting for the Midland Rural Housing Board that the element of the policy that is possibly open to challenge is whether the residency requirement (5years) and past residency requirement (5 out of past 15 years) is overly restrictive and excessive for the purposes of meeting the justifiable aim.
- 9.6 The Worcestershire County Housing Enabling Officers Group (chaired by this Council's strategic Housing Manager) has the issue of Rural Lettings Criteria included in it's work programme. The group intends to review the rural lettings criteria of a number of authorities in the County with a view to developing a uniform countywide policy for adoption by the authorities concerned. It will be appropriate for the group to give consideration to the issue of potentially over restrictive residency restrictions in developing a draft countywide policy.

## **10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no financial implications to the review or implementation of a revised policy other than officer time and consultation expenses.

## **11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Non compliance with the Code of Practice upon Racial Equality in Housing could expose the Council and partner RSLs to a risk of a claim.

**12.0 COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

12.1 Objective 1 – Regeneration – Housing

Objective 3 - Sense of Community and Wellbeing

**13.0 RISK MANAGEMENT**

13.1 Non compliance with the Code of Practice upon Racial Equality in Housing could expose the Council and partner RSLs to a risk of a claim.

**14.0 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 In deliberating the risk of unfairness, the conclusion is that there is that the application of the policy does present a risk of unfairness but that this is justified as the legitimate aim cannot be met in any other way.

14.2 The means of achieving the legitimate aim is considered to be proportionate, i.e. ‘fair and balanced’ taking into account different groups and their needs.

**15.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues None
Personnel Implications None
Governance/Performance Management Yes
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Yes
Policy Yes
Environmental No

**16.0 OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes

Executive Director (Partnerships and Projects)	Yes
Executive Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	No
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

## **17.0 WARDS AFFECTED**

17.1 All Wards

## **18. APPENDICES**

18.1 Appendix I - Criteria And Allocations Policy For The Letting And Allocation Of Rural Affordable Housing Developed Under 'Exception Site Policy'

## **16.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **CONTACT OFFICER**

Name: A.M. Coel – Strategic Housing Manager  
E Mail: a.coel@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Tel: (01527) 881270

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**CRITERIA AND ALLOCATIONS POLICY FOR THE LETTING AND ALLOCATION OF RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPED UNDER 'EXCEPTION SITE' POLICY.**

The Registered Social Landlord (Housing Association) developing and managing the affordable housing development will assess all applications made requesting the allocation of a dwelling on the scheme **in the following order:**

- 1. All applicants wishing to be considered for Rented Housing within the proposed scheme must be registered on the Bromsgrove District Council Housing Register.** The Council will also nominate applicants registered on the Housing Register for consideration for Shared Ownership or Fixed Equity units where applicants have specified their wish to be considered when completing their application form.
  
- 2. The following Local Connection Eligibility Criteria will be applied:**  
**(The first phase of eligibility will be considered initially, and only if insufficient applicants are eligible will the other phases be considered in order.)**

The first phase of eligibility will be restricted to:

- i) Local residents within the parish, with a minimum term of residence who want to remain in the locality but cannot afford to do so.
  
- ii) Those who have previously resided in the parish for a number of years and who need to return to the parish but cannot afford to do so and who qualify as one or more of the following :
  - a) Those who need to return to the parish to provide or receive support to / from a close family member living in the parish.
  
  - b) Those who are employed within the parish.
  
  - c) People with a confirmed offer of employment in the parish but who are deterred by the difficulty of finding and affording suitable accommodation.

A second phase of eligibility would include applicants who live outside of the parish but within an immediately adjoining parish (within the District of Bromsgrove) who need to live in the parish but cannot afford to do so and who qualify as one or more of the following:

- a) Those who need to return to the parish to provide or receive support to / from a close family member living in the parish.
  
- b) Those who are employed within the parish.

- c) People with a confirmed offer of employment in the parish but who are deterred by the difficulty of finding and affording suitable accommodation.

A third phase of eligibility would include applicants who live outside of the parish but within the District of Bromsgrove who need to live in the parish but cannot afford to do so and who qualify as one or more of the following:

- a) Those who need to return to the parish to provide or receive support to / from a close family member living in the parish.
- b) Those who are employed within the parish.
- c) People with a confirmed offer of employment in the parish but who are deterred by the difficulty of finding and affording suitable accommodation

A fourth phase of eligibility would include applicants who live outside of the parish and outside of the District of Bromsgrove who need to live in the parish but cannot afford to do so and who qualify as one or more of the following:

- a) Those who need to return to the parish to provide or receive support to / from a close family member living in the parish.
- b) Those who are employed within the parish.
- c) People with a confirmed offer of employment in the parish but who are deterred by the difficulty of finding and affording suitable accommodation.

**3. Applicants who qualify under the Local Connection Eligibility Criteria (Sect 2. Above) will then undergo an affordability assessment to establish that they are not in a position to afford an open market dwelling in the area. (The process will also establish an applicant's ability to afford shared ownership and fixed equity options).**

Completed forms will be assessed in accordance with:-

- Current data on house prices and rents in The Parish;
- Financial requirements of average mortgage lenders and their lending policies;



- The availability of appropriate properties to meet identified needs e.g. accommodation to meet disabilities or health issues and tenure required.

**4. Where applicants have both a relevant local connection (Sect 2 above) and fit the affordability criteria (Sect 3 above), their housing need will be prioritised in accordance with the Council’s Allocations Policy & Housing Register Points Scheme, with the exception of:-**

- Any points awarded in the section headed Local Connection. These will be removed, as local connection will have already been assessed under Sect 2 above.
- Any points which were awarded for needs which will not be met by the offer of a dwelling in The Parish e.g. medical or welfare needs which would not be improved by living in The Parish;

Offers will be made in descending points order and where applicants have the same number of points, those with the longest local connection will have priority. Where applicants are purchasing an equity share but are unable to complete within a reasonable timescale they will be given a reduced priority.

**5. Applications will be further prioritised in accordance with Bromsgrove District Council’s policy on the allocation of property by family size to property type/size (Section 5 of the Council’s Allocation Policy & Housing Register document).**

In the event that no households can be identified from the above criteria within 3 weeks, allocations will be made to the most suitable applicants, having regard to their reasons for seeking a home in The Parish.

**Definitions**

<b>The Parish</b>	The Civil Parish within which the affordable housing is located.
<b>Immediately Adjoining Parish</b>	A Parish with a common boundary and immediately next to the parish within which the affordable housing is located.
<b>Minimum term of residence</b>	Normally 5 years.
<b>Number of years</b>	Normally 5 out of the past 15
<b>Close Family Member</b>	Means parents, siblings, grandparents and children and such relationships through

adoption. In exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of Bromsgrove District Council, more distant relatives may fall within the definition if they give to the applicant a level of support normally associated with those listed above. (' In exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of Bromsgrove District Council, other parties may fall within the definition if they can provide evidence that they give the applicant a level of support normally associated with those listed above!')

**Want**

A specific reason to reside in the Parish within which the affordable housing is located.

# Criteria for the Allocation of Affordable Housing Developed in Rural Areas (Under 'Exception Site' Policy)

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN RURAL LOCATIONS**

- Policy S16 of Bromsgrove District Local Plan allows consideration of the development of appropriate affordable housing where a significant local need is evidenced by survey.

## **OCCUPANCY CONTROLS ARE TO:**

- Enable applicants to remain in the locality or return because of family connections in order to give or receive support
- Enable applicants to remain in or return to the locality in order to sustain or take up employment opportunities

## **POLICY REQUIREMENTS**

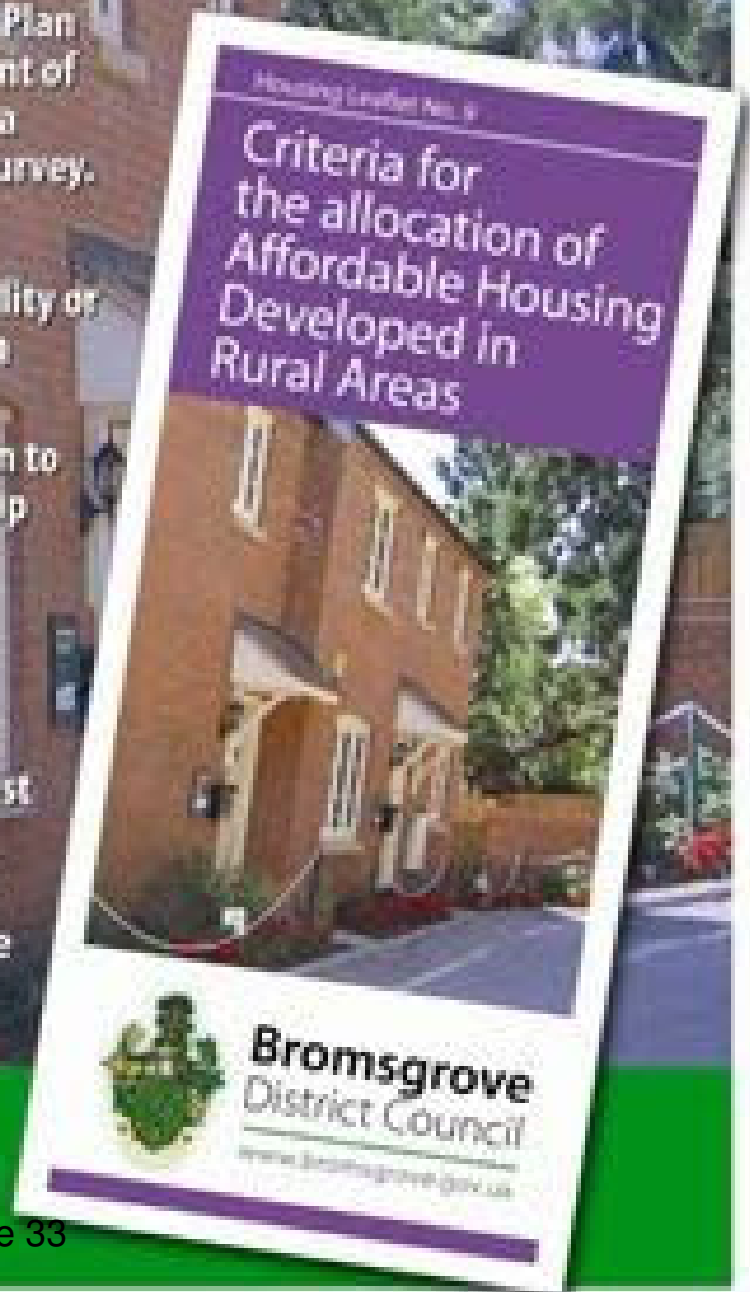
There must be:

- Conclusive genuine local housing need
- Type, tenure, mix and scale of need must be reflected in development
- Affordable housing to be in perpetuity
- Adequate occupancy controls to reserve the affordable housing for local needs

Please ask for our

**HOUSING LEAFLET No 9**

which explains the criteria in greater detail



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# Eligibility

## PHASE 1

Local residents within the parish, with a minimum term of residence who want to remain in the locality but cannot afford to do so.

Those who have previously resided in the parish for a number of years and who cannot afford to but need to return to the parish:

- To provide or receive support to/from a close family member living in the parish.
- Are employed within the parish.
- Have a confirmed offer of employment in the parish.

## PHASE 2

If dwellings remain unallocated after all applicants eligible under Phase 1 have been exhausted:

- A second phase of eligibility would include applicants who live outside of the parish but within an immediately adjoining parish (within the District of Bromsgrove) who need to live in the parish but cannot afford to do so and who qualify for the same reasons as specified in Phase 1.

## PHASE 3

If dwellings still remain unallocated after all applicants eligible under Phase 1 and 2 have been exhausted:

- A third phase of eligibility would include applicants who live outside of the parish but within the District of Bromsgrove who need to live in the parish but cannot afford to do so and who qualify for the same reasons as specified in Phase 1.

## PHASE 4

If dwellings still remain unallocated after all applicants eligible under Phase 1, 2 and 3 have been exhausted:

- A fourth phase of eligibility would include applicants who live outside of the parish and outside the District of Bromsgrove who need to live in the parish but cannot afford to do so and who qualify for the same reasons as specified in Phase 1.

## DEFINITIONS

**The Parish** - The Civil Parish within which the affordable housing is located.

**Immediately Adjoining Parish** - A Parish with a common boundary and immediately next to the parish within which the affordable housing is located.

**Minimum term of residence** - Normally 5 years.

**Number of years** - Normally 5 out of the past 15

**Close Family Member** - Means parents, siblings, grandparents and children and such relationships through adoption. In exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of Bromsgrove District Council, more distant relatives may fall within the definition if they give to the applicant a level of support normally associated with those listed above. [In exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of Bromsgrove District Council, other parties may fall within the definition if they can provide evidence that they give the applicant a level of support normally associated with those listed above.]

**Want** - A specific reason to reside in the Parish within which the affordable housing is located.



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## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET

6 FEBRUARY 2008

#### VARIATION TO CAR PARKING ORDER

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Cllr Margaret Sherrey
Responsible Head of Service	Mike Bell, Head of Street Scene and Waste Management

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks authority to make changes to the District of Bromsgrove (Off-Street Parking Places) Order in order to implement the increase in fees, the increase in excess charges and the removal concessionary passes agreed by the Council on 16 January 2008.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the proposed amended Schedules to the Order are approved
- 2.2 That the Head of Street Scene and Waste Management is authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to consider any objections received and to make the Order.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 16 January 2008 the Council agreed that as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan charges for car parking would be increased and the amount of excess charge being increased from £60 to £70. In addition, the Council agreed to a new Concessions Policy which included the withdrawal of the concessionary parking permit scheme with effect from 1 March 2008.
- 3.2 The Order needs to be varied to reflect these changes. The proposed changes affect only the Schedules to the Order, and are detailed in the appendices to this report.
- 3.3 Members should note that as part of the ongoing review of the Scheme of Delegation it is proposed that officers should be authorised to make any variations to Off-Street Parking Orders which simply reflect any decisions already taken by Council, for example as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no new implications.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The procedure for making and amendment of car parking orders is regulated the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 and the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

**6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

6.1 N/a.

**7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

7.1 There are no new considerations.

**8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no new considerations. The proposed increase in charges have already been highly publicised and the statutory procedure for making the order requires a Notice of Variation to be published in a newspaper circulating in the whole of the district and for it to be displayed in the car parks affected

**9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no new considerations.

**10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no new considerations.

**11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues None
Personnel Implications None
Governance/Performance Management None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 None
Policy None
Environmental None

**12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**



Portfolio Holder	<b>Yes</b>
Chief Executive	<b>No</b>
Executive Director (Partnerships and Projects)	<b>No</b>
Executive Director (Services)	<b>No</b>
Assistant Chief Executive	<b>No</b>
Head of Service	<b>Yes</b>
Head of Financial Services	<b>No</b>
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	<b>Yes</b>
Head of Organisational Development & HR	<b>No</b>
Corporate Procurement Team	<b>No</b>

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**

All wards

**14. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 The proposed Schedule 1 of the Car Parking Order  
Appendix 2 The proposed Schedule 2 of the Car Parking Order  
Appendix 3 The proposed Schedule 3 of the Car Parking Order

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

**CONTACT OFFICER**

Name: Steve Martin  
E Mail: [steve.martin@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:steve.martin@bromsgrove.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01527 881457 or 07771616933

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**THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF BROMSGROVE (OFF-STREET PARKING PLACES) (VARIATION) ORDER 2008**

**Schedule 1 – Parking Places**

<b><u>1. Parking Place</u></b>	<b><u>2. Class of Vehicles Permitted</u></b>	<b><u>3. Hours and days of Operation</u></b>	<b><u>4. Charges</u></b>	<b><u>5. Maximum Waiting Period Allowed</u></b>	<b><u>6. Minimum Time In Which Return Is Prohibited</u></b>
Bromsgrove Station	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0800 – 2200 everyday	All day £3.00	N/a	N/a
Churchfields Multi Storey	Levels 1 and 2; solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order Levels 3,4,5, and 6; vehicles not in excess of 3 tonnes	0800 – 1900 Monday to Saturday 0900 – 1630 Sunday	Up to 1 hour £0.70 Up to 2 hours £1.40 All day £3.00	N/a	N/a
Hanover Street	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0800 – 2200 everyday	Up to 1 hour £0.80 Up to 2 hours £1.60 Up to 3 hours £2.40 All day £4.00	N/a	N/a
New Road	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0800 – 2200 everyday	Up to 30 minutes £0.40 Up to 1 hour £0.70 Up to 2 hours £1.40 Up to 3 hours £2.10 Up to 4 hours £2.80 Up to 5 hours £3.50	5 hours	5 hours
Parkside	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0800 – 2200 everyday	Up to 30 minutes £0.40 Up to 1 hour £0.70 Up to 2 hours £1.40 Up to 3 hours £2.10 Up to 4 hours £2.80 Up to 5 hours £3.50	5 hours	5 hours
Recreation Road North	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0800 – 2200 everyday	Up to 1 hour £0.70 Up to 2 hours £1.40 Up to 3 hours £2.10 All day £3.00	N/a	N/a
School Drive	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0800 – 2200 everyday	Up to 1 hour £0.70 Up to 2 hours £1.40 Up to 3 hours £2.10 All day £3.00	N/a	N/a
Stourbridge Road	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0800 – 2200 everyday	Up to 1 hour £0.70 Up to 2 hours £1.40 All day £3.00	N/a	N/a
Recreation Road South	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0800 – 2200 everyday	Up to 30 minutes £0.40 Up to 1 hour £0.70 Up to 2 hours £1.40 Up to 3 hours £2.10 Up to 4 hours £2.80 Up to 5 hours £3.50	5 hours	5 hours

**THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF BROMSGROVE (OFF-STREET PARKING PLACES) (VARIATION) ORDER 2008**

**Schedule 1 – Parking Places**

Windsor Street	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0800 – 2200 everyday	Up to 30 minutes £0.40 Up to 1 hour £0.80 Up to 2 hours £1.60	2 hours	2 hours
Dolphin Centre	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0800 – 2200 everyday	Up to 1 hour £0.70 Up to 2 hours £1.40 Up to 3 hours £2.10 All day £3.00	N/a	N/a
Catshill	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0000 – 2359 everyday	No charges	2 hours	2 hours
Alvechurch	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0000 – 2359 everyday	No charges	N/a	N/a
Aston Road (Part)	Solely as specified in Paragraph 5 of the Order	0000 – 2359 everyday	No charges	N/a	N/a

**THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF BROMSGROVE (OFF-STREET PARKING  
PLACES) (VARIATION) ORDER 2008  
Schedule 2 – Excess Charge And Fines**

<u><b>Excess Charge or Fine</b></u>	<u><b>Amount</b></u>
Rate of excess charge	£70
Failing to comply with notice as specified in paragraph 34	£100
Furnishing a statement which is false in a material particular, and doing so recklessly or knowing it to be false	£100

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**THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF BROMSGROVE (OFF-STREET PARKING PLACES) (VARIATION) ORDER 2008**  
**Schedule 3 – Concessionary Permits**

1. In this Schedule, except where the context otherwise requires, the following expressions have the following meanings;

<b>'The Council'</b>	means the Council of the District of Bromsgrove.
<b>'Car park'</b>	means any off-street parking place provided by the Council for members of the public.
<b>'Permit'</b>	means a written or printed form of ticket issued by the Council in accordance with and subject to the conditions of the scheme.
<b>'Authorised vehicle'</b>	means the vehicle displaying the permit with the registration number which is inscribed on the face of the permit.
<b>'Prescribed fee'</b>	means the fee which the Council has set.
<b>'Holder'</b>	a person to whom the permit has been issued.

2. The Council may issue to residents aged 60 years or over one concessionary permit for use on one vehicle which is owned by the applicant provided that the prescribed fee of £30 has been paid.
3. In exceptional circumstances residents who are disabled and who have difficulty in paying parking fees may also apply in writing to a designated officer requesting a concessionary permit. Permits issued in this manner are done so at the discretion of the designated officer.
4. The applicant is required to provide proof of ownership with a vehicle log book at the point of application, or in the case of a lease car, a lease agreement which specifies that the applicant is the leaseholder.
5. The Council will print the vehicle registration number shown on the log book onto the face of the permit.
6. The vehicle registration number printed on the permit shall not be altered or substituted with a different number except by the Council on the application of the holder.
7. The permit shall only be considered to be valid if it is securely fixed to the windscreen of the authorised vehicle at the time of parking. Holders should not affix the permit so that it obscures their vision.
8. The concessionary permit shall be valid in all Council pay and display car parks at all times until expiry providing a space is available and the person in control of the vehicle complies in all respects to the regulations and directions in place in the car park at that time.
9. No pass shall be valid over the maximum waiting time permitted in that parking place.
10. The Council in their absolute discretion may refuse to issue a permit to any person without giving any reason for such refusal, and similarly may withdraw, or invalidate in writing, the permit at any time without giving reason for such withdrawal or invalidation.
11. The holder of the permit does not acquire any right in respect of the use of any car park (other than not having to make any payment to park) which are not enjoyed by other members of the public using the car park.

**THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF BROMSGROVE (OFF-STREET PARKING  
PLACES) (VARIATION) ORDER 2008  
Schedule 3 – Concessionary Permits**

12. Any vehicle parked on the car park will be parked entirely at the owners risk and all permits issued by the Council are strictly on the basis that the Council shall have no liability for any loss or damage to any such vehicle or its contents with the exception of such loss or damage due to an act or omission on the part of the Council.

**Information note:**

The concessionary permit scheme has now been withdrawn and no new concessionary permits will be issued or renewed after 1 March 2008. All existing permits issued on or prior to this date will be considered valid until expiry.



## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET

FEBRUARY 6<sup>TH</sup> 2008

**OUTURN EXPENDITURE OF CLG (Formerly ODPM) HOMELESSNESS GRANT FUNDING FOR 2007/08, UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE AND PROPOSEDED USE OF GRANT FOR HOMELESSNESS PREVENTATIVE SCHEMES FOR 2008/09 – 2010/11.**

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor P. Whittaker
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Planning and Environment

#### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Since the Homelessness Act 2002, the Government has allocated grant funding to local authorities to prevent and tackle homelessness and to help achieve the Government target set for each LA of halving the number of homeless people living in temporary accommodation by 2010.
- 1.2 The annual grant to BDC, allocated through Communities and Local Government (CLG) has been used to fund a range of homelessness support services and schemes that focus upon the prevention of homelessness and repeat homelessness in the District.
- 1.3 This report provides members with information relating to:
  - The schemes in place in this District funded by CLG Grant during 07/08 which provide support to the homeless or help to prevent homelessness.
  - The impact the preventative services have had on reducing homeless presentations and acceptances and the authorities performance against the Government target of reducing the use of temporary accommodation by 2010.
  - The successful bid made by us for additional CLG homelessness grant and the funding that has been allocated for 2008/09.
  - Details of the schemes recommended by the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group to receive grant funding for 2008/09.

- Proposals to utilise additional grant funding to address under occupation and to make better use of existing housing stock in the District.

1.3 This source of homelessness funding has been received for the past 5 years and has been approved by members for allocation to schemes in accordance with the recommendations made by the multi agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the update on the homelessness preventative and support schemes funded through CLG Homelessness Grant during 2007/08 be noted.

2.2 That the increased level of CLG Homelessness Grant funding and three year allocation process for the period 2008/09 – 2010/11 be noted.

2.3 That the Council's performance in halving the use of temporary accommodation two years in advance of the Government's target date be noted.

2.4 That the submissions for the funding of schemes recommended by the Bromsgrove Homelessness Steering Group set out at Sect 7 of the report be approved to receive funding from the 2008/09 – 2010/11 allocation of homelessness grant .

2.5 That the additional bids for funding of schemes submitted since the announcement of additional grant funding (set out at Sect 7.3 of the report) be refused.

2.6 That the surplus additional grant funding be allocated to the temporary employment of an Under Occupation Officer to identify and develop opportunities to make better use of existing housing stock in the District.

2.7 That the Head of Planning & Environment Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing be granted delegated authority to re-allocate any under spend or make further adjustments necessary to ensure full utilisation of the grant allocation for 2008/09 in support of existing or new schemes.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Since the Homelessness Act 2002, the Government has allocated grant funding to local authorities to prevent and tackle homelessness

and repeat homelessness and to help achieve the Government target set for all local housing authorities to halve the number of homeless people living in temporary accommodation by 2010. Since its inception, the annual grant to BDC, allocated through Communities and Local Government (CLG) has been used to fund a range of homelessness support services provided in the District by a range of partner organisations.

3.2 The Government requires the following outcomes to be delivered by the grant:

- Reduced and sustained reduction in the level of rough sleeping by at least two thirds below the level in 1998.
- Avoidance of long-term use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families with households with children or a pregnant woman.
- By 2010 end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for young people between 16 and 17 years of age.
- Reduction in the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010.

3.3 As the Council experiences minimal or no rough sleeping and has low usage of B&B (having used hostel accommodation or self contained dispersed units to house homeless families), the first two requirements (above) are currently being controlled.

Using capital funding, the Council has made more self contained dispersed temporary accommodation available to homeless families through purchase and repair (Buy Backs) schemes thus improving the standard of temporary accommodation offered. However, in terms of the final outcome, this does not actually reduce the use of temporary accommodation and this is where sound preventative services come into play to achieve:

- The Council's strategic aim of reducing the overall use of temporary accommodation, and
- The Council's strategy to phase out the use of hostel type temporary accommodation.

Reducing homelessness through Homelessness Prevention and Support Services provided through the CLG Homelessness Grant are fundamental to the ability of the Council to make progress, and maintain minimal use of temporary accommodation (in accordance with government targets) and phase out the use of Hostel accommodation without impacting on the Council's consistently low use of B&B.

4. **Schemes funded by CLG Grant during 2007/08 which provide support to the homeless and/or help to prevent homelessness.**

- 4.1 Up until now, the grant has been allocated on an annual basis for one year at a time. For 2007/08, the Council received CLG homelessness grant funding of £60,000 which together with some carry forward funding from 2006/07 provided a total grant availability of £79,000
- 4.2 Members may recall that as the Strategic Housing Authority, BDC coordinates and leads the Bromsgrove Homelessness Strategy Steering Group which in partnership with a range of organisations has developed a strategy and action plan to address the support and needs of the homeless and developed schemes aimed at the prevention of homelessness. This action plan is imbedded in the Council's own Housing Strategy (2006 – 2011) which gained 'Fit For Purpose' accreditation by the Government Office of the West Midlands in 2006.
- 4.2 This time last year, the Executive Cabinet gave approval to the grant funding for 2007/08 being used in accordance with the recommendations made by the Bromsgrove Homelessness Steering Group. The Executive Cabinet also gave delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder to re-allocate any under spend.

The grant funding for 2007/08 has therefore been allocated and utilised as follows:

Original Allocation of CLG Homeless Grant 2007/08		
	Bids Accepted	Actual Exp
	£	£
Amount Carried Forward from 06/07	19,000	
Step Up Private Tenancy Scheme	2,000	2,000
CAB Debt Advice	12,000	6,000
Baseline Rent Deposit Scheme	9,000	9,000
Centrepont	1,000	1,000
Sanctuary Scheme	1,000	1,000
Floating Homelessness Prevention Officers	24,000	24,000
BDHT Home Visiting Service	30,000	15,000
Total	79,000	58,000

Grant	60,000	
Total Grant Available	79,000	
Underspend	0	21,000

An under spend £21,000 for 2007/08 will occur. £15,000 of which is due to the delay in the implementation of a home visiting service at BDHT. However, the £15,000 has been approved for this additional work and will be used to continue to fund the service for 2008/09. The remaining under spend is due to the restructuring of the CAB housing

advice service, through which a saving was made of £6,000 which has been carried forward for allocation under the 2008/09 grant allocation.

A additional award of homelessness grant (see table below) was made in September 2007 to fund specific schemes to help achieve the Governments target to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010. This funding has contributed towards the Council achieving this target at the end of Dec 2007, two years early.

<b>Additional 20,000 Homelessness Grant Award for 2007/08</b>		
Baseline Rent Deposit Scheme	9,000	9,000
Temporary Accommodation Reduction	3,000	3000
Nighstop Pilot	3,000	
Homelessness Module - Abritas	5,000	
	<b>20,000</b>	

4.2 The **2007/08 funded schemes** are progressing as follows:

#### **CAB Specialist Debt Advice Service**

This specialist service has now been amalgamated into the General Housing Advice Service which is provided for the Council by CAB. It offers assistance and representation for potentially homeless clients. The work has shown to be highly successful in achieving positive results in the prevention of homelessness. The majority of their work has been concentrated on money advice/repossession cases.

#### **Baseline Rent Deposit Scheme (Private Tenancy Scheme) for under 25's**

BYHF have developed a 'Private Tenancy Scheme' which can provide three alternative incentives to encourage Private Landlords to let their accommodation to young people. These are Rent Deposits, Rent guarantees and rent in advance. During 2007 it was identified that the scheme required additional officer hours to meet demand and a bid for additional funding was submitted to CLG to increase the current post from part time to full time so that more time can be spent recruiting landlords to the scheme.

#### **Centrepoint**

Centrepoint's progress in raising awareness of homelessness issues with health professionals has been slow due to staff changes and a difficulty in establishing a contact within the PCT. Both of these issues have now been resolved.

#### **Sanctuary Scheme – Bromsgrove District Council**

There have been no calls for the provision of Sanctuary Schemes during 2007/08; therefore, funding available will be carried forward to 2008/09 in readiness for any cases of DV requiring assistance.

### **Floating Support – Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT)**

This scheme provides non tenure specific floating support to customers who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness. The service was set up during January 2007 therefore there is no evidence of outcomes at this early stage. There was a delay in setting up the service which resulted in an under spend of homelessness grant of £4k which was re-allocated to pilot the following two schemes:

1. **Step Up Private Tenancy Scheme (Rent Deposit / Bond) for over 25's – Bromsgrove District Council**  
Utilising the under spend of CLG grant the Council was able to pilot the 'Step Up' private tenancy scheme for over 25's. At the end of March the scheme had helped two households access private rented accommodation.

2. **Spend to Save Scheme – Bromsgrove District Council**  
Part of the under spend of CLG grant was also earmarked for opportunities to prevent homelessness through a 'Spend to Save' scheme. Whilst BDHT have been encouraged to consider innovative use of these monies, no applications have been forthcoming at present. It is hoped that now BDHT has agreed to re-structure its service towards more prevention work, that this fund will be better utilised during 2007/08.

### **Prevention of Homelessness through Home Visits – Bromsgrove District Housing Trust**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2006 the Strategic Housing Team met with Sarah Cumberland, Homelessness Expert from CLG and reviewed the Council's performance in respect of homelessness and the use of Temporary Accommodation. A number of recommendations were identified to deliver improvement in performance and following the meeting a further £15k CLG Homelessness Grant was awarded for the Council to develop a home visiting service through BDHT.

Due to some staffing difficulties at BDHT, commencement of the service was delayed; however we have committed these monies to BDHT for a two year period and accordingly need to carry the £15k forward to be drawn during 2007/08.

**5.0 The impact that preventative services have had on reducing homeless presentations and acceptances and the authorities performance against the Government target of reducing the use of temporary accommodation by 2010.**

5.1 The number of people presenting as homeless, those accepted and the outcome of homelessness prevention services are monitored by the Strategic Housing Team on a quarterly basis. The table below indicates a trend of reducing homeless presentations and acceptances and a growing number of cases that are being prevented from becoming homeless.

5.2 In 2004, the Government set all housing authorities a target of reducing the number of homeless clients living in temporary accommodation by 2010. For Bromsgrove, this meant reducing our numbers from 68 to 34, which whilst aiming to phase out the use of hostels and retain minimal use of B&B would be a difficult task to achieve without sound preventative services.

5.3 At the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007, we achieved the target figure of 34 when we recorded only 33 clients occupying temporary accommodation. This means that the Council, with the support of BDHT, CAB, Baseline and partner support services achieved the governments target two years ahead of the deadline. It must be recognised that changing circumstances such as any increase in mortgage repossessions may alter our performance in the future, but it proves that the prevention services employed have assisted in meeting the target (2years early) within the climate that it was set.

	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	Up to Sept 07	Up to Dec 07
<b>Homeless Presentations</b>	320	341	249	89	
<b>Homeless Acceptances</b>	141	175	122	55	
<b>Cases prevented from being homeless</b>	Not recorded	52	76	87	109
<b>Numbers in temp accom</b>	75	97	63	50	33

**6.0 The CLG Homelessness Grant funding that has been allocated for 2007/08.**

- 6.1 The CLG have allocated Homelessness Grant of £80,000pa for the next three financial years, 2008/09, 2009/10, 2010/11.
- 6.2 For the first time since its introduction, the grant has been allocated for a three year period thus enabling for security and forward planning of services.

**7.0 Details of the schemes recommended by the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group to receive grant funding for 2008/09.**

- 7.1 At the last meeting of the Homelessness Steering Group on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2007, bids for 2008/09 were considered. At the time of the meeting, the allocation for 08/09 had not been announced and accordingly the Steering Group considered bids against an anticipated allocation of £60,000. The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group recommended the following schemes for approval.

Name of Project	Priority of scheme	Initial Bid £	Grant Recommended £	Period of grant	Outcomes Other Considerations
BYHF – Private Tenancy Scheme for under 25's	1		18,000	3 years	Continuation of scheme offering rent deposit, rent in advance and support to assist under 25's to access private rented accommodation
BDHT – Floating Support Service	2	24,600	24,000	3 years	Continuation of the floating support service for homeless or potentially homeless. This scheme is jointly



					funded by Supporting People and BDHT.
New Start Re-use and Resettlement Project	3	5,000	5,000	3 years	
Spend to Save	4		3,000		Additional funding to resolve homeless and potentially homeless situations and avert use of temporary accommodation.
Nightstop	5	8,000	8,000		A pilot fund to enable us to purchase places of temp accom with trained families for single, non priority homeless people in the Redditch Nightstop Scheme.
Centrepoint	6	3,500	3,500		Subject to discussion regarding Centrepoint's local and countywide role in educational awareness of homelessness for younger people.
BDHT Homelessness Focus	7		500		To carry out consultation in the form of

Groups					focus groups with homeless applicants which, if approved, would be match funded by BDHT.
BDC Consultation Fund	8	1,000	1,000		To enable the council to consult with younger and homeless people upon services provided, reasons for homelessness and to investigate solutions.
			£63,000		

7.2 Therefore, the recommended bids amount to £63,000. The Government's confirmation of grant allocation announced in December was confirmed as £80,000 and the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group were given a further opportunity to submit bids for the remaining £17k plus £6k under spend from 07/08.

7.3 The following additional bids were received:

- £1,000 to deliver an education initiative to schools,
- £5,000 for BYHF to train 5 staff to become mediators
- £7,000 for BYHF to provide a Life Skills Coach
- £1,000 for New Song to provide an Office Administrator
- £1,000 for New Song to provide a New Starts Resettlement project

7.4 Having reviewed the Council's priorities, good practice on prevention of homelessness and the Audit Commission Key Lines Of Enquiry, it is recommended that these bids are rejected in favour of a new initiative to make best use of existing housing stock by tackling under occupation as outlined in Sect 8 below.

**8.0 Proposals to utilise additional grant funding to address under occupation and to make better use of existing housing stock in the District.**

- 8.1 The continuing shortage of affordable housing in the District makes it ever more important to make best use of existing housing stock in the District and it is proposed that the remaining grant of £23k be directed towards the temporary recruitment of a Under occupation Officer.
- 8.2 It is proposed that the temporary post within the Strategic Housing Team could identify those under occupying social and lower quartile market housing to offer help and support to move to more appropriate accommodation. It is acknowledged that many tenants owners make a personal decision to under occupy a home and this will be respected, however where residents are prevented from moving, by being unable to coordinate a move or being unable to identify alternative accommodation the assistance from an Under Occupation Officer could help enable a more sizeable home to become available for occupation by larger families.
- 8.3 With the implementation of Choice Based Lettings anticipated for June 08, those under occupying their properties will be placed in the highest band to encourage them to down size and make their property available for families in housing need. To maximise the effect of this, an Under occupation Officer would be able to identify those currently under occupying social housing, ascertain the type of property that would attract them to consider a move, help identify appropriate properties and offer support with planning and arranging a house move.

## **9.0 Concluding Comments**

- 9.1 Members are asked to approve the recommendations (set out in the table at 7.1 of the report) put forward by the Bromsgrove Homelessness Steering Group for funding of £63,000. Three of the schemes (amounting to £ 47,000 require approval for the three year period of the present allocation to enable sustainability of the schemes). The remaining schemes will run for one year only with the opportunity of being re considered for funding this time next year against other competing bids at the time.
- 9.2 Members are asked to approve that the remaining £23,000pa be allocated for the three year period to the appointment of a temporary Under Occupation Officer, a position that would be annually reviewed against outcomes.
- 9.3 As in previous years, Members are asked to grant the Head of Planning & Environment Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder For Strategic Housing delegated authority to approve re-allocation of any under spend or make further adjustments necessary to ensure full utilisation of the grant allocation for 2008/09 in support of existing or new schemes.

## **10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Grant funding under the Homelessness (In Need of Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 is allocated by the CLG to local authorities in accordance with their expenditure upon schemes up to the allocation limit. Accordingly the expenditure incurred in supporting the schemes does not fall upon this authority.

## **11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Prevention of homelessness through the schemes developed and funded through CLG Grant assist the Council in meeting its statutory duties to homeless applicants under the Homeless provisions of the Housing Act 1996 and the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002 that prevents local authorities from placing homeless families or expectant mothers in B&B type accommodation.

## **8.0 CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

### **8.1 Objective 1 – Regeneration (Town Centre and Housing)**

Improved standard of support and preventative service for homeless people.

### **8.2 Objective 2 – Improvement (Customer Service)**

Improved service to customers by the ability to provide a higher standard of prevention and support service together with more choice in solutions available.

### **8.3 Objective 3 – (Sense of Community and Wellbeing)**

Homelessness prevention, reduction and support influences health and wellbeing.

### **8.4 Priority 4 – Environment – (Clean Streets)**

Reduction of homelessness helps a more planned allocation of housing thus supporting better neighbourhood integration and therefore reduces any negative impact upon the environment.

## **9.0 RISK MANAGEMENT**

9.1 If the recommended schemes are not approved there is a risk that more households who are threatened with homelessness or who are in housing need will have limited alternative options. There is the risk that they may have to make a homeless approach and this could consequently lead to the following risks:

- Inability by the Council to meet the statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation in the District thus necessitating placement in B&B accommodation outside of the District.
- Increased B&B costs.

- Weakened performance against BV 183a (number of families placed in B&B) which is currently zero.
- Inability to maintain the DCLG target of reducing temporary accommodation by 50% by the year 2010

**10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 This scheme will benefit the Council's customer, by offering household's more options to prevent their homelessness. Where possible to enable them to remain in their own homes, the Council will be encouraging them to be more independent and take responsibility for their housing situation.

The scheme will also benefit the larger community as there will be fewer households making homeless approaches, and in turn less homeless households in the district.

**11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues
None
Personnel Implications
The potential ability to employ a person on a temporary basis would be referred to the Head of HR for consideration in respect of any re-deployment requirements.
Governance/Performance Management
Ability to improve and maintain performance against BVPI's as detailed in the report.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998
None
Policy
None
Environmental
None
Equalities and Diversity

Two of the recommended schemes are to provide Focus Group and consultation opportunities. These will assist the Council and BDHT in identifying E&D issues relevant to homeless and potentially homeless persons and provide an opportunity to review services provided.

**12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	YES and he supports the recommendations.
Acting Chief Executive	Yes
Corporate Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes
Head of Legal & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	Yes

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**

13.1 The homeless prevention services and issues covered in the report are District wide and are not specific to any particular ward.

**14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

14.1 None

**CONTACT OFFICER**

Name           A.M. Coel  
 E Mail         [a.coel@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:a.coel@bromsgrove.gov.uk)  
 Tel              01527 881270

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE CABINET

6<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2008

#### RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR WORCESTERSHIRE – 2008-2013

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Roger Hollingworth
Responsible Head of Service	Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive

#### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet about the consultation on the Draft Sustainable Community Strategy for Worcestershire 2008 – 2013 and request ratification of the response to the consultation.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 Members are requested to consider and ratify the response to the draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2013 prior to it being submitted to the Worcestershire Partnership, with particular focus around:
1. Geographic focus around Bromsgrove town centre, Longbridge and the Bromsgrove railway station relocation
  2. Community cohesion
  3. Children and young people
  4. Older people

This report and Appendix 2 constitutes Bromsgrove District Council's response to the consultation.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Worcestershire Partnership is in the process of revising its Sustainable Community Strategy and published a draft for consultation, attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Each section of the Strategy has been considered in detail and a response produced, attached as Appendix 2. The main issues for Members' consideration are:
- 3.2.1 The document is robust but has a geographic focus towards the south of the county, for example, expansion of the University of Worcester and improvement of rail links presented by Norton Parkway. We need to redress the balance by ensuring focus on Longbridge, Bromsgrove town centre regeneration and the relocation of the Bromsgrove railway station.

- 3.2.2 It is felt that the Strategy's focus around community cohesion (section 4.3, p33) is too narrow. We would prefer to see a focus on wider issues of societal breakdown – e.g. anti-social behaviour, inter-generational conflict and a general loss of sense of community, with actions to mitigate such issues.
- 3.2.3 We particularly support the priority outcomes for meeting the needs of children and young people (section 10.1, p 54), particularly outcome 4, "to ensure children and young people have things to do and enjoy their communities".
- 3.2.4 We feel that there should be more focus on older people. The focus within the Strategy is around social care rather than preventive services for the 60 – 85 age bracket.
- 3.2.5 Although Worcestershire County Council are supporting the town centre and the railway station projects, they are not adequately reflected in the Strategy and therefore we need to make a case for these within the wider partnership setting.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 None.

#### **6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

- 6.1 The Strategy links to all corporate objectives.

#### **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 Working in partnership is a key risk which is identified in the Corporate Risk Register. The Council and the LSP will not be able to deliver its priorities without working in partnership with the Worcestershire Partnership. The Bromsgrove Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010 (ratified by Cabinet in November 2007) has been considered by the Worcestershire Partnership during the drafting of the county Strategy, and the Bromsgrove Partnership will be delivering actions locally against the themes in the document.

#### **8 CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Working in partnership delivers joined up outcomes, which is what customers want.

#### **9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Section 4.3 (p 33) of the Strategy discusses community cohesion. Refer to questions 23 – 26 of the response.



**10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 By responding in this way to the strategy it demonstrates that Bromsgrove is addressing the needs of residents of the district and ensuring that future plans and resources are included in the strategic plans.

**11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues – None.
Personnel Issues – None.
Governance/Performance Management – The Strategy will be managed by the Worcestershire Partnership, but the Bromsgrove Partnership has its own performance management framework which will ensure appropriate information can be provided when it is requested.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act 1988 – None.
Policy – The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 illustrates that partnerships are central to building on achievements of recent years to embed them into lasting reform.
Environmental – None

**12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	No
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director (Partnerships & Projects)	No
Executive Director (Services)	No
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	No
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	No
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**

All Wards.

**14. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Sustainable Community Strategy for Worcestershire 2008-2013 (second edition)

Appendix 2 Bromsgrove District Council Response

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No further background papers.

**Contact officer**

Name: Louise Berry, Senior Policy & Performance Officer

E [l.berry@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:l.berry@bromsgrove.gov.uk)

Mail:

Tel: (01527) 881412

**DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION**  
**NOVEMBER 2007**

PARTNERSHIP TOWARDS  
EXCELLENCE – THE SUSTAINABLE  
COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR  
WORCESTERSHIRE

SECOND EDITION 2008 – 2013



## CONTENTS

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
One	The Sustainable Community Strategy for Worcestershire	3
Two	Shaping the Sustainable Community Strategy	8
Three	The Relationship Between the Sustainable Community Strategy and Spatial Strategies	21
Four	Cross Cutting Themes	30
Five	Priority Outcomes	37
Six	Communities That Are Safe and Feel Safe	40
Seven	A Better Environment for Today and for Tomorrow	43
Eight	Economic Success that is Shared By All	47
Nine	Improving Health and Well Being	51
Ten	Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People	54
Eleven	Stronger Communities	58
Twelve	Implementing and Monitoring the Sustainable Community Strategy	64
<b>APPENDICES</b>		
One	Sources of Statistical Information	67
Two	Key Plans and Strategies	69
Three	The Worcestershire Partnership	75
Four	Examples of Community Engagement in Worcestershire	78

## **SECTION ONE – THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR WORCESTERSHIRE**

### **1.1. What is the Draft Sustainable Community Strategy for Worcestershire?**

This document is the second edition of “Partnership Towards Excellence - A Community Strategy for Worcestershire 2003 – 2013”. The job of the sustainable community strategy<sup>1</sup> is to set out the strategic vision for the future of Worcestershire and to focus on activity needed in the short term (2008 – 2013) to make it happen. The aim is to improve the quality of life of people who live, visit or work in the County.

Crime, health, housing, jobs, learning, the environment and transport are some of the big issues that this strategy is concerned with. It deals with these issues at a *countywide* or wider regional or national level. In developing the county wide strategy we are not starting from scratch – we are “refreshing” and updating the work that was set out in “Partnership Towards Excellence” and building on a firm evidence base (see Appendices 1 and 2) to identify the priority issues that will need to be tackled over the next 5 years.

Each District and Borough Local Strategic Partnership has produced a community strategy that will tackle issues at the more local neighbourhood or District level. The 151 Town and Parish Councils, particularly those 48 (at October 2007) that have produced or are developing Parish Plans, are working at a more local level still. Parish Plans will have influenced the District Community Strategies, which have in turn influenced this county Strategy. The idea is that we identify where and how issues are best addressed, and encourage action and decision making at the most local level possible.

To emphasise this commonality of purpose each of the district sustainable community strategies in Worcestershire will address the following six themes:

- Communities that are safe and feel safe
- A better environment for today and tomorrow
- Economic success that is shared by all
- Improving health and well being
- Meeting the needs of children and young people
- Stronger communities - covering a range of issues including housing, culture and volunteering

Section 5 sets out the 30 priority outcomes that we will tackle together under these six themes in the years ahead.

---

<sup>1</sup> In this document when we say Community Strategy or Strategy we mean this Sustainable Community Strategy

## **1.2. What is the Worcestershire Partnership?**

This Strategy has been produced by the Worcestershire Partnership. This is the countywide Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for Worcestershire.

The Worcestershire Partnership brings together local government, public services such as health, learning providers, police and probation, voluntary and community organisations and local businesses within Worcestershire. The work of the Partnership is based on a shared common purpose and good will. These agencies across the public, voluntary and private sectors – have committed themselves to achieve the vision and priorities that this strategy sets out.

Partnership working is not new in Worcestershire – and over time it has matured and developed to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose in a changing environment. You can find out more about the membership of the Worcestershire Partnership and how it is organised at Appendix 3.

### **Q1. Do we need more information about the Worcestershire Partnership here?**

## **1.3. What is the Worcestershire Partnership's vision for the county?**

### **Vision**

Together we have developed a vision for Worcestershire. This vision is based on what Worcestershire residents told us was important to them in making our county a great place to visit, work or live in:

A County with safe, cohesive, healthy and inclusive communities, a strong and diverse economy and a valued and cherished environment

### **Values**

The Worcestershire Partnership has agreed the following values. These values apply to all partners in their work for the Worcestershire Partnership. The values underpin everything we do. In order to join the Partnership individuals and groups must agree to subscribe to the values below.

In all our work and planning we will:

- Provide for the needs of all groups in society
- Treat people with equality and value diversity

- Build strong, cohesive communities and promote good community relations
- Remove barriers that prevent individuals from reaching their full potential
- Intervene early to prevent problems from becoming entrenched
- Take account of the needs of future generations
- Actively seek ways in which to improve people's health and well-being
- Work in partnership with others
- Provide high quality and value for money services
- Involve and listen to local people and local communities – these could be geographical communities or communities of interest
- Promote Worcestershire on the regional, national, European and international stage and maximise the opportunities available to the county.

#### **1.4. How is this second edition of the Community Strategy different?**

Since Worcestershire's Community Strategy was published in 2003 there have been changes to the county or new issues have emerged that have resulted in shifts in priorities.

This version of the strategy for example has a specific theme on children and young people. At central government level Local Area Agreements (LAAs) have been introduced that act as the delivery plan for the Community Strategy (see Section 12 for more information on LAAs).

The Partnership has also had considerable successes in tackling some of the problems that residents had highlighted in 2003. For example

- Worcestershire's Greenspaces and Community Partnership were awarded £3.4 million from the Government's Liveability Fund to carry out projects to improve public open spaces throughout the county
- £1.2 million has been drawn down from Big Lottery Fund to provide high quality play opportunities for children and young people in the county – picking up on a consistent priority for our residents of improving activities for teenagers
- Neighbourhood policing has been introduced across the county – bringing police officers closer to the communities that they serve
- We have developed joint standards across the county for street cleaning, litter control and investigation and clearing of fly tipping – eliminating any "postcode lottery" and responding to residents' concerns
- Bus passenger numbers have increased
- We have produced a "County Green Directory" which is full of tips and contacts to help us all live a greener lifestyle

- We have secured £725,000 from the £1 million available from Advantage West Midlands to implement our recovery plan from the flooding in Summer 2007
- “Destination Worcestershire” is a partnership initiative which brought together the tourism functions of the County Council and District Councils and key partners from the private sector.
- The incidence of coronary heart disease and cancer has reduced
- There has been an upward trend of pupils aged 16 gaining 5 or more GCSE grades A\* - C, 2006/7 results showed that 57.6% achieved this result – the highest ever

You can find out more about what we have achieved by looking at the Partnership’s first Local Area Agreement. In some areas (like raising educational achievement, public transport and waste) we want to do more and so you will find that we continue our activity in these areas through this community strategy.

**Q2. Is this section helpful? Do you have any suggestions of examples we could include here?**

## **1.5. How can you influence the draft Sustainable Community Strategy?**

This document is intended for the many agencies, organisations and community groups that will shape and deliver the Strategy. At a later stage an “easy to read” summary version of the final Strategy will be produced.

The Strategy is still a “draft” and therefore open to change and amendment and your contribution and comments are invited and welcomed. The purpose of the draft document is to stimulate debate and further development of partnership actions for agreement by partners over the next 3 months. We have included some specific questions where your views would be particularly valuable.



There are a number of ways that you can contribute to the development of this draft:

- By joining in a workshop at the Worcestershire Assembly
- By submitting written comments on this Strategy<sup>2</sup>, particularly your views on the consultation questions that we have highlighted (see back page for contact details)
- By emailing us on [scsconsultation@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:scsconsultation@worcestershire.gov.uk)
- By logging your views on the consultation forum on our website <http://www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk/forum/>

**Consultation closes on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

The comments submitted as part of this consultation process will be carefully considered by the Worcestershire Partnership Thematic Groups and the Management Group. You will be able to see the Management Group's response on our website.

We will also be carrying out an exercise to "rural proof" this Strategy and an Equalities Impact Assessment – to ensure that the needs and aspirations of all of Worcestershire's communities have been fully considered.

In November 2007 the Government will publish for consultation draft statutory guidance on "place shaping". This wide-ranging guidance refers to Community Strategies, and some of the issues that we have raised in this draft. We will be assessing the impact of the draft guidance on the Strategy and making any necessary changes.

The Worcestershire Partnership Board will decide on the final structure and content of the Community Strategy.

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<sup>2</sup> The Worcestershire Partnership will hold the information that you provide. Responses from groups and organisations may be published on our website, individual responses will be anonymized prior to publication.

## SECTION TWO - SHAPING THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

### 2.1 What are the factors that influenced this Sustainable Community Strategy?

The diagram below illustrates the many factors that have shaped this Strategy. These factors are further explained in this Section and in Section 3.

**Figure 1 – Factors that have influenced Worcestershire’s Community Strategy**



**Q3. Can you think of any other factors that should have shaped this Strategy and which should be included in this diagram?**

## 2.2 How did we find out Worcestershire’s residents views?

The Worcestershire Partnership developed the six key themes of this Community Strategy in response to what Worcestershire residents have told us is important to them. There are a number of ways that we have found this out.

The Worcestershire wide **Citizens Panel** is a sample of about two thousand residents who are canvassed for their views on a wide range of issues. The findings of the Panel are “weighted” to ensure that they are reflective of Worcestershire’s population. The Partnership commissioned Panel surveys in 2003 and 2005<sup>3</sup> following the community strategy themes in order to identify and track “quality of life” issues in the county. A further survey in June 2007 asked some key questions to support this SCS review<sup>4</sup>. You will find reference to the Panel findings throughout this Strategy.

In addition this countywide strategy has built on the work of District LSPs and of the **District Community Strategies**<sup>5</sup> – these have been produced using local knowledge and involvement, including that provided by the **Parish planning process**. District LSPs identified the priorities they believed this countywide Strategy should reflect. This has ensured that the local perspective has influenced this Strategy.

The findings of the **Best Value General Satisfaction Survey 2006** showed that across the county residents identified the level of crime, health services, clean streets, education provision and affordable decent housing as being the most important factors in making the county a good place to live. Further information about residents’ priorities for improvement can be found in Section 2.4.10

## 2.3 How did we find out Worcestershire Councillors’ views?

Worcestershire has a total of 285 elected councillors across the county council and six district councils in the county (there are 36 councillors who have been elected to both the County Council and a District Council). In addition we have 1,350 Parish and Town Councillors.

Councillors have a specific role in the Partnership. They provide a bridge between the councils, the partnerships and the people that they serve and are in a strong position to advocate community concerns

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<sup>3</sup> February 2003 and May 2005 Citizens Panel Surveys

<sup>4</sup> June Citizens' Panel survey, a total of 1352 responses representing a response rate of 68%.

<sup>5</sup> District LSPs have identified local priorities that they believe this countywide strategy should address

and issues. Their role is unique as they are democratically elected **by** communities to work **for** communities.

Councillors have a community leadership role - bringing people together, developing a vision for their area and delivering improvements in the quality of life for local people. In some circumstances councillors may need to lead and challenge communities as well as support them, for example to counter prejudice and to build social inclusion. Community leadership is often delivered through partnership, particularly when it is tackling cross-cutting issues.

Councillors' community leadership roles have been specifically acknowledged by the Worcestershire Partnership. All council leaders have a seat on the **Worcestershire Partnership Board** and parish and town councillors are represented through the County Association of Local Councils (the umbrella body for parish and town councils) on the Board and Partnership Task Groups.

In addition, one County Councillor and one District councillor sit on each of the Theme Groups. The Partnership has recently established **Member Reference Groups** (consisting of both county and district councillors) for each of the themes of this Community Strategy. This ensures that the work of the partnership is influenced by councillors' democratic mandate.

District Councillors' priorities for this Community Strategy have been reflected through District LSPs. County Councillors were asked for input and priorities through a briefing session. The Citizens Panel survey was also sent to all District and County Councillors to canvas views.

## **2.4 The Worcestershire "Story of Place"**

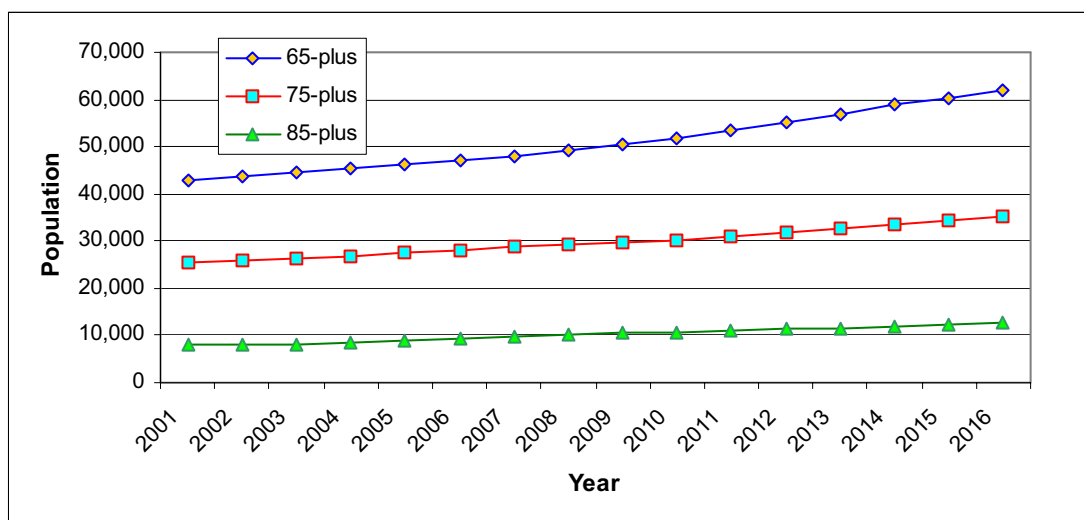
The County of Worcestershire is located in the heart of England. It comprises six Districts: Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester City, Wychavon and Wyre Forest. It has an outstanding and rich natural environment. It is home to spectacular features such as the Malvern Hills, and a large part of the county consists of a combination of fields, orchards, woodlands, meadow, ancient forests and rivers. Though agricultural land and open countryside dominate the landscape, 64% of the total population lives in urban areas. Worcestershire is adjacent to the major West Midlands conurbations and has generally good access to and from the national road network.

### **2.4.1 Population change**

The population of Worcestershire is expected to increase by about 38,000 (or 7 per cent) by 2026 (Office National Statistics (ONS), 2004-based projections) to approximately 590,000. This compares with an estimated increase of about 10 per cent in England over the same time

period. Specifically, as is the case nationally, the most significant population growth in Worcestershire will be in the older age groups. The 65 and older population is expected to rise by 56 per cent to 151,000, with the 85+ population almost doubling to just over 24,000. The Centre for Census & Survey Research (CCSR) at the University of Manchester has undertaken a study examining the potential future change in the population of the County with a Limiting Long-Term illness (LLTI).

**Figure 2 - Projected Numbers of Older People in Worcestershire with Limiting Long-Term Illness (LLTI) by age, 2001-16**



Source: CCSR, University of Manchester

Figure 2 shows up to 2016 the number of people in the County aged 65-and-over with a LLTI is projected to rise to around 67,800, an increase of around 45% on 2001 levels. For the 85 plus age group, the increase between 2001-16 is set to rise at a rate of almost 60%, as this age group has the highest proportional population increase (see Section 9 for further information). Analysis by the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Social Research, commissioned by Worcestershire County Council, indicates that the rate of increase in LLTI in the County was much greater than the national comparison since 2001. More than 160,000 people in Worcestershire may have some type of LLTI by 2026 if the same rate of growth continues. This will have major resource implications for public services.

In comparison, the 0-19 population is expected to fall by 9 per cent by 2026, whilst the corresponding projection for the 10-19 years age group predicts a 13 per cent reduction. This could have implications for the number of school places needed, and there is a need to develop strategies to retain school leavers in the County. In September 2005, University College Worcester was renamed the University of Worcester, after gaining full university status. It is the only Higher Education Institution in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and is one of the fastest growing universities in the country.

An increasing population will have an impact on the County, creating additional demands for housing, along with increased pressures on existing infrastructure and public services. As an example, the Regional Spatial Strategy is currently being revised (see Section 3.1 for further detail). Worcestershire has higher than average house prices, but suffers from a major shortfall in the availability of affordable housing.

### 2.4.2 Deprivation

Worcestershire may not be regarded as having high levels of deprivation overall, but parts of the County do experience significant levels of deprivation. Worcester City is in the top half of most deprived local authorities in terms of education and crime (2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation for England).

Eleven areas in Worcester are in the top 20% most deprived nationally, and two areas are in the top 10%. These are the areas of Old Warndon and southwest Gorse Hill. The two areas experience multiple deprivation associated with income, employment, ill health, education, and crime, and are ranked as particularly deprived for education, being in the most deprived 1% of areas nationally. Areas of Challenge also cover Oldington & Foley Park, Horsefair, Broadwaters & Greenhill, Pickersleigh and Batchley, Greenlands and Central Redditch.

Deprivation concerns are not solely linked to the urban parts of Worcestershire. Some rural parts of the County are within the top 1 per cent most deprived areas in England in terms of geographical access to services. These include wards within Malvern Hills District Council at Lindridge, Teme Valley, the Tenbury area and Longdon.

### 2.4.3 Ethnicity

**Table 1 – Ethnic Population of Worcestershire**

Ethnic Group	Percentage of Total population – Worcestershire (%)	Percentage of Total population – England (%)
White-British	95.5	87
White-Irish	0.8	1.3
Other White	1.3	2.7
Mixed	0.7	1.3
Indian	0.3	2.1
Pakistani	0.5	1.4
Bangladeshi	0.2	0.6
Other Asian	0.1	0.5
Black or Black British	0.3	2.3
Chinese	0.2	0.5
Other Ethnic Group	0.1	0.4

Source: 2001 census

Around 2.5 per cent of the population of Worcestershire is made up of black and minority ethnic communities (non-White); this has increased from 1.5 per cent in 1991. By 2011, it is estimated that black and minority ethnic communities will account for 4.3 per cent of the population of Worcestershire (based on 2001 Census results and fertility, mortality and migration statistics for each ethnic group). The Asian community is currently the largest ethnic minority community in Worcestershire, making up 1.1 per cent of the population. The Pakistani population accounts for 0.5 per cent of the county's total population.

While not recorded by the Census, an increasing number of partners in Worcestershire are including separate categories for Gypsies Romany and Irish Travellers on their Ethnic Monitoring Forms. Gypsies and Travellers may be one of the oldest and largest Minority Ethnic Communities in Worcestershire and in the 2007 Citizens Panel survey were identified as the ethnic group most likely to face prejudice and discrimination.

In recent years there has been significant international migration into Worcestershire, particularly from the A8 European Union Accession countries. Since 2002/03, a total of 12,000 new resident migrants have been registered for National Insurance. The largest numbers are in Wychavon, Worcester and Redditch. Over the last 12 months (2006/07), more than half of the migrants have been from Poland and about three quarters were from Eastern Europe. Applicants from areas such as Portugal and India, which formed the highest proportion of registrations in 2002-03, have stayed fairly constant over this time-period. It should be noted that these figures show only **new** applicants for NINOs in each year, and do **not** show the length of time that applicants will actually stay in this country. It is entirely possible that applicants from earlier years have now departed. Migrant workers are bringing proven and welcome economic benefits to the County, and we will aim to maximise the use of this skilled migrant labour. By contrast, this also has to be considered in terms of how these groups can become successfully integrated, both within our indigenous communities and in the workforce (see Section 4.3.2 for further information).

#### **2.4.4 Community Safety**

Since 2003/04, crime reduction in Worcestershire has been amongst the highest in the country. In the financial year April 2006 – March 2007, the total number of recorded crimes fell by 2.1 percent in Worcestershire, compared with the previous 12 months.

The British Crime Survey (BCS) Comparator crimes (those crimes deemed to be the most likely to be reported) have fallen by 0.5

percent. Sexual offences fell by over 14 percent, whilst thefts of vehicles dropped by nearly 12.5 percent and racially aggravated offences were over 11 percent down. Some types of crime have however increased. Robberies went up by 22 percent whilst common assaults increased by 15.2 percent and drug offences rose by nearly 13 percent. (The rise in common assault is probably partly because of a change by West Mercia Police in the way they record this type of crime, and is not confined to Worcestershire). Although recorded crimes continued to fall in Worcestershire last year, this trend has flattened in recent years and it may be difficult to sustain in future.

### 2.4.5 Health

Worcestershire residents have generally good health, and life expectancy is increasing. Nevertheless there are a number of health issues that need to be tackled. We need to improve health and well being overall, and close the gap between the health of the worst-off and best-off in Worcestershire, where there are marked variations. There is a need to encourage and facilitate healthier lifestyles, developing projects with a focus on the most disadvantaged areas of Worcestershire (see Section 9.2. for further details).

In recognising that population growth in Worcestershire will be in the older age groups, we must support the commissioning and redesign of integrated older adults' services including preventive services. Worcestershire is currently producing a Joint Strategic Needs Analysis for Health and Well-being for the County Council and the Primary Care Trust.

### 2.4.6 Educational Attainment

The tables below show the most recent information on performance at the Key Stages by schoolchildren in Worcestershire. These results (from 2006) indicate that achievement in Worcestershire is, in general, slightly above the average for the maintained sector in England.

**Table 2 - Percentage of pupils achieving the expected levels at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 in Worcestershire and England, 2006<sup>6</sup>**

<b>Key Stage 1</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Worcestershire	87	84	92	91
England	84	81	90	89
<b>Key Stage 2</b>	<b>English</b>		<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Worcestershire	80		75	89
England	79		75	86
<b>Key Stage 3</b>	<b>English</b>		<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Worcestershire	74		78	76
England	73		77	72

<sup>6</sup> All DfES data for 2006 is **provisional**; this is the latest data available at November 2007.



Historical data (shown in Table 3) indicates that, since 2002, the performance of Worcestershire children at Key Stage 1 has been slightly stronger than national performance. (This trend also applies, in general terms, to Key Stages 2 and 3).

**Table 3: Percentage of pupils achieving the expected levels<sup>7</sup> at Key Stage 1 in Worcestershire and England, 2001 to 2005**

Subject	Worcs	England	Worcs	England	Worcs	England	Worcs	England	Worcs	England
Reading	84	84	85	84	86	84	86	85	87	85
Writing	86	86	88	86	83	81	82	81	85	82
Maths	90	91	91	90	92	90	91	90	92	91
Year	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	

Source: DfES, 2007

### 2.4.7 Economy

Total employment levels in Worcestershire are projected to increase by 0.2 per cent per annum during the period 2005-2010 and by 0.4 per cent per annum for 2010-2015.<sup>8</sup> Forecasts suggest that between 2005-2010 there will be significant growth in the electricity, gas and water industry, whereas, agriculture will see a large decrease. In terms of occupation, between 2005-2010, there will be a forecast increase in personal, sales and customer service occupations as well as professional occupations. By contrast a decrease is expected in administrative, clerical and elementary occupations.

Between 2004 and 2005, there was a 2.4 per cent decrease in the number of jobs in the county with changes in all industries<sup>9</sup>. Most significantly, manufacturing has decreased by 13.6 per cent, whereas, banking, finance and insurance jobs have increased by 8.8 per cent.

Almost 15 per cent of Worcestershire's residential workforce is self-employed, an increase of 1.7 per cent since 2001<sup>10</sup>. It is also estimated that 15.1 per cent of the residential workforce are classed as home workers, over 3 per cent higher than regional and national figures<sup>11</sup>. The vast majority of home workers use different places to work but use their home as a base.

Although overall Worcestershire has relatively good rates of skills achievement, there are specific geographical areas that are significantly below the national level of attainment. Considerable work will be required to ensure that sustainable employment is achievable for these locations. We will increase skill levels in the County's

<sup>8</sup> Cambridge Econometrics, March 2007

<sup>9</sup> Annual Business Inquiry 2004, 2005 DEFRA 2004,2005

<sup>10</sup> Annual Population Survey

<sup>11</sup> Labour Force Survey 2005

workforce by securing greater numbers of NVQ qualifications at levels 2 & 3 and delivering programmes such as Skills for Life. This is critical if we wish to maintain high levels of employment in Worcestershire.

The average residents based household income for Worcestershire is £34,737, which is over £4,000 more than the West Midlands average and £500 greater than the figure for England<sup>12</sup>. In 2006, people who lived in Worcestershire and worked full-time (either in or out of the county) earned £904 gross per annum more than the West Midlands average. By contrast those who worked full-time in Worcestershire earned £1,698 gross per annum less than the West Midlands average. Census data also tells us over 69,000 people travelled out of the county to work, compared to almost 37,000 people who travelled into the county to work

Claimant count rates (unemployment) in Worcestershire remain consistently below those recorded regionally and nationally<sup>13</sup>. The long-term claimant count rate for Worcestershire in June 2007 also follows this trend.

A case can always be made for directing resources to areas of higher than average unemployment. There are also sound arguments for supporting regeneration initiatives such as Bromsgrove town centre redevelopment. On the other hand there are a number of locations offering significant economic opportunities within the County (see 3.4 for further details).

#### **2.4.8 Worklessness**

Worklessness is a less familiar term than unemployment and extends beyond the unemployed. It includes those who are economically inactive, that is, those who are of working age not in: work; full time education or training; and not actively seeking work. Approximately 57,600<sup>14</sup> of Worcestershire's residents of working age are classified as economically inactive, which equates to 17.5 per cent of the working age population. Reducing levels of worklessness is a real challenge for the County.

#### **2.4.9 Environment**

Worcestershire is one of the most environmentally diverse counties in Britain. It has a very varied geology and landform. The County encompasses the southern limit of many northern plant and animal species, and the northern limit of species found in the south, and is therefore exceptionally rich ecologically. Some of Worcestershire's landscapes, such as the Malvern Hills have been recognised nationally

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<sup>12</sup> Based on PayCheck CACI Household Income Model

<sup>13</sup> ONS June 2007

<sup>14</sup> Job Centre Plus, Department for Work and Pensions 2007

as being amongst the most notable in the country and have been designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, giving them added protection against inappropriate development.

Our landscape cannot be taken for granted. The unseasonal and significant flooding that occurred in Summer 2007 has adversely impacted upon the County's residents and economy. This flooding was not just fluvial flooding (i.e. rivers bursting their banks) but also resulted in heavy rainfall and flash floods. This summer flooding was quite exceptional, and overall, approximately 6,000 properties were affected and approximately 3,500 residential properties were severely flooded. The economic cost to the County was estimated at £6.4 million per week during the height of the flooding.

Climate change has become a major issue, but at least part of the adverse impact of the exceptional summer floods was the result of human intervention. Worcestershire will address flooding as one of its priorities (see Section 4.1). It will be important to balance the demand for new development with the need to protect the natural environment.

#### **2.4.10. Worcestershire Priorities – Best Value Satisfaction Surveys**

The results below are based on the combined responses to the County Council Best Value Satisfaction survey and the six District Council Best Value Satisfaction Surveys, which were carried out in September and October 2006. In total, the results are based on 9,404 individual responses.

The Best Value Satisfaction survey asked respondents to identify their priorities for improvement in their local area. For residents in Worcestershire, road and pavement repairs are the top priority for improvement, followed by improving activities for teenagers and the level of traffic congestion. The top two priorities have remained the same since the survey was last conducted in 2003/04, however the third priority for improvement in 2003/04 was crime and is now traffic congestion. There are differences in priorities at the local level. Road and pavement repairs dominate as a priority in Wychavon, and tend to be the priority for many rural areas in Worcestershire. Traffic congestion is the top priority in urban areas such as Worcester City, Stourport and Evesham. Reducing crime is a priority for Worcester City and Redditch.

#### **2.4.11. SWOT Analysis**

In drawing together this "story of place" for Worcestershire, the Worcestershire Partnership undertook a SWOT analysis, identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the county. The results of this are shown in the table below.

**TABLE 4 – WORCESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP SWOT ANALYSIS**

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding natural environment</li> <li>• Low crime rates</li> <li>• Diverse base of voluntary sector services</li> <li>• Mix of urban and rural</li> <li>• Proximity to both Birmingham and remote rural England</li> <li>• Good access to and from national road network</li> <li>• Principle disease trends are downwards, general good health and increasing life expectancy</li> <li>• High quality primary care infrastructure</li> <li>• Excellent range of opportunities to maintain health and wellness</li> <li>• Skilled, stable workforce</li> <li>• Strong sense of place in local communities</li> <li>• Good track record of partnership working</li> <li>• <i>Relatively</i> low traffic congestion</li> <li>• Central Technology Belt</li> <li>• Historical 'honey pot' e.g. Worcester Cathedral, Malvern Priority, Worcester Commandery, etc.</li> <li>• Below average unemployment rates</li> <li>• Low levels of income deprivation and child poverty in some districts</li> <li>• High level of grassroots community planning (Parish Plans) activity</li> <li>• People generally get on well together – good community cohesion</li> <li>• General quality of life is high</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate infrastructure to serve the proposed RSS additional housing demands and demands on local resources and services</li> <li>• Deprivation and poverty challenges in specific geographical areas, including rural areas</li> <li>• High cost and poor provision of public transport and limited access in some areas, particularly rural areas</li> <li>• Higher than average house prices and lack of affordable housing</li> <li>• Relatively low-wage economy</li> <li>• Poor rail links</li> <li>• Lack of identifiable Worcestershire 'brand'</li> <li>• Poor retailing provision</li> <li>• Poor youth provision</li> <li>• Few opportunities for art and cultural events in some districts</li> <li>• Under-developed tourism profile</li> </ul>

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximising the use of skilled migrant labour</li> <li>• Developing businesses in the Central Technology Belt, including Qinetiq</li> <li>• Higher education opportunities, including expansion of the University of Worcester</li> <li>• Opportunities to grow businesses and attract entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Improvement of rail links, e.g. opportunities presented by Norton Parkway</li> <li>• Develop innovative approaches to improving and sustaining services in the most rural localities</li> <li>• Mobilise community enterprise to deliver neighbourhood services</li> <li>• Use good partnership track record to create new and nimble public bodies planning and commissioning local services</li> <li>• Develop partnership working around the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy</li> <li>• Development of Worcester’s river frontage for leisure and tourism purposes</li> <li>• Tourism and heritage opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergence of new risks to health that are lifestyle-based, e.g. obesity and binge drinking</li> <li>• Increased risk of fluvial and localised flooding</li> <li>• Increasing elderly population</li> <li>• Inadequate transport infrastructure</li> <li>• Loss of intellectual resources as people migrate out of the county</li> <li>• Danger of becoming a dormitory county between Birmingham and Bristol</li> <li>• Consequences of poor rail links to London</li> <li>• Under-funding of public services</li> <li>• Emergence of global/local public health risks from climate change and pandemic disease</li> <li>• Lack of starter units for new enterprises</li> <li>• Lack (or confusion) of availability of business start-up packages</li> <li>• Balancing new development with protecting the natural environment</li> </ul>

The above represents an initial view of Worcestershire’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. There will be further work done on this analysis at the Worcestershire Assembly meeting – and through the course of the consultation process.

- Q4. Can you recognise Worcestershire from the “Story” set out here?**  
**Q5. Is there any other information that should be included**  
**Q6. Do you agree with the points made in the SWOT analysis?**  
**Q7. Do you have any points that you feel should be included in the SWOT analysis?**

## **2.5 Relationship Between The Community Strategy And Other Key Plans And Strategies**

In putting together the Community Strategy we have had regard to the key plans and strategies for the County. You can see the full list at Appendix 2.

This demonstrates that in preparing this Strategy we have had regard to: -

- 36 National plans, strategies and documents
- 16 Regional plans, strategies and documents
- 5 Sub Regional plans, strategies and documents
- 51 Worcestershire plans, strategies and documents and
- 15 District and local plans, strategies and documents.

**Q8. Do you know of any other plans, strategies or documents that should be included in Appendix 2?**

## **SECTION THREE - THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND SPATIAL AND GEOGRAPHIC PLANS**

### **3.1 Spatial Planning In Worcestershire**

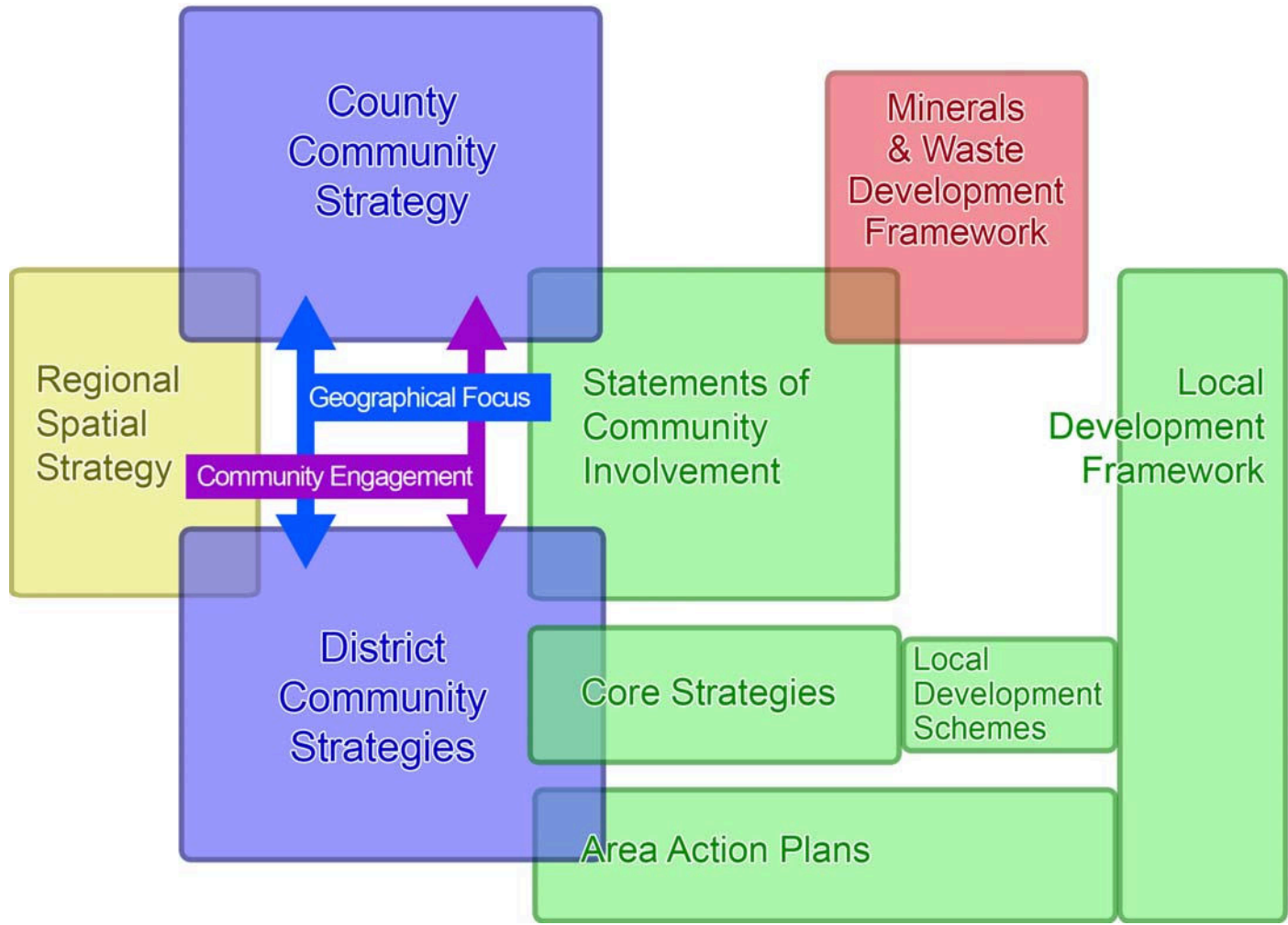
This Community Strategy is about the vision for the future of the county, covering the big issues over the next years, and inevitably these will have a spatial dimension. If for example we are making plans for our economy, considering future employment and the need to bring targeted industries to the county, expanding the University in Worcester or considering the need for new and affordable housing, health facilities and schools then all these facilities need to be located somewhere – and that is the role of spatial planning.

The diagram on the next page shows the relationship between these spatial plans and Worcestershire's Community Strategies. This shows how they are inter-connected. The rest of this Section tells you more.

<b>Q9. Is this diagram helpful in describing these relationships?</b>
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In the future the Government proposes to merge regional spatial strategies and economic strategies – creating even greater synergies between these linked issues.

**FIGURE 3 - RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPATIAL PLANS AND COMMUNITY STRATEGIES**





### 3.2.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

In 2004 the Government introduced a new planning system to manage how developments take place across the country. **Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS)** set out the broad spatial planning strategy for how a region should look in 10 – 15 years time. Worcestershire is part of the West Midlands region.

The West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA) published the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy in June 2004. It is the statutory framework for development within the West Midlands Region until 2021 and beyond. It identifies the key challenges facing the Region and sets out policies designed to tackle them. It is also taking a closer look at some issues in more detail – this is being approached in three phases.

Phase One focused on the Black Country. Phase Two directly impacts on Worcestershire and focuses on a range of issues including housing figures, employment land, transport and waste, as well as which towns and cities should be the focus for development.

In January 2007 WMRA produced the “RSS Phase Two Revisions Options Consultation”. This presents a number of key issues for the county, and some options as to how these are addressed:-

- **Level of housing growth** - The West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA) is preparing a Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). It has identified a Preferred Option for the level of housing growth to be achieved in Worcestershire between 2006 and 2026 of 36,600 dwellings. This is to be focussed on Worcester and Redditch, but with some provision across the whole of the County. There is considerable Government pressure to raise the Region’s housing targets even higher in order to fully meet “demand”. Worcestershire Partnership has emphasised that housing growth should meet the full range of needs of residents and the workforce, including social, affordable housing as well as executive housing. Of particular concern to the Worcestershire Partnership is the ability to provide appropriate social, community and transportation infrastructure in advance of strategic housing growth. A focus on housing numbers alone will lead to unsustainable patterns of development with attendant social and economic problems, for example poor access to jobs and services. Unsustainably high levels of growth are likely to damage Worcestershire’s environment and lead to congested travel conditions, particularly if adequate priority is not given to public transport improvements.
- **Employment Land** – The RSS Preferred Option suggests that there is a need to identify a five year “reservoir” of 96 hectares of readily available employment land across the county with an

indicative long-term supply of 288 hectares. Worcestershire Partnership has highlighted the need to ensure that the allocation of new employment land must be directly related in size and location to the new housing allocations. We also want to ensure that a balanced portfolio of employment sites is available at district level to provide good quality jobs near to where people live and minimise the need for commuting. It is important that we attract employment in the growth clusters identified in the Regional Economic Strategy such as medical and environmental technologies. The Central Technology Belt stretching from Birmingham to Malvern will provide a focus for high technology industries.

- **Ensuring that growth is targeted appropriately-** The RSS Revision Preferred Option identifies Worcester City and Redditch as “Settlements of Significant Development”, with the majority of growth in the County to take place in and around Worcester. The Worcestershire Partnership wishes to ensure that the focus on Worcester City is sustainable, and does not detract from the rest of the County.

Worcestershire Partnership submitted a formal response in January 2007 to the Phase Two RSS Revisions “Strategic Options” consultation. We will again be responding to the RSS Preferred Option when it is formally published and submitted to the Secretary of State in January 2008. We will then be providing a written submission to the Public Examination into the Revisions programmed for October 2008.

The RSS Phase Three Revision is expected to commence in November 2007. It will be looking at critical rural services, recreational provision, regionally significant environmental issues and provision for gypsy and traveller sites.

We will continue to emphasise at every opportunity that Worcestershire’s economic and social needs have to be met by appropriate and sustainable levels of growth in focussed geographical locations that enhance and not threaten the unique qualities of our towns and villages and the surrounding countryside. We will also stress that climate change is of major concern to us, the more so in the light of the exceptional severe flooding events experienced in Worcestershire over the summer.

Worcestershire Partnership will act as one of the forums where these challenging and vital debates will take place, drawing on the visions and outcomes expressed in this Strategy.

**Q10. Do you agree with the nature of the Worcestershire Partnership response to the RSS Phase Two Revision?**

### **3.2.2 Spatial Planning at the County level**

Worcestershire County Council has the responsibility for producing plans on issues that affect the whole county such as the **Minerals and Waste Development Framework**. This involves considering issues over how and where we should dispose of our waste in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way. This will be set out in the **Waste Core Strategy**. Updated guidance on minerals, particularly hard rock, will also be produced. The County Council will continue to use its powers under the Planning Acts to advise the West Midlands Regional Assembly on all strategic planning matters affecting the county. It will also provide research and policy advice in key areas such as natural resources and historic built environment to support the District Council's more detailed **Local Development Frameworks**.

### **3.2.3 Local Development Frameworks (LDF) – Spatial Planning at the District Level**

The LDF consists of a portfolio of documents (Local Development Documents or LDDs) that outline the spatial planning strategy for the local area. These documents are prepared by District Councils. They set out at District level how land will be allocated for housing, employment, and open spaces etc. Of particular importance in respect of the Community Strategy is the "Core Strategy". The **Core Strategy** plays a key role in the delivery of both district and county community strategies by setting out its spatial aspects and providing a long-term spatial vision. The Core Strategy should express those parts of the Community Strategies that relate to the development and use of land and outline that council's strategy for delivering strategic development needs including how and where new homes, schools, offices, roads, bridges and other structures will be built.

The three district Councils in South Worcestershire (Worcester City, Wychavon and Malvern Hills) are developing a Joint Core Strategy. The three northern districts and borough Councils – Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove and Redditch – are all in the process of developing their Core Strategies as individual authorities, although each of the Councils recognise the need to work together to address issues that cross administrative boundaries.

### **3.2.4 Statements of Community Involvement**

A key component of both the Community Strategy and the spatial planning framework is community engagement and involvement. How this is achieved is set out in a **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**. These describe how councils will engage communities in the preparation of their LDDs. The aim is to ensure that

consultation begins at the earliest stage of document development so that communities are given the opportunity to participate and to make a difference to how their area develops.

In future years a partnership wide Community Engagement framework will be developed - which will influence the preparation of both community strategies and spatial plans. This initiative reflects proposals in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill / Act. The Partnership's approach to this is discussed further at Section 4.2

**Q11. Is this explanation of the Spatial Planning Process helpful?**

**Q12. Does it explain the relationship between spatial and community strategies, and the links between them?**

### **3.3 Examples Of Relationships Between the Community Strategy and Spatial Plans**

The table below demonstrates the sorts of spatial policies that will relate to the Community Strategy Outcome Themes.

**Table 5 – The relationship between Community Strategy Themes and Spatial Issues**

<b>Community Strategy Theme Outcome</b>	<b>Spatial Issues</b>
Communities that are safe and feel safe	e.g. Support for CCTV or improving highway safety, housing design, housing location, sustainability, reducing car travel and tackling congestion
A better environment for today and tomorrow	e.g. Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plans, sustainable development, carbon neutral build
Economic success that is shared by all	e.g. Employment land such as the Stourport Road Employment Corridor, Longbridge site, Central Technology Belt and Bromsgrove Technology park
Improving health and well being	e.g. Siting of health facilities, identifying land for recreation and sport, providing integrated transport solutions and achieving a shift from car use to other sustainable modes, providing cycle paths and walkways
Meeting the needs of children and young people	e.g. Building skate parks siting of schools
Stronger communities	e.g. Siting of housing developments such as in the LDF Core Strategies e.g. making land available for an appropriate housing mix

**Q13. Is this table helpful?**

**Q14. Can you identify alternative examples that can be included here?**

### **3.4 Geographical Focus – Areas of challenge and opportunity**

We know that quality of life in Worcestershire is generally high.

We also know that there are some specific geographical areas of the county that face **CHALLENGES**<sup>15</sup> because of deprivation, health inequalities, worklessness or isolation from key services (see Section 2.4.2). These areas have been identified through statistical data and the District Community Strategies. They are highlighted here to signify the commitment of the Worcestershire Partnership to contribute to the improvement plans for these areas.

#### **Warndon and Gorse Hill – Worcester City**

Parts of Warndon and Gorse Hill are considered by the government to be among the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. The proposal is to develop a Community Forum for these areas bringing together public service providers and other interested parties to make a real difference.

#### **Deprived areas in Kidderminster**

**Oldington and Foley Park** have been identified as areas of particular disadvantage. They have been the focus of a Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, which has been working with both residents and service providers to improve quality of life in the area. This approach has now been extended to the **Horsefair, Broadwaters, and Greenhill** areas in Kidderminster, where a partnership approach has been adopted to focus on improving quality of life.

The **Pickersleigh** area of Malvern has been the focus of a range of initiatives aimed at improving quality of life such as a family support scheme and an active residents group (the Elgar Regeneration Group). There is further work taking place to develop a “neighbourhood profile” in order to map local issues and identify future priority.

#### **Deprived areas in Redditch**

Statistical analysis has identified the **Batchley, Greenlands and Central** neighbourhoods of Redditch as areas of deprivation.

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<sup>15</sup> These are areas that have been identified through District SCS's – not an inclusive list of areas of deprivation in the county – a final Redditch LSP community strategy has not been received.

There are also areas of the county where there are **OPPORTUNITIES** to encourage sustainable development and bring real benefits to the county. These will usually be addressed through District Local Development Frameworks, and will require input from a range of partners.

The **Central Technology Belt** runs from Birmingham, through Bromsgrove and Worcester, to Malvern along the A38, and offers the opportunity to deliver economic development by moving away from a reliance on motor manufacturing and related industries towards new sectors, such as medical technologies.

A new £120 million **Worcester University/Library** city centre campus is currently being developed and will incorporate the first joint public and university library in the UK. This represents a rare opportunity for the County to use this facility as one of the vehicles for retaining and attracting young people to Worcestershire.

**Q15. Is it useful to highlight specific geographical areas in the county wide Community Strategy? – or should a more strategic approach be taken with specific geographical issues being addressed through District SCSs?**

**Q16. If you think that these areas should be included are there any other geographical areas of challenge / opportunity that should be identified here, and what is the evidence for this?**

## **SECTION FOUR - CROSS CUTTING THEMES**

### **4.1 Tackling Environmental Challenges like Climate Change and Flooding**

#### **4.1.1 Why is tackling Environmental Challenges like Climate Change and Flooding Important?**

Worcestershire is not immune to the global and national environmental challenges that are facing us. There is widespread acceptance that climate change is already happening, and further change is inevitable. We know that the climate has changed significantly over the last century.<sup>16</sup> The extremity of change is expected to depend on such things as future levels of emissions of climate change gases such as carbon dioxide and methane (known as greenhouse gases).

The Citizens Panel survey<sup>17</sup> showed that 60% of respondents agree that climate change is already having an impact on Worcestershire. 83% of respondents thought it was important that action was taken in Worcestershire to tackle climate change. The more we do now to reduce emissions, the less extreme the expected impact.

Section 2.4.9 described the impact of the flooding in Summer 2007 on Worcestershire. Mitigating the effects of climate change is a priority in Worcestershire. This includes considering the way that people manage the environment to alleviate rather than exacerbate flood risk and flooding.

**Q17. Do you agree that tackling environmental challenges such as climate change and flooding should be a cross cutting theme?**

#### **4.1.2 Priority Outcomes**

- Raise Awareness of the issue of Climate Change, flooding and other environmental challenges
- Reduce harmful Climate Change causing gas emissions across the County by 10% by 2010 & 20% by 2020
- Assist adaptation to the impacts of Climate Change and flooding on the County

**Q18. Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes for tackling environmental challenges such as climate change and flooding?**

<sup>16</sup> Worcestershire Climate Change Impacts Study 2004

<sup>17</sup> Worcestershire Citizens Panel, June 2007.



### **4.1.3 Actions on Tackling Environmental Challenges like Climate Change and Flooding**

- Develop a Local Climate Change Impact Profile for the County
- Raise awareness of the issue of climate change through formal education, raising awareness amongst staff in organisations and businesses, using the local media and by incorporating climate change into other awareness programmes
- Reducing greenhouse gases by improving the energy efficiency of Worcestershire's housing stock and increasing the number of households that benefit from Warm Front Grants
- Reviewing our emergency response to flooding to learn lessons for the future
- Implementing our short and long term flood recovery plans
- Promoting new forms of surface water management, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, soakaways, areas of porous paving, green roofs and the like to aid flood prevention, by minimising runoff into watercourses and sewerage systems
- Encourage new homes to achieve the Code for Sustainable Homes standard
- Promoting the creation of flood storage areas, upstream of towns, where appropriate
- Develop a local system to monitor and assess and provide guidance upon the impact of climate change, particularly flooding, upon the historic environment.
- Consider how the Worcestershire Partnership can use its influence to improve the management of the environment (for example flood defences, drainage, land use) to take account of the impact of climate change

**Q19. Can you identify any further actions that the Partnership could take to tackle environmental challenges , particularly actions around adaption and resilience to climate change and flooding?**

## **4.2 Community Engagement**

### **4.2.1 Why is Community Engagement important?**

The Partnership believes that better decisions are made, better services are provided and that places are more likely to be improved and transformed when individuals and communities are given a real say and are active in shaping the places that they live.

Community engagement is our two-way relationship with communities. It is how we obtain information from local communities and individuals, and how they receive information from us. Across the Partnership's agencies and organisations there is a wide range of activity that aims

to ensure that this happens. You can find out more about our approach and find examples of what already takes place at Appendix 4.

The role of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is particularly important in enabling individuals to participate actively in their own communities through for example providing opportunities for volunteering, community development work and through delivering flexible and user focussed services. The Worcestershire Compact ensures effective partnership working between the VCS and public agencies in the county.

We recognise too the role of the sector in reaching groups who may be marginalised or excluded from the sorts of activities described above for reasons of disability, age, ethnicity, language, gender or cultural barriers. Across the partnership there are examples of specific targeted work to seek and hear these voices. For example partners were involved in Community Fairs held in Worcester, Redditch and Kidderminster – these multicultural events engaged with Black, Minority Ethnic and Eastern European communities to promote and publicise public services and gather views and opinions about community concerns. This work is important in developing cohesive communities (see 4.3 below)

**Q20. Do you agree that Community Engagement should be a cross cutting theme?**

#### **4.2.2 Priority Outcome**

- Empower local people to have a greater choice and influence over local decision making and a greater role in public service delivery.

**Q21. Do you agree that this is the priority outcome for Community Engagement?**

#### **4.2.3 Actions on Community Engagement in Worcestershire**

- Develop a framework for Community Engagement in Worcestershire – the framework should cover the whole spectrum of involvement (information, consultation, involvement and devolution), taking into account expected Government guidance
- Incorporate within the framework the work and learning developed through the Statements of Community Involvement described in Section 3
- Utilise a range of community engagement mechanisms - appropriate to the issue concerned and local circumstances.
- Ensure that community engagement is inclusive and that proactive steps are taken to reach communities that do not

traditionally participate in consultation and engagement mechanisms – see 4.3 below

- Where possible “join up” community consultation and engagement mechanisms across partners to avoid duplication (e.g. through the use of the Ask Me! Consultation Planner and Finder database)
- Develop a common framework across participating councils to respond to requests from community organisations to manage or own public assets
- Promote democracy and participation in the democratic process

**Q22. Can you identify any further actions that the Partnership could take on Community Engagement?**

## **4.3 Promoting Community Cohesion in Worcestershire**

### **4.3.1 Why is Community Cohesion important?**

The Worcestershire Partnership vision and values highlight our commitment to build communities that enhance individuals’ life opportunities, treat people with equality and value diversity and build strong cohesive communities and good community relations.

We have adopted the definition of cohesive communities developed by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion<sup>18</sup>:-

An integrated and cohesive community is one where:

- There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country
- There is a strong sense of an individual’s rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment
- There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny
- There is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common
- There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other institutions within neighbourhoods.

<sup>18</sup> Our Shared Future – Final report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (COIC), June 2007

The small size of Worcestershire's BME communities (see Section 2.4.3) requires a pro-active approach to ensure that the particular needs and concerns of these communities are listened to and addressed. Worcestershire councils are engaged in a capacity building project that will enable us to tailor our Equality and Diversity Strategies to Worcestershire's particular circumstances. This two-year project will include work to ensure that we have effectively identified and mapped gender and ethnicity across the county, and the barriers that may affect these groups. A key element of the work will be to develop a participation strategy and to enhance opportunities for positive engagement. This will enable agencies to have a strong evidence base from which to specifically tailor their equality strategies to the needs and issues identified.

Building cohesive communities is about addressing perceptions and tackling myths as well as about identifying the facts. Perceptions of cohesion are linked to a complex range of factors – including individuals' experience of deprivation and discrimination; perceptions about levels of crime and antisocial behaviour, perceptions about the impacts of immigration, and perceptions about the fair allocation of public services and resources<sup>19</sup>

Looking at the BVPI General Satisfaction Survey<sup>20</sup> 77% of Worcestershire respondents agreed that their "local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together", slightly lower than the national average of 79%.

We asked our Citizens Panel<sup>21</sup> "Compared with five years ago, do you think that different ethnic and religious groups mix with each other more or less or do you think there is no difference?" Only 11% felt groups mixed more with each other, most people (48%) said that there is no difference in the amount ethnic and religious groups mix with each other compared to five years ago, 15% felt there was less mixing, and 26% didn't know. This is important information as one of the components of cohesive communities is that there are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

The longest established minority community in the county is the Gypsy Traveller community, with generations of some local families having lived in Worcestershire for several hundred years. Despite their deep roots within the county there is evidence that Gypsy Traveller communities experience prejudice and inequality<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> COIC – Our Shared Futures

<sup>20</sup> BVPI General Satisfaction Survey 2006

<sup>21</sup> Citizens Panel June 2007

<sup>22</sup> West Midlands (West Mercia's) The Forgotten Minority, Gypsies and Travellers November 2007

More recently migrant workers have been attracted to Worcestershire, particularly to the seasonal and manufacturing work provided by the counties agricultural industries (see Section 2.4.3).

Migrant workers across the West Midlands can be found in industries such as manufacturing, transport storage and communications, hotels and restaurants and agriculture. Businesses report that they are employing migrant workers to address labour shortages.<sup>23</sup> A regional study has evidenced the positive impacts on business performance from employing migrant workers – 47% reported a positive impact on business performance. Disadvantages were communication problems due to poor English<sup>24</sup>.

In Worcestershire, as elsewhere, there may be social impacts from the growth in the numbers of migrant workers that have not yet been fully quantified. We asked the Citizens Panel<sup>25</sup> some specific questions about migrant workers. 45% of respondents believe that migrant workers are beneficial to our economy, 23% of respondents do not think they are beneficial, 27% neither agreed nor disagreed. Although 68% of respondents agree that we should respect the rights of migrant workers, only 33% think that we should do more to learn about the culture of migrant workers, and 31% disagreed with this.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that migrant workers may be displacing the Gypsy Traveller communities from seasonal agricultural work. Established Black and Minority Ethnic Communities have also expressed concern about competition for jobs, housing and resources from migrant workers.

Worcestershire's mix of urban and rural environments is an asset and a potential challenge. There has been successful work in the county to address rural isolation and to enable access to housing, training, jobs and services for people in rural communities – but community cohesion issues for people in rural communities may need to be more fully explored, for example the impact of second home owners on rural communities and possible fragmentation between established communities and "newcomers" to these areas.

The last Citizens Panel Survey showed that 30% of respondents identified "troublesome teenagers or children" as the third most important anti social behaviour problem. There may be a need to promote opportunities for inter generational activities in order to address perceptions and stereotypes that younger and older people hold about each other.

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<sup>23</sup> ibid

<sup>24</sup> ibid

<sup>25</sup> Citizens Panel June 2007

The above commentary gives an indication of community cohesion issues for Worcestershire but further work is needed to strengthen the evidence base.

**Q23. Do you agree that Community Cohesion should be a cross cutting theme?**

#### **4.3.2 Priority Outcomes**

- To ensure the development of a strong evidence base through which we will identify the main community cohesion issues in Worcestershire
- To use this evidence to take action to address specific community cohesion issues in the county

**Q24. Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes for Community Cohesion?**

#### **4.3.3 Actions on Community Cohesion**

- Undertake more detailed community mapping to identify community cohesion issues in Worcestershire
- Conduct and audit of opportunities for cross- cultural and inter faith engagement in the county
- Consider the need for and development of an Integration and Cohesion Strategy for the County

**Q25. Can you identify any further actions that the Partnership could take to support community cohesion?**

**Q26. Do you agree that these are the priority cross cutting themes, if not what do you think should be included here?**

## **SECTION FIVE – COMMUNITY STRATEGY OUTCOMES**

### **5.1 Priority Outcomes addressed by this Community Strategy**

Partnership working is all about “adding value” - that is increasing the impact that we can collectively make to improving quality of life in Worcestershire over what can be achieved by working as separate individuals and organisations. The themes and outcomes in this Strategy have been selected precisely because they need this partnership approach, looking at the evidence and then identifying those issues where collectively we can make a difference; these are the difficult issues that cannot be solved by one agency alone.

The table over sets out the priority outcomes that this strategy will address.

**Table 6 - Priority Outcomes for Worcestershire’s Sustainable Community Strategy**

<p><b>Communities that are Safe and Feel Safe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To reduce crime</li> <li>- To re-assure the public by reducing the perception of crime</li> <li>- To reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs and alcohol</li> <li>- To build respect for communities and to reduce anti social behaviour</li> </ul>	<p><b>A Better Environment – for Today and Tomorrow</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To protect and improve Worcestershire’s natural and historic environment</li> <li>- To promote the prevention, re-use, recycling and recovery of waste</li> <li>- To address issues of water quality, supply, consumption and drainage in Worcestershire</li> <li>- To increase energy efficiency and increase the amount of energy generated from renewable sources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economic Success that is Shared by All</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To promote technology led growth benefiting all sectors and parts of the County</li> <li>- To support the sustainable development of the County through infrastructure development (in particular, transport infrastructure), and establishing Worcester as a sub regional focus</li> <li>- To remove barriers to employment and improve skills</li> <li>- To ensure that Worcestershire’s economic interests are effectively represented at all levels</li> </ul>	<p><b>Improving Health and Well Being</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To support adults to lead healthy lifestyles</li> <li>- To reduce health inequalities</li> <li>- To improve the quality of life and independence of older people and those with a long term illnesses</li> <li>- To improve mental health and well-being</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To support children and young people to lead healthy lifestyles</li> <li>- To prevent bullying and support those affected by it</li> <li>- To raise educational achievement</li> <li>- To ensure children and young people have things to do and enjoy their communities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stronger Communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To provide decent, affordable housing which meets the diverse needs of Worcestershire</li> <li>- To improve quality of life in Worcestershire by providing vibrant, sustainable cultural opportunities for all</li> <li>- To support effective volunteering which is accessible to all</li> <li>- To reduce income deprivation, including child and pensioner poverty</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cross – Cutting Themes</b></p> <p><b>Tackling Environmental Challenges like Climate Change and Flooding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To raise awareness of the issues of Climate Change, flooding and other environmental challenges</li> <li>- To reduce harmful climate change causing gas emissions</li> <li>- To assist adaption to the impacts of climate change and flooding on the county</li> </ul> <p><b>Community Engagement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To empower local people to have a greater choice and influence over local decision making and a greater role in public service delivery</li> </ul> <p><b>Community Cohesion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To ensure the development of a strong evidence base through which we will identify the main community cohesion issues in Worcestershire</li> <li>- To use this evidence to take action to address specific community cohesion issues in the county</li> </ul>	



## **5.2 Relationships between Community Strategy themes and outcomes**

Although these outcomes are presented thematically here, in reality many of them have an impact on each other.

As part of the consultation process we will be using an “integration tool” to ensure that this Strategy has considered and demonstrated all the cross linkages between the different outcomes, and look at how themes and outcomes can contribute to each other.

This is the case in many areas of this strategy – in the final version of this document the process mapping work on that the Partnership is undertaking on addressing worklessness and how this impacts across the themes, will be used to illustrate this.

## **SECTION SIX - COMMUNITIES THAT ARE SAFE AND FEEL SAFE**

### **6.1 Priority Outcomes**

1. To reduce crime
2. To re-assure the public by reducing the perception of crime
3. To reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs and alcohol
4. To build respect for communities and to reduce anti-social behaviour

**Q27. Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence for this?**

### **6.2 Why are these the outcomes the priorities?**

We know that the level of crime is for our residents the most important factor in making an area a good place to live.<sup>26</sup> In fact compared to national and regional figures since 2003/04, crime reduction in Worcestershire has been amongst the highest in the country (see Section 2.4.4. for further details).

The incidence of crime can be more concentrated in particular geographical locations (e.g. the urban centres of Redditch, Kidderminster and Worcester City). However, that does not mean that the significance of the impact of crime in other parts of the County is not treated seriously. We will continue to prioritise work to combat domestic abuse and hate crimes. Hate incidents could range from verbal assault or intimidation to the fortunately far more uncommon racially aggravated violence.

Overall 92% of our Citizens Panel respondents<sup>27</sup> feel safe in their neighbourhood during the day. After dark the figure changes to 62%. There is a significant difference between those respondents living in rural areas who feel safe after dark in comparison to those living in urban areas (73% and 57% respectively). We recognise that there is more to be done to reassure those that live, work or visit Worcestershire of the relative safety that we all enjoy. Encouragingly crime is no longer identified by most of our residents as one of the top three issues that most needs improving in the county – indicating that fear of crime is beginning to be addressed.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Best Value General User Survey 2006 / 07

<sup>27</sup> Citizens Panel June 2007

<sup>28</sup> BV General Satisfaction Survey 2003/4 level of crime was a top three priority for improvement in Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest. In 2007 only Redditch included crime as a top three priority

We know that misuse of illegal drugs and alcohol can fuel crime and anti social behaviour<sup>29</sup>. Between April 2006 and March 2007 drug offences increased by nearly 13 percent. It is estimated that there are 2500-3000 'problematic drug misusers' within the county;<sup>30</sup> and 146,369 harmful and hazardous drinkers<sup>31</sup>. We have a clear Strategy to reduce the harm of drugs and alcohol in the county.<sup>32</sup> The West Mercia Fear of Crime Survey shows a slight reduction in the proportion of respondents in Worcestershire who think illegal drug misuse in their local area is a fairly or very serious problem (29% in 2007 compared with 31% in 2006).

We are concerned to tackle anti social behaviour – things like noisy neighbours, littering, abandoned and burnt out vehicles, vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property. Whilst these may be less significant problems in Worcestershire (27% of respondents to the Worcestershire Best Value General Satisfaction survey said this was a problem, compared with 39% nationally) they are issues that make a big impact on our quality of life and affect our perception about how safe we are in our neighbourhoods. Treating each other with respect and consideration is something for which we are all responsible.

**Q28. Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?**

### **6.3. Actions over the next 5 years**

- Tackling and reducing the level of crime and disorder with specific emphasis on:
  - criminal damage
  - burglary
  - violent crime
  - personal robbery and theft
  - vehicle crime
  - anti social behaviour
- Working together on a monthly basis to review the facts about crime and anti social behaviour to identify any geographical "hotspots" or emerging issues. This " multi agency tasking" enables us to respond early and quickly when problems are identified
- Implement the recommendations of the joint strategic review of domestic abuse services across Worcestershire including priorities to support the domestic abuse helpline, to develop multi agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) and specialist domestic violence

<sup>29</sup> Alcohol misuse and related crime in Worcestershire Jan 2002 – Dec 2003, Worcestershire SMAT

<sup>30</sup> Frischer M, Heatlie and Hichman M (2004). Estimating the prevalence of problematic and injecting drug use for Drug Action Team areas in England

<sup>31</sup> Reducing the harm of drugs and alcohol: A strategy for Worcestershire 2005 - 2008

<sup>32</sup> ibid

- courts (SDVC), to develop perpetrator programmes and to increase the range of provision to adults and children affected by abuse.
- Extending the Hate Incident reporting schemes - these put the victim at the centre of our concern
  - Continuing to be responsive to our communities' concerns about crime through mechanisms such as:
    - Neighbourhood policing initiative – local policing teams have been established across the county to enable police to be easier to contact and more visible in the community
    - Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings – an opportunity for police, partners and communities to meet and agree local policing priorities and report back on progress
    - Responding to issues raised through Community Calls for Action<sup>33</sup>
  - Continuing to implement our strategy to reduce the harm of drugs and alcohol to both individuals involved and the wider community
  - Developing action plans right across the county to build respect in our communities and to tackle anti social behaviour
  - Raising awareness of the problems caused by littering and develop volunteer groups to help to tackle this issue
  - Working together to reduce levels of graffiti and respond quickly to remove litter, fly tipping and abandoned vehicles
  - Continuing to strengthen joint working on these issues by bringing together the three Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in the north of the county to form one North Worcestershire CSP

**Q29. Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.**

## **6.4 Benefits to Worcestershire**

- Reductions in levels of crime
- Concerns about crime and community safety are listened to, understood and acted upon – people are re-assured and realistic about levels of crime in the county
- Reduction of the harm caused by drugs and alcohol to the individuals involved and to the community
- Reduction in anti social behaviour - which will improve quality of life for everyone
- Improvements to the environment with less litter and graffiti

**Q30. Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?**

<sup>33</sup> A mechanism by which communities can raise issues of concern about crime with District Ward Councillors

## **SECTION SEVEN - A BETTER ENVIRONMENT – FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW**

### **7.1 Priority Outcomes**

1. To protect and improve Worcestershire's natural and historic environment
2. To promote the prevention, re-use, recycling and recovery of waste
3. To address issues of water quality, supply, and consumption and land drainage in Worcestershire
4. To increase energy efficiency and increase the amount of energy generated from renewable sources

**Q31. Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence for this?**

### **7.2 Why are these outcomes the priorities?**

The quality of the county's environment is one of its most valuable assets, and includes a rich built heritage, varied and sensitive habitats and diverse landscape. Residents have repeatedly told us how much they value Worcestershire's environment.<sup>34</sup>

Two habitats are of particular significance in Worcestershire - species-rich grassland and wetlands. The county is a national stronghold for species-rich lowland grassland, containing a significant proportion of the national resource. With three major rivers (the Severn, Teme and Avon) and numerous tributaries, wetland habitats such as wet grassland are also a major feature in the county. These habitats and others are included in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Worcestershire, which sets targets for their restoration and creation. Achieving these targets is a major challenge, which the county needs to meet if we are to retain our valued and valuable biodiversity in the face of future impacts such as climate change and urban expansion.

Worcestershire's archaeological sites and historic buildings are an irreplaceable asset that contribute to our understanding of the present and the past. They need to be considered within their surrounding landscape, which can itself be of significance in defining the character of the county

We have developed a process to annually report on and monitor the condition of the Worcestershire environment. At the end of each year,

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<sup>34</sup> Citizens Panel Survey – 2003 and 2005

a State of the Environment Report is prepared to publicise the findings. The information collected aims to give a key indication of the State of the Environment in Worcestershire. The Report provides accessible and scientifically sound information to inform the preparation of policy, and has been used as the evidence base for the priorities included in this Strategy. It can be found at [www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk](http://www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk).

The next two decades will continue to see waste management in the United Kingdom transformed. The changes presented by climate change, along with more stringent government targets, new UK and European legislation and a higher social awareness will drive these challenges. The cost of dealing with domestic waste in Herefordshire and Worcestershire in 2006/07 was £28 million and these costs are increasing. We need to divert waste from landfill sites. Landfill tax will increase from £24 to £56 per tonne within the next few years and new treatment facilities will be needed to treat our waste so that we can meet the changes in legislation.

Domestic waste is only about one fifth of the amount of commercial, industrial, construction and demolition waste produced in the county – these amount to about one and a quarter million tonnes of resources, less than half a million tonnes of which is currently recycled.

We must make tough decisions as to how we tackle the problem. We need to consider waste as a resource. Everyone can play their part by reducing, reusing, and recycling as much waste as possible. 77% of Citizens Panel respondents gave a high priority to increasing the range and amount of materials that are recycled.<sup>35</sup>

Water is a vital natural resource, the management of which is fundamental to sustainable development. It plays an important role in the County in terms of its contribution to landscape character, as well as making a significant economic contribution, for example in agricultural irrigation and recreational use. There are a number of water issues facing the County including river water quality, rates of water consumption, infrastructure requirements in particular sewerage capacity linked to proposed new developments and flooding and other climate change impacts. This will be an important area of work over the coming years.

We are all aware of the contribution of “greenhouse gases” to climate change<sup>36</sup>. A significant proportion of these greenhouse gases arise from our energy use and our dependence on diminishing and increasingly expensive fossil fuel reserves. Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, together with increasing energy efficiency measures and

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<sup>35</sup> All references to the Citizens Panel are from responses to the June 2007 survey

<sup>36</sup> See IPCC report on climate change

increasing the use of renewable energy, can make a significant contribution to reducing carbon emissions. 90% of the Citizens Panel support the generation of renewable energy in Worcestershire. 69% of Panel members gave a high priority to constructing extremely energy efficient buildings, 65% gave a high priority to improving energy efficiency in existing buildings and 51% of respondents gave a high priority to ensuring new developments generate renewable energy on site.

**Q32. Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?**

### **7. 3. Actions over the next 5 years**

- Continue to implement and develop the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan<sup>37</sup> which aims to protect Worcestershire's variety of plants, birds and animals, the habitats in which they live and the interactions between them
- Establish a Geodiversity Action Plan for the county - geodiversity is the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils and soils which, combined with biodiversity, make up the physical landscape
- Identify and progress priorities to enhance and protect Worcestershire's landscape character, which has arisen as a result of a combination of agricultural uses, buildings, wildlife and local traditions as well as underlying geology
- Contribute to the regional agenda through the Landscapes for Living project dealing with biodiversity and landscape character
- Protect and enhance ancient woodlands by restoring these sites to native woodland and increasing the sustainable management of woodlands
- Develop a Worcestershire Historic Environment Action Plan which aims to protect Worcestershire's rich physical heritage of archaeological sites, historic buildings and historic landscapes and complements and interacts with Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plans, with an immediate focus on legislative change, development pressures and climate change
- Review and monitor the Joint Waste Municipal Management Strategy<sup>38</sup> and commission the required waste management facilities to increase recycling and recovery to ensure diversion from landfill
- Encourage prevention, re-use, recycling and recovery of waste through public awareness / information campaigns and for example by developing the re-use / recycling capacity of voluntary and community sector organisations

<sup>37</sup> Biodiversity Action Plan 1999 and Revisions 2007

<sup>38</sup> The Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy is jointly produced by Hereford Council, Worcestershire County Council and all of Worcestershire's District Council's

- Improve water quality – all surface and ground waters should reach “good status” (this is achieved by meeting demanding environmental objectives) by 2015 as set out in the EU Water Framework Directive
- Ensure that issues of water, water use reduction, drainage and sewerage are taken account of in the spatial planning process.
- Promote the use of renewable energy in the county
- Developing a renewable energy paper to influence spatial planning in the county

**Q33. Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.**

## **7. 4 Benefits to Worcestershire**

- Increased and improved understanding, management and use of the natural environment
- Increased wildlife, able to withstand pressures such as climate change
- Saving resources that are currently wasted, at considerable expense
- Appropriate facilities to manage a reduced quantity of waste
- Water will be conserved and its quality improved and new developments will avoid flood risk areas
- Increased take up of renewable energy technologies

**Q34. Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?**



## **SECTION EIGHT - ECONOMIC SUCCESS THAT IS SHARED BY ALL**

### **8.1 Priority Outcomes**

1. **Business** – to promote technology led growth benefiting all sectors and parts of the County
2. **Place** – to support the sustainable development of the County through infrastructure development (in particular, transport infrastructure), and establishing Worcester as a sub regional focus
3. **People** – to remove barriers to employment and improving skills
4. **Powerful Voice** – to ensure that Worcestershire’s economic interests are effectively represented at all levels

These priorities reflect those of the Regional Economic Strategy.

**Q35. Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence for this?**

### **8.2 Why are these outcomes the priorities?**

“In ten years time, technology-led growth will have contributed to the sustainable development of Worcestershire and strengthened its role as an economic driver for the region – acting as a catalyst for all sectors of the economy and areas of the County to benefit and providing well paid and highly skilled jobs and a high quality of life for residents.” This is the bold vision for Worcestershire’s economy. Economic success underpins many of the other outcomes identified in this Strategy.

A key area of work is diversifying the county’s economic base and developing a knowledge driven economy. Worcestershire has a higher proportion of workers in low technology industries and a lower proportion of workers in knowledge based services compared with both the regional and national average.<sup>39</sup> Our objective is to create jobs and encourage employment in high technology industries to provide a sustainable base for the county’s economy in the long term.

Section 3 describes the level of housing growth identified for the county over the next ten years, and the focus for development on Worcester City. Location of employment opportunities near to housing development, tackling congestion, promoting sustainable integrated

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<sup>39</sup> Worcestershire County Economic Assessment 2006 -2007 Table 2.18 Employees by industry as a percentage of all employees, Page 26

transport are all key to ensure that the building blocks are in place to enable sustainable development that protects quality of life. Residents consistently tell us that transport and road congestion are issues that are important and of concern to them.<sup>40</sup> Ensuring all Worcestershire residents can access key services including education, training and employment is a major part of a transport strategy to support the county's economic aspirations.

Worcestershire's unemployment rate is below the national and regional average<sup>41</sup>. However in order for residents to benefit from business diversification and to attract high technology industries there needs to be concerted action to improve educational and skills attainment across all age ranges. Section 10 sets out our aspiration to raise educational achievement. Worcestershire has an above the national average of 19 year olds who are not in employment, education or training.<sup>42</sup> We aim to increase levels of participation for this age group. We also have a higher than the regional and national average of working age population at NVQ1 level<sup>43</sup>.

Section 2.4.8 described worklessness in the County. People need support to rebuild confidence after a period out of the workforce and work is needed with employers to tackle barriers to employment. The Voluntary and Community Sector have a key role to play here.

Worcestershire also experiences considerable level of "churn" – whereby seasonal and low skill workers move frequently as employment opportunities become available.

To meet our vision for our economy we need to ensure that we have tapped into the talent pool in the county, and raised skill levels to enable people to take on the technical and supervisory roles that our economic strategy will attract.

Worcestershire's economic aspirations are ambitious. We are well placed to benefit from the outcomes of the Sub National Economic Review, which will devolve significant economic development to county level. Worcestershire will become a higher value added economy, making an important contribution to closing the £10billion regional output gap, by providing well paid jobs and a high quality of life for its workers.

**Q36. Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?**

<sup>40</sup> Priority for county strategy from 4 of 6 District LSP strategic priorities

<sup>41</sup> Economic Assessment 2006 –2007, Table 4.4 Unemployment by District, August 2006, Page 74

<sup>42</sup> Annual Performance Assessment 2007

<sup>43</sup> ONS annual population survey (Qualifications Jan 2006 – Dec 2006)

## **8. 3. Actions over the next 5 years**

- Working with the Central Technology Belt to maximise the potential for technology growth, linking to expertise in Malvern and Birmingham
- Encouraging environmental businesses to Worcestershire through demonstrating expertise in this area
- Reducing the reliance on private car travel through improvements to walking, cycling and passenger transport networks
- Ensuring the successful delivery of key physical developments that contribute to the economic prosperity of the county, such as the Worcester City Centre Masterplan, which outlines plans for the University of Worcester campus, the new Library & History Centre and the development of the riverside
- Improving transport infrastructure through the Worcester Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy to facilitate the sustainable growth of Worcester City.
- Ensuring that towns such as Kidderminster, Redditch and Bromsgrove have a strong robust future economy by improving the skill levels of local residents and creating good quality jobs.
- Ensuring that market towns continue to support their rural hinterlands by remaining as an attractive focus for business, residents and visitors
- Encourage visitors to Worcestershire, and work with providers in the tourism sector to ensure that visitors want to return
- Targeted work on those vulnerable young people who are not accessing employment, education and training, e.g. young offenders and pregnant teenagers
- Improving the skills of the existing workforce – particularly focusing on those at NVQ Level 2+ and below to move them onto NVQ level 3 & 4
- Utilise the skills, knowledge and resources of the voluntary and community sector to promote an active and vibrant social economy in Worcestershire, providing business solutions to meet community needs
- Working with AWM to demonstrate how economic development can be successfully delivered at the county level, including looking across county boundaries to identify opportunities to enhance the economy to mutual advantage

**Q37. Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.**

## **8. 4 Benefits to Worcestershire**

- Increase in the numbers of and access to quality jobs in the County
- Increase in skill levels of people of employment age
- Increase in wage levels as a result of economic diversification
- Reduction in the numbers of people who are workless in the county
- Increase in the number of visitors to the County
- Minimise the impact of traffic congestion through reducing reliance on private car travel and improving opportunities to use sustainable transport
- Reduce the number of children who are not in employment, education and training.

**Q38. Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?**

## **SECTION NINE - IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELL BEING**

### **9.1 Priority Outcomes**

1. To support adults to lead healthier lifestyles
2. To reduce health inequalities
3. To improve the quality of life and independence of older people and those with a long term illnesses
4. To improve mental health and well-being

**Q39. Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence for this?**

### **9.2 Why are these outcomes the priorities?**

If adults cannot be encouraged to lead healthier lifestyles the repercussions will affect not only particular individuals, but all of us because of the knock on implications for local services and the economy. Reducing smoking, obesity and alcohol consumption are all priorities nationally and regionally. Between 20 – 25% of adults smoke, this figure is higher in disadvantaged areas.<sup>44</sup> Smoking causes one fifth of deaths from circulatory disease and one third of all cancer deaths.<sup>45</sup> Obesity is another major cause for concern. Two thirds of adults are classified as overweight and obese<sup>46</sup> – and again these rates are higher in disadvantaged areas. Obesity is now a major cause of diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Alcohol misuse is responsible for social and health problems. One fifth of adults drink more than the safe limit<sup>47</sup> - highest rates being among young adults and those living in disadvantaged areas. The death rates from alcohol related liver disease are rising<sup>48</sup>, as are the number of A&E attendances due to alcohol misuse - over 1,200 visits in 2006/07<sup>49</sup>.

The above figures demonstrate that there is a clear link between areas of disadvantage and health. Detailed mapping work has been carried out to identify "hot spot" areas across Worcestershire<sup>50</sup> to enable targeted interventions to address health inequalities

<sup>44</sup> West Midlands Regional Lifestyle Survey, 2005, West Midlands Regional Observatory (WMRO)

<sup>45</sup> Smoking Kills – ONS General Household Survey 2003

<sup>46</sup> Regional Lifestyle Survey *ibid*

<sup>47</sup> Regional Lifestyle Survey *ibid*

<sup>48</sup> WMRO

<sup>49</sup> Hospital Episode Statistics 2006/07

<sup>50</sup> PCT Health Hotspots mapping, October 2007

Section 2.4.1 described the expected increase in the older population in Worcestershire. Almost half of the people aged 65 and over have a Limiting Long term Illness.<sup>51</sup> Clearly ensuring that older people stay healthy with a good quality of life for as long as possible – and shaping services to maintain older people’s independence whilst addressing often complex needs is a key issue for the future.

About one sixth of people will suffer from a mental illness during their lifetime. There is much we can do to prevent mental health problems and to treat them early. We also need to ensure that people with mental health problems have access to high quality health services and opportunities for a full and productive life.

**Q40. Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?**

### **9. 3. Actions over the next 5 years**

- Increasing awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles.
- Increasing the capacity of the smoking cessation service and providing signposting into the service
- Development of a weight management service
- Increasing opportunities for sport and other physical activities
- Local projects to improve awareness and access to healthy food in disadvantaged areas
- Developing and implementing Healthy Transport strategies
- Development of a Health Trainers service to provide support for people in disadvantaged areas to develop healthier lifestyles
- Focusing mainstream service on disadvantaged areas to improve access
- Increasing the capacity of alcohol services, particularly for early interventions to prevent harm
- Maintaining work in Worcester, Redditch and Evesham through the WINN project, which provides early intervention and low level support services that will help older people stay healthy, active and independent as long as possible
- Reviewing day services for older people to provide an appropriate mix of services depending on people’s needs
- Improving management of people with long term conditions
- Joint review and commissioning of mental health services

**Q41. Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.**

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<sup>51</sup> 2001 Census

## **9. 4 Benefits to Worcestershire**

- There will be a reduction in the proportion of adults who smoke
- Overweight and obese adults will lose weight
- More adults will be participating in sport or other physical activities
- Death rates from circulatory diseases and cancers will fall.
- More services will be accessible on foot or bicycle
- There will be better access to services for people from disadvantaged areas
- Health will improve more quickly in the most disadvantaged areas and the health gap between these areas and the county as a whole will narrow
- There will be a reduction in hospital attendances for alcohol related conditions
- There will be fewer delayed discharges from acute and community hospitals

**Q42. Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?**

## **SECTION TEN - MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **10.1 Priority Outcomes**

1. To support Children and Young People to lead healthy lifestyles
2. To prevent bullying and support those affected by it
3. To raise educational achievement
4. To ensure children and young people have things to do and enjoy their communities

**Q43. Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence for this?**

### **10.2 Why are these outcomes the priorities?**

Leading a healthy lifestyle as a child / young person carries health benefits into adulthood. There has been a focus in recent years on promoting the importance of a healthy diet for children and young people. The number of overweight and obese children has risen steadily over the last 20 years. Nationally 13.4% of children aged 2 – 10 were defined as obese – indicative results for Worcestershire show the figure is lower but still over 10%<sup>52</sup>. Research shows that obese children are at risk from a number of serious health problems more usually seen in adulthood, including higher risk of heart attack and stroke, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes<sup>53</sup>. Concern about this agenda is reinforced by our Citizens Panel<sup>54</sup>, where education for parents and educating children about healthy eating and exercise were suggested as ways of increasing the life expectancy of children and young people in Worcestershire. In addition, young people in Worcestershire report above average smoking and alcohol consumption levels.<sup>55</sup>

The proportion of under 19s who are pregnant is reducing at a lower rate than the national target. These young women are less likely to achieve economic wellbeing for themselves or their children, which means their children get a poor start in life.<sup>56</sup>

Bullying is a major national agenda, and was identified by the Children's Commissioner for England as the top agenda for young

<sup>52</sup> Health Survey for England 2004

<sup>53</sup> Audit Commission – Tackling Childhood Obesity – First Steps

<sup>54</sup> Citizens Panel – June 2007

<sup>55</sup> Audit Commission TellUs 2 Survey 2007

<sup>56</sup> Ofsted Annual Performance Assessment Dataset for Worcestershire for 2007



people.<sup>57</sup> This concern is reflected in Worcestershire, where young people reported both an experience of, and concern about, bullying which was above the national average.<sup>58</sup>

Educational achievement is a critical determinant of good life chances in adulthood. Although Worcestershire's performance remains above average, the gap with similar areas is narrowing and it still means that less than half of all young people do not achieve 5 GCSE's at A\* to C grade including Maths and English.<sup>59</sup> Performance is also behind the stretch target for the Local Area Agreement.

Nearly half of all respondents (48%) to the June 2007 Citizens Panel survey do not think that children have enough opportunity to play safely and freely within walking or cycling distance of their home. Providing more activities for teenagers was also the top priority for improvement from the Best Value General Satisfaction User Survey.

**Q44. Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?**

### **10.3 Actions over the next 3 years**

- As part of our new Obesity Strategy, children in year 6 and reception classes in school are being measured and weighed. This will establish a baseline against which further progress can be judged when year 6 and reception children are measured and weighed in future years.
- Continue rolling out the Healthy Schools programme to schools and assist 50 early years providers to work towards "Healthy Settings" status
- Continue working on the revised Teenage Pregnancy Plan Strategy
- Improve sex and relationship education in schools, with a particular focus on schools in areas of identified need
- Make sure all professionals working with young people are fully trained on how to talk to young people about sex and relationships issues
- Improving systems for collecting and electronically recording the incidence of bullying, ensuring there is consistent recording and reporting
- Use data on bullying and the results of ongoing consultations to further develop the anti-bullying strategy
- Develop systems for recording bullying and the impact of strategies in out of schools settings

<sup>57</sup> Bullying Today – Children's Commissioner Office, 2007

<sup>58</sup> Audit Commission TellUs 2 Survey 2007

<sup>59</sup> Ofsted Annual Performance Assessment Dataset for Worcestershire for 2007

- Training/briefing programmes on Anti-Bullying to be rolled out across all partners, including schools and school governors and review policy guidance in light of feedback from schools
- Develop and consult on an action plan to prevent bullying of vulnerable groups
- Work with schools to continue to improve performance at each key stage of education from foundation to post 16.
- Work with schools where there is evidence of underachievement, and intervene where necessary to ensure that problems are resolved and schools improve
- Continue to work with schools to increase the percentage of young people who achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C
- Implement the national improvement strategies for primary and secondary schools, and support schools where underachievement is apparent, so that children can achieve better at school
- Continue to show that young people's achievement improves as the progress through school [referred to as 'value added' measure]
- Increase the percentage of young people who achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C
- Continue to reduce the percentage of young people at Key Stage 3 / 4 who are permanently excluded from school.
- Put in place an integrated youth support strategy so that all young people have receive information, advice and guidance, are able to access positive activities and receive targeted support when the need arises
- Increase the number of 'Positive Activities for Young People' provided by all partners and the voluntary sector
- Establish a Play Strategy Action Plan for each District Council.
- Develop partnerships at a local level through the Community and School Clusters, so that there are local solutions to meet local needs
- Develop and make information for parents available through the Family Services Directory, particularly for children at the point they transfer to and between school, college or employment.
- Promote the [www.pluginandplay.org.uk](http://www.pluginandplay.org.uk) website to coordinate, publicise and promote positive activities for young people across Worcestershire

**Q45. Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.**

## **10.4 Benefits to Worcestershire**

- More children and young people with healthy diets
- Fewer women under 18 becoming pregnant
- Fewer children and young people are bullied
- More children and young people who are bullied are helped and supported
- A wide range of learning experiences are available, giving children and young people skills for life
- Better results at school, especially for those groups who usually do less well
- Greater access by children, young people and their families to community resources

**Q46. Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?**

## **SECTION ELEVEN - STRONGER COMMUNITIES**

### **Priority Outcomes for Stronger Communities**

1. To provide decent, affordable housing which meets the diverse needs of Worcestershire
2. To improve quality of life in Worcestershire by providing vibrant, sustainable cultural opportunities for all
3. To support effective volunteering – which is accessible to all
4. To reduce income deprivation including child and pensioner poverty

**Q47. Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence for this?**

### **11.1 To provide decent, affordable housing which meets the diverse needs of Worcestershire**

#### **11.1.1 Why is this a priority outcome?**

A suitable, decent and affordable home is central to ensuring that local residents enjoy a good quality of life and contributes to the sustainability of our local communities. Housing impacts on a wide range of customers and service provision within the county and an inclusive, partnership approach is essential to achieve successful outcomes for local people.

The recent Housing Green Paper 2007 has highlighted the need for more homes to meet the growing demand, well designed and greener homes which are linked to good schools, transport and healthcare, and more affordable homes available to buy or rent. This is supported by recent local research into the housing markets that operate across the county and indeed the sub-region.

Government has set targets for achieving the Decent Homes Standard and to improve energy efficiency (Home Energy Conservation Act) in both socially rented and private homes and this is supported by local Stock Condition Survey evidence. There are proven links between property standards and health.

There is a strong commitment to ensure that vulnerable people within our communities receive the support they need to enable them to live independently where possible. This is supported by a robust partnership approach as set out in a range of countywide strategies that include Supporting People, Older People and Homelessness strategies.

**Q48. Do you know of any other evidence relating to this outcome that should be included here?**

### **11.1.2 Actions Over the Next five Years**

- To work in partnership to evidence local needs and to use this to develop policy responses
- To maximise the development of new affordable housing in sustainable rural and urban locations to meet local needs whilst ensuring that new homes are well designed and more energy efficient
- To ensure that the needs of rural communities are met and sustained for the future
- To increase the range of housing options available for local people and prevent homelessness wherever possible but when this cannot be achieved to support people in temporary accommodation and to secure alternative housing
- To make the best use of the existing stock and ensure that choices are made available for people to live in good quality, suitable accommodation which meets their needs
- To tackle fuel poverty by improving affordable warmth and thermal comfort particularly for vulnerable people and those on low incomes
- To provide a range of housing and support options for older and vulnerable people to enable them to maintain their independence
- To ensure that housing related services contribute to other key policy areas such as community safety, health, social care, sustainability, regeneration and climate change

**Q49. Are there any other partner actions relating to this outcome that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.**

### **11.1.3 Benefits to Worcestershire**

- Reduced levels of homelessness and shared accommodation
- Increased levels of independent living
- More choice of housing and support options
- Improved standards of accommodation
- Less fuel poverty
- Improved health
- Less energy usage
- More mixed and sustainable local communities

**Q50. Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?**

## **11.2 Improve quality of life in Worcestershire by providing vibrant, sustainable cultural opportunities for all**

### **11.2.1. Why is this outcome a priority?**

Access to culture, leisure and recreation have a key role to play in enhancing the quality of life in Worcestershire. Recent government research<sup>60</sup> shows that cultural and recreational activity have a positive impact on the way that people feel about the place that they live, as well as having personal benefits to individuals in terms of improved health, confidence, and providing opportunities for learning and self expression. Actions relating to this outcome contribute to many of the other themes in this Strategy.

**Q51. Do you know of any other evidence relating to this outcome that should be included here?**

### **11.2.2. Actions over the next 5 years**

- Through the countywide network of facilities and services, engage adults onto a wide range of high quality, challenging and inspiring programmes to enhance the physical, intellectual and emotional well being of individuals, society and for community cohesion
- Use innovative ways to broaden access to Worcestershire's heritage (museums, archaeology and archives) for everyone in the County to develop a sense of place and identity and a pride in where they live
- Enable all children and young people to access quality sport and play opportunities through the direct provision of facilities and services and the implementation and delivery of Worcestershire Play Strategy and Physical Education and School Sport Club Links Strategy and associated district action plans
- Develop and enable a wide range of opportunities for people within Worcestershire to take part in a visual or performing arts activity
- To increase access to and enjoyment of natural greenspace in both rural and urban areas through the provision, management and promotion of a network of countryside sites<sup>61</sup>, urban greenspace and rights of way<sup>62</sup>
- Directly provide, or assist the voluntary sector in providing, high quality leisure events for our local communities
- Continue to support and recognise the significant contribution that our thriving voluntary and community sector make to Culture across Worcestershire, through the provision of grants, facilities,

<sup>60</sup> DCMS Culture on Demand

<sup>61</sup> See Worcestershire Countryside Access and Recreation Strategy

<sup>62</sup> See Rights of Way Improvement Plan

promotion and publicity of activities, information, advice and guidance appropriate to the array of clubs, organisations and groups within the County

**Q52. Are there any other partner actions relating to this outcome that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.**

### **11.2.3 Benefits to Worcestershire**

- There will be more opportunities for people to enjoy cultural activities
- People will feel more able to participate in society with improved confidence, health or education as a result of improved confidence, health, or education as a result of involvement in a cultural opportunity
- Worcestershire will benefit economically through increased tourism
- The cultural heritage of Worcestershire will be preserved for future generations to enjoy

**Q53. Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?**

## **11.3. To support effective volunteering – which is accessible to all**

### **11.3.1. Why is this a priority outcome**

Volunteers make an invaluable contribution to the quality of life in Worcestershire. Their commitment benefits those they work with, the voluntary groups and services they support, local employers, the community, and the environment. Their activities also benefit the volunteers themselves, offering them new experiences and helping them develop new skills, in some cases providing an opportunity to “put something back” into society, in others a chance to re-build confidence and self-esteem.

**Q54. Do you know of any other evidence relating to this outcomes that should be included here?**

### **11.3.2. Actions Over the Next Five Years**

- Reducing barriers to volunteering and ensuring that volunteering activity is valued, adequately resourced and well managed
- Promoting the importance, recognition and value of volunteering throughout Worcestershire

- Developing, promoting and continuously improving standards of good practice in working within voluntary organisations and in supporting all aspects of volunteering
- Promoting equal opportunity to volunteering
- Improving the accessibility and opportunities of volunteering
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of volunteer-placing organisations and those of individual volunteers
- Enabling leaders within the volunteering sector to work together throughout Worcestershire to unite as partners

**Q55. Are there any other partner actions relating to this outcome that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.**

### **11.3.3 Benefits to Worcestershire**

- Residents have opportunities to develop skills and employability
- Isolation is reduced, with opportunities to develop more and new social contacts
- Volunteers are engaged in their community
- Community cohesion is increased

**Q56. Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?**

## **11.4 To reduce income deprivation, including child and pensioner poverty**

### **11.4.1 Why is this a priority outcome?**

A total of six areas in Worcestershire – the Old Warndon and South-West Gorse Hill areas in Worcester City, the Rifle Range and Horsefair areas in Kidderminster, Batchley in Redditch and part of the Westlands estate in Droitwich - have rankings in the top 10% most deprived in England for income deprivation affecting children. National research shows that the highest concentration of child poverty outside London is in the West Midlands.<sup>63</sup>

A further fourteen areas in Worcestershire are within the top 10% most deprived areas nationally for income deprivation affecting older people. Eleven of these areas are in Redditch.

Poverty has a direct impact on the health of those affected. Problem debt can result in stress, depression or anxiety and cutting back on

<sup>63</sup> Households Below Average Income 1994/95-2003/04. DWP & National Statistics (2005).



food or heating also affects physical health.<sup>64</sup> Low household income in childhood can be at the root of many of the cycles of deprivation, often leading to poor education attainment and low self-esteem<sup>65</sup> and, in some circumstances, to crime and re-offending. Research shows that almost a fifth of prisoners in the UK experience problem with rent arrears, unpaid bill and fines; problems that many find worsen while they are in prison.<sup>66</sup>

**Q57. Do you know of any other evidence relating to this outcome that should be included here?**

#### **11.4.2. Actions Over the Next Five Years**

- Establishing a County wide task group to tackle issues leading to child and pensioner poverty and develop an action plan
- Improving benefit administration, with the emphasis on benefit take-up, by joining up services and challenging negative perceptions
- Reducing over-indebtedness and financial exclusion by working alongside and building on existing work of organisations such as the Worcestershire Credit Union and Citizens Advice Bureaux
- Ensuring close links with existing initiatives to reduce worklessness, to support those who want to work but cannot due to incapacity or family pressure, back into employment.

**Q58. Are there any other partner actions relating to this outcome that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.**

#### **11.4.3 Benefits to Worcestershire**

- Fewer children and pensioners living at or below the poverty line
- Increase in residents taking up the benefits to which they are entitled
- Fewer residents taking on unmanageable debt and reduced incidences of loan sharking
- Increase in levels of financial literacy in the County
- Reduction in health inequalities in the most economically disadvantaged parts of the County

**Q59. Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?**

<sup>64</sup> Action on Debt: why it matters and what you can do. Social Exclusion Unit (2004), p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> Breaking the Cycle: taking stock of progress and priorities for the future. Social Exclusion Unit (2004).

<sup>66</sup> Through the Prison Gate: a joint thematic review by HM Inspectorates of Prisons & Probation, Home Office (2001).

## **SECTION TWELVE - IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

### **12.1. The Worcestershire Local Area Agreement (LAA)**

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) is the primary means by which this Community Strategy will be delivered.

The LAA is an agreement between central government and public bodies in Worcestershire. It is prepared by the county council on behalf of the Worcestershire Partnership and negotiated with the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM). In 2006 the Worcestershire Partnership signed its first LAA, which will run until 2009. The LAA follows the themes of this community strategy. It contains 39 outcomes with associated indicators and targets. This includes 13 reward targets. These targets encourage us to stretch our performance beyond what we would normally achieve. If we are successful by the end of the Agreement we will be rewarded with additional money.

The LAA is reviewed every six months. The Government have recently described a new role for LAAs as the delivery mechanism for SCS, and as the central delivery contract between central Government and local government and its partners. In future the LAA will draw on the outcomes set out in this Community Strategy to set specific measures for delivery. Some of the measures to be included in Worcestershire's LAA will be negotiated with GOWM to reflect national priorities, others will be driven by the Partnership and reflect our local issues and concerns.

The LAA will not specify HOW the partnership will deliver the outcomes – but will focus on WHAT the desired outcome will be, in a way that is precisely measurable. Once partners have agreed to a target in the LAA they are individually and jointly responsible for making sure that it is delivered.

It is expected that the LAA will contain up to 35 improvement targets for the area and 18 mandatory early years and performance targets from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

The next LAA will follow a new approach to allocating funding. Most funding for core services will come mainly from the Revenue Support Grant, which is not ring fenced. There will also be an Area Based Grant, which will contain funding streams from across Government Departments.

In addition other funding will come through specific grants, although the Government's presumption is against this approach. In some limited circumstances this will happen where funding allocations are difficult to predict and are uncertain (e.g. grants which are demand-led).

The full detail of funding of future LAA priorities is still being developed – up to date information can be obtained as it becomes available from the Worcestershire Partnership website and the "In Brief" Partnership bulletin.

The Partnership has set up an easy to use model that tracks progress against LAA targets using a "traffic light" system. Outcomes are reported as being on target (green), borderline (amber), or below target (red). This model enables the Partnership to check that we are on course for success – or to take corrective action.

You can find out more about the LAA at:

<http://www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk>

## **12.2. Worcestershire Partnership Management Group and Theme Groups**

The Worcestershire Partnership Board recognised the need for a smaller group to manage the day to day running of the LAA and so the Management Group was formed, consisting of representatives from the key sectors on the Board.

The Management Group is responsible for performance managing the targets we set ourselves in the LAA.

The Partnership's Theme Groups lead on delivering the outcome measures. The people responsible for coordinating each of the thematic blocks of the LAA report to the Management Group on a rotating basis. This enables them to identify when problems arise and address these before it's too late. The Management Group has also appointed a performance management champion who closely monitors the performance of all partners responsible for delivering the agreement.

## **12.3. District Local Strategic Partnerships**

All of our District LSPs will be delivering actions against the themes in this Community Strategy at the local level.

In addition District LSPs are represented on the Worcestershire Partnership Board, Management Group and Thematic Groups –

ensuring continuity and co-ordination of activity at the local and strategic level.

## **12.4. Local Development Frameworks**

Section 3 of this Strategy sets out the relationship between the Community Strategy and spatial plans. Through these relationships the LDFs will provide the necessary spatial expression of this Community Strategy.

## **12.5. Through other agencies and partnerships**

The Worcestershire Partnership aims to ensure that the county's needs and interests are advocated and recognised at the regional and national level.

The Partnership recognises that the whole Community Strategy cannot be delivered within the county. It will also influence the planning and decision-making processes of other regional and national agencies and partnerships over the coming years.

## **APPENDIX ONE – SOURCES OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

1. Worcestershire Citizens Panel Surveys, February 2003, May 2005, June 2007, Worcestershire County Council
2. Best Value User Survey 2003/04, Audit Commission
3. Best Value User Survey, 2006/2007, Audit Commission – Results from Bromsgrove DC, Malvern Hills DC, Worcester Alliance, Wyre Forest DC, Wychavon DC Council Surveys and Worcestershire County Council
4. Office of National Statistics, Population Projections
5. Centre for Census & Social Research (CSSR), University of Manchester
6. Index of Multiple Deprivation for England 2004
7. 2001 Census
8. Number of National Insurance Number Registrations 2002 – 2007
9. British Crime Survey Comparator Crimes
10. Department for Education and Science data 2006 & 2007 (note some of this data is *provisional* at the time of writing (Nov. 07))
11. Annual Business Inquiry 2004 and 2005
12. Agricultural Census, DEFRA
13. Annual Population Survey, 2005 and 2006
14. Cambridge Econometrics, March 2007
15. DEFRA 2004,2005
16. Annual Population Survey
17. Labour Force Survey 2005
18. PayCheck CACI Household Income Model
19. Job Centre Plus data
20. Department for Work and Pensions, 2007
21. Strategic Assessments (Crime and Disorder) for each District, North & South Worcestershire, 2007
22. Alcohol Misuse and Related Crime in Worcestershire Jan 2002-Dec 2003, Worcestershire SMAT
23. IPCC report on climate change
24. Worcestershire County Economic Assessment 2006-2007
25. ONS Annual Population survey
26. Worcestershire Health Profile, 2007, NHS
27. West Midlands Regional Lifestyle Survey, 2005, West Midlands Regional Observatory
28. Smoking Kills, ONS General Household Survey 2003
29. HES - Hospital Episodes Statistics 2006/07
30. PCT Health Hotspots mapping, October 2007
31. Health Survey for England 2004
32. TellUs 2 Survey, Audit Commission, 2007
33. Ofsted Annual Performance Assessment Dataset for Worcestershire 2007
34. Department of Work and Pensions, Households Below Average Income 1994/95-2003/04

35. Improving Community Safety, Fact Sheet, 2007 – 2008,  
Worcestershire County Council
36. Strengthening Worcestershire's Economy, Fact Sheet, 2007 –  
2008, Worcestershire County Council
37. Enhancing Services to Young People, Fact Sheet, 2007 – 2008,  
Worcestershire County Council
38. Audit Commission Area Profile for Worcestershire, 2006

## **APPENDIX TWO – KEY PLANS AND STRATEGIES**

### **European Plans and Strategies**

1. European Landscape Convention, 2004, Congress of Regional & Local Authorities of the Council of Europe

### **National Plans and Strategies**

1. Strong and Prosperous Communities, Local Government White Paper October 07, CLG
2. Our Shared Futures, June 07, Commission on Integration and Cohesion
3. Making Assets Work – The Quirk Review of community management and ownership of public assets, Quirk Review Team
4. Opening the transfer window: The government's response to the Quirk Review, CLG
5. Working together for well-being: from vision to reality, LGA
6. UK Climate Change Programme, 2006, DEFRA
7. National Community Safety Action Plan, 2006 –2009, Home Office
8. Crime and Disorder Act Review, 2006, Home Office
9. Together We Can Action Plan, June 2005, Home Office
10. Respect Action Plan, January 2006, Home Office
11. Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy, 2004, Cabinet Office
12. Cleaner Safer Communities, November 2004, ODPM
13. Tackling Drugs Changing Lives, Home Office
14. Cutting Crime: A New Partnership 2008-11, Home Office
15. Countryside Quality Counts – Tracking Change in the English Countryside, 2006, Natural England
16. National Planning Policy Guidance & Statements, CLG
17. Heritage White Paper, 2007, DCMS
18. Woodfuel Strategy for England, 2006, Forestry Commission
19. Developing our Water Resources Strategy for England & Wales, Consultation Document, 2007, Environment Agency
20. Waste Strategy, 2007, DEFRA
21. Energy White Paper, 2007, DTI
22. Delivering a Sustainable Railway: White Paper, 2007, DfT
23. Planning White Paper, 2007, CLG
24. Choosing Health: making healthy choices easier, 2004, DoH
25. Our Health, Our Care, Our Say, January 2006, DoH
26. Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives, 2002, DCMS
27. Tackling Childhood Obesity – First Steps, Audit Commission
28. Bullying Today, 2007, Children's Commissioner Office
29. Code for Sustainable Homes – a step-change in sustainable home building practice, 2006, CLG

30. Delivering Housing Strategy through Local Area Agreements, Chartered Institute of Housing & IDeA
31. Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable. Housing Green Paper, 2007, CLG
32. Culture on Demand, 2007, DCMS
33. Culture & the Shared Priorities, 2004, DCMS/LGA
34. Action on Debt – Why It Matters and What You Can Do, 2004, Social Exclusion Unit
35. Breaking the Cycle, 2004, Social Exclusion Unit
36. Through the Prison Gate: a Joint Thematic Review, 2001, HM Inspectorates of Prisons & Probation, Home Office

## **Regional Plans and Strategies**

1. WM Regional Spatial Strategy, 2004 and subsequent revisions, West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA)
2. WM Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revisions Options Consultation, January 2007, WMRA
3. WM Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revisions Preferred Option, October 2007, WMRA
4. Worcestershire Partnership response to WM Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revisions Options Consultation, Worcestershire Partnership
5. West Midlands Economic Strategy Consultation Draft, May 2007, Advantage West Midlands (AWM)
6. Regional Skills Assessment, 2006, West Midlands Regional Skills Partnership
7. West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy, 2007, AWM
8. Regional Biodiversity Strategy, 2005, West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership
9. Green Infrastructure Strategy for the West Midlands, Forestry Commission
10. West Midlands Regional Energy Strategy & Adaptation Programme, 2004, Energy West Midlands
11. Regional Assembly Climate Change Action Plan, 2007, West Midlands Regional Assembly
12. Healthy Choice? You Decide: Developing a Regional Health and Well-Being Strategy, West Midlands Regional Health Partnership
13. West Midlands Regional Lifestyle Survey
14. Investing in Health, A Strategic Framework for the West Midlands, 2007 – 2012, NHS West Midlands
15. West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy, 2005, West Midlands Regional Assembly
16. Valuing People & Places: West Midlands Cultural Strategy, 2006, Culture West Midlands



## **Sub-Regional Plans and Strategies**

1. Rural Regeneration Zone Implementation Plan, 2007-2010, AWM
2. West Mercia Divisional Policing Plan, 2005-2008, West Mercia Police
3. West Mercia Fear of Crime Survey, 2006, West Mercia Police
4. Severn River Basin District - River Basin Planning: working together, statement of steps and consultation measures for preparing Severn River Basin management plan, Environment Agency
5. Water for life and livelihoods – River Basin Planning: summary of significant water management issues (Severn River Basin District), 2007, Environment Agency

## **Worcestershire Plans and Strategies**

### **Cross – Cutting Themes**

1. Impacts of Climate Change in Worcestershire, 2004, Worcestershire County Council
2. Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy, 2004, Worcestershire County Council
3. Worcestershire Flood Recovery Plan, Worcestershire, August 2007
4. An investigation into the barriers to integration as perceived by young people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds in the Worcestershire area, Worcestershire Racial Equality Council
5. West Midlands Forgotten Minority, Meeting the needs of the Gypsy Traveller Community, November 2007
6. Economic Impact of Migrant Workers in the West Midlands, November 2007, LSC

### **Communities that are Safe and Feel Safe**

7. Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnerships Strategy (CSP) 2005 – 2008
8. Redditch CSP Strategy, 2005 - 2007
9. South Worcestershire's CSP Strategy 2005 – 2008
10. Wyre Forest CSP Strategy 2005 – 2008
11. West Mercia's Divisional Policing Plans 2005 – 2008
12. Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy
13. Worcestershire's SMAT Treatment Plans (Adult, young people)
14. Reducing the Harm of Drugs and Alcohol – A Strategy for Worcestershire, SMAT, 2005- 2008

### **A Better Environment for Today and Tomorrow**

15. Biodiversity – Endangered Wildlife of Worcestershire, 1998, Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership
16. Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment, 1999
17. Biodiversity Action Plan for Worcestershire, 1999, Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership

18. Worcestershire State of the Environment Report, Worcestershire Partnership Environment Group
19. Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Herefordshire and Worcestershire, 2004 – 2034, Worcestershire County Council, District Councils and Herefordshire Council

### **Economic Success that is Shared by All**

20. Worcestershire County Economic Summary
21. State of Worcestershire Economy 2007, Worcestershire Partnership, Economy & Transport Theme Group
22. Worcestershire Economic Strategy, 2004, Worcestershire Partnership, Economy & Transport Theme Group
23. Destination Worcestershire Business Plan, 2007, Destination Worcestershire
24. Worcestershire Rural Action Plan, 2004, Worcestershire Partnership, Economy & Transport Theme Group
25. Worcestershire Food & Drink Action Plan, Worcestershire Partnership, Economy & Transport Theme Group
26. Strengthening Worcestershire's Economy Fact Sheet, Worcestershire County Council
27. Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 2, 2006 – 2011, Worcestershire County Council
28. Worcestershire Accessibility Strategy 2006 –2011, Worcestershire County Council
29. Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy, 2007, Worcestershire County Council
30. Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy, 14 Best Practice Reports, 2007, Worcestershire County Council

### **Improving Health and Well Being**

31. Day Services for Older People, Draft Strategy, September 2007
32. Worcestershire Supporting People Five Year Plan
33. Worcestershire Joint Commissioning Strategy for Mental Health, 2007 – 2012, Worcestershire Mental Health Trust
34. Worcestershire's SMAT Treatment Plans (Adult, young people), Worcestershire SMAT
35. Reducing the Harm of Drugs and Alcohol – A Strategy for Worcestershire, SMAT, 2005- 2008
36. Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Strategy
37. Work to develop the Joint County Council / PCT Strategic Needs Assessment

### **Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People**

38. Making life better: Every child and young person, every agency, one plan. Worcestershire Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2009, Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership
39. Raising Standards in Schools Fact Sheet, 2007, Worcestershire County Council

40. TellUs2 Survey of Children and Young People, June 2007

**Stronger Communities**

41. Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy
42. Living Life to the Full: A Cultural Strategy for Worcestershire, 2002-2007, Worcestershire Partnership Cultural Theme Group
43. Worcestershire Play Strategy
44. Worcestershire Arts Strategy, Worcestershire County Council
45. Physical Education and School Sport Club Links Strategy
46. Worcestershire Countryside Access & Recreation Strategy, 2007, Worcestershire County Council
47. Worcestershire Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Worcestershire County Council
48. Valuing Worcestershire Volunteers in 2007 and beyond – draft, 2007, Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium
49. Valuing Worcestershire Volunteers, 2006-2007, Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium
50. Worcestershire Compact, 2006 (and draft Volunteering Code of Practice, 2007), Worcestershire Partnership,
51. Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium 10 Year Strategy, 2006-2016, Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium

**District<sup>67</sup> / Local Plans**

1. Community Strategy for Worcester 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2007 – 2012, Worcester Alliance
2. Shaping the Future Together, Wychavon Community Strategy, September 2007, Wychavon Core Group
3. Sustainable Community Strategy, Malvern Hills District, 2006 – 2016, Vision 21
4. Helping to Transform Your Life, Community Strategy 2007, Wyre Forest Matters
5. Your District, Your Future, Bromsgrove Sustainable Community Strategy, 2007 – 2010, Bromsgrove Partnership
6. Written submissions from Bromsgrove LSP, Vision 21 Malvern Hills, Worcester Alliance, Wyre Forest Matters, Wychavon Core Group about District LSP priorities for inclusion in the County SCS
7. Redditch Partnership Four Cross Cutting Priorities
8. Written submission from Wychavon DC and Worcester City Council
9. South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy, Draft, November 2007, Malvern Hills DC, Worcester City DC, Wychavon DC
10. Wyre Forest Core Strategy, Issues and Options Paper, July 2007, Wyre Forest DC
11. Bromsgrove Core Strategy, Issues and Options Paper, June 2005 (preferred option in development 2007), Bromsgrove DC

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<sup>67</sup> NOTE – District SCS's have been built on a local evidence base that will refer to District, Neighbourhood and Parish Plans as appropriate – these references have therefore not been reproduced here.

12. Redditch Town Plan No.3 (core strategy in development 2007),  
Redditch BC
13. Central Technology Belt Business Plan, 2002 onwards, CTB
14. University of Worcester Strategic Plan, 2007-2012, University of  
Worcester
15. Community Housing Business Plan, Wyre Forest Community  
Housing

## **APPENDIX THREE – WORCESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE**

The Worcestershire Partnership structure chart (below) shows how the partnership is organised to deliver Worcestershire's Local Area Agreement and our Sustainable Community Strategy. The Worcestershire Partnership Board is the strategic body of the Partnership and develops the vision for Worcestershire. The Management Group ensures the continuous development of the Worcestershire Partnership as a driving force for change, picks up on key themes and issues from the theme groups and oversees the development of the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement on behalf of Worcestershire Partnership Board. The Theme Groups are the 'engine rooms' of the partnership and are responsible for turning strategy into practice. There are also three task groups that focus on specific areas of interest.

### **Worcestershire Partnership Board**

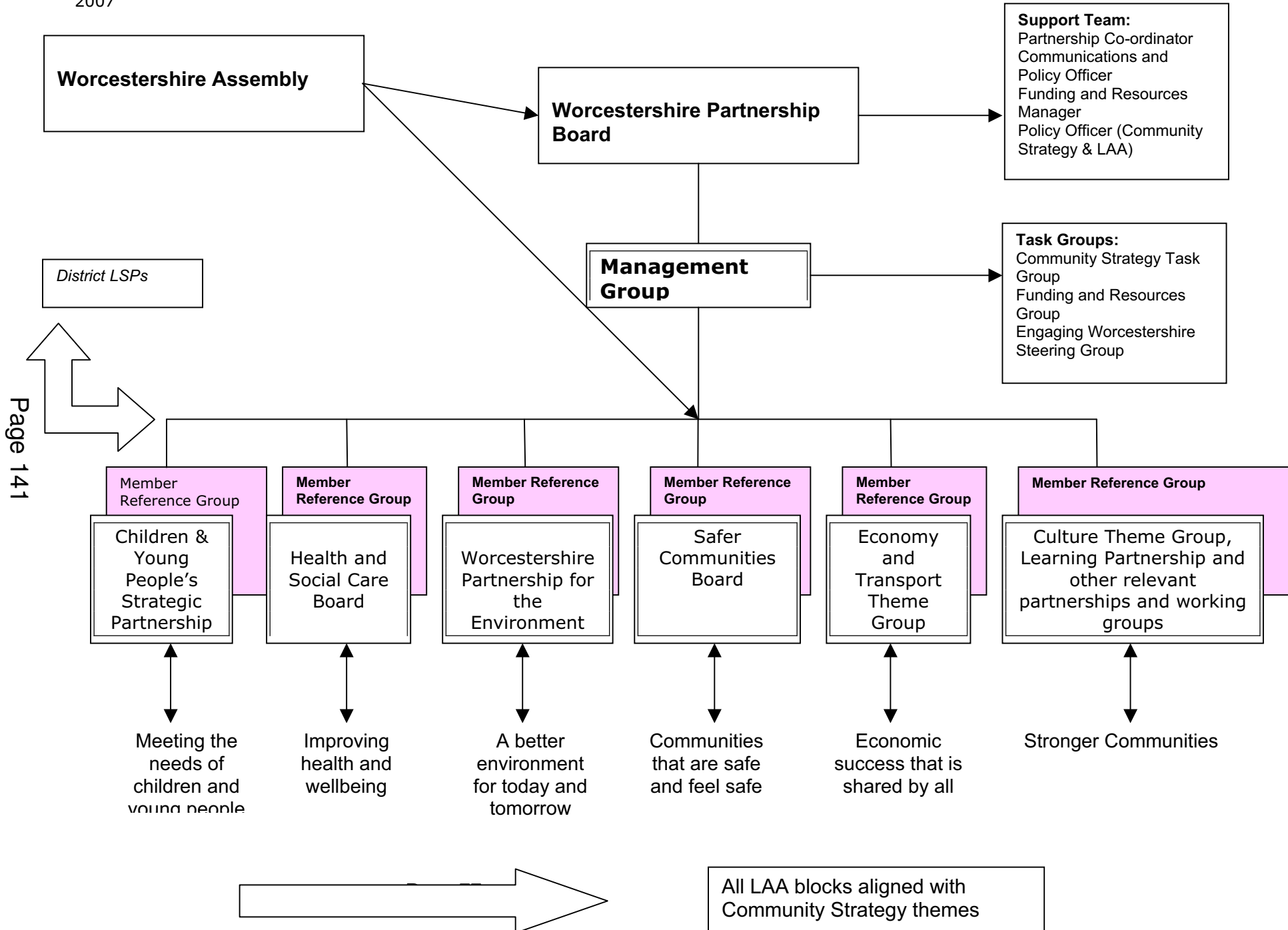
The Worcestershire Partnership Board is the strategic body of the partnership and is responsible for:

- Identifying and agreeing strategic priorities for the county
- Shaping the countywide Community Strategy and Worcestershire's Local Area Agreement
- Gaining partner agreement to the vision, values and outcomes of the partnership
- Agreeing the roles and responsibilities of the key elements of the wider partnership structure and delegating work to them
- Debating issues of mutual interest and concern
- Identify cross-cutting issues and gaps and overlaps in countywide provision
- Representing Worcestershire at a regional and national level.

### **Membership**

- Worcestershire County Council
- Wyre Forest District Council
- Wychavon District Council
- Worcester City Council
- Redditch Borough Council
- Malvern Hills District Council
- Bromsgrove District Council
- Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils
- Wyre Forest Matters
- Wychavon Local Strategic Partnerships
- Worcester Alliance
- Redditch Partnership
- Vision 21
- Bromsgrove Partnership

- Worcestershire Primary Care Trust
- Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community First
- Diocese of Worcester
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Learning and Skills Council
- Jobcentre Plus
- Local Development Agency Network
- Racial Equality Council
- Thomas Vale Construction plc
- University of Worcester
- West Mercia National Probation Service
- West Mercia Police Constabulary
- Worcestershire Wildlife Trust
- Worcestershire Partnerships NHS Mental Health Trust



## Appendix 4 – Examples of Community Engagement in Worcestershire

Community Engagement can be best described by using a simple model **The Ladder of Participation**. The table below sets out each stage of the ladder, describes what it means and then gives some examples of work that is already happening in Worcestershire.

**Table 6. Examples of Community Engagement in Worcestershire according to the Ladder of Participation**

<b>The Ladder</b>	<b>What does this mean?</b>	<b>Examples in Worcestershire</b>
Informing	Telling people what is planned so that they are informed about what is happening.	e.g. Area Forums / Spotlights – county council and partner meetings that enable information exchange on specific topics for people in a particular location. e.g. Council Tax leaflets give information about how councils, police and fire and rescue services spend public money.
Consulting	Asking people’s opinion – Consultation should offer a number of options and listen to the feedback received. The decision is made taking account of the results of consultation alongside other factors.	e.g. Citizens Panels / Surveys – questionnaires that ask residents opinions on issues or topics – able to give a representative “snapshot” of opinion.
Deciding Together	Encourage people to provide some additional ideas and options, and to decide together the best way forward.	e.g. Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings - police led events linked to neighbourhood policing areas that enable residents to identify, prioritise and tackle issues of importance to them.
Acting Together	Not only do different interests decide together what is best, but also they form a partnership to carry it out. They are equally responsible for the outcome.	e.g. Oldington and Foley Park Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder – puts residents in charge of identifying the improvements needed in their area.  e.g. Sure Start Childrens Centres – these projects aimed at pre school children and families include parents and residents in their management structures.
Supporting independent community initiatives	Help communities to meet their own needs - perhaps within a framework of grants, advice and support provided by a resource holder.	Community management and ownership of buildings – e.g. community organisations leasing community centres.  Worcestershire Partnership Funding Portal – offers a single point for organisations to obtain funding advice.  Grant aid / funding to voluntary organisations – this funding is levered in from a wide range of sources and enhances and supports quality of life across the county.





**For further information about this Draft Sustainable Community Strategy please contact:**

**Jennifer Springer,  
Worcestershire Partnership,  
County Hall,  
Spetchley Road,  
Worcester,  
WR5 2NP**

**Tel 01905 728745**  
[scsconsultation@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:scsconsultation@worcestershire.gov.uk)

**PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMMENTS ON THIS STRATEGY TO  
JENNIFER BY:**

**14<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2008**

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL – RESPONSE TO  
WORCESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP DRAFT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY  
STRATEGY

Q1 Do we need more information about the Worcestershire Partnership?

Detail sufficient.

Q2 Is this section helpful? Do you have any suggestions of examples we could include here?

Useful background detail.

Q3 Can you think of any other factors that should have shaped this Strategy and which should be included in this diagram?

No other factors.

Q4 Can you recognise Worcestershire from the 'story' set out here?

Worcestershire is recognisable from the story of place, but there are too many geographic references to the southern part of the county.

Q5 - Q7 Q5: Is there any other information that should be included?  
Q6: Do you agree with the points made in the SWOT analysis?  
Q7: Do you have any points that you feel should be included in the SWOT analysis?

Agree with points made in the SWOT analysis, as stated in Q4, the geographic areas listed are almost all in the southern half of the county, for example, Norton Parkway – there is no mention of the Bromsgrove railway regeneration, which amounts to a £12 million investment. Bromsgrove town centre is also clearly a weakness in terms of the urban offer with regard to the county's towns.

Weaknesses

- Lack of sports facilities – no current knowledge of county's needs is available
- Bromsgrove town centre

Opportunities

- Play opportunities via Play Strategy(ies) – more Sport England funding being accessed via the County Sports Partnership
- Bromsgrove town centre (including relocation of railway station) and Longbridge redevelopment

### Threats

- Affordable housing – countywide issue but of particular significance to Bromsgrove. The Regional Spatial Strategy allocates 1,400 houses to be built in Bromsgrove over the next 20 years, most of which needs to be affordable housing. This is the smallest allocation in the region, but it is proposed that 3,300 houses of Redditch Borough’s allocation be built within Bromsgrove District. This would exacerbate the already unbalanced market.

Q8 Do you know of any other plans, strategies or documents that should be included in Appendix 2?

Unaware of other plans, strategies or documents that should be included in Appendix 2. Pleased to see ‘Your District, Your Future’ listed.

Q9 Is this diagram helpful in describing these relationships?

The diagram is a useful explanation of relationships between spatial plans and community strategies. It may be useful to add boxes giving reference to parish plans and/or neighbourhood plans.

Q10 Do you agree with the nature of the Worcestershire Partnership response to the RSS Phase Two Revision?

Agree with the Worcestershire Partnership’s response to RSS Phase 2 Revision. However, Bromsgrove Council is intending to object to the RSS Phase 2 Revision on two grounds. Firstly, there is insufficient housing to meet the affordable housing needs of the District, and secondly, the Council does not support the provision of housing for Redditch Borough’s needs within the District boundary of Bromsgrove on the edge of Redditch due to the potential loss of Green Belt land. The Council is unhappy with the inflexibility of this allocation and would prefer to have control over the siting of the allocation.

Q11 & Q12 Q11: Is this explanation of the Spatial Planning Process helpful?  
Q12: Does it explain the relationship between spatial and community strategies, and the links between them?

The explanation of the Spatial Planning Process is helpful and it does explain the relationship between spatial and community strategies and the links between them.

Q13 Is this table helpful?

The table is helpful.

Q14 Can you identify alternative examples that can be included her?

Bromsgrove District Council has Sense of Community as one of its objectives and priorities and considers this one of the biggest challenges facing local government. Spatial planning can play a significant role in shaping and designing communities that are cohesive between generations and different groups of society.

Further examples:

Better Environment: - Bromsgrove railway station redevelopment

Economic Success: - Bromsgrove town centre

Stronger Communities:– Designing children and young people and different generations into developments.

Q15 Is it useful to highlight specific geographical areas in the county wide Community Strategy – or should a more strategic approach be taken with specific geographical issues being addressed through District SCS?

Bromsgrove District Council supports the high level thematic approach but recognises that such an approach can make it more difficult to refer to what is actually happening on the ground. The Council would be keen to see specific targets under themes – eg affordable housing through the release of appropriate release of land, town centre, railway station.

Q16 If you think that these areas should be included are there any other geographical areas of challenge/opportunity that should be identified here, and what is the evidence for this?

Opportunities:

Longbridge regeneration should be added. It is a major priority for the Bromsgrove Partnership and the District Council and aims to:

- Create 10,000 new jobs over a 10-year period;
- Create 500-700 new homes, with 35% being affordable;
- Provide appropriate community facilities to provide a sense of community for new residents.

Bromsgrove Railway Station Regeneration.

- Over the last 10 years, numbers of those who use the station has increased by 400%, the strongest growth rate in Worcestershire, is the most used un-staffed station on Central Trains area and has only basic facilities.
- The relocated station has a budget of approximately £12 million.
- A new station would enhance the gateway into the District, improve accessibility, passenger facilities and train services. Secondary benefits include socio

economic benefits , opportunities for further development in Bromsgrove, linkages to the town centre and Technology Park and employment opportunities that the new station with improved capacity will offer.

Bromsgrove Town Centre – currently has a poor retail offer and the layout is undoubtedly the worst in the county when set alongside the economic wealth of the District. Worcestershire County Council has recognised this and will be funding a project manager post to work on the redevelopment.

Q17 Do you agree that tackling environmental challenges such as climate change and flooding should be a cross-cutting theme?

Tackling environmental challenges such as climate change and flooding should absolutely be a cross cutting theme. Such issues cannot be addressed adequately in isolation.

Q18 Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes for tackling environmental challenges such as climate change and flooding?

Agreed that these are the priority outcomes for tackling environmental challenges such as climate change and flooding. However, we feel that the first bullet point in paragraph 4.1.2 is not specific enough and consideration should be given to rewording/strengthening the outcome.

Q19 Can you identify any further actions that the Partnership could take to tackle environmental challenges, particularly actions around adaption and resilience to climate change and flooding?

Para 4.1.3 – The bullet point that states:  
Encourage new homes to achieve the Code for Sustainable Homes Standard – we feel that a stronger word than ‘encourage’ should be used – e.g. ‘impel’.

Consider adding dredging the River Severn in order to increase the volumetric capacity of the river in order to carry more water. The effect of this would reduce the possibility of the river breaching its banks which causes flooding in local towns or areas.

We feel that the Worcestershire Integrated Passenger Transport should be added to the list.

Q20 Do you agree that Community Engagement should be a cross cutting theme?

Agree that Community Engagement should be a cross cutting theme. Bromsgrove District Council and the Bromsgrove

Partnership recognises the role played by the voluntary and community sector. BDC has its own local Compact charter, which is driven by a steering group and has its own action plan. BDC and the LSP have built a strong relationship with its VCS partners and supports events during National Compact Week and Carers' Week for example.

BDC is supporting two pilot area forums (with a proposal to extend to a further two forums), which are currently being evaluated. BDC regularly consults via surveys and focus groups (and has plans to extend its programme) on a wide variety of issues and contributes regularly to PACT meetings, all of which are beginning to empower local people to have a greater choice and influence over local decisions and a greater role in public service delivery.

Q21 Do you agree that this is the priority outcome for Community Engagement?

Agree with the priority outcome. Based on the response to Q20, Bromsgrove District Council strongly supports community engagement as a priority as demonstrated by the levels of activity within the District.

Q22 Can you identify any further actions that the Partnership could take on Community Engagement?

No further actions identified, but we support the development of a clear framework for engagement, particularly a framework for neighbourhood management. The Council's experience is that senior officer support of such initiatives has a beneficial impact of the community's perception of the Council.

Q23 Do you agree that Community Cohesion should be a cross cutting theme?

We strongly support community cohesion as a cross cutting theme but feel that the focus is too narrow and government led, focusing specifically on BMEs, economic migration etc. Whilst these are important issues, there are wider issues of societal breakdown – e.g. anti social behaviour, inter-generational conflict and a general loss of sense of community.

We understand the term as it is used here but would like to see it changed to become less jargonistic – perhaps becoming 'sense of community' rather than 'community cohesion'.

Q24 Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes for Community Cohesion?

Agree with the priority outcomes for Community Cohesion, but is

more evidence required to determine that we have an issue around the loss of sense of community?

Q25 Can you identify any further actions that the Partnership could take to support community cohesion?

We feel that the focus is a bit narrow here. Could consider the challenge of community cohesion breakdown – i.e. anti-social behaviour. This may be picked up in the proposed detailed community mapping but is a potentially big challenge. Could consider things that bring people together – traditionally events, sports and arts budgets suffer during budget rounds, but these are the things that bring people together.

Q26 Do you agree that these are the priority cross cutting themes? If not, what do you think should be included here?

Agree with the priority cross cutting themes.

Q27 Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not, what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence for this?

Agree with the priority outcomes. They reflect the Bromsgrove Partnership's SCS priorities.

Q28 Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?

Not aware of other evidence.

Q29 Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes, please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.

No further partner actions identified.

Q30 Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?

No other benefits identified.

Q31 Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not, what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence for this?

Agree with the priority outcomes. They reflect the Bromsgrove Partnership's SCS priorities.

Q32 Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?



Not aware of other evidence.

Q33 Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes, please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.

No further partner actions identified.

Q34 Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?

No other benefits identified.

Q35 Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not, what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence for this?

Agree with the priority outcomes. They reflect the Bromsgrove Partnership's SCS priorities.

Q36 Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?

Not aware of other evidence.

Q37 Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes, please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.

Bullet point 4- Consider adding:

- Longbridge regeneration site will contribute to economic prosperity. This is a priority in the Bromsgrove SCS and the BDC Council Plan 2007 – 2010.
- Regeneration of Bromsgrove town centre.

On a general point, the list feels very Worcester-centric and the reference to the Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy for Worcester city is intriguing when there are major problems around the A38 in Bromsgrove and the railway station being critical to development of both the District and county.

Q38 Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?

A further bullet point:

- Increase the retail offer in the county.

Q39 Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not, what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence

for this?

Agree with the priority outcomes. They reflect the Bromsgrove Partnership's SCS priorities.

Q40 Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?

Not aware of other evidence.

Q41 Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes, please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.

No further partner actions identified.

Q42 Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?

No other benefits identified.

Q43 Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not, what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence for this?

Agree with the priority outcomes. They reflect the Bromsgrove Partnership's SCS priorities and we particularly welcome priority 4 as the Council has a real concern that children and young people are being demonised.

Q44 Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?

Not aware of other evidence; however, BDC recently held a conference where 45 children and young people aged between 7 and 18 years attended. The Council will be setting up local working groups of children and young people to consider the issues identified and how they can be addressed.

Q45 Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes, please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.

Consider adding;

- Physical activity – being developed on a county and district basis via Community Sports Networks and Sports Partnerships.
- Play – via Play Strategy(ies).

Q46 Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?

Final bullet point – amend to read:  
Greater access by children, young people and their families to  
community resources **and access to play facilities.**

Q47 Do you agree that these are the priority outcomes? If not, what do you think should be the priority outcomes and what is the evidence for this?

Agree with the priority outcomes. They reflect the Bromsgrove Partnership's SCS priorities. However, should volunteering be within the Community Engagement section?

This is first time that older people are really mentioned in the outcomes. Is the definition of pensioner poverty too narrow? There are references to older people in the document, but given the scale of the issue, is the focus on social care too narrow? We believe more consideration needs to be given around preventative services –e.g. healthy living groups – to bring communities together.

Q48 Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?

Not aware of other evidence but BDC intends to conduct focus groups for people aged 60 – 85 to look at their needs. The LSP is also working on re-invigorating the Older People's Forum in the District.

Q49 Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes, please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.

No further partner actions identified.

Q50 Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?

No other benefits identified.

Q51 Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?

Not aware of other evidence.

Q52 Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes, please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.

No further partner actions identified.

Q53 Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?

No other benefits identified.

Q54 Not aware of other evidence.

Q55 Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes, please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed.

No further partner actions identified. Work is being done locally to address these issues.

Q56 Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?

Consider adding a further bullet point:

- Sharing skills and knowledge between sectors.

Q57 Do you know of any other evidence relating to the outcomes that should be included here?

Not aware of other evidence.

Q58 Are there any other partner actions relating to the outcomes that should be included here? If you are identifying actions that relate to these or any alternative outcomes, please evidence that partners have agreed to the action proposed

No further partner actions identified.

Q59 Can you identify any other benefits that should be included here?

No other benefits identified.

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

6TH FEBRUARY 2008

### CABINET

#### IMPROVEMENT PLAN EXCEPTION REPORT [NOVEMBER 2007]

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Roger Hollingworth Leader of the Council
Responsible Officer	Hugh Bennett Assistant Chief Executive

#### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To ask Cabinet to consider the attached updated Improvement Plan Exception Report for November 2007.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That Cabinet considers and approves the revisions to the Improvement Plan Exception Report, and the corrective action being taken.
- 2.2 That Cabinet notes that for the 159 actions highlighted for November within the plan 86.9 percent of the Improvement Plan is on target [green], 7.0 percent is one month behind [amber] and 3.1 percent is over one month behind [red]. 3.1 percent of actions have been rescheduled [or suspended] with approval.

#### **3 BACKGROUND**






- 3.1 July 2007 Cabinet approved the Improvement Plan 2007/08. The Improvement Plan is directly linked to the 10 corporate priorities and 12 enablers identified in the Council Plan 2007/2010.
- 3.2 At July 2007 Cabinet Members approved the inclusion of an additional number of actions from the Improvement Director. The Improvement Plan is designed to push the Council through to a rating of Fair during 2008.

#### **4. PROGRESS IN NOVEMBER 2007**

- 4.1 Overall performance as at the end of November 2007 is as follows: -

<b>RED</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>RED</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3.1%</b>
<b>AMBER</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>AMBER</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7.0%</b>
<b>GREEN</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>85.0%</b>	<b>GREEN</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>86.9%</b>
<b>REPROGRAMMED</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>REPROGRAMMED</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3.1%</b>

Where: -

	<b>On Target or completed</b>
	<b>Less than one month behind target</b>
	<b>Over one month behind target</b>
	<b>Original date of planned action</b>
	<b>Re-programmed date.</b>

4.2 Out of the total of 159 actions for the month, 13 actions have been deleted, suspended or the timescales have been extended. This amounts to 8.2 percent of the plan. These actions are: Overall Customer Satisfaction x2 ((4.1); Review of Annual Business Cycle (6.4); Satisfaction with Artrix (8.2); Historical Offer (establishment of museum trust) (8.4); Improvements in Use of Resources scoring in relation to VFM (11.3) Ombudsman Complaints (Customer Feedback System) (15.1); Reduced Demand (15.2); Better understanding of the spatial project (17.1); Satisfaction with leisure centre offer (18.3); Management Development Strategy (20.4); PDR Process (22.1); Develop Project Management Arrangements (22.6).

4.3 An Exception Report detailing corrective actions being undertaken for red and amber tasks is attached at **Appendix 1**

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 No financial implications.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 No Legal Implications.

## **7. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

7.1 The Improvement Plan relates to all of the Council's four objectives and five priorities.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

8.1 The risks associated with the Improvement Plan are covered in the corporate and departmental risk registers.

## **9. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The Improvement Plan is concerned with strategic and operational issues that will affect the customer.

## **10. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Please see section 3 of the Improvement Plan

**11. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 See section 11 of the Improvement Plan

**12. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues: Delivery of the Improvement Plan involves various procurement exercises.
Personnel Implications: See Section 18 of the Improvement Plan.
Governance/Performance Management: See Section 4 of the Improvement Plan.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998: See sections 12.2 and 12.3
Policy: See Section 4 of the Improvement Plan.
Environmental: See Section 8 of the Improvement Plan.

**13. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	<b>No</b>
Chief Executive	<b>At CMT</b>
Executive Director (Partnerships and Projects)	<b>At CMT</b>
Executive Director (Services)	<b>At CMT</b>
Assistant Chief Executive	<b>Yes</b>
Head of Service	<b>At CMT</b>
Head of Financial Services	<b>At CMT</b>
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	<b>At CMT</b>
Head of Organisational Development & HR	<b>At CMT</b>
Corporate Procurement Team	<b>No</b>

**14. WARDS AFFECTED**

14.1 All wards

**15. APPENDICES**

15.1 Appendix 1 Improvement Plan Exception Report November 2007

**16. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

16.1 Full Improvement Plan for November can be found at [www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk) under meetings Minutes and Agendas where there is a direct link to the Improvement Plan.

**CONTACT OFFICER**

Name: Jenny McNicol  
E Mail: [j.mcnicol@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:j.mcnicol@bromsgrove.gov.uk)  
Tel: (01527) 881631



CP1: Town Centre																		
Ref	November 2007 Action	Colour	Corrective Action													Who	Original Date	Revised Date
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action			
1.2.2	Consultation with community.															PS	Sept-07	Jan-08
1.2	<b>Work Commenced</b>																	
1.2.2	Consultation with community.	PS																Action not yet commenced due to the reconsidered approach in 1.1.2. (where a recommendation is going to Cabinet in January proposing a model for redeveloping the market hall site and the identification of a developer to do this work. This replaces the earlier idea of identifying a development partner to do all the work in the town centre).

<b>CP4: Customer Service</b>																	
Ref	November 2007 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
4.1.1	Agree customer survey				Will be completed in January 2008										HB	Oct-07	Jan-08
4.1.	<b>Overall Customer satisfaction</b>																
4.1.1	Agree customer survey	HB														Delayed due to protracted negotiations. Questions are now in draft form but are likely to be completed in January due to other competing priorities.	

<b>CP4: Customer Service</b>																	
Ref	November 2007 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
4.1.2	Undertake survey				Survey will go out at the end of January 2008										HB	Oct-07	Jan-08
4.1.	<b>Overall Customer satisfaction</b>																
4.1.2	Undertake survey	HB														Due to the delay in the negotiations in 4.1.1, the survey will take place later than originally planned.	

<b>CP4: Customer Service</b>																	
Ref	November 2007 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
4.1.11	Customer Service Peer Review and Update of Customer First Strategy.				Will be reported to February 08 Cabinet										KD	Oct-07	Jan-08
<b>4.1.</b>	<b>Overall Customer satisfaction</b>																
4.1.11	Customer Service Peer Review and Update of Customer First Strategy.	KD														Delayed due to capacity issues. Now in draft form. Will be reported to February 08 Cabinet	

<b>CP5: Reputation</b>																	
Ref	November 2007 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
5.4.1	Framework contract established with single supplier for graphics.				Deadline is now an issue for the Procurement Team who are working with Redditch DC on this joint initiative. Anticipate that tenders will go out on 15 <sup>th</sup> January 2008.										HB	Sept-07	Jan-08
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Brand Recognition</b>																
5.4.1	Framework contract established with single supplier for graphics.	HB														A pilot for funding all of Together Bromsgrove through advertising has been agreed. Given the financial saving from this, it was considered a higher priority.	

<b>CP6: Performance</b>																		
Ref	November 2007 Action	Colour	Corrective Action													Who	Original Date	Revised Date
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action			
6.4.1	Undertake review of annual business cycle and reports, with particular focus on CMT, PMB and Cabinet.															HB	Nov-07	Dec-07
<b>6.4</b>	<b>Review Annual Business Cycle (and reinforce business planning cycle)</b>																	
6.4.1	Undertake review of annual business cycle and reports, with particular focus on CMT, PMB and Cabinet.	BR/HB																No capacity to undertake review plus the initial feedback from the Audit Commission is that our performance management processes are robust. Although a key issue is greater middle manager involvement.

<b>CP7: Community Influence</b>																		
Ref	November 2007 Action	Colour	Corrective Action													Who	Original Date	Revised Date
7.5.2	Guidance for "adoption" of Parish Plans developed and approach to Charter.		Project delayed by one month.													HB	Nov-07	Dec-07
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action			
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Parish Council Influence (and Parish Council Charter)</b>																	
7.5.2	Guidance for "adoption" of Parish Plans developed and approach to Charter.	HB														Lead member of staff have been ill and this has caused 6 days to be lost in November which has put the project back.		

CP10: Planning																	
Ref	November 2007 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
10.4.3	Further action depending on results of clinic.		Orange		Further meeting to take place with GOWM in December.										DH	Nov-07	Dec-07
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
10.4	Revisit Planning Moratorium																
10.4.3	Further action depending on results of clinic.	DH					Orange	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	The small allocation available to Bromsgrove, some 2100,(of which 680 units already accounted for) will not result in removal of Moritorium. Meetings with Redditch and Stratford re RSS allocation took place in November.		

<b>FP1: Value for Money</b>																		
Ref	November 2007 Action	Colour	Corrective Action													Who	Original Date	Revised Date
11.3.5	Identify services for detailed benchmarking & cost analysis to be undertaken		Report taken to Cabinet in November. New accountancy manager will start work in Feb 08 to drive this work forward.													JP	Aug-07	Feb-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action			
<b>11.3</b>	<b>Improvements in Use of Resources scoring in relation to VFM</b>																	
11.3.5	Identify services for detailed benchmarking & cost analysis to be undertaken	JP														VFM action plan and report presented to Cabinet in November. Initial cost analysis being undertaken – report to be taken to CMT to identify the areas for further analysis. New accountancy manager will start work in Feb 08 to drive this work forward.		

<b>FP2: Financial Management</b>																
Ref	November 2007 Action	Colour	Corrective Action											Who	Original Date	Revised Date
12.1.1	Implementation of the POP project to account for commitments & accruals on the Agresso system		Roll out to Customer Service Centre and Revenues and Benefits section will take place in January											JP	July-07	Mar-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action	
<b>12.1</b>	<b>Improved Financial Management by budget holders</b>															
12.1.1	Implementation of the POP project to account for commitments & accruals on the Agresso system	JP														Upgrades have been tested and implemented.

<b>FP2: Financial Management</b>																
Ref	November 2007 Action	Colour	Corrective Action											Who	Original Date	Revised Date
12.1.3	Train all managers to use web access for Agresso reporting		Due to the vacant Accountancy Manager post the full implementation will be delayed with a new proposed start date for the remainder of the Council for March 08.											JP	Sept-07	Mar-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action	
<b>12.1</b>	<b>Improved Financial Management by budget holders</b>															
12.1.3	Train all managers to use web access for Agresso reporting	JP														Delayed due to focus on implementation of POP as linked with web access. New upgrades have been implemented



<b>FP3: Financial Strategy</b>																	
Ref	November 2007 Action	Colour	Corrective Action												Who	Original Date	Revised Date
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
13.1.4	Report to Members on levels of debt and the recovery effectiveness of material income														JP	Oct-07	Feb-08
13.1	ROI																
13.1.4	Report to Members on levels of debt and the recovery effectiveness of material income	JP															This area was missed from qtr 2 – to be addressed formally at qtr 3 – reported to CMT officers monthly

FP4: Financial Strategy																		
Ref	November 2007 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date	
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action			
14.2.4	"Town Hall" meeting.															HB	Nov-07	July-08
14.2	Integrated Annual Reports																	
14.2.4	"Town Hall" meeting.	HB																The town hall meeting was originally put back from November to January in order that we could update people with some firm proposals on the town centre. January was then considered a bad month to hold the meeting. With the next meeting planned for July, it was agreed to cancel the November/January one and just go for one meeting a year

PR2: Improved Governance																		
Ref	November 2007 Action	Colour	Corrective Action												Who	Original Date	Revised Date	
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action			
16.4.2	Identify peer mentors for the Leader (and Cabinet Members) and the Leader of the Opposition.															CF	Oct-07	Jan-07
<b>16.4</b>	<b>Improve Member Capacity</b>																	
16.4.2	Identify peer mentors for the Leader (and Cabinet Members) and the Leader of the Opposition.	CF																Mentors identified. This programme is now back in accordance with timescales. The first session will be facilitated with the Cabinet in January. Leader is currently being mentored. Work is driven by the Modern Member Steering Group.

PR4: Improved Partnership Working																	
Ref	November 2007 Action	Colour	Corrective Action												Who	Original Date	Revised Date
18.3.3	Review the customer consultation systems and implement a revised annual satisfaction survey. To Include reprofiled budgets to meet issues identified following the survey/ongoing feedback.		Will be completed in January 2008.												JG	Oct-07	Jan-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
18.3	<b>Satisfaction with leisure centre offer</b>																
18.3.3	Review the customer consultation systems and implement a revised annual satisfaction survey. To include reprofiled budgets to meet issues identified following the survey/ ongoing feedback.	JG														Due to low return levels the annual user satisfaction survey have been delayed as more time has been allowed for completion. This will now be completed in Jan 08 due to the low numbers attending the site at this time of the year,	

HR&OD3: Positive Employee Climate																	
Ref	November 2007 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
21.1.6	Implement Action Plan		Orange		Action Plan implementation delayed by delayed publication of results. Report will go to CMT in Jan 08										JP	August-07	Jan-08
21.1	Employee satisfaction																
21.1.6	Implement Action Plan	JP		Orange	Orange	Red	Orange	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey			Employee Focus Groups were held in November to look at how to address the issues raised and determine an action plan.	

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## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET

6TH FEBRUARY 2008

#### CUSTOMER FIRST STRATEGY REVIEW

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Mike Webb, Portfolio for Customer Care and Customer Service, and Revenue Generation
Responsible Head of Service	Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive and Deb Poole, Head of E-Government and Customer Services

#### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The report provides a review of the Council's customer performance since the Strategy was agreed in March 2006, a review of the strategic action plan and an updated action plan for the next three years.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:-
1. Note the improving customer performance of the Council (3.4, Appendix 1 Section 4).
  2. Recognise that whilst the Council has made significant progress since the Strategy was approved in March 2006 much remains to be done to deliver excellent customer service.
  3. Agree the Strategy's priorities for the year ahead and approve the detailed action plan to support the delivery of these priorities (Appendix 1 Section 8).

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In March 2006 the Cabinet approved a Customer First Strategy for Bromsgrove District Council. At the time (and still) the primary focus of the Council has been to improve its basic performance, in particular, its Best Value performance indicators, which are critical to achieving a rating of "Fair" from the Audit Commission, when the Council is re-inspected in the Autumn of 2008. Nevertheless, the Strategy recognised that the long term ambition of the Council is to deliver both excellent performance, but also an excellent customer experience, comparable to the best in the private sector.
- 3.2 The Strategy took a holistic approach, based on international private

sector best practice, and looked to ensure there were actions designed to improve the customer service and culture of the Council across 12 themes.

3.3 A Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Timebound (SMART) strategic action plan was agreed by Cabinet for these 12 themes. Progress against the action plan is reviewed in section 6 of the Strategy (Appendix 1). Besides progress against the action plan there have been a number of national developments since the Strategy was introduced, significantly, from April 2009, the Council will be subject to a new inspection framework – Comprehensive Area Assessment. The Council has also undergone a first Comprehensive Performance Assessment, a peer review from the I&DeA and has started to produce a range of customer satisfaction survey data, to compliment the already extensive customer data from the Customer Service Centre. Finally, Cabinet has taken the decision (with cross party support) to make a £6.7m investment in ICT to bring the Council's ICT up to the requirements of the Government's e-Government standard. All of this information is reviewed in the Strategy, before being brought together in an updated Customer First Strategic Action Plan (Appendix 1 Section 8).

3.4 The Council has made considerable progress since March 2006 including:-

- Customer First being one of the Council's four values and also one of the Council's five priorities;
- Improved performance at the Customer Service Centre, including a call resolution at the first point of contact now above 90% (November 2007).
- 72% of CSC customer would recommend the CSC to a friend (Customer Panel July 2007);
- 65% of customers were satisfied with the service received at the CSC (Customer Panel July 2007);
- a re-launched Council website;
- Customer First training for all staff (with a second wave taking place in February and March 2008);
- the roll out of complaints software across the Council;
- the introduction of a Customer Manual for all staff;
- the launch of the Council's All Inclusive Equalities Scheme, Equalities and Diversity Forum and Disabled User Group;
- staff recognition for customer service and improvement;



- senior management attendance at PACT meetings and the piloting of two area committees;
  - a budget aligned to feedback received from residents; and
  - performance for our Best Value performance indicators now being around the average for an English district council.
- 3.5 Despite these improvements, we are starting from a low base. Overall resident satisfaction has improved, but remains too low at 51% (Best Value Satisfaction Survey 2007).
- 3.6 Through the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), that replaces Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in April 2009, and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, we can expect an increased emphasis on “citizens”, “users” and “non-users” from Central Government and a new “duty of involvement”; however, none of these seem to really get to the heart of the often intangible ways an organisation works i.e. the mindset of the Council, which really deliver the level of customer care we aspire to.
- 3.7 Rather than look to the Government’s regulatory framework for local government for incentivisation, the Council needs to find its own approach. There does not seem to be an obvious and simple solution to achieving excellence in customer service; however, the original approach adopted in the Customer First Strategy of looking to ensure Customer First feeds through every aspect of the Council (in the 12 themes identified), underpinned by investment in ICT and a long term commitment to customer service from Members and senior management appears to be the correct way forward.
- 3.8 Finally, by the end of 2008/2009, the Council should have in place all the major processes required to deliver excellent customer service. The step change from average to excellence is likely to be less dramatic than the previous few years and more subtle, requiring us to maintain a strategic focus, but also ensure we make lots of small changes that improve customer service, along with embedding and refining our customer processes.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Some of the proposed actions will require business cases and budget bids for the 2009/2010 budget cycle. These are likely to be relatively small, apart from community transport.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 A new “duty to involve” the public will apply from 01 April 2009 (see Appendix 1 3.3).

#### **6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

- 6.1 Council Objective – Improvement and Council Priority – Customer

Service.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

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

- Delivery of benefits and savings from Spatial Project.
- Successful roll out of complaints software.
- Responding to requirements of new regulatory framework for local government and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

- Delivery of benefits and savings from Spatial Project.

Risk Register: E-Government and Customer Services

Key Objective Ref No: 1

Key Objective: Spatial Project

- Successful roll out of complaints software.

*Risk Register: Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance*

Key Objective Ref No: 2

Key Objective: Effective Customer First Strategy

- Responding to requirements of new regulatory framework for local government and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007:

*Risk Register: Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance*

Key Objective Ref No: -

Key Objective: -

7.3 The third risk is not currently included in the Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance risk register and needs to be added and cross checked to the corporate risk register.

## **8 CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The Strategy is designed to improve customer service and care to our customers. The Council has a media plan for customer service, which includes press coverage on the launch of the Council's customer standards and complaints software.

Staff have been briefed about Customer First and all staff are being trained on Customer First Part 2 by 31 March 2008.

**9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Equalities and Diversity are an integral part of the Council’s approach to customer service and the Strategy includes a number of actions to improve our customer service in this respect.

**10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The Strategy is consistent with the Council’s VFM Strategy, in particular:-

- The Customer Panel will offer services increasing amounts of data on customer satisfaction which needs to be taken into account in any assessment of value for money; and
- Business cases will be required for a number of proposals in the Strategy e.g. community transport links, expansion of area committees.

**11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues: Yes, community transport and future Customer Panel contract.
Personnel Issues: Yes, making the recruitment process more orientated to recruiting employees with a customer service aptitude.
Governance/Performance Management: Yes, more customer service measures in the corporate performance indicator set.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act 1988: Yes, continued support for PACT and potential expansion of area committees.
Policy: None.
Environmental: Community transport is more environmentally friendly than individual taxis.

**12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	Yes.
Chief Executive	Yes.
Executive Director (Partnerships & Projects)	Yes.
Executive Director (Services)	Yes.
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes.

Head of Financial Services	Yes.
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes.
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes.
Corporate Procurement Team	No.

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**  
'All Wards'.

**14. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Customer First Strategy for Bromsgrove District,  
Customer First Strategy Review, January 2008.

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Customer First Strategy, Bromsgrove District Council, Cabinet March 2006.

Comprehensive Area Assessment, Joint Consultation, Audit Commission, November 2007.

Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities: Statutory Guidance: Draft for Consultation, Department of Communities and Local Government, November 2007.

**Contact officer**

Name: Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive  
E h.bennett@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Mail:  
Tel: (01527) 881242.



## Customer First Strategy for Bromsgrove District

### Customer First Strategy Review

**January 2008**



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)



## Contents

1. Forward from the Portfolio Holder
2. Introduction
3. National Developments
4. Customer Feedback and Performance Indicators
5. Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Peer Review
6. Spatial Project
7. Reviewed Action Plan
8. Priorities for the Year Ahead
9. Strategy Scorecard
10. Updated Action Plan
11. Conclusions
12. Contacts
13. Appendices

## 1. Forward by Councillor Mike Webb, Portfolio for Customer Care and Customer Service, and Revenue Generation

Excellent customer service is a priority for the Council.

Since the original Customer First Strategy was agreed in March 2006, the Council has come a long way on its journey to deliver this priority. The Council's performance is now consistent with a "Fair" rated authority and we expect this to be confirmed when we undergo our second Comprehensive Performance Assessment, by the Audit Commission in late 2008. I am particularly pleased that the average speed of answering at our customer service centre is now improving and that over 90% of calls are resolved at the first point of contact. This is down to the hard work of the managers and staff at the Council. I am also really pleased to see senior officer commitment to the PACT process, to area committees, "back to the floor" and "walking the wards". It is really important that both Members and officers really understand the District and residents we serve and provide leadership to the rest of the organisation.

2008 will be a critical year in the Council's journey towards excellent customer service. In January, we launched our customer feedback system, customer manual for staff and customer standards. We will also be putting all staff through a second wave of customer first training. Later in the year, we should see the completion of the delivery of the spatial project, which will see the introduction of eleven new integrated IT systems. These systems will deliver financial savings, put us at the forefront of the Government's drive for electronic government, but most importantly deliver improved services to our customers. We will also see the Council start working towards level 3 of the local government equalities standard and start delivering equalities outcomes.

This review and updated strategic action plan sets out in detail these key actions, but also a whole host of smaller actions across 12 themes. The idea is that customer first, runs through all that we do, so that staff, from the moment they join the organisation and through all they deliver, understand the importance of customer service. As the 12 themes suggest, there is no single solution to achieving excellent customer service. We need to be ambitious, but also understand that this is about forming new and positive habits, about changing the psychology of the Council, something we cannot achieve overnight.

I look forward to reporting further progress to you in a year's time.

Councillor Mike Webb  
Portfolio for Customer Care and Customer Service, and Revenue Generation

## 2. Introduction

2.1 In March 2006 the Cabinet approved a Customer First Strategy for Bromsgrove District Council. At the time (and still) the primary focus of the Council has been to improve its basic performance, in particular, its Best Value performance indicators, which are critical to achieving a rating of “Fair” from the Audit Commission, when the Council is re-inspected in the Autumn of 2008. Nevertheless, the Strategy recognised that the long term ambition of the Council is to deliver both excellent performance, but also an excellent customer experience, comparable to the best in the private sector.

2.2 The Strategy took a holistic approach, based on international private sector best practice, and looked to ensure there were actions designed to improve the customer service and culture of the Council across 12 themes. On the advice of the I&DeA Peer Review we have added a thirteenth theme, customer access:-

- ✚ organisational strategy and a compelling vision;
- ✚ customer need research (listen to our customers);
- ✚ organisation structure;
- ✚ service delivery process;
- ✚ management practices;
- ✚ measurements;
- ✚ training and management development;
- ✚ internal team building;
- ✚ customer education;
- ✚ customer environment;
- ✚ communications – internal and external;
- ✚ managing the change; and
- ✚ customer access.

2.3 A Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Timebound (SMART) strategic action plan was agreed by Cabinet for these 12 themes. Progress against the action plan is reviewed in section 6. Besides progress against the action plan there have been a number of national developments since the Strategy was introduced, significantly, from April 2009, the Council will be subject to a new inspection framework – Comprehensive Area Assessment. The Council has also undergone a first Comprehensive Performance Assessment, a peer review from the I&DeA and has started to produce a range of customer satisfaction survey



data, to compliment the already extensive customer data from the Customer Service Centre. Finally, Cabinet has taken the decision (with cross party support) to make a £6.7m investment in ICT to bring the Council's ICT up to the requirements of the Government's e-Government standard. All of this information is reviewed in the following sections, before being brought together in an updated Customer First Strategic Action Plan.

### 3. National Developments

#### Comprehensive Area Assessment

3.1 The key national development is the planned replacement of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), with Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). The new approach to regulating the work of local authorities is still being consulted on and will start in April 2009; however, a number of important changes can be identified at this stage:-

- ✚ There is going to be a much stronger emphasis on the “experience of citizens, people who use services and local taxpayers.
- ✚ A reduced focus on looking into councils’ processes and a much stronger emphasis on looking at why councils have taken particular decisions (the customer evidence for these decisions) and the outcomes achieved.
- ✚ Continued emphasis on understanding the diverse needs of our communities, in particular, listening and responding to the needs of the more vulnerable in our communities.
- ✚ A new national indicator set, which will replace the existing Best Value performance indicators. These have now been published and will be used to update the Council Plan. There are more perception indicators than previously seen under the Best Value regime and these will be measured by a new “Place Survey”, which will replace the Best Value satisfaction survey.
- ✚ There will be a “duty to cooperate” placed on all key public bodies in an area, so this will add some much needed statutory teeth to the Local Strategic Partnership
- ✚ There will be more room for councils to use local performance measures, but the Audit Commission will expect an increased emphasis on data quality (the Council is improving in this area and has recently moved its score from 1 out of 4 to 2 out of 4).

3.2 These changes are being much heralded by Government, but the overall approach seems complex and the terms “customer” and “customer experience” are absent from the language of CAA; however, the shift towards measuring perception and greater freedom to use local measures is welcomed.

#### Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

3.3 In terms of this Act’s impact on the Council’s approach to Customer First, the clue is very much in the title. The word “involvement” is a step change from the previous focus in the Local Government Act 1999, which used the term “consultation”. Under the Act, the Council will have a specific “duty to involve”. The Government is concerned that the current levels of consultation and civic participation are not bringing about a sufficient understanding of the difficulties politicians face in balancing the competing needs of communities and this is

driving an increasing dissatisfaction with public services at a time when they are actually improving.

3.4 The new duty will come into force on 01 April 2009. The duty is likely to impact on the Customer First Strategy as follows:-

- ✚ Consultation will need to provide “genuine opportunities” for people to be involved, so councils will want to draw on widespread evidence of what constitutes good practice in consultation. The Council undertook a number of benchmarking visits on performance management during 2007, which have benefited the Council. In 2008 we will need to undertake similar visits on “involvement” in order to sharpen up our practice.
- ✚ An expectation that we undertake “participatory budgeting” and “citizen juries”. The Assistant Chief Executive attended a course on these earlier in the year, which has given the Council a number of best practice examples. Such approaches are designed to increase dialogue and understanding on the issues the Council faces. They are resource intensive.
- ✚ The co-design of services i.e. where local people play an active role in the commissioning of services. The town centre redevelopment offers such an opportunity, while the work on transport e.g. community transport and railway station also offer possibilities.
- ✚ Co-produce or carry out some aspects of customer delivery for themselves. The Act particularly focuses on the transfer of assets and community centres. The Artrix is such an example. This part of the Act is unlikely to have much impact on the Council due to the low level of buildings we own.
- ✚ Residents work with Council on assessing services e.g. citizens acting as mystery shoppers. A local RSL recently won the public sector award for customer service with The Times newspaper. The RSL used this approach. It has been something the Council has discussed before. Such an approach does involve resource and at this stage, we are still rectifying basic performance and customer service issues; however, we should look to adopt such an approach in the medium term, perhaps in 2009.

3.5 All of the above come with resource implications. The Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team has less resource than either Wychavon or Redditch district councils, but a larger improvement agenda, given our current CPA rating; conversely, the Council’s support for PACT, two area committees, “Chats with the Chief”, investment in the Customer Panel and establishment of the Equalities and Diversity Forum means the Council is comparatively well placed to respond to this agenda.

3.6 The Statutory Guidance on the “duty to involve” clearly states (2.22, page 25) that:-

“authorities should consider the predicted benefits of informing, consulting and/or involving against the costs of that involvement”.

- 3.7 So, the Council should look to build the “duty to involve” into the Customer First Strategy, but consider carefully the resource implications. The strategic action plan for the Strategy has been updated accordingly.

### **Varney Report**

- 3.8 Plans to transform services are supported by the December 2006 Service Transformation Report (Sir David Varney) – the key themes of which have been incorporated into this our approach to telephony, face to face and e-government access channel design. The Spatial Project is critical to delivering this vision for local government.

### **Local Area Agreement**

- 3.9 The County Local Strategic Partnership is currently working on a new Local Area Agreement for Worcestershire. This agreement will go live in April 2009. Most of the draft targets focus around service outcomes e.g. reduced crime, reduced CO2 emissions, but one target does relate to this Strategy:-
- 3.10 Empower local people to have a greater choice and influence over local decision making and a greater role in public service delivery.
- 3.11 It is unclear how this target will be delivered in Worcestershire at this stage; however, the Council’s support for PACT, two pilot area committees and the proposed review of the need for community transport, working alongside the Equalities and Diversity Forum and Disabled Users Group.

## 4. Customer Feedback and Performance Indicators

- 4.1 Customer feedback and performance indicators are a key aspect of any improvement agenda. The Council now has in place a proper corporate performance management framework, including two customer panel surveys per annum, which was supplemented this year by the Best Value satisfaction survey (the Council also surveys its own staff every year). The Council is also about to introduce a complaints software package across the Council, which will provide further analysis on the nature of our complaints. The Council has also been producing good quality performance data for the Customer Service Centre since its inception.

### Best Value Satisfaction Survey

- 4.2 A detailed report on the Survey's results was taken to the Performance Management Board in September 2007 and the information was also used in the Council Plan 2008/2011 Part 1, which provided the strategic backdrop to the medium term financial plan. The overall results, compared to the last survey/quartile and then with the other Worcestershire Districts are set out in the two tables below.

**Table 1 - Overall satisfaction survey results**

Ref	Description	2003/04 Result	2006/07 Result	Quartile
<b>Corporate Health</b>				
BV3	Overall Satisfaction with the way the authority runs things	48%	51%	3
BV4	Satisfaction with complaint handling.	25%	31%	4
<b>Environment</b>				
BV89	Satisfaction with street cleanliness	61%	62%	4
BV90a	Satisfaction with waste collection.	83%	76%	3
BV90b	Satisfaction with waste recycling (local facilities)	71%	76%	1
<b>Culture</b>				
BV119a	Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities	45%	53%	4
BV119b	Satisfaction with libraries	n/a	72%	3
BV119c	Satisfaction with museums / galleries	25%	27%	3
BV119d	Satisfaction with theatres / concert halls	n/a	33%	3
BV119e	Satisfaction with parks and open spaces	71%	76%	2
<b>Planning Satisfaction survey</b>				
BV111	Satisfaction with planning service by those making a planning application	69%	56%	n/a
<b>Benefits Satisfaction Survey</b>				

Ref	Description	2003/04 Result	2006/07 Result	Quartile
BV80a	Satisfaction with contact with the office	78%	79%	n/a
BV80b	Satisfaction with service in the office	78%	83%	n/a
BV80c	Satisfaction with the telephone service	73%	72%	n/a
BV80d	Satisfaction with staff in the office	83%	84%	n/a
BV80e	Satisfaction with forms	62%	61%	n/a
BV80f	Satisfaction with speed of the service	78%	74%	n/a
BV80g	Overall Satisfaction with the service	82%	82%	n/a

3.3 Through the 2008/2011 medium term financial plan, the Council can point to investment in most of the underperforming issues identified above e.g. customer complaints system, street cleanliness, street theatre, leisure facilities and disinvestment where a decision has been made not to make an area a local priority e.g. the museum. It is interesting to note that the satisfaction with waste recycling is top quartile. This service, along with waste collection and the Customer Service Centre is probably the most visible of the Council's activities. It has received investment and the high level of service being offered clearly has been recognised by the public. The investment in the CSC also appears to have been recognised by the public (see Customer Panel section). The waste collection service is an area that despite operational improvements this year, is likely to need a more fundamental investment in both vehicles and ICT to deliver a very high quality service level, which we should aim for on our most visible services.

**Table 2 - Comparison of satisfaction survey results with other authorities in the county**

BVPI No.	1.1 Description	Bromsgrove	Malvern Hills	Wychavon	Worcester City	Redditch	Wyre Forest
<b>CORPORATE HEALTH</b>							
3	Overall Satisfaction with the way the authority runs things	51%	57%	65%	61%	54%	50%
4	Satisfaction with complaint handling	31%	36%	45%	42%	35%	37%
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>							
89	Satisfaction with street cleanliness	62%	74%	77%	69%	72%	62%
90a	Satisfaction with waste collection	76%	87%	84%	79%	87%	67%
90b	Satisfaction with waste recycling (local facilities)	76%	86%	80%	72%	79%	73%
<b>1.2 CULTURE</b>							
119a	Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities	53%	61%	66%	66%	56%	65%
119b	Satisfaction with libraries	72%	-	80%	75%	-	82%
119c	Satisfaction with museums / galleries	27%	49%	37%	60%	33%	42%
119d	Satisfaction with theatres / concert halls	33%	79%	38%	57%	53%	32%
119e	Satisfaction with parks and open spaces	76%	85%	81%	74%	78%	76%

- 4.4 For most of the satisfaction indicators the trend for Bromsgrove has been favourable, overall satisfaction increased, compared to an average decrease nationally. Where the national trend increased Bromsgrove results, in most cases, increased by a bigger margin. Likewise, where the national trend was a decrease then Bromsgrove results usually decreased by a lesser amount. The only two indicators where Bromsgrove trend was worse than the national trend was BV 89 – street cleanliness and BV90a – waste collection; however, celebrations about Bromsgrove results bettering the national trend need to be tempered by the fact that for most of the satisfaction indicators Bromsgrove was starting from a very low base, two exceptions being BV90b – recycling (top quartile) and BV119e – parks and open spaces (2<sup>nd</sup> quartile).

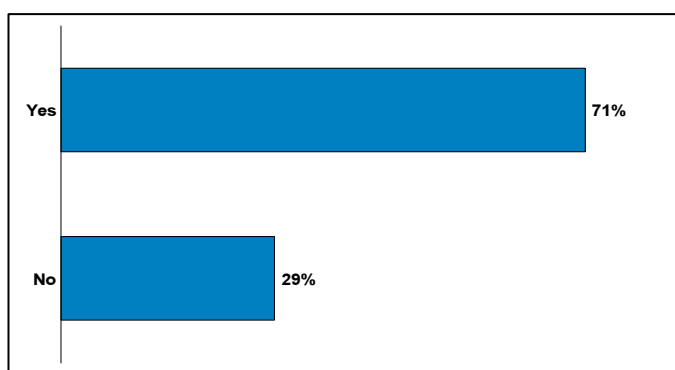
### Customer Panel

- 4.5 Bromsgrove District Council commissioned Snap SurveyShop to assist with our Customer Panel Survey 2007. Unlike the Best Value satisfaction survey, the Customer Panel allows us to ask specific questions about our services i.e. it can be more specific. The Council has also recently undertaken two focus groups on the 2008/09 budget round which also provided some feedback to the Council on its customer's experience. Overall, the feedback from the Customer Panel and the budget focus groups with regard to customer service is increasingly positive; however, there is still considerable room for improvement. The following are key extracts from the Customer Panel survey:-

#### Ease of accessing the Customer Service Centre

- 4.6 71% found accessing the Customer Service Centre easy. Less than half (47%) of under 35s found access easy, compared to three quarters (76%) of those in the 55 or older age group. Ease of access varied by working status too, 61% of workers finding access to be easy compared to 79% of non workers.

Do you find the Customer Service Centre easy to access?



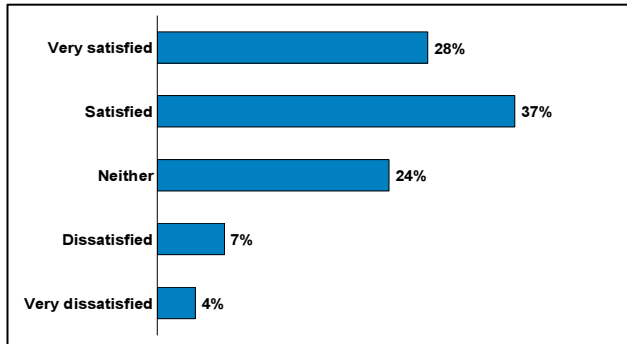
- 4.7 What is surprising about this result is that older residents seem to find the CSC easier to use than under 35s which is perhaps unusual as call centres are a relatively new way of doing business and something that under 35s are more familiar with. A focus group made up of under 35s may be required to find out what exactly is the issue here. Another issue that could not be identified from the analysis is whether there is any difference in satisfaction with access to the CSC by geographic area. Given that private sector companies operate national call centres, this should not be the case; however, a number of focus groups for residents in locations like Hagley, Alvechurch and Wythall, could prove useful in

identifying whether there is a need to offer a different form of customer service to these areas e.g. additional CSC offices, a CSC bus etc.

Satisfaction with service received

4.8 Two thirds (65%) were satisfied with the service they received. Satisfaction varied from 58% in males to 73% in females, 49% in 35 to 54s to 71% in 55 or older and 53% in workers to 73% in non workers.

Satisfaction with service received

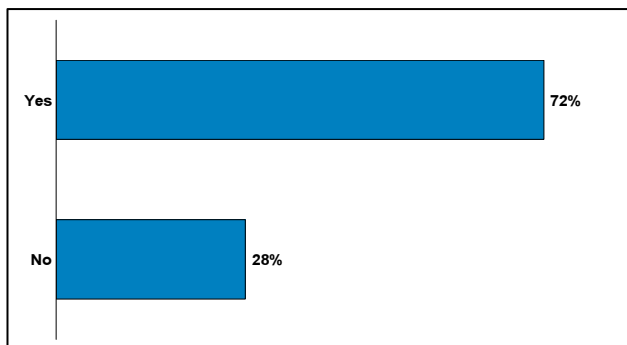


4.9 Again, it is surprising that the under 35s seem to be the least satisfied. As per the previous graph, a focus group may be required to find out the exact nature of the problem. It may be a perception issue. Given that not everyone will, by the nature of what the Council does, get the answer they want from the CSC, a figure of only 11% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied is very low. Senior managers have gone “back to the floor” and listened in to calls at the CSC and the level of service given by the operatives is excellent. We have started to do this with Members now and again, are getting very positive results.

Recommending the use of the Centre

4.10 Three quarters (72%) would recommend the use of the Centre to a friend, ranging from 68% in males to 78% in females, and 65% in 35 to 54 to 91% in under 35s.

Would you recommend the use of the Customer Service Centre to a friend?



4.11 This survey measure has been recommended for the corporate performance indicator set, as this is perhaps the ultimate test of the effectiveness of the Council’s customer experience. It is also interesting to note that in the case of

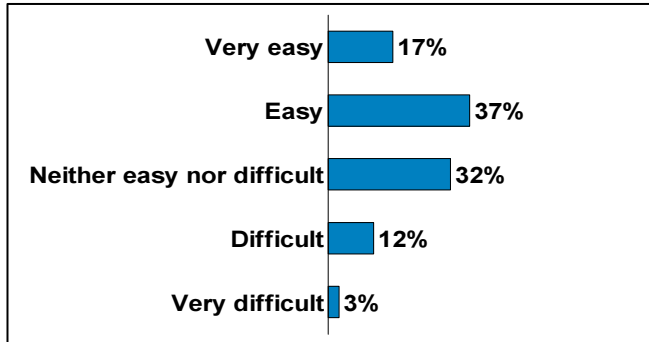


the under 35s, 91% would recommend the CSC, despite their dissatisfaction with accessing it which suggests an issue with the figures.

Ease of contacting the Council

4.12 Over half (54%) found it easy to contact the Council. Ease dropped to 47% in males and under 35s, rising to 58% in the 55 or older age group and 59% in females.

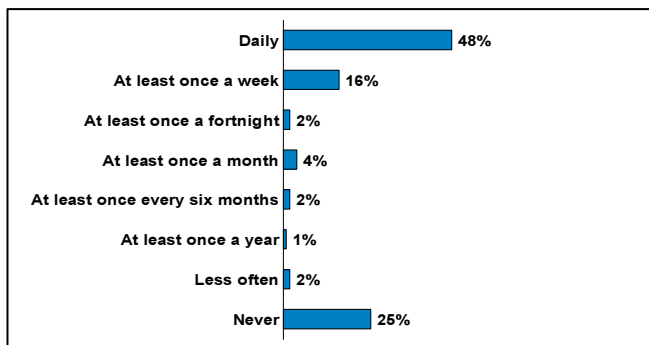
Ease of contacting the Council



Frequency of Internet use

4.13 About half (48%) used the internet on a daily basis and a further 16% at least once a week. One quarter (25%) never used the internet, varying from 6% amongst those working and 3% in under 35s, to 39% in the 55 or older age group and 45% in those not working.

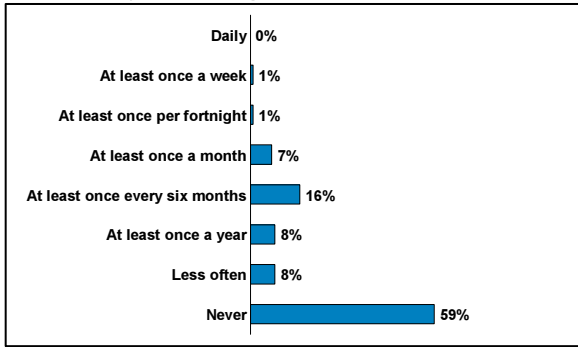
Frequency of internet use



Frequency of visiting Council's website

4.14 2 out of 5 residents (41%) had visited BDC's website. Two thirds (66%) of those in the 35 to 54 age group had visited the website, but only 29% in the 55 or overs and 26% amongst those not working.

Frequency of visiting BDC's website

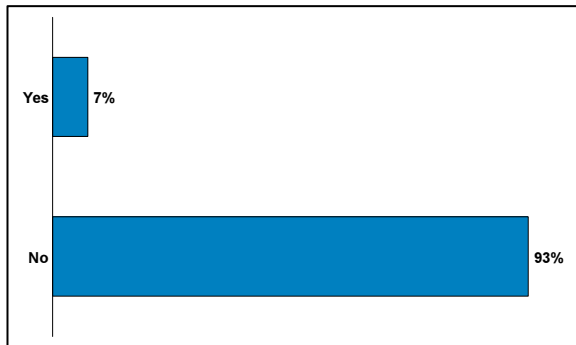


4.15 59% may not be a problem, if they have not needed to look, but we did not ask how easy those who accessed the site, found it, something we need to ask in the 2008 Customer Panel survey.

Awareness of text messaging and email alert system

4.16 Only 7% were aware of the text messaging and email alert system.

Are you aware of the service?



Budget Focus Groups

4.17 Feedback from residents on the CSC as part of the budget consultation (residents were asked about their attitude to investing in more CSC advisers), few claimed to have had any problems actually getting in contact with the council:-

*"Pleased with call centre service. Do not see a need."* – Female 35-44

*"Not had any problems"* Female 65+

*"Service delivery and customer service has been good"* – Male 35-44

4.18 Most who had contacted the council claimed that the problem was not accessing a council employee it was getting that employee to take ownership of the issue and/or call them back:-

*"Try and improve internal efficiencies"*

4.19 A few said it was easier to contact the council than their bank. One respondent also mentioned that they expect a wait when they contact the Council; however, it

was noted that customer service is important and that it was good that the council recognised this:

*“Look after your customers! Should look to identify peak times that staff will be needed” – Male 35-44*

- 4.20 The key issue here is the interface between the CSC and “back office”. This needs further management attention in 2008. The proposed appointment of a Change Manager with business process re-engineering skills will be an important resource to help facilitate this change.

### Performance Indicators

- 4.21 Overall, the Council’s performance is improving at a rapid rate. In 2005/06 only 21% of the Council’s indicators were better than the national average. The conservative estimate for 2007/08 is that this figure will have increased to 60% (using 2006/07 quartile information). This is a significant improvement and should be recognised as such; however, this level of performance only gets the Council to approximately the average for a district council, when we aspire to excellence, so we will need to maintain our focus for at least the next three years in order to achieve the equivalent of an excellent rating in the new CAA framework. The Council has improved its performance largely through a focus on performance, that was previously absent; however, this approach has its limitations, with further change needed a combination of investment and more radical changes to the way things are done e.g. business process re-engineering linked to ICT. Three things are now critical to the continued improvement:-

- ✚ Continuing to ensure there is a very strong alignment between the budget and the Council’s priorities (which in turned are underpinned by performance and customer information);
- ✚ Completion of the Spatial Business Project; and
- ✚ Undertaking business process re-engineering work through the appointment of a Change Manager (externally funded).

- 4.22 Local indicators have also seen a gradual improvement; in particular, the CSC (see overleaf) is now achieving its targets for average speed of answer and calls answered whilst continuing to achieve a 90% plus resolution at the first point of contact. The targets for the average speed of answer and calls answered were reduced in July to 35 seconds and 75%, from 20 seconds and 85% respectively. This was on the advice of the then Improvement Director and for a six month period. Current performance is achieving the revised targets and the original targets.

Ref	Description	Freq	C or S		Apr.	May.	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.
CSC	Monthly Call Volumes Customer Contact Centre	M	S	Target								
				Actual	8,410	6,399	7,628	7,819	8,855	7,483	7,676	7,089
CSC	Monthly Call Volume Council Switchboard	M	S	Target								
				Actual	7,718	7,310	7,060	7,270	6,995	5,888	5,946	5,573
CSC	Resolution at First Point of Contact all services (percentage)	M	S	Target	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00
				Actual	90.77	90.00	92.00	95.00	90.20	95.00	86.40	95.00
CSC	Average Speed of Answer (seconds)	M	S	Target	20.00	20.00	20.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00
				Actual	67.00	47.00	53.00	48.00	55.00	53.00	31.00	31.00
CSC	% of Calls Answered	M	S	Target	85.00	85.00	85.00	75.00	75.00	75.00	80.00	80.00
				Actual	60.00	81.00	79.00	80.00	77.00	79.00	86.00	86.00

## 5. Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Peer Review

### Comprehensive Performance Assessment

- 5.1 Placing the customer at the heart of Council activity was the first key recommendation from the Council's first Comprehensive Performance Assessment. In order to do this, the Audit Commission recommended that:-
- ✚ The Council base service planning and delivery on the outcomes of both evidence based needs assessment and inclusive consultation; and
  - ✚ Make customer satisfaction a key deliverable for all managers and staff and take robust and timely action to address dissatisfaction.
- 5.2 A key point to emerge from the CPA was the Audit Commission's view that while senior management and front line staff at the CSC were committed to Customer First, there is "still too much complacency from the rest of the organisation to the changes that need to be implemented".
- 5.3 The uplift in the Council's performance does suggest that complacency can quickly be removed by the old adage, "what gets measured, gets done"; however, a key problem for the Council is how to measure customer satisfaction for some services (not all are suitable for measuring through the Customer Panel) and how to track the 10% of CSC calls that are put through to the "back office". There is no simple solution to these problems; however, concentrated senior management focus (and the CSC manager) on operational issues is probably the only solution. The review of the team action plans should enable the Assistant Chief Executive to check how each team is measuring customer satisfaction, while customer clinics for issues identified by the CSC and analysis of the information from the complaints software are also important. We also need to maintain a focus on a small set of customer indicators, as there is a tendency to set too many in surveys, which leads to a loss of focus.

### I&DeA Peer Review

- 5.4 The Council underwent an I&DeA Peer Review in May 2007. The peer review team made 12 recommendations. The Council's Corporate Management Team accepted most of these recommendations; however, all the recommendations focused on process and there were not specific recommendations (based on good practice from other authorities) on how to improve customer service. This was disappointing. These and the Council's response to them are set out on the following page:-

Ref.	Recommendation	Response
4.4.1	Prioritise initiatives in the Council. There was evidence that a great deal had been achieved, but the pace of change is fast and it is unlikely that it can be continued at the same pace without impacting on key people in the Council.	The Council will have an opportunity to update its Improvement Plan again for July 2008 Cabinet. The Council should achieve a rating of Fair during 2008. The Council has also recently recruited an Executive Director Services. The target of achieving 5 CharterMarks by March 2010 has also been dropped. All four of these actions, should enable some reduction in the pace to a more acceptable level.
4.4.2	Clarify the roles of all Members in implementing the Customer First Strategy	The peer review team suggested that the Customer First Board include Members. The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services was invited to attend the Board; however, this would have meant another evening meeting. The Portfolio Holder already meets with Assistant Chief Executive and Head of E-Government and Customer Service each month and received a copy of the minutes from the Board. In addition, the Council has a Cabinet, PMB, Scrutiny model which is functioning better and better; focus should be maintained on improving the effectiveness of these formal committees. This recommendation was rejected; however, Members of PMB will be going "back to the floor" to listen to calls at the CSC in January. If this pilot proves successful "back to the floor" could be rolled out to all Members. We also need to increase all Member involvement in the next budget round (from the beginning of the process).
4.4.3	Define a Customer Access Strategy for Bromsgrove which meets the needs and aspirations of the Members and the community; this should consider the use of all channels and	Satellite CSCs around the District is an expensive approach and the need is not proven and needs a business case with clear evidence of a market or need before investment is

	be used to inform discussions in the Worcestershire Hub partnership.	made. Section 3.7 identified that the under 35s had an issue with accessing the CSC. They are a more mobile age group, which suggests the access issue is less about location. We will need to undertake some survey and focus group work in 2008 to determine the access issues we face.
4.4.4	Produce a Consultation Strategy which includes a feedback process.	Updated Strategy agreed at November 2007 Cabinet. Each consultation is different, so there cannot be a standard way of feeding back; however, we should look to feedback to the public on every consultation exercise undertaken.
4.4.5	Implement a corporate complaints process and purchase a system.	Purchased and due to be implemented on 31 January 2008.
4.4.6	Establish a programme and project management framework for the Improvement Plan which is consistently applied across the Council and can be utilised to direct the Customer First programme.	Bid made to Capacity Building Fund for Change Manager in Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team. This bid, if successful, should provide sufficient resource to complete this work.
4.4.7	Review the Spatial project to ensure that it is still fit for purpose, that the Council will achieve the benefits set out in the business case and identify any areas of the project which will provide early returns. The review team believe it might be advisable to split it more clearly into discrete work elements with very overt milestones so that it might be more easily managed and monitored.	Project has been reviewed and new supplier procured.
4.4.8	Improve front office/back office working to ensure that the customer receives best possible service. This requires open, two way communications, will include work to improve system interfaces and recognise the need to be	The Customer First Board are now undertaking a range of customer clinics to provide senior management focus on some of the organisational sticking points that are causing problems. Also, the Change Manager post (above) should

	explicit about ownership of requests and enquiries.	be able to undertake some business process re-engineering work on these issues. Asking the CSC to maintain a log of some of the calls put through to the “back office” and then spot checking what happened to these requests may also increase the organisational discipline required to deliver better customer service.
4.4.9	Develop a Bromsgrove position on shared services and communicate this to key stakeholders to ensure that Bromsgrove is in control of its own destiny.	The Council is increasingly working with Redditch. This work needs to progress further, so that it can be evaluated, before the Council can determine whether this is the right approach or whether the Council needs to consider that shared services model being considered by the three southern districts. The Council’s basic position is clear. If the business case makes sense, the Council will sign up. The recent “business case” for a shared service model of “the Hub” was only an outline proposal and needed further work.
4.4.10	Introduce a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the Customer First training that had been and will be delivered.	The Customer First Board has agreed that members of the Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team will do spot checks on compliance with the Customer Manual.
4.4.11	Ensure that internal communications are relevant in terms of content and language and continue to drive both internal and external communications.	The Council’s communications is much improved; however, too much language is still in a professional versus customer style. Every manager to go through Plain English training and introduce Plain English clinics.
4.4.12	Enhance the performance management framework to include customer service metrics, satisfaction levels and complaints. Ensure that the improvements that are delivered can be clearly demonstrated.	More customer service performance indicators are being introduced through the 2008/2011 Council Plan. Further changes will be made each year as the Customer Panel survey is refined.



## 6. Spatial Project

### Background Information

- 6.1 In 2005 a wide ranging investigation was carried out in conjunction with various organisations into the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's service delivery and business processes. The findings of this investigation are detailed separately in the Spatial Business Case. The business case was approved by Council in August 2006. The project started at the beginning of October 2006 and is scheduled to close in October 2008.
- 6.2 The Spatial Project is a transforming and modernising programme aimed at providing staff with the systems, processes and tools to change and improve the way services are delivered to BDC customers. The project will deliver the following:
- Corporate Gazetteer
  - Gazetteer Management system aka LLPG – Local Land and Property Gazetteer.  
The LLPG will be used to provide data updates to the NLPG – National Land and Property Gazetteer
  - Environmental Health system
  - Estate/Asset Management module
  - Building Control module
  - Development Control module
  - Electoral Management system
  - Housing module
  - Licensing module
  - Land Charges module
  - Document Management system
  - Business Process Mapping
  - Mobile technologies
  - Web based access to mapping data
  - Integration to existing core applications eg: Agresso, CRM etc
- 6.3 The key stages of the project are outlined below. These stages are not sequential and share dependencies. As such, many of the stages will run in parallel or at the very least will temporarily overlap.
- Data cleansing – Gazetteer, other departmental data sets
  - Back office systems and software installations inc IDOX and Anite applications and Business Process Mapping.
  - Support contract with MDA initiated for systems in 'live'
  - Corporate document management rollout
  - Integration with core back office applications

## Planned Benefits and Improvements

### 6.4 Corporate Gazetteer and Gazetteer Management

- An accurate, recognised national property reference number (UPRN) for every property that can link into all Council systems such as Council Tax and Business Rates.
- Linking to the Revenues and Benefits system will standardise address information and reduce incidences of wrongly addressed information being sent to customers.
- One central council address database instead of numerous ones
- Electoral roll data accuracy

### 6.5 Environmental Health

- Sharing of information across all departments for items such as records of properties where hazardous waste is generated.
- Link to Customer Relationship Management System will reduce the amount of re-keying when customers make enquiries or order services.
- Online applications will reduce the amount of data re-keying and speed up turn around times for customers.
- Making the public registers available online will increase public access to statutory information.
- Mobile working enabling officers to deliver environmental services at the required point of delivery without having to come back to the office.

### 6.6 Estate/Asset Management

- Core information for all asset control and property management that is up to date and available
- Linking to the LLPG will correctly reference addresses and will improve information flow.

### 6.7 Planning

- Customers will have access to on-line planning applications and automated land searches.
- GIS will improve accuracy of planning applications and turn around times.
- Automated searches will speed up search times for customers.
- Mobile working will increase staff efficiency and potentially speed up processing.
- Workflow will improve efficiency of the current process, reduce the amount of paper-based memos leading to better customer service.
- Accurate on-line licensing applications and control to automatically update systems and records

### 6.8 Electoral Management

- Accurate electoral data with integration to the LLPG for addressing data.
- Electronic signature recognition
- Improved quality of output both hardcopy and electronic.

## Business Transformation – a definition

- 6.9 Transformation alters the culture of an institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviours, processes, and products: is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole organisation: is intentional and occurs over time

(American Council on Education (ACoE))

The transformation element of the spatial project will involve radical change to the following areas of the Council:

Areas of Transformation	Bromsgrove Spatial Project
<p><b>Our culture and behaviour:-</b> how we treat service users, how we work with each other and with suppliers and partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing access to accurate data</li> <li>• Sharing data across directorates to better serve the customer</li> <li>• Linking to the CRM will reduce re-keying of customer data, reduce errors and speed up transactions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The services themselves:-</b> what it is that we deliver to the service user, how we make it available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of public access to corporate data eg: planning applications available and searchable on the Council's website.</li> <li>• Ability to submit Planning Applications online and pay for them at the same time.</li> <li>• Mobile workforce delivering services direct to the customer.</li> <li>• Online licensing applications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Our processes and systems:-</b> manual procedures, IT systems, work flow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faster processing of Land Charges requests.</li> <li>• Integrated systems with data flowing between them.</li> <li>• Document management across the organisation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Our organisational structures:-</b> restructuring, joint delivery with public sector partners, joint delivery with private sector partners, outsourcing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of Planning Services at the Customer Service Centre (CSC).</li> <li>• Easier access to data at the CSC</li> <li>• More services available at the CSC</li> <li>• Development of shared services with partners.</li> </ul>

## 7. Review of Strategic Action Plan

Note: the references relate to the paragraph of the original Customer First Strategy.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Comments
<b>Organisational Strategy and Vision</b>					
6.4	Agree customer vision and Customer Charter at Cabinet.	Vision agreed and communicated to staff.	15.03.06	30.04.06	Agreed.
6.6	Develop the Vision further as part of the fundamental review of the corporate plan.	Vision further expanded upon by measures and actions through use of balanced scorecard.	15.03.06	30.09.06	Council Plan 2007/2010 and draft 2008/2011.
<b>Customer Need Research</b>					
7.5	Establish and outsourced customer panel.	Panel established and providing feedback.	15.03.06	30.09.06	Outsourced to SNAP Surveys.
7.6	Survey customers twice a year to find out what they think of our services (only one survey in 2006/07 due to set up time).	Surveys completed and reported to CMT and Performance Management Board.	01.10.06	31.03.07	Survey one completed and second survey in draft.
7.7	Hold focus groups, one for each service area to identify what drives customer satisfaction in each area.	Short list of drivers of customer satisfaction identified for each area.	01.09.06	30.09.06	Focus groups were undertaken on customer service, but more specific ones required on aspects of our service delivery during 2008.
7.8	CMT members to "walk the wards" once a year with Members.	Short list of actions arising delivered.	01.08.06	31.12.06	These are now taking place.
7.9	CMT (and Members) to undertake "back to the floor" days.	Press coverage and internal coverage.	01.04.06	31.07.06	CMT members have completed these. Very positive feedback during CPA.

7.10	CMT meeting on "back to the floor" to agree actions.	Short list of agreed actions, which are delivered.	01.07.06	31.07.06	Information was brought back to CMT, but agreed that this approach did not work. Completion of days is monitored and issues picked up are dealt with by managers outside of CMT.
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Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
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7.11	Attend a regular industry association meeting to find out what other councils are doing.	New ideas obtained and built in to Strategy.	01.04.06	31.03.07	Council has joined a professional body, but has not attended a regular meeting.
7.12 11.22	Review the PACT and Spotlight meeting minutes once per annum for trends.	Trends reported to PMB. PMB to make recommendations to Cabinet.	01.01.07	31.12.07	PACT meetings do not produce minutes, only three priorities. These have not been reported to PMB/Cabinet, but everyone is aware of issues e.g. speeding, ASB, youth.
7.12 11.25	Review corporate complaints and compliments once per annum to review trends.	Trends reported to PMB. PMB to make recommendations to Cabinet.	01.01.07	31.12.07	Not completed as system not yet introduced. Will go live in January.

### Organisational Structure

8.2	Ensure the impact on the customer is a key criteria in any decisions about future structures.	Clear evidence of benefit to customer from decisions.	On-going	On-going	2008/09 budget aligned to priorities which include customer service.
8.3	Cabinet report template to include a standard heading on "customer impact".	Template updated and being used.	01.04.06	31.05.06	Completed.
8.4	Council's project management methodology includes a strong focus on the customer.	Documentation has clear process for considering the customer in any decisions/actions.	15.03.06	30.04.06	Completed.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
<b>Service Delivery Process</b>					
9.4	All documentation reviewed to ensure customer friendly (after all services have migrated to Customer Service Centre).	All documents mapped. Consistent house style. Plain English.	Year 2	Year 2	Some documentation has been reviewed and customer clinics have also recently looked at this issue; however, signage and documentation still comparatively poor.
9.5	Key service delivery processes identified and re-engineered to ensure customer benefit.	Services mapped and re-engineered.	01.04.06	31.10.07	Completed as part of Spatial Project.
9.6, 9.7 & 9.8	Develop customer benefits statements for each service delivery area.	See above.	01.04.06	31.10.07	Benefits statements for the spatial project are an area we would like to complete, but capacity is not available until the Change Manager starts in CCPP Team.
9.9 & 9.10	Establish formal service level agreements between the Customer Service Centre and each service area.	Agreements in place, adhered too and actively supported by SMT member attendance.	Already in place.	Already in place.	A performance clinic held by the Improvement Director found that only one Resource Level Agreement is actually signed off. This is an area of focus for 2008/09.
9.11	Ensure all contracts include a section on the customer and how it is addressed through the particular service purchased.	Procurement guidance and advice reflects this action.  Possible coverage as part of Internal Audit work.	01.04.06	30.06.06	This has not been actioned.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
9.12	Internet/Intranet upgrade to focus on improvements for customer.	Content updated and migrated to new County platform.	01.03.06	31.05.06	The Council has moved to the County Council platform and while content needs to be kept up to date, the website is much improved.
		Positive feedback from public through survey.	01.01.07	31.03.07	

**Management Practices**

10.2	All team meetings to have a standard item on customer issues/feedback once a month.	Minutes of feedback and delivered actions of improvement.	01.05.06	On-going	Just introduced as part of monthly DMT performance pro-forma.
10.3	PDR format to include sections on customer service and behaviours.	Agreed approach built into 2007/08 PDR approach (this is subject to discussion with new Head of HR).	01.04.06	30.09.06	Not introduced due to scale of change going on with PDRs. Currently being reviewed.
10.4	All new job descriptions to have a standard agreed opening duty on customer service.	Standard duty in place (this is subject to discussion with new Head of HR).	01.04.06	31.08.06	As above. Currently being reviewed.
10.5	Introduce a range of activities that communicate the importance of the customer.	See 7.7 to 7.9.	See 7.7 to 7.9.	See 7.7 to 7.9.	Clear leadership from both Members and CEO about importance of customer.
10.6	Customer Board to include two representatives from front line staff.	Realistic actions that reflect what is happening in the Council.	01.04.06	30.06.06	CSC and complaints manager represented.
10.7	Staff suggestion scheme on customer improvement.	Scheme operational and audit trail of improvements actioned.	01.04.06	30.06.06	Introduced with good suggestions.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
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**Measurements**

11.13	Undertake the ODPM Satisfaction Survey.	Survey completed to required ODPM standard and results sent to ODPM.	01.04.06	31.03.07	Completed and reported to PMB.
11.14, 11.15, 11.16	Finalise and roll out the customer charter.	Charter developed by staff. Charter published. Press coverage.	01.04.06	31.07.06	Agreed and will be re-launched with Customer Manual in January 2008.
11.17, 11.18, 11.19	Organise focus groups with the public.	See 7.7.	See 7.7.	See 7.7.	Completed, but more required to understand some of the issues customers have.
11.19	Measure customer standards and charter through customer panel survey.	See 7.6.	See 7.6.	See 7.6.	Useful survey completed and reported in July 2007.
11.20	Undertake mystery shopper surveys.	Undertake surveys, received feedback and take corrective actions.	01.09.06	30.06.07	Unsuccessful budget bid, so not progressed.
11.21	Review the need for separate Spotlight and PACT meetings.	Agreed approach with partners.	13.03.06	31.05.06	Spotlight meetings stopped.
11.23 11.24	Develop customer feedback policy and system (ICT)	New policy and process in place.	01.04.06	31.10.06	Policy agreed and system will go live in January 2008.



Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
11.26	CharterMark one area of the Council outside of the recovery plan.	Charter Mark obtained.	Year 2	Year 2	Unsuccessful budget bid, so not clear that there will be any further action in 2008; however, this route will drive a much stronger customer focus, so the long term ambition should be to CharterMark every team.
11.27	Review the Charter Mark process and decide on whether to Charter Mark the whole Council.	Charter Mark obtained	Year 3	Year 3	See above.
11.28	Ensure residents obtain feedback from Spotlight/PACT meetings.	Feedback provided in suitable media e.g. Parish Magazines, next PACT meeting for residents.	On-going	On-going	PACT process ensures regular feedback to public.

**Training and Development**

12.2	Ensure the "Top Team" programme includes a focus on the customer.	Training contains customer focus.	13.03.06	31.10.06	Top Team produced corporate priorities which included customer service.
12.3	All staff to go through customer training which will focus on interpersonal skills.	95% of staff attended training.	01.04.06	31.07.06	Customer First Part 1 completed with Part 2 due to be completed by 31 March 2008.
12.4	Middle Managers course to include stronger focus on customer service.	All middle managers to have attended "handling difficult customer situations" and "interpersonal communication skills".	TBD	TBD	Being actioned through Customer First Part 2 training and all managers going on handling difficult customers in June.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
12.5	Subscribe to a professional organisation that deals with customer service.	New ideas fed into the Strategy.	01.04.06	30.06.06	CCPP has joined an organisation.
12.6	Develop a customer satisfaction manual	Clear procedures for staff on best practice for customer care.	Year 2	Year 2	Manual will be launched in January 2008.

**Internal Team Building**

13.3	Service business planning to be cascaded to a team level.	Staff involvement, measured through annual staff survey.	01.09.06	31.03.07	Cascaded with Assistant Chief Executive due to review all team plans by 31 May 2008.
13.4	PDR process to follow business planning with staff putting forward their actions to improve customer service.	100% of PDRs completed. Positive feedback on process through annual staff survey.	01.09.06	31.03.07	Successfully introduced with 99% of staff receiving PDR.
13.5	Job rotation and procedure manuals in place for key customer processes.	Internal audit check that suitable arrangements in place (subject to agreement with IA Manager for 2007/08 audit plan).	Year 2	Year 2	No further action planned at this stage.
13.6	SMT member to attend one team meeting per year.	Standard met.	01.04.06	31.03.07	Achieved.
13.7	Staff social events (other than Christmas).	Improved morale measured through annual staff survey.	On-going	On-going	Xmas Party and BBQ a success. Need to consider holding these outside 9 to 5 to encourage customer culture and attendance from all staff.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
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**Customer Environment**

14.3	Customer friendly layout in Council House reception and Member's area.	New reception open.	On-going	31.05.06	Council House reception much improved.
14.4	Review all customer areas for their physical suitability for our customers.	See 14.5	Year 2	Year 2	Council undertaking DDA compliance work.
14.5	Obtain customer feedback from the public through the customer panel on the suitability of our premises.	Positive feedback from survey.	Year 2	Year 2	Will need to survey in next round of Customer Panel.

**Communications – Internal and External**

15.4	Undertake visible leadership events.	Minimum two events per year.	01.04.06	31.03.07	Staff Forums every quarter.
15.5	Ensure the editorial policies for Grapevine and Council Chat include a strong customer focus.	Updated policies in place.	01.04.06	31.08.06	Both "Connect" and "Together Bromsgrove" has a customer/performance focus.
15.6	Ensure a strong focus on the customer through internal communications.	Regular articles on the customer in the various communications.	On-going	On-going	Council has won an award for its internal communications.
15.7	Remind senior managers to thank staff personally.	Positive feedback through staff survey.	On-going	On-going	There is a good culture of recognising staff and rewarding them through Team of the Month etc.
15.8	Introduce team and individual customer service awards.	Quarterly awards. Reported in Grapevine.	01.04.06	31.03.07	Successfully introduced (at least that is how the winners view it).
15.9	Retain copies of positive letters and display at reception points.	Copies in all reception points.	01.05.06	30.06.06	We did attempt this, but finding a positive letter was not easy 18 months ago. We should now re-launch this idea.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
15.10	Continue to publish our press releases via e-mail, on staff notice boards and at the customer service centre.	Displayed.	On-going	On-going	On-going.
15.11	Develop a customer service poster.	Poster displayed around Council buildings.	01.05.06	31.08.06	Poster for Customer First value agreed and launched.
15.12	Review the corporate image of the Council, in particular, reprographics and our corporate rules for colours, lettering etc.	Standards agreed and operational.	01.07.06	31.12.06	New Corporate Style Guide due to be launched in January 2008.

**Managing the Change**

16.4, 16.5	Establish a Customer Service Project Board.	Board established. Detailed project plan, similar to the Recovery Plan in place to support delivery of Strategy.	01.05.06	31.05.06	Established during 2007 with CEO as Chair.
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Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
<b>Other Actions In Support of Strategy</b>					
All	Recruit to vacant Customer First Post (one year fixed contract).	Post filled	15.03.06	31.07.06	Now a permanent appointment.
4.6	Complete equalities impact assessment of Strategy.	Assessment completed and action plan in place.	01.05.06	31.07.06	Completed.
7.7	Train members of Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team in focus group facilitation skills.	Training undertaken and used to facilitate focus groups, particularly, for support services to help identify customer measures.	01.04.06	31.07.06	Training completed.

## 8. Priorities for the Year Ahead

- 8.1 The same 13 themes are still valid; however, there are six priorities within these themes, set out below. A revised action plan is included overleaf.

### Service Delivery Process

- 8.2 Information Communication Technology

- Implement spatial project.
- Complete roll out of customer complaints system.
- Undertake review of waste collection vehicles and ICT requirements.

- 8.3 Improve links between CSC and “back office”

- Appoint Change Manager to Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team (funded from central government Capacity Building Fund).
- Complete Resource Level Agreements between each department and CSC.
- Undertake business process re-engineering work on interfaces between CSC and “back office”.
- Continue with “customer clinics”.
- Align all staff holidays to CSC opening hours through Single Status.

### Training and Management Development

- 8.4. Customer First Training Parts 2 and 3 (and evaluation)

- Complete Customer First Training Part 2.
- Continue with annual training on customer service e.g. Customer First Part 3 etc.
- Introduce intensive customer care coaching for specifically identified managers and staff.
- Plain English training for all managers.

## Measurements

### 8.5. Customer Performance Measures

- Review customer standards.
- Review customer metrics in each team action plan.
- Undertake and refine second annual Customer Panel survey with focus on customer standards and satisfaction.
- Increase customer measures in corporate performance indicator set.
- Undertake internal customer survey.
- Charter Mark CCPP team.

## Communications – Internal and External

### 8.6. “One Council” Communications, Corporate Message and Style.

- Increase awareness of text messaging service.
- Continue to improve the Council’s website.
- Maintain the corporate communications planner.
- Identify communication projects in departments and ensure compliance with style guide.

## Customer Needs Research

### 8.7. Community Involvement.

- Continued attendance of senior managers at PACT meetings, but widen this to Corporate Management Team.
- Complete external review of Area Committees and agree way forward, including review of need for area offices.
- Introduce a participatory budget approach for children and young people and build on approach piloted this year with Equalities and Diversity Forum.
- Undertake a series of focus groups on service design, with a particular focus on non-users and user groups that are dissatisfied.

- Develop a Customer Access Strategy.

### **Customer Access**

#### 8.8 Customer Access

- Review the need for community transport and extending shopmobility hours.
- Continue to work with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and develop the role of the Welfare Officer in Revenues and Benefits.
- Carry out a review of resident's access requirements and determine whether there is a need to develop area offices for the CSC and/or extend the officer opening hours of the CSC.
- Undertake a benchmarking visit to a high performing Council to look at their approach to access.
- Continue to work towards Level 3 of the equalities standard for local government, in particular, start to deliver service outcomes.
- Continue to work on the Council's communications, to ensure residents are aware of the services we provide and how to contact us; and continue to ensure a consistent brand for the Council and improve the Council's website.
- Work towards ensuring full DDA compliance for all our buildings.

8.9 Section 8 provides a scorecard of measures for this Strategy, drawn from the service business plans. The specific dates for delivering these are set out in Section 9, which is the updated action plan for this Strategy.



## 8. Strategy Scorecard

<p><b>Customer Measures</b></p> <p>Improve overall satisfaction with the Council.</p> <p>Improve satisfaction with refuse collection.</p> <p>Improve % of residents recommending CSC to a friend.</p> <p>Improve satisfaction with Council website.</p> <p>Number of complaints resolved at stage 1</p>	<p><b>Process Measures</b></p> <p>Improve average answer times at the CSC.</p> <p>Improve call resolution at first point of contact at CSC</p> <p>Charter Mark the CCPP team in 2008/2009.</p> <p>Achieve Level 3 of the LG equalities standard.</p> <p>Reduce the number of missed bins.</p>
<p><b>Staff Measures</b></p> <p>% of staff completing the Customer First (Pt 2) training.</p> <p>Reduce sickness absence.</p> <p>Improved Employee Survey measures.</p> <p>Compliance with corporate customer standards.</p> <p>Plain English (or similar) training for staff.</p>	<p><b>Finance Measures</b></p> <p>£300,000 annual saving from Spatial project.</p> <p>Delivery of departmental VFM action plans.</p> <p>Successful bid to Capacity Building Fund for change manager.</p> <p>Equalities and Diversity forum budget bids for 2009/2010.</p> <p>Successful bids for other customer service improvements (based on identified need).</p>

## 9. Feb 08 – Jan 11 Action Plan

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
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### Organisational Strategy and Vision

No further actions on this theme.

### Customer Need Research

3.5	Annual review of outsourced customer panel.	Panel established and providing feedback.	01.09.08	31.10.08	£20,000	HB	M
3.5	Survey customers twice a year to find out what they think of our services (one "place" type survey and one customer standards survey).	Surveys completed and reported to CMT and Performance Management Board.	01.02.08	31.01.09	As above	HB	M
3.7	Hold a series of focus groups to determine customer access needs and how customers measure satisfaction.	Information used to inform Customer Access Strategy.	01.04.08	31.07.08	Improvement Fund	HB	H
6 (7.8)	CEO to continue with the "walk the wards" programme.	Short list of actions arising delivered.	On-going	On-going	CEO	KD	M
6 (7.9)	CMT to undertake "back to the floor" days.	Issues identified and resolved and staff updated on Intranet.	On-going	On-going	CMT	SS	M
4.4.2	Members to go "back to the floor".	Short list of agreed actions, which are delivered.	01.07.08	31.01.09	Customer First Office	SS	M
	Staff "job swap"	Positive feedback in employee survey.	01.10.08	On-going	Customer First Office	SS	M

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
2.4	Expand participatory budget pilots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalities and Diversity Forum to submit bids.</li> <li>Children and Young People Forum to submit bids against agreed budget.</li> <li>Citizen's Jury to follow budget process.</li> </ul>	Budget Cycle Timeline	Budget Cycle Timeline	2009/2010 Approved Budget	JM	H
-	Annual Review of consultation strategy	Strategy approved by Cabinet.	01.09.08	01.11.08	CCPP Team	JM	M
-	Co-ordinate community engagement and consultation across the council	Co-ordinated programme of work agreed and delivered.	01.04.08	31.03.09	CCPP Team	JM	M
3.3	Establish an annual internal customer survey – before March 2008	Survey conducted and results used in service business plans.	01.02.08	31.03.08	CCPP Team	JM	M
3.4	Establish an annual member survey – to be reviewed next year.	Survey conducted and results used in service business plans.	01.02.08	31.03.08	CCPP Team	JM	M
	Ensure the customer service improvements identified through scrutiny (and approved by Cabinet) are actioned.	Recommendations tracker reported to Scrutiny Steering Board.	On-going	On-going	Legal and Democratic Team	CF	M
	Introduce a scheme for “adopting” parish plans and continue to develop e-link for parish councils.	Approach agreed by all stakeholders and up and running.	01.02.08	30.06.08	CCPP Team and Legal and Democratic	HB CF	M

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
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**Organisational Structure**

6 (8.2)	Ensure the impact on the customer is a key criteria in any decisions about future structures of the Council.	Clear evidence of benefit to customer from decisions.	On-going	On-going	CEO	KD	H
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**Service Delivery Process**

3.21 5.	Key ICT systems introduced as part of Spatial Project and processes re-engineered to ensure customer benefit.	Services mapped and re-engineered.	01.09.07	31.10.08	£6.7m	DP	H
6 (9.6)	Develop customer benefits statements for each part of the Spatial Project.	See above.	01.04.08	31.05.08	Change Manager	HB	H
6 (9.9)	Ensure formal Resource Level Agreements between the Customer Service Centre and each service area are in place (and migration plans).	Agree schedule to complete them.  Completed RLAs	01.02.08	29.02.08	CSC Manager	RH	H
6 (9.11)	Ensure all contracts include a section on the customer and how it will be addressed through the particular service purchased.	Procurement guidance and advice reflects this action.  Possible coverage as part of Internal Audit work.	01.04.06	30.06.06	Procure Team	JP	M

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
4.3	Undertake Customer Clinics	Identified improvements delivered.	01.12.07	On-going	Customer First Board	KD	H
3.20	Additional BPR work with Change Manager post, on interface issues between CSC and "back office.	Identified improvements delivered.	01.05.08	30.09.09	Capacity Building Fund	HB	H
3.3	Review equipment and ICT requirements for SSWM Department, in particular, waste collection.	Service requirements and costs identified for 2009/2012 MTFS	01.12.07	31.07.08?	SSWM/E-Gov&Cust	MB/DP	H
11.1	CSC to identify a list of customer issues each month for the Board to look at.	.Issues referred to customer clinics and improvements made.	01.08.07	Review in 12 months	CSC Customer First Board	KD/RH	H
3.14	Focus group on Internet to understand customer issues.	Improvements identified. Positive feedback from public through customer survey.	01.07.08	30.09.08	E-Gov & Customer Serv / CCPP	DP	M

**Management Practices**

4.3	All DMT meetings to have a standard item on customer issues/feedback once a month.	Minutes of feedback and delivered actions of improvement.	01.02.08	31.01.09	CMT	HB	M
6 (10.3)	PDR format to include sections on customer service and behaviours for all staff.	Agreed approach built into 2009/10 PDR approach.	01.09.08	31.12.08	HR&OD	JP	H

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
6 (10.4)	All new job descriptions to have a standard agreed opening duty on customer service.	Standard duty in place (this is subject to discussion with new Head of HR).	01.02.08	31.05.08	HR&OD	JP	M
6 (10.7)	Continue with "Bright Ideas" staff suggestion scheme on customer improvement.	Quarterly reporting of what CMT has done with suggestions.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	SS	M
2.4	Undertake benchmarking visits to at least 2 councils recognised for best practice on customer service.	Ideas brought back and implemented.	01.02.08	31.01.09	Customer First Board	KD	M

#### Measurements

2.1	Undertake the DCLG Place Survey.	Survey completed to required DCLG standard, results sent to DCLG and results used in future decision-making of the Council.	?	?	Will require budget bid.	HB	H (statutory)
6 (11.19)	Measure customer standards and charter through customer panel survey.	Improved performance compared to 2007 survey.	01.04.08	31.07.08	£20,000	HB	M
6 (11.20) & 2.4	Introduce resident mystery shopper surveys.	Undertake surveys, received feedback and take corrective actions.	2009/2010	2009/2010	CCPP/CSC	SS	M

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
4.4.5	Undertake annual review of complaints system as part of review of Customer First Strategy.  Review complaints and compliments data at monthly performance CMT.	Approved by Cabinet.	01.12.08	06.02.09	Customer First Board	HB	M
4.4.10	Customer Manual spot checks	Customer Manual being complied with.	Quarterly	Quarterly	Customer First Board	SS/HB/AM	M
4.4.8	Spot check service requests put through to the "back office".	Identify service failures to Customer First Board and rectify.	01.05.08	On-going	Change Manager	HB	H
4.4.12	Update corporate performance indicator set each annum with customer measures.	Agreed by Cabinet as part of Council Plan.	01.12.08	20.02.09	CCPP	JO	M

**Measurements (continued)**

6 (11.26)	CharterMark the CCPP Team.	Charter Mark obtained.	01.04.08	31.03.09	Existing budget.	SS	M
6 (11.26)	CharterMark the Elections Team.	Charter Mark obtained.	2009/2010	2009/2010	2009/2010 budget bid	SS	M
6 (11.27)	Review the Charter Mark process and decide on whether to Charter Mark the whole Council.	Charter Mark obtained	01.04.10	30.09.11	CCPP	SS	M

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
6 (11.28)	Ensure residents obtain feedback from PACT meetings and pilot Area Committees.	Feedback provided in suitable media e.g. next PACT meeting for residents, Together Bromsgrove.	On-going	On-going	Community Safety Team	GR	M
	Invite PACT chairs to budget focus group to obtain customer service ideas.		Sept Each Year	Sept Each Year	CCPP	JM	M

### Training and Development

6 (12.2)	Ensure the "Top Team" programme includes a focus on the customer.	Agreed training content includes customer service.	?	?	Improvement Fund	KD	H
6 (12.3)	All staff to go through annual Customer First Training each year.	95% of staff attended training.	Jan-Mar each year	Jan-Mar each year	Corporate Training Budget	HB/JP	H
6 (12.4)	Identify coaching for middle managers including a focus on customer service and interpersonal skills	All middle managers to have attended "handling difficult customer situations" and "interpersonal communication skills".	01.01.08	31.03.8	Corporate Training Budget	JP	H
6 (12.5)	Continue to subscribe to a professional organisation that deals with customer service.	New ideas fed into the Strategy. Attendance at professional events.	On-going	On-going	CCPP Budget	HB	M



Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
6 (12.6)	Review customer manual	Quarterly spot checks by CCPP team. Annual review of Manual	2009/2010	2009/2010	CCPP	SS	M
9.2	Develop a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the customer first training	Successful evaluation. Agree approach as part of each round of training.	Jan-Mar each year	Jan-Mar each year	CCPP & HR&OD	HB&JP	M

**Internal Team Building**

6 (13.3)	Service business planning to be cascaded to a team level.	Staff involvement, measured through annual staff survey.	31 May Each Year	31 May Each Year	CCPP	HB	M
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**Internal Team Building**

6 (13.4)	PDR process to follow business planning.	100% of PDRs completed. Positive feedback on process through annual staff survey.	31 May Each Year	31 May Each Year	HR&OD	JP	H
6 (13.5)	Job rotation and procedure manuals in place for key customer processes.	Internal audit check that suitable arrangements in place (subject to agreement with IA Manager for 2008/09 audit plan). Determine SMART measure as part of audit plan.	01.04.08	31.03.09	IA	JP	L

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
6 (13.6)	CEO DMT member to regularly attend team meeting.	Each manager to attend one meeting per quarter.	01.04.06	31.03.07	CEO DMT	CEO	M
6 (13.7)	Hold BBQ at Council House and Depot. Hold Xmas meal for all staff (after office hours).	Improved morale measured through annual staff survey.	01.07.08	01.12.08	£2,000	HB	M
	Establish a project managers group.	Group established and making better connections between projects.	01.02.08	30.06.08	Within Budget	TB/HB	M

**Customer Environment**

6 (14.3)	Review customer friendly layout in Council House reception and CSC prior to CPA inspection.	Positive feedback in Customer Panel survey and CPA site visit.	01.04.08	31.07.08	CSC	RH	M
6 (14.4)	Review all customer areas for their physical suitability for our customers.	DDA Compliance target.	01.07.08?	31.03.09	DDA budget	CF	H
6 (14.5)	Obtain customer feedback from the public through the customer panel on the suitability of our premises.	Positive feedback from survey.	01.05.08	31.07.08	£20,000	HB	M

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
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**Customer Environment (continued)**

Staff Suggestion	Introduce modern customer friendly name badges for every member of staff.	Badges for all staff.	01.04.08	30.06.08	CEO	HB	m
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**Communications – Internal and External**

6 (15.4)	Continue to undertake visible leadership events.	Six monthly staff forums.	01.12.08	On-going	CEO	KD	H
6 (15.5)	Continue to ensure the editorial policies for Connect and Together Bromsgrove include a strong customer focus.	Positive feedback from Members and Customer Panel.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M
6 (15.6)	Continue to ensure a strong focus on the customer through internal communications.	Regular articles on the customer in the various communications.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M
6 (15.8)	Continue team and individual customer service awards.	Monthly award. Posters for each award. Xmas awards.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M
6 (15.9)	Retain copies of positive letters and display at reception points.	Copies in all reception points.	Start in May 2008	On-going	CCPP	SS	M
3.16	Increase awareness and use of Council's text messaging service.	Customer Panel indicator.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	HB	M

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
9.1	Improve customer communication by ensuring all written correspondence is customer focused, clear and easy to understand	Plain English or similar training for all middle managers.	2008/2009	2008/2009	Awaiting report on approach and costs	AMD	M

**Communications – Internal and External (continued)**

6 (15.10)	Continue to publish our press releases via e-mail, on staff notice boards and at the customer service centre.	Visual check round the building that they are displayed.	01.04.08	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M
6 (15.12)	Completed review of external communications to check compliance with style guide.	Document work programme for Corporate Communications Working Group on target.	01.02.08	31.01.11	CCPP and graphics contract	AMD	M

**Managing the Change**

16.4, 16.5	Customer First Board to meet regularly.	Every month. Progress against Customer First Strategy Action Plan reviewed at each meeting.	On-going	On-going	CEO, CCPP, SSWM, E- Gov./Cust	KD	H
-	Undertake annual review of Customer First Strategy.	Review completed and reported to Cabinet and PMB.	Feb. Cabinet each year	Feb. Cabinet each year	As above.	HB	M

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
4.4.6	Introduce a programme management structure to support the Improvement Plan and project management methodology of the Council.	Documentation has clear process for considering the customer in any decisions/actions.	01.04.08	30.06.08	Change Manager	HB	H
All	Recruit Change Manager to CCP Team (18 month fixed contract).	Post filled by 01.04.08 and delivering actions set out in strategy.	01.02.08	30.09.09	Capacity Building Bid	HB	H

## Customer Access

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
	Review the need for community transport and extending shopmobility hours.	Service up and running and shopmobility hours extended if need identified.	01.02.08	01.04.09	2009/2010 Budget Bids	HB MB	H
	Respond to the County consultation on transport and ensure future transport developments e.g. railway station, interchange in town centre, improve customer access to council facilities.	Satisfaction measure in Customer Panel.	01.02.08	30.09.09	Network Rail and County Council Funding	HB MB	H
	Continue to work with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and develop the role of the Welfare Officer in Revenues and Benefits.	Increase in take up of benefits claimants.  Improved debt advice for residents.	On-going	On-going	Within Approved Budget	JP	M
	Carry out a review of resident's access requirements and determine whether there is a need to develop area offices for the CSC and/or extend the officer opening hours of the CSC.	Business case as part of 2009/2010 budget and start of any agreed changes in 2009/2010.	01.02.08	01.04.09	2009/2010 Budget Bids	HB DP	H
	Undertake a benchmarking visit to a high performing Council to look at their approach to access	New ideas built into future Strategy update.	01.04.08	30.09.08	Officer Time	HB DP	M

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
	Continue to work towards Level 3 of the equalities standard for local government, in particular, start to deliver service outcomes.	Equality outcomes built into 2008/2009 improvement plan and separate corporate equalities action plan on target.	01.02.08	31.07.08	Equalities Officer	FS	H
	Continue to work on the Council's communications, to ensure residents are aware of the services we provide and how to contact us; and continue to ensure a consistent brand for the Council and improve the Council's website.	Customer Panel measures on awareness of services and ease of access the Council.	01.02.08	31.07.08	Equalities Officer	FS	H
	Work towards ensuring full DDA compliance for our buildings	% of Authority buildings' public areas that are suitable and accessible to the disabled (BV156)	On-going	On-going	Approved Budget	CF	H
	Continue to work with the Equalities and Diversity Forum and Disabled Users Group.	Identification of service gaps. Annual review/survey on Forum and Group's satisfaction.	On-going	On-going	Equalities Officer	FS	H

## 10. Conclusions

- 9.1 The Council is now improving at a rapid speed and expects to achieve a CPA rating of fair in the Autumn 2008. The Council has robust processes in place which should enable it to achieve an excellent rating in the new CAA framework; however, the Council aspires to achieve excellence in customer service and this still does not feel central to either CPA or CAA whose lexicon is one of “citizens”, “users” and “non-users” rather than “customer”. In addition, the focus on process and measurement means that the often intangible parts of an organisation i.e. the mindset of the Council, is absent from the Government’s thinking, which is still too producer focused.
- 9.2 Rather than look to the Government’s regulatory framework for local government for incentivisation, the Council needs to find its own approach. There does not seem to be an obvious and simple solution to achieving excellence in customer service; however, the original approach adopted in the Customer First Strategy of looking to ensure Customer First feeds through every aspect of the Council (in the 12 themes identified), underpinned by investment in ICT and a long term commitment to customer service from Members and senior management appears a reasonable way forward.
- 9.3 Finally, by the end of 2008/2009, the Council should have in place all the major processes required to deliver excellent customer service. The step change from average to excellence is likely to be less dramatic than the previous few years, requiring us to maintain a strategic focus, but also ensure we make lots of small changes that improve customer service, along with embedding and refining our customer processes.



## 11. Contacts

### Customer First Board Members

Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive, [k.dicks@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:k.dicks@bromsgrove.gov.uk)  
01527 881400

Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive  
[h.bennett@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:h.bennett@bromsgrove.gov.uk)  
01527 881430

Deb Poole, Head of E-Government and Customer Service,  
[d.poole@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:d.poole@bromsgrove.gov.uk)  
01527 88XXXX

Roger Horton, Customer Service Centre Manager.  
[r.horton@sbromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:r.horton@sbromsgrove.gov.uk), 01527 88XXXX

Anne-Marie Darroch, Communications and Customer First Manager  
[a.darroch@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:a.darroch@bromsgrove.gov.uk)  
01527881651

Sharon Sharpe, Customer First Officer, [s.sharpe@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:s.sharpe@bromsgrove.gov.uk),  
01527 88XXXX

## 12. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Bromsgrove District Council, Customer Services Peer Review, I&DeA, (May 2007) (Available on request).