



**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**WEDNESDAY, 2ND APRIL 2008 AT 6.00 P.M.**

**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 5th March 2008 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 4th March (Pages 9 - 12)
5. To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Board held on 17th March 2008 (to follow)
6. To receive the minutes of the Performance Management Board held on 18th March 2008 (to follow)
7. Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Report (Pages 13 - 60)
8. Annual External Audit Report 2006/07 (Pages 61 - 84)
9. Audit Commission - Annual Audit and Inspection Letter (Pages 85 - 106)
10. Improvement Plan Exception Report (January 2008) (Pages 107 - 122)
11. Comprehensive Performance Assessment Re-categorisation Request (Pages 123 - 136)

12. Parish Plans (Pages 137 - 146)
13. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting

K. DICKS  
Chief Executive

The Council House  
Burcot Lane  
BROMSGROVE  
Worcestershire  
B60 1AA

18th March 2008

# Agenda Item 3

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 5TH MARCH 2008 AT 6.00 P.M.

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, M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Mr. J. Edwards, Lead Official and Councillor P. M. McDonald

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. T. Beirne, Mr. P. Street, Mr. H. Bennett, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. J. Godwin, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. J. Pitman, Ms. D. Poole and Ms. D. Parker-Jones

#### 141/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

#### 142/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

#### 143/07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 6th February 2008 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record, subject to:

- (a) it being noted that Councillor Mrs Dyer had been present during Minute No's 131/07 to 140/07;
- (b) the list of those present at the meeting being amended to record Councillors Mr and Mrs McDonald as having been in attendance; and
- (c) the amendment of Minute No. 135/07 (Motion - Allocation Policy) to reflect the following points raised by Councillor Mrs McDonald:

Councillor Mrs McDonald stated that the Exception Site Policy:

- ignored the needs and living conditions of those living throughout the district and concentrated on the parish few;
- created a division between those living in the urban and rural areas of Bromsgrove; and
- whilst not illegal, did not support the true value of British justice, fairness and equality.

It was Councillor Mrs McDonald's personal view that the Policy breached the Race Relations Act inasmuch as the overwhelming majority of black and minority ethnic (BME) people lived in the urban area of Bromsgrove, thus indirectly discriminating against the few BME members of society who lived in the parishes. Councillor Mrs McDonald stated that no figures or statistics had been put forward to argue against this and that the Policy was used to keep BME people out of the parishes, which was contrary to the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy. Councillor Mrs McDonald added that no dual District/Parish Councillors had declared an interest in this item.

144/07 **SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 5th February 2008 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that, it being noted that the Recommendation at Minute No. 85/07 (Calls for Action - CLG Consultation) had already been dealt with via a separate report to the Council on 27th February 2008, the minutes be noted.

145/07 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The minutes of the Performance Management Board held on 19th February 2008 were submitted.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the minutes of the meeting be noted; and
- (b) that, subject to it being noted that the Cabinet would, in future, be monitoring, very closely, any underspends on capital budgets in order to avoid carry forwards of this nature, the Recommendation at Minute No. 79/07 (Integrated Finance and Performance Report (Quarter 3 December 2007), be approved.

146/07 **AIR QUALITY SCRUTINY REPORT - RECOMMENDATION 1**

Further to the meeting of the Cabinet on 5th February 2008, the Cabinet re-considered its response to the first recommendation contained within the Air Quality Scrutiny Report in relation to Low Emission Zones.

The Leader advised that whilst further information had now been received on the Low Emission Zone scheme which was being implemented in London, this was not an issue which the authority, as a District Council, could have a direct impact on and that this therefore needed to be progressed by the County Council.

**RESOLVED** that the relevant Portfolio Holder, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Air Quality Task Group (should the Task Group Chairman so wish), take this matter forward with the appropriate officers of the County Council and that the Portfolio Holder keep the Scrutiny Steering Board (SSB) updated, via the SSB's Recommendation Tracker Report, as to any progress regarding implementation of a Low Emission Zone Scheme in the roads/areas detailed in the original recommendation.

147/07 **PUBLIC TRANSPORT (BUSES) SCRUTINY REPORT**

The Cabinet considered the recommendations contained within the Public Transport (Buses) Task Group Scrutiny Report. The Leader acknowledged the work undertaken by the Task Group and it was noted that the Chairman of the Scrutiny Steering Board was present to respond to any issues raised on the report.

It was noted that a large number of the recommendations were matters which fell within the remit of the County Council and/or other agencies. As such, it was felt that the relevant Portfolio Holder, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Task Group (should the Task Group Chairman so wish as it was noted that this was outside of their terms of reference) should refer various matters onto the appropriate body and that the Portfolio Holder should keep the Scrutiny Steering Board updated, via the Board's Recommendation Tracker System, on any progress with the matters in question. Following discussion, it was

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that in relation to Recommendation 1, this matter be referred to the Town Centre Steering Group for it to decide how best to deal with the required interface with the relevant stakeholders for a new bus station for Bromsgrove (including the establishment of any required sub-committee of the Group in order to progress the new bus station), and that the relevant Portfolio Holder, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Public Transport (Buses) Task Group, keep updated as to any developments and update the Scrutiny Steering Board (SSB), via the SSB's Recommendation Tracker Report, on any progress in this regard;
- (b) that in relation to Recommendation 2, the Portfolio Holder and the Chairman of the Task Group refer this matter to the County Council and the Local Strategic Partnership Transport Theme Group, and that the Portfolio Holder report back to the Scrutiny Steering Board on any progress in this regard;
- (c) that in relation to Recommendation 3, the Portfolio Holder and the Chairman of the Task Group refer this matter to the County Council, the Local Strategic Partnership Transport Theme Group and the Town Centre Steering Group, and that the Portfolio Holder report back to the Scrutiny Steering Board on any progress in this regard;
- (d) that in relation to Recommendation 4, the Portfolio Holder and the Chairman of the Task Group refer this matter to the County Council, with any involvement on the part of this Council in becoming a proactive partner in future bids for rolling stock to be put on hold until such time as the draft Local Transport Bill becomes law, and that the Portfolio Holder report back to the Scrutiny Steering Board on any progress in this regard;
- (e) that in relation to Recommendation 5, this matter be referred to the Local Strategic Partnership Transport Theme Group for investigation and that the Group be requested to provide the Cabinet with a report in six months time detailing progress in this regard;

- (f) that in relation to Recommendations 6 and 7, the Portfolio Holder and the Chairman of the Task Group refer these matters to the County Council, and that the Portfolio Holder report back to the Scrutiny Steering Board on any progress in this regard;
- (g) that in relation to Recommendation 8, it being noted that the County Council was considering production of a new strategy on the marketing and delivery of information on passenger transport services in Worcestershire, this Council look at establishing website links to consult with the public further to support the County's new strategy, and that the Portfolio Holder report back to the Scrutiny Steering Board on any progress in this regard;
- (h) that in relation to Recommendation 9, this Council offer itself as a pilot authority to work with the County Council for the introduction of Real Time Passenger Information at major amenities, and that the Portfolio Holder report back to both the Scrutiny Steering Board and the Cabinet on any progress in this regard;
- (i) that in relation to recommendation 10, the Portfolio Holder and the Chairman of the Task Group arrange for the feasibility of producing a London Underground style bus route map to be looked into with the County Council, and that the Portfolio Holder report back to the Scrutiny Steering Board on any progress in this regard;
- (j) that in relation to Recommendation 11, this be referred direct to the County Council for action as these were not matters which fell within the remit of this Council;
- (k) that in relation to Recommendation 12, it be noted that Councillors Mrs Dyer and Mrs Sherrey were members of the group which was looking into the Worcestershire County Council Transport Strategy and that they would continue to have proactive involvement in this;
- (l) that in relation to Recommendation 13:
  - (i) it be noted that the issue of establishing a new bus station had already been dealt with under Recommendation 1;
  - (ii) it be agreed that the re-location of the existing toilet block as detailed at Recommendation 13 (c) be rejected as this was already being progressed;
  - (iii) that the Portfolio Holder discuss with the Executive Director - Projects and Partnerships the possibility of establishing a Shopmobility unit close to the re-located toilet block and that the Portfolio Holder report back to the Cabinet in this regard; and
  - (iv) that the Portfolio Holder and the Chairman of the Task Group report back to the Scrutiny Steering Board on progress on the above; and
- (m) that in relation to Recommendation 14, the membership of the Joint County and District Town Centre Steering Group remain as at present but that input be sought from Councillor Lewis, as Chairman of the Task Group, on any transport related issues.

148/07 **DEDICATION OF CYCLEWAY**

Consideration was given to the proposed dedication of the part of a cycleway at Catshill, that being part of Sustrans Route Cycle Path between Milton Road and Stourbridge Road (the Cycleway), which was within the Council's

ownership. In relation to the request for authority to be delegated to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to deal with such matters where no objections were received, the Leader stated that the Portfolio Holder would be expected to keep abreast of any delegations exercised.

**RESOLVED** that the part of the Cycleway within the Council's ownership be approved for Dedication as a public cycle path; and

**RECOMMENDED** that the Scheme of Delegation be amended to delegate authority to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to approve dedications of cycleways, bridleways, footways, footpaths and highways where no objections to the proposal have been received.

149/07 **COUNCIL PLAN 2008-2011 PART 2**

The Cabinet considered the Draft Council Plan for 2008-2011. The Plan also included a high level action plan for the Council's priorities for 2008-2011.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Draft Council Plan 2008-2011, including the new Balanced Scorecard for the Council on page 16 and the Council's Strategic Action Plan 2008-2011, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

150/07 **IMPROVEMENT PLAN EXCEPTION REPORT (DECEMBER 2007)**

Consideration was given to the updated Improvement Plan Exception Report for December 2007, together with the corrective action being taken.

In relation to the delayed community consultation as part of the preparation of the Area Action Plan for the Town Centre, Members noted the importance of appointing, as soon as possible, a developer for the Market Hall site and that any further slippage with the consultation would have an affect on such an appointment. It was also noted that Portfolio Holders would, at the next meeting of the Cabinet, be asked to report back as to the reasons for any slippages for January (Quarter 4).

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the revisions to the Improvement Plan Exception Report and the corrective action being taken be noted and approved; and
- (b) that it be noted that of the 147 actions highlighted within the Plan for December 2007, 82.3% of the Plan was on target (green), 11.6% was one month behind (amber) and 2.0% was over one month behind (red). 4.1% of actions had been rescheduled or suspended with approval.

151/07 **DECEMBER (QUARTER 3) PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

The Cabinet considered a report setting out the Council's performance at 31st December 2007 (period 9, Quarter 3).

It was noted that although the number of Performance Indicators which were Improving or Stable had fallen in comparison with the previous Quarter, these had been addressed and as at the end of January 74% were Improving or

Stable, with 85% achieving their Year to Date target. As had been pointed out under the minutes of the meeting of the Performance Management Board, Officers were due to look at the issue of budget underspends in order to ensure these were more appropriately managed, thus avoiding such carry forwards. Details of carry forwards would, in future, be available on a quarterly basis and it was noted that a new Accountancy Manager was to commence employment with the Council at the end of March, both of which would assist with this.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that it be noted that 55% of Performance Indicators (PIs) were Improving or Stable, compared to 83% at Quarter 2;
- (b) that it be noted that 73% of PI's were achieving their Year To Date target, compared to 72% at Quarter 2;
- (c) that it be noted that 75% of PI's were predicted to meet their target at year end, compared to 79% at Quarter 1; and
- (d) that the financial position for both revenue and capital funding for the second quarter of £198k underspend and £840k respectively be noted; and

**RECOMMENDED** that approval be given for the carrying forward of the estimated under spent budgets totalling £2.250m from 2007/08 to 2008/09, as detailed at Appendix 5 to the report.

152/07 **CAPITAL STRATEGY 2008-2011**

Consideration was given to an updated Capital Strategy for the Council for 2008-2011. The Strategy brought together work undertaken by the Council in recent years on the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council Plan, which together set out a vision for Bromsgrove for 2008 and beyond.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Capital Strategy 2008-2011 be approved.

153/07 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2008-09 TO 2010-11**

The Cabinet considered a strategy statement for the treasury management and investments in relation to the Council required for compliance with the Local Government Act 2003 and to ensure the Council demonstrated accountability and effectiveness in the management side of its funds.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) that the Strategy and Prudential Indicators shown at Appendices A and B to the report be approved and adopted;
- (b) that the Authorised Limit for borrowing be set at £6m as required by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), that being the same as the Affordable Borrowing Limit required by section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003; and
- (c) that the maximum level of investment to be held within each organisation (i.e. bank or building society) as detailed be set at £3m.



154/07 **FEES AND CHARGES 2008-09**

Consideration was given to the fees and charges to be levied on services provided by the Council, which were used as the basis for income targets in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2008-09 to 2010-11.

Members were advised of the following updates to the details set out in the report:

- (i) Dolphin Centre - up to one hour: 70p, up to three hours: £2.10p and all day: £3;
- (ii) Recreation Road North - all day: £3;
- (iii) Recreation Road South - up to five hours: £3.50p.

Additionally, the Churchfields Multi Storey and Hanover Street car parks had been listed as short stay in error.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to the amendments detailed in the preamble above, the fees and charges detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

155/07 **LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE (LHA) POLICY**

The Cabinet considered a report which provided details of a new Local Housing Allowance Scheme which was being introduced on 1st April 2008 and set out a new policy to support the delivery of the new scheme.

**RESOLVED** that the changes to the Housing Benefit Scheme, as detailed in the report, be noted, and the policy at Appendix 1 be approved and adopted.

156/07 **DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT (DHP) POLICY**

Consideration was given to a report which presented members with a Discretionary Housing Policy for the Authority.

**RESOLVED** that the changes to the Housing Benefit Scheme, as detailed in the report, be noted, and the policy shown at Appendix 1 be approved and adopted.

157/07 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

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

Minute No  
158/07

Paragraphs  
1 and 3

158/07 **WRITE OFF - SUNDRY DEBT**

Consideration was given to the writing off of a Sundry Debt which had been identified as irrecoverable.

**RESOLVED** that the balance detailed in the report be written off as irrecoverable.

The meeting closed at 7.38 p.m.

Chairman

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD

TUESDAY, 4TH MARCH 2008 AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillor C. R. Scurrall

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. T. Beirne, Mr. P. Street, Mrs. C. Felton and Ms. D. McCarthy

#### 90/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor B. Lewis F.CMI.

#### 91/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were made.

#### 92/07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 5th February 2008 were submitted.

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

#### 93/07 REFUSE AND RECYCLING SCRUTINY REPORT

The Chairman of the Refuse and Recycling Task Group, Councillor C. R. Scurrall, was welcomed to the meeting and he presented the Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Report to the Board.

Councillor Scurrall first wanted to thank all those who had assisted with the scrutiny investigation including other Members of the Task Group, officers and the facilitator.

It was pointed out that Bromsgrove District Council was ranked 50 out of 393 (one being the best) for its combined recycling and composting for the year 2006/07 and that it was the highest ranked authority in the County. It was also stated that the recommendations relating to NVQ training for the workforce were considered key.

The Board considered each recommendation in turn. Questions were raised relating to the first recommendation on NVQ training and these were answered.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that it be clarified which NVQ level refuse and recycling crews would be required to undertake if recommendation one was approved; and
- (b) that the Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Report containing recommendations be approved.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Report be placed on the next available Agenda for Cabinet's consideration and all recommendations contained within the report be approved.

94/07 **NEW TASK GROUPS**

The Board considered the membership of the two newly established Task Groups. An additional membership form for the Alcohol Free Zones Task Group from Councillor Mrs. M. Bunker was tabled.

It was commented that the response from Members to join either of the Task Groups had been poor and therefore it was suggested that Members be canvassed once more.

Members of the Board also discussed appointing a Chairman for the Anti-Social Behaviour Task Group and the terms of reference of the Alcohol Free Zones Task Group.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that Councillor K. Taylor be appointed as Chairman of the Anti-Social Behaviour Task Group;
- (b) that the scrutiny exercise scoping checklist for the Alcohol Free Zones Task Group, which would act as the Task Group's terms of reference, be approved; and
- (c) that a letter be sent to all non-Cabinet Members requesting them to complete a membership form if they wish to join one of the recently established Task Groups.

95/07 **RECOMMENDATION TRACKER**

The recommendation tracker report was considered. Members were informed that, in relation to Air Quality Scrutiny recommendation 16 (b), at a recent meeting of the Modern Councillor Steering Group, it had been agreed that a showing of the film "An Inconvenient Truth" would be organised and would be incorporated within the Member Training Programme. It was suggested that the film could be the basis of a discussion and that Ms. R. Ford from the Energy Saving Trust could assist and act as a facilitator.

**RESOLVED** that the recommendation tracker and verbal update on Air Quality Scrutiny recommendation 16 (b) be noted.

96/07 **CABINET'S FORWARD PLAN**

Members of the Board considered the Cabinet's Forward Plan which contained the key decisions scheduled to be made over the next few months.

The Chairman asked for further details on item number 14 on the Cabinet's Forward Plan which related to the Artrix Service Level Agreement (SLA). The Chief Executive assured Members that the reason for the SLA was to ensure the Council received value for money. It was stated that the Performance Management Board had also considered this item at the end of 2007 and was due to consider the draft SLA at a future meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that Councillor J. T. Duddy, as Chairman of the Performance Management Board, ensure that the Performance Management Board considers the draft Artrix Service Level Agreement; and
- (b) that the Cabinet's Forward Plan be noted.

97/07 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the work programme for the Scrutiny Steering Board.

It was explained that the Energy Efficiency Project Group was at the development stage and the key issues it was considering included working towards reducing carbon emissions (which meant the Council needed to investigate current levels) and developing a sustainability statement and a travel plan for the Council. The Executive Director – Partnerships and Projects informed the Board that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on 26th March 2008.

With regard to Value for Money in relation to Street Scene and Waste Management and the ICT Spatial Programme, there was a discussion on whether these topics should remain on the Scrutiny Steering Board's work programme or whether it was more appropriate to refer one or both topics to the Audit Board or Performance Management Board for consideration.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the Executive Director – Partnerships and Projects submit a report to the meeting of this Board on 3rd June 2008 on the progress of the Energy Efficiency Project Group;
- (b) that 'Climate Change' as a possible topic for scrutiny, be deferred until the meeting of this Board on 3rd June 2008, following consideration of the report mentioned in (a) above;
- (c) that all other topics stated on the Scrutiny Steering Board's work programme remain listed and be considered at a future meeting when existing Task Groups have completed their scrutiny investigations; and
- (d) that the remainder of the work programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.35 p.m.

Chairman

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## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET

2ND APRIL 2008

#### REFUSE AND RECYCLING SCRUTINY REPORT

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Street Scene and Waste Management
Scrutiny Task Group Chairman	Councillor C. R. Scurrall

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider the findings and recommendations made by the Refuse and Recycling Task Group which are contained within the attached report.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members are requested to consider and approve the attached report and recommendations contained within it.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board on 12th June 2007, it was decided a Task Group would be established to scrutinise issues relating to refuse and recycling and that Councillor Taylor would be appointed as Chairman.
- 3.2 The full terms of reference were approved by the Scrutiny Steering Board at its meeting held on 3rd July 2007 when membership of the Task Group was also agreed.
- 3.3 After the first meeting of the Task Group, Councillor Taylor believed he had an interest and therefore resigned immediately. The Scrutiny Steering Board appointed Councillor Scurrall to take over as Chairman at its meeting on 2nd October 2007.
- 3.4 Further details can be found in the "Terms of Reference" and "Background and Methodology" sections on page 6 of the attached report.
- 3.5 The Scrutiny Steering Board considered and approved the attached report at its meeting held on 4th March 2008 and it was requested that it be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

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

- 4.1 For the majority of recommendations there are either no financial implications or minimal financial implications as outlined in the attached report. All of these costs can be met within the existing budget.
- 4.2 In relation to the NVQ training referred to in recommendations 1 to 3, funding assistance from Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is available and would cover the full cost of recommendations 1 and 2. It is expected that they will also cover approximately 50% of the costs of recommendation 3 which in total would amount to over £75,000. Therefore, the total cost to this Council will be approximately £1500 and this can be met within the existing training budget.

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

- 5.1 There are no legal implications relating to this report.

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

- 6.1 This report links to Council Objectives Environment and Improvement.

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

- 7.1 The risk of not implementing the recommendations contained within the attached scrutiny report is that this Council does not continue to improve the refuse and recycling service and in particular, customer service standards.

#### **8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 If the recommendations were approved and implemented, residents living in Bromsgrove District would benefit from improved customer service (e.g. via NVQ Training being provided to refuse and recycling crews, which would have an emphasis on customer satisfaction, as explained in the attached report).

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

- 9.1 There are no implications directly relating to this report for the Council's Equalities and Diversity Policies.

#### **10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 As there will be a significant amount of funding assistance available from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in relation to implementing recommendations 1, 2 and 3, it means that the NVQ Training would be value for money, particularly as it states within the recommendations that specific local protocols would need to be built into the training to ensure it meets the requirements for Bromsgrove District.



## 11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues – None.
Personnel Implications – There are implications in relation to recommendation 2 which requests that it is made a requirement for all new employees to either hold the NVQ in Waste Management or achieve it within an agreed timeframe.
Governance/Performance Management – None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – None
Policy – None
Environmental – the refuse and recycling service is inextricably linked to environmental issues.

## 12. 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	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes – The Learning and OD Manager was consulted.
Corporate Procurement Team	Yes

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**

All Wards.

**14. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Report including its seven appendices.

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

**CONTACT OFFICER**

Name: Della McCarthy, Committee Services Officer  
E Mail: [d.mccarthy@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:d.mccarthy@bromsgrove.gov.uk)  
Tel: (01527) 881407



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council

[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

# SCRUTINY REPORT

## REFUSE AND RECYCLING

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## SCRUTINY REPORT

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Completed January 2008

Committee Services Officer: Della McCarthy

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**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**REPORT OF THE REFUSE AND RECYCLING TASK GROUP**

JANUARY 2008

**MEMBERS**

Councillors C. R. Scurrall (Chairman), Mrs. M. Bunker, Mrs. A. E. Doyle, S. P. Shannon and C. J. Tidmarsh

(Councillor C. B. Taylor was appointed Chairman initially and attended the first meeting of the Task Group. However, following the first Task Group Meeting, Councillor C. B. Taylor believed he had an interest and therefore resigned immediately. The Scrutiny Steering Board appointed Councillor C. R. Scurrall to continue as Chairman at its meeting in October 2007. Councillor C. R. Scurrall was already a Member of the Task Group and had received the required training to lead the scrutiny investigation.)

This Task Group wishes to acknowledge the assistance received from Mr. D. McGrath from Link Support Services (UK) Ltd who has helped the Task Group from the start of the investigation, with focusing on specific topic areas using the 'One Page Strategy', all the way through to the end of the scrutiny investigation when this report was finalised. Members would also like to thank all officers involved from Street Scene and Waste Management as well as the Committee Services Officer, Ms. D. McCarthy.

**SUMMARY**

The role of the Refuse and Recycling Task Group was to carry out a scrutiny exercise to identify issues affecting the efficiency and performance of the service since the introduction of two weekly collections, highlighting the promotional aspirations of the workforce as a means of strengthening the service and make general recommendations for strengthening the service.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Workforce Development – Recommendations 1 to 3**

With a view to achieving higher sustainable levels of resident satisfaction and improving the efficiency of the service, as well as giving employees an opportunity to obtain relevant qualifications, we recommend the following:

1. NVQ Training for Existing Workforce

NVQ Training in Waste Management from WAMITAB (Waste Management Industry Training Advisory Board) via NEW College is given to all refuse and recycling staff over a 2 year period commencing September 2008 with the following conditions:

- standards for 'performance criteria' and 'knowledge requirements' specific to this Council are built into the awards;
- the preferred primary assessment method is observation (rather than witness testimonies or personal statements); and
- that performance criteria is observed consistently over a certain time period rather than as a one-off

Please refer to pages 10-11 for more detail on recommendation 1.

*(Cost: Nil. Funding assistance via the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is available and is believed to be worth in the region of £75,000 and £90,000 meaning there would be **no cost** to this Council.)*

2. NVQ Training for New Employees

It is made a requirement of all new employees to either hold the NVQ in Waste Management or achieve it within an agreed timeframe.

*(Cost: Nil. It is anticipated that future funding will be obtained via the Learning and Skills Council.)*

3. NVQ Training for Team Leaders

The following NVQ training is given to the three Refuse and Recycling Team Leaders:

- Team Leading in Refuse and Recycling via NEW College
- BITS (Business Improvement Techniques) via RDI (Resource Development International)

*(Cost: It is expected that a proportion of the funding (approximately 50%) will be available from the Learning and Skills Council. Therefore, it is anticipated that the total cost to this Council will be approximately £1500 and this can be met within the existing training budget.)*

**Increasing Recycling Rates – Recommendations 4 to 9**

One of the agreed outcomes of the Task Group was to investigate possibilities of improving recycling rates which led to the following:

4. Commingled Recycling Service

Request that Street Scene and Waste Management Officers monitor the progress Worcestershire County Council is making in relation to building their own sorting plant by 2009, as this will enable a commingled recycling service to be launched (making it easier to recycle and likely to encourage more recycling) and therefore significantly improve this Council's recycling rates.

*(Cost: Nil. There is a saving identified in 2010/11 of £100k as a result of the Council moving to commingle waste provision.)*

5. Recycling Additional Materials

Street Scene and Waste Management Officers be requested to continue to encourage Worcestershire County Council officers to investigate recycling more materials through the Waste Management Forum.

*(Cost: Nil)*

6. Benchmarking

Request that Street Scene and Waste Management Officers continue to regularly and systematically benchmark against the top 10-15 local authorities in the recycling league table which are achieving higher recycling rates, with a view to adapting any parts of their services to Bromsgrove which may prove successful in helping to increase our recycling figures.

*(Cost: Nil)*

7. Expanding the Recycling Service

Street Scene and Waste Management Officers be requested to continually investigate ways in which the Council can expand the recycling service to reach the remaining 6% of the District.

*(Cost: Nil)*

8. Eco-School Programme

In order to educate as many children as possible to take responsibility for the future of their own environment and encourage more recycling throughout the District, Street Scene and Waste Management officers be requested to continue to encourage all schools to join the Eco-School programme, particularly primary schools.

*(Cost: Nil)*

9. Incentive Schemes

Request that Street Scene and Waste Management officers keep up to date with developments of the Defra pilot incentive scheme and when the results are known, the option of introducing such a scheme be investigated further.

*(Cost: Nil)*

**Green Waste Collection – Recommendation 10**

It was agreed that the Green Waste Collection Service would be a specific topic area for the Task Group to investigate. Due to the recent decision in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2008/09 -2010/11, our recommendation is:

10. Consultation

Request the Head of Street Scene and Waste Management to make certain there is thorough consultation with local residents in relation to the green bin charging arrangements due to be put in place. Effective communication will help ensure smooth implementation of the charging system which should avoid a reduction in customer service standards.

*(Cost: Minimal and can be met within the existing budget.)*

**Fortnightly Collections**

One of the agreed outcomes was that the satisfaction levels of the fortnightly refuse collections would be assessed. This has been completed and the Task Group agree that it is not necessary to make any recommendations regarding fortnightly collections. More details are given on page 17



**Communication – Recommendations 11 to 15**

The Council should adopt a clear communication strategy to help improve the recycling service as there is a strong correlation between communication and customer satisfaction:

11. Communication with local residents  
Increase communication with local residents wherever possible to encourage reducing, reusing and recycling. For example, ensuring local residents are aware that they can request more recycling boxes free of charge.  
*(Cost: Minimal and can be met within existing budget)*
12. Collection Arrangements  
To ensure that local residents are clear about which containers should be placed on the kerbside and when, officers be requested to investigate trialling wheelie bin stickers during 2008/09 or 2009/10, similar to Lichfield District Council.  
*(Cost: Nil. However, the cost of printing bin stickers instead of calendars would need to be considered if this recommendation is approved.)*
13. Member and Parish Council Training  
Similar to Daventry District Council, training/information sessions be arranged to inform Members of the following to ensure they have a sound knowledge of the Street Scene and Waste Management Services to pass on to local residents:
  - the history of the service;
  - where the Council is at present; and
  - plans to progress the service in future.Members of Parish Councils should also be invited to attend these sessions.  
*(Cost: Minimal and the cost of such sessions can be met within the existing budget.)*
14. Member Updates  
Updates relating to the refuse and recycling service be included in Members' Bulletins.  
*(Cost: Nil)*
15. Vehicle Tracking and Communication System  
The Head of Street Scene and Waste Management be requested to further investigate the effectiveness of various vehicle tracking and communication systems with a view to trialling a model in the future.  
*(Cost: Nil. At this stage, it is believed that further investigation is required to assess the potential benefits and financial implications. Any trialling should be at no cost to the Council.)*

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

At the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 12th June 2007, it was decided a Task Group would be established to scrutinise issues relating to refuse and recycling.

The Task Group's terms of reference, which were compiled by the first appointed Chairman, Councillor Taylor, were approved by the Board at its meeting held on 3rd July 2007, subject to additional wording. The full terms of reference are attached as **Appendix 1**. The Membership of the Task Group was also agreed at the same meeting.

The Task Group was given 4 months (from the date of its first meeting) to complete its work. To ensure effective scrutiny, the Task Group waited until after the scrutiny training held in August before commencing the scrutiny investigation. The first meeting was on 22nd August 2007.

As Councillor Taylor resigned due to an interest, Councillor Scurrrell was appointed Task Group Chairman by the Scrutiny Steering Board at its meeting in October 2007. The change in Chairmanship after one meeting delayed the work of the Task Group for a few weeks and therefore the deadline for completion of the scrutiny exercise was extended by the Board to 28th January 2008.

## **BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY**

### Public Involvement

A press release was issued informing the public the Refuse and Recycling Task Group had been set up. Members of the public were encouraged to submit their views, comments and suggestions for the Task Group to consider. Information about the Task Group was also uploaded on to the website where again the public were encouraged to voice their opinions and suggestions for improvement.

A total of almost 30 letters and emails were received which is the largest number for any Task Group so far. It is worth noting that almost half of the comments received were complimentary about the refuse and recycling service.

### Witnesses

The Refuse and Recycling Task Group worked closely with Street Scene and Waste Management officers as well as the Learning and Organisational Development Manager. The Task Group also believed it was important to gain input from the relevant Portfolio Holder.

The Task Group researched and contacted other local authorities with high recycling rates and those classed as waste and recycling beacon authorities who are seen as exemplars of sustainable waste management.

Others contacted to provide evidence were: Training providers, such as NEW College and RDI (Resource Development International) regarding NVQ training; Parish Councils; and local supermarkets (as well as Head Offices) regarding recycling, reusing and reducing waste schemes. Unfortunately, no response has been received to date from the supermarkets.

A full list of those contacted is set out in **Appendix 2**.

### Research

A wealth of background information was considered by Members in between meetings which included: information from the IDeA Beacon Scheme website, such as various case studies relating to the theme 'Waste and Recycling'; the Joint Municipal waste Management Strategy for Herefordshire and Worcestershire 2004-2034, Managing waste for a brighter future; the work of the Cabinet's Street Scene Advisory Group which also looked at the waste collection service; this Council's Refuse and Recycling Collection Policy; scrutiny reports from other local authorities; and information produced by Defra on letsrecycle.com.

### Areas Covered

There were a total of seven task group meetings and at the first meeting a schedule of work was devised.

The four main areas covered were:

- Workforce development
- Improving the recycling rates
- Green waste collection service
- Fortnightly refuse collection service

Further details on these main areas covered are included in the next section.

However, there were many issues discussed during the scrutiny investigation and below is a list of some of them (in no particular order):

- Reducing, reusing and recycling
- Waste Minimisation Strategy
- Customer Survey on Street Scene and Waste Management
- Recycling rates compared to other local authorities
- Various strategies used by other local authorities to improve recycling rates particularly at Broadland District Council, North Kesteven District Council and North Norfolk District Council (as suggested by Mr. McGrath, Facilitator)
- Audit Commission Report on Waste Management

- Work being carried out by Worcestershire County Council such as Jilt the Junk, Shop Smart and Love Food Hate Waste campaigns
- Publicity and consultation
- Home composting, sink macerators, organic waste shredding and green grow soil
- Parish Councils views on the Green Waste Collection Service
- Performance Indicators such as total tonnage collected
- Information from various external sources including the IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency), CfPS (Centre for Public Scrutiny), letsrecycle.com and Local Government News.
- Wheelie bins and recycling containers
- Local supermarkets (in relation to excess packaging and plastic bags)
- Plastic bag free town of Modbury in Devon
- Pay as you throw proposal
- Compost street sweeping and street recycling bins
- Eco-School Programme
- Draft reports compiled by Resource Futures consultants selected via Defra Waste Implementation Programme relating to Worcestershire County

### The 'One Page Strategy'

The Task Group had the opportunity to work with Mr. McGrath who most Members will have met through various training events held. Mr. McGrath acted as a facilitator and introduced the 'one page strategy'.

Bromsgrove District Council has a statutory duty to scrutinise issues of key concern to members of the public. In exercising this duty this Council has decided that its approach to Overview and Scrutiny will be 'Ambitious Scrutiny' which involves focusing on clear challenge areas with a view to:

- Spotting and exploring policy opportunities which hold the potential to improve service standards;
- Working within a project framework;
- Underpinning overview and scrutiny activity with relevant Member development and facilitation support to introduce best practice methodologies;
- Consulting widely with a particular emphasis on identifying best practice exemplars; and
- Producing specific and workable recommendations which hold the potential to improve service delivery

Members took part in 'ambitious scrutiny' training to assess the potential to employ this approach to the work of the Refuse and Recycling Task Group. It is understood that obtaining a clear focus and producing a succinct project plan is key to ensuring effective scrutiny within fairly tight timescales. Therefore, Members received training support from Mr. McGrath in a particular approach to

project planning - the 'one page strategy'. The one page strategy is used as an aid to:

- Gain a clear understanding of the focus of the review – aimed at the most productive 'payback' areas
- Articulate this focus clearly on one piece of paper
- Identify potential outcomes (to explore throughout the review) and
- Point out key activities for Task Group Members

It was clear from the outset that we wished to explore a variety of areas under the general umbrella of refuse and recycling. We, as a Task Group, acknowledged that refuse and recycling is a huge portfolio and so it was highly desirable to get a clear focus on specific areas to review.

Following a thorough discussion, a one page strategy was produced and is attached as **Appendix 3**. In brief, the one page strategy identified the four main areas of focus as:

- (a) **Workforce development (for waste management staff)** with a particular focus on measures aimed at improving customer, resident satisfaction and efficiency and performance of the service. Local and national research carried out by the authority indicates that satisfaction with household waste collection dropped by 7% to 76% satisfied. Nationally satisfaction levels with waste collection staff dropped by 5%.
- (b) **Exploring opportunities to further improve 'dry recycling rates'** noting that Bromsgrove was named recently via a Defra poll as one of the top ten most improved Councils in the country for recycling and composting.
- (c) **Assess potential to support green waste collection during the winter months.** It is understood that this particular issue has moved on since the Task Group commenced its investigation and this has been taken on board when making our recommendations in relation to green waste collections.
- (d) **Consultation to assess satisfaction levels regarding fortnightly bin collections**

To ensure the Task Group remained focussed on the specific topics agreed to be scrutinised, the 'One Page Strategy' was a standing item on every agenda.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Workforce Development (Recommendations 1-3)

One of the main areas the Task Group decided to investigate was developing the workforce through relevant training in order to further improve customer service and resident satisfaction. We believe residents of the District deserve a high performing and efficient workforce and therefore the Task Group considered this particular area in great detail.

It is important to both Members of the Task Group and officers that we provide the best service possible to local residents and the refuse and recycling collection service is no exception, particularly as this is the one service used by all residents. The Task Group was impressed by the Recycling Team achieving a level of customer satisfaction that puts them amongst the top 25% nationally and we want to help ensure they remain in the top quartile and improve further!

It is also our concern that refuse and recycling crews may feel undervalued but we believe staff morale could be improved by providing recognition to staff through giving them the opportunity to achieve a nationally recognised qualification.

Following the scrutiny training and through completing our 'one page strategy', we were encouraged to set 'unreasonable' ambitions in this area (as an aid to 'thinking the unthinkable and being creative') and expressed a desire for all refuse and recycling crews to be trained in efficiency improvement techniques and customer satisfaction at **no cost** to the Council.

Members and officers collectively identified two potential training providers who could deliver appropriate training for operatives and the Learning and Organisational Development Manager was asked to research the answers to a number of specific questions which were put to training providers and internal staff and to 'give evidence' to the Task Group. The Learning and Organisational Development Manager was also requested to assess the different training providers which were RDI (Resource Development International) and NEW College. **Appendix 4** is an extract of the reports from the Learning and Organisational Manager which provides more detail on the training providers and the NVQ Training.

Funding assistance via the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is available to support the training, development and assessment of the refuse and recycling crews and therefore, there would be no financial implications for this Council. In fact, it should be pointed out that the level of funding available to support training and development of operatives is estimated to be worth in the region of £1500-£1800 per member of staff. Around 50 members of staff would participate

in the scheme (over a 2 year period) which means **this would attract support to the authority in the region of £75,000-£90,000**, notwithstanding benefits to the operatives, the Council and members of the public generated via the training. This would not be a 'quick fix' but a long term project.

To ensure the training has a noticeable impact on the service, we believe that specific local protocols aimed at reinforcing the high customer standards in the waste management operations need to be built in to help ensure residents' satisfaction is improved (e.g. Daventry District Council achieves 85% user satisfaction). Source IDEA Beacon case study published August 2006.

The Task Group therefore recommend the following:

<b>Recommendation 1</b>	<p>NVQ Training in Waste Management from WAMITAB (Waste Management Industry Training Advisory Board) via NEW College is given to all refuse and recycling staff over a 2 year period commencing September 2008 with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ standards for 'performance criteria' and 'knowledge requirements' specific to this Council are built into the awards;</li> <li>▪ the preferred primary assessment method is observation (rather than witness testimonies or personal statements); and</li> <li>▪ that performance criteria is observed consistently over a certain time period rather than as a one-off.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Implications</b>	<p>There are no financial implications relating to this recommendation as funding assistance via the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is available. As it costs in the region of £1500-£1800 per member of staff, this would attract support to the authority in the region of £75,000 and £90,000.</p>

To make certain the Council continues to have a high performing and efficient workforce, we believe it needs to ensure that all new refuse and recycling operatives are provided with the same training and development opportunities. Therefore, assuming the NVQ in Waste Management from WAMITAB (Waste Management Industry Training Advisory Board) is still being offered, we recommend the following:

<b>Recommendation 2</b>	<p>It be made a requirement of all new employees to either hold the NVQ in Waste Management or achieve it within an agreed timeframe.</p>
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<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are no financial implications relating to this recommendation as it is anticipated that future funding will be obtained via the Learning and Skills Council.
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The Task Group fully support Team Leaders also being offered the opportunity to improve their skills as this can only be of benefit to our customers. Similar to the NVQ training for refuse and recycling staff, the training should still have standards built into the awards which are specific to this Council to ensure there is a link with improving customer satisfaction. Therefore, as suggested by the Learning and Organisational Development Manager, our final recommendation in relation to workforce development is:

<b>Recommendation 3</b>	The following NVQ training is given to the three Refuse and Recycling Team Leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Team Leading in Refuse and Recycling via NEW College</li> <li>▪ BITS (Business Improvement Techniques) via RDI (Resource Development International)</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Implications</b>	It is expected that a proportion of the funding (approximately 50%) will be available from the Learning and Skills Council. Therefore, it is anticipated that the total cost to this Council will be approximately £1500 and this can be met within the existing training budget.



## Increasing Recycling Rates (Recommendations 4-9)

We understand that our ‘unreasonable’ ambition of improving dry recycling waste by 10% is only likely to be achieved once Worcestershire County Council, as the disposal authority, has the facilities.

Worcestershire County Council will be building a MRF (Materials Recycling Facilities) which is anticipated to be up and running by 2009/10 and will therefore enable this Council to launch a commingled recycling service. This should see a dramatic increase in this Council’s recycling figures from 40% to approximately 50-55%. We would also support this as it could lead to savings for the District Council as there would be an ability to collect waste more economically.

Through research and questioning other local authorities with higher recycling rates, it appears that one of the main differences is that they provide a commingled recycling service.

It should be pointed out that although the Task Group, as part of its investigation, looked at increasing recycling rates, it also fully appreciates the hard work of officers which has ensured the Council is achieving very good recycling rates. We were pleased to learn that out of 393 local authorities, **Bromsgrove is ranked 50 for its recycling rates during 2006/07** and if you compare that to neighbouring authorities (Worcestershire County Council - 155, Wyre Forest - 224, Worcester City - 261, Malvern - 282, Wychavon - 333, Redditch - 354) this is an excellent achievement. (See **Appendix 5**)

However, some local authorities are achieving far higher recycling rates at around 50-55% and it is important that we strive to do even better. Particularly as other local authorities are improving which is why Bromsgrove is ranked 50 out of 393 in 2006/07 when it was ranked 21 out of 393 in 2005/06.

<b>Recommendation 4</b>	Request that Street Scene and Waste Management Officers monitor the progress Worcestershire County Council is making in relation to building their own sorting plant by 2009, as this will enable a commingled recycling service to be launched (making it easier to recycle and likely to encourage more recycling) and therefore significantly improve this Council’s recycling rates.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are no financial implications. In fact, there is a saving identified in 2010/11 of £100k as a result of the Council moving to commingle waste provision.

As Worcestershire County Council is building its own sorting plant, this opens up the potential for this Council to recycle more materials. However, it is understood that what this Council is able to collect is dependent on what the County Council can dispose of and this leads to the next recommendation.

(For your information, Waste Management Forum Meetings are attended by the relevant officers from each local authority across Worcestershire, including Worcestershire County Council.)

<b>Recommendation 5</b>	Street Scene and Waste Management Officers be requested to continue to encourage Worcestershire County Council officers to investigate recycling more materials through the Waste Management Forum.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are no financial implications.

Improvement is a Council Objective and to ensure we continue to improve the refuse and recycling service provided to our residents, we feel it is important that benchmarking is carried out on a regular basis.

<b>Recommendation 6</b>	Request that Street Scene and Waste Management Officers continue to regularly and systematically benchmark against the top 10-15 local authorities in the recycling league table which are achieving higher recycling rates, with a view to adapting any parts of their services to Bromsgrove which may prove successful in helping to increase our recycling figures.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are no financial implications.

We believe the Council should aim to provide its services to as many local residents as possible if not all. We commend Street Scene and Waste Management officers in ensuring 96% of residents receive a recycling service, however, Members and officers agree that it is our aim to overcome barriers which prevent the Council offering its recycling service to all local residents and the Task Group would like to ensure that the last 6% of the District is not forgotten.

<b>Recommendation 7</b>	Street Scene and Waste Management Officers be requested to continually investigate ways in which the Council can expand the recycling service to reach the remaining 6% of the District.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are no financial implications.

The Eco-Schools programme helps children become more effective citizens by encouraging them to take responsibility for the future of their own environment. Pupil involvement is a key part of the Eco-Schools programme and it is hoped that this will improve children's awareness and encourage more recycling as well as encouraging reducing and reusing. The Task Group feel that this programme is an excellent way of educating children so that recycling, reducing and reusing becomes second nature.

<b>Recommendation 8</b>	In order to educate as many children as possible to take responsibility for the future of their own environment and encourage more recycling throughout the District, Street Scene and Waste Management officers be requested to continue to encourage all schools to join the Eco-School programme, particularly primary schools.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are no financial implications.

We were interested to learn that five local authorities have been chosen to pilot incentives for household waste minimisation and recycling. The aim is to reward local residents who reduce, reuse and recycle and encourage those who do not to change their behaviour and there is a feeling that there is strong public support for such schemes. The Task Group feels it is important that the pilot schemes are monitored as with further information, we will be in a position to assess in the future whether such schemes would be appropriate for Bromsgrove District. (Further information is attached as **Appendix 6**)

<b>Recommendation 9</b>	Request that Street Scene and Waste Management officers keep up to date with developments of the pilot incentive scheme and when the results are known, the option of introducing such a scheme be investigated further.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are no financial implications.

**Green Waste Collection**  
(Recommendation 10)

There has been much discussion in relation to the Green Waste Collection Service and some Members have aired very different view points from reintroducing the green bin collection during the winter months to scrapping the service altogether. However, things have moved on since we started this scrutiny investigation and earlier this month, Full Council agreed to introduce a charge from April 2009, anticipated to be £30 per household per year for a collection service between April and November or approximately £45 per household per year for a 12 month collection service, depending upon the uptake.

As the Council will be charging for the green waste service in future years commencing April 2009, we feel it is vital that there is thorough consultation with local residents in order to ensure customer service standards do not suffer. Through consultation, officers will be able to investigate the demand for the service and work out feasible arrangements to ensure smooth implementation. We need to learn from past mistakes and make certain we communicate effectively with all local residents in order to maintain a high level of customer satisfaction.

<b>Recommendation 10</b>	Request the Head of Street Scene and Waste Management to make certain there is thorough consultation with local residents in relation to the green bin charging arrangements due to be put in place. Effective communication will help ensure smooth implementation of the charging system which should avoid a reduction in customer service standards.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are minimal financial implications in terms of communicating to our residents, however, these are minimal and can be met within the existing budget.

## Fortnightly Collections

We had a very good response to the press release and information posted on to the website which informed the public of the Task Group and asked for views, comments on suggestions. What was perhaps more unusual was the level of very positive responses received which shows how hard all staff in Street Scene and Waste Management have worked to ensure our residents now receive a good standard of service. This is backed up by the fact that Bromsgrove was named recently via a Defra poll as one of the top ten most improved Councils in the country for recycling and composting. (Extracts from comments received from local residents are attached as **Appendix 7**)

One area where there appeared to be conflicting viewpoints was the satisfaction levels of the fortnightly refuse collections as opposed to weekly collections, particularly in light of private companies offering such a service. Therefore, it was decided that this would be an area which required further assessment. To do this, we contacted the Parish Councils to complete a very simple and concise survey on this particular point which we called the "Waste Matters" survey.

Perhaps surprisingly, as we have always had a good response rate from Parish Councils in the past with scrutiny investigations, only 9 out of 20 Parish Councils responded, even though they were given 3 months to respond and reminders were sent. One Parish Council decided rather than give a collective response, individual Members were asked to complete the survey and 3 responses were received. Alvechurch Village Society (AVS) asked to be included in the survey and also responded taking the total number of responses to 12.

Out of the 12 responses received from the Parish Councils and AVS, **9 stated they were either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied'** with the fortnightly refuse collection service as opposed to a weekly collection service and only **3 stated they were 'dissatisfied'**.

The Task Group also believe that the fortnightly collection helps to ensure the recycling rates remain high by encouraging local residents to recycle. We received a number of positive comments about the recycling service in particular and in light of the comments received from the public and Parish Councils, as well as taking into account the major financial implications, we believe moving to a weekly collection service would be of no benefit and would be a backward step.

We are satisfied that the fortnightly refuse collections (as opposed to weekly) are not a major issue for our local residents, particularly to those who recycle, and therefore we have no recommendations to make relating to this topic area.

**Communication with local residents**  
(Recommendations 11-15)

We believe that promoting reducing, reusing and recycling is key to sustainability. It is an excellent achievement to have the high recycling rates that we do and we need to ensure this continues. We feel this can be addressed through further communication with residents. For example, it appears that not all residents are aware that they can request more recycling boxes free of charge. If residents are not aware of this, they may be placing recycling into their grey bins unnecessarily.

<b>Recommendation 11</b>	Increase communication with local residents wherever possible to encourage reducing, reusing and recycling. For example, ensuring local residents are aware that they can request more recycling boxes free of charge.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are minimal financial implications which can be met within the existing budget.

Since the refuse and recycling kerbside collection was introduced, we are aware that officers have tried various methods to make it clear to local residents which containers should be placed on the kerbside and when.

We would like to suggest that, similar to Lichfield District Council, a bin sticker showing when and what is to be collected could be very useful to our residents.

<b>Recommendation 12</b>	To ensure that local residents are clear about which containers should be placed on the kerbside and when, officers be requested to investigate trialling wheelie bin stickers during 2008/09 or 2009/10, similar to Lichfield District Council.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are no financial implications to investigating this option. However, the cost of printing bin stickers instead of calendars would need to be considered if this recommendation is approved.

During our investigation, we considered the work of beacon authorities. The IDeA Beacon Scheme website gives information on various case studies relating to local authorities who are providing residents with an effective waste collection and recycling service. Two of the case studies we looked at related to Daventry District Council. What we learnt from Daventry District Council in particular, which is one of the UK's leading recycling Council's, is officers and Members have a shared awareness of the need to support local residents. What they found particularly helpful was enabling communication with Parish Councils and local residents. This led the Task Group to discussing how this Council could support the local communities it serves in a similar way. It is felt that to ensure Ward Members and

Parish Councils can support the public, there needs to be a thorough understanding of the service.

We believe that there is a strong correlation between communication and customer satisfaction so in order for Members to effectively communicate with local residents on the refuse and recycling service, which is the one service used by ALL residents in the District, we want to recommend that:

<b>Recommendation 13</b>	Similar to Daventry District Council, training/information sessions be arranged to inform Members of the following to ensure they have a sound knowledge of the Street Scene and Waste Management Services to pass on to local residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the history of the service;</li> <li>▪ where the Council is at present; and</li> <li>▪ plans to progress the service in future.</li> </ul> Members of Parish Councils should also be invited to attend these sessions.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	Minimal financial implications which can be met within the existing budget.

To ensure Members are continually updated by Street Scene and Waste Management in relation to the refuse and recycling service, we also recommend the following:

<b>Recommendation 14</b>	Updates relating to the refuse and recycling service be included in Members' Bulletins.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are no financial implications.

Vehicle tracking was discussed by the Task Group including possible benefits as it was understood that a particular vehicle tracking device was being trialled by Redditch Borough Council. However, we understand that a 2-way communication device could have more advantages. For example, with a 2-way communication system, officers would be able to contact the crews and vice versa. Crews would be able to inform other officers of issues such as, reasons for missed bins. Therefore, there is a strong possibility this could further improve customer service. Although crews do use mobile phones, a communication system would ensure there is an auditable trail and there are also health and safety issues to consider in relation to mobile phone use when on the rounds as opposed to a communication system.

Although this is potentially a good proposal, we understand that financial implications may be an issue and at this stage, it is difficult to conclude whether or not the benefits justify the cost of installing such a device in refuse vehicles (of

which there are approximately 20). Therefore, we would like to recommend the following:

<b>Recommendation 15</b>	The Head of Street Scene and Waste Management be requested to further investigate the effectiveness of various vehicle tracking and communication systems with a view to trialling a model in the future.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are no financial implications.

## **CONCLUSION**

Members of the Task Group believe that although Street Scene and Waste Management officers are doing an excellent job, we should not be complacent. As previously mentioned, the refuse and recycling collection service is the one service used by all residents and therefore, it is not surprising that it is often used to judge the performance of the Council. It is, therefore, particularly important that we ensure we provide the best service possible.

It should be pointed out that our recommendations link to two Council Objectives, Improvement and Environment, as well as two Priorities, Customer Service and Clean Streets and Recycling. There is also a strong connection to one of the Council's Values, Customer First. We found officers from Street Scene also fully supportive of the recommendations included within this report.

Officers and Members of the Task Group agree that although recycling is important, we should also work hard at ensuring we are reducing waste as well as reusing. After all, if we are able to reduce the waste we produce and collect, this will automatically increase our recycling figures. Although it is not within our powers to ensure manufacturers reduce the amount of packaging they use, we can work with local residents to do our part. We firmly believe that educating and communicating with the public are crucial to encouraging everyone to do as much as possible to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.

We are already providing a good service compared to many other local authorities across the county which shows just how far the service has improved. It is thanks to the hard work of officers and local residents who have made certain the Council is achieving very good recycling rates. Let's keep improving.

We have found this scrutiny exercise very valuable and hope the Cabinet will see the benefits of the recommendations put forward for consideration. We would also like to take this opportunity to once again thank all those who contributed to our scrutiny investigation, including the officers from Street Scene and Waste Management and Mr. McGrath our facilitator.



## **REVIEW**

The Refuse and Recycling Task Group will reconvene in 12 months time to carry out a review of the outcome of this report including whether or not recommendations were approved and implemented and the impact of these actions.

**Councillor C. R. Scurrell**  
Chairman of the Refuse and Recycling Task Group

### **Contact Officer**

Name: Della McCarthy

Email: [d.mccarthy@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:d.mccarthy@bromsgrove.gov.uk)

Tel: 01527 881407

# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1** – Task Group’s Terms of Reference

**Appendix 2** – A List of those the Task Group consulted

**Appendix 3** – The ‘One Page Strategy’

**Appendix 4** – Extracts from Reports relating to NVQ Training

**Appendix 5** – Information on Recycling Rates of Local Authorities

**Appendix 6** – Incentive Scheme Trials

**Appendix 7** – Extracts of comments made by local residents

**REFUSE AND RECYCLING TASK GROUP**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The attached scrutiny exercise scoping checklist (which acted as the Refuse and Recycling Task Group's terms of reference) was approved by the Scrutiny Steering Board on 3rd July 2007, subject to additional wording being included in the 'specific subject to be scrutinised' section so that it read as follows:

"Identifying issues affecting the efficiency and performance of the service since the introduction of two weekly collections, highlighting the promotional aspirations of the workforce as a means of strengthening the service and make general recommendations for strengthening the service."

The terms of reference was also agreed by the Task Group at its first meeting on 22nd August 2007.

# SCRUTINY EXERCISE SCOPING CHECKLIST

This form is to assist members to scope the scrutiny exercise in a focused way and to identify the key issues it wishes to investigate.

When the Board decides to set up a Task Group to scrutinise a particular subject, the appointed Chairman of the Task Group should complete this checklist. Completed forms will be considered by the Board and by the Task Group as a whole at the Task Group's first meeting.

- General Subject Area to be Scrutinised: *Quality of refuse & recycling Service.....*
- Specific Subject to be Scrutinised: *Identifying issues affecting.....  
the efficiency and performance of the Service such as the  
introduction of two weekly collections, highlighting the  
promotional expectations of the workforce as a means  
of strengthening the Service.....*

▪ Should the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**

▪ Should any Officers be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**

If yes, state name and/or post title: *H.R. and Legal  
and Street Scene*

▪ Should any external witnesses be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**

If so, who and from which organisations? *Amois*

▪ Should the Task Group receive evidence from other sources other than witnesses? **YES/NO**

If so, what information should the Task Group wish to see and from which sources should it be gathered? *Finance / Budget HR?*

▪ Should a period of public consultation form part of the Scrutiny exercise? **YES/NO**

If so, on what should the public be consulted? *To be decided*

Have other authorities carried out similar scrutiny exercises? **YES/NO**

If so, which authorities?.....*Unknown*.....

What were their conclusions and what can we learn from them?.....*Unknown*.....

Will the Scrutiny exercise cross the District boundary? *Possibly* **YES/NO**

If so, should any other authorities be invited to participate?.....*Yes*.....

.....

- Would it be appropriate to co-opt anyone on to the Task Group whilst the Scrutiny exercise is being carried out? **YES/NO**

If so, who and from which organisations?.....

.....

What do you anticipate the timetable will be for the scrutiny exercise?

.....*Unknown*.....

.....

.....

- Approximate number of Task Group Meetings?.....*Unknown*.....

Signed:.....*[Signature]*.....

Chairman of behalf of the: *Refuse & Recycling Service 7*.....Task Group

Date:.....*20 June 2007*.....

Please return completed forms to:  
Della McCarthy  
Committee Services Officer  
Legal and Democratic Services  
Bromsgrove District Council

**A List of those the Task Group Consulted**

**External Witnesses:**

Public:

- Members of the Public via press releases and the Council's website. A total of 26 emails and letters were received.

Other Local Authorities:

- Broadland District Council
- North Kesteven District Council
- North Northfolk District Council
- Worcestershire County Council

Parish Councils:

- All Parish Councils were contacted twice during the scrutiny investigation asking for views via the "Waste Matters" survey.

Supermarkets and Stores:

- Alldays Stores
- Asda Stores (Both the Manager at the local store and the Chief Executive based at their Head Office in Leeds)
- Iceland
- Morrisons Supermarket
- One Stop Community Stores
- Somerfield Stores
- Spar Supermarkets
- Tesco Express

Waste Contractors:

- Severn Waste (Worcestershire County Council's Waste Contractors).

Other:

- Alvechurch Village Society (AVS) – requested to be consulted when Parish Councils were contacted.

It should be noted that Mr. D. McGrath, Link Support Services (UK) Ltd, was also present at most of the meetings to act as a Task Group facilitator.

**Internal Witnesses:**

Street Scene and Waste Management:

- Mr. M. Bell, Head of Street Scene and Waste Management
- Mr. K. Hirons, Street Scene and Waste Manager
- Ms. A. Wardell, Waste Policy and Promotions Manager

Human Resources and Organisational Development:

- Ms. H. Parkinson, Learning and Organisational Development Manager

Cabinet Member:

- Councillor Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP, Portfolio Holder for Street Scene and Recycling.

Mr. Hirons and Ms. Wardell attended all Task Group Meetings between them. For the majority, both were present.

All relevant officers were made aware of the recommendations and were given an opportunity to comment.

As with all scrutiny reports, all financial implications were checked by the Head of Financial Services and all legal implications were checked by the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and/or a Senior Solicitor.

## THE 'ONE PAGE STRATEGY' – FOR THIS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TOPIC

Last Updated: 26 November 2007

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY: KEY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**What is the broad Topic area?** Refuse & Recycling/ Waste Management

**What is the specific topic areas?** 1/ **Workforce development** to improve customer service & resident satisfaction 2/ Assess potential to **support green waste** collection during winter months 3/ Assess satisfaction levels of **fortnightly collections** 4/ Strategy to improve overall **'dry' recycling rates**

**What is the unreasonable ambitions?**

- 1/ Workforce development training for collection staff fully funded by LSC
- 2/ Report to assess options for some level of green waste collection during winter
- 3/ Ward based consultation in some areas to assess whether fortnightly collection is problematic and how we can deal with complaints more effectively
- 4/ Improve dry recycling waste from 22% to 32% in 12 months

**How well do we perform at the moment?**

Reports requested on current performance levels for (a) resident satisfaction with collection service and (b) current recycling rates

**Who shall we consult about the current service and how we can improve it?**

**Residents of Bromsgrove** some local ward newsletters or Council newspaper  
**Businesses:** Learning Skills Council training provider and local supermarkets  
**Expert Witnesses/ other Councils:** BDC Officers in Waste Management, Parish Councils, Training Dept. and Portfolio Holder

**What other help do we need?**

**Research help:** which Councils are best recycling performers, who can we contact/visit?

**Training:** Preparing a questioning and listening plan, preparing for a benchmarking visit if required, preparing a 'change' plan to produce realistic and achievable recommendations

**How long should it take?**

**4 months** (28th January 2008) – within which timescale we will complete:

- ✓ Workforce development plan recommendations
- ✓ Green waste/ winter collection recommendations
- ✓ Overall recycling plan recommendations

**What will be the outcomes?**

- (a) *all collection staff trained in efficiency improvement techniques & customer satisfaction - fully funded externally*
- (b) *Assessed satisfaction of fortnightly collection*
- (c) *Options assessed to support winter collection*
- (d) *Key recommendations to improve overall recycling rates*



Below are extracts from various reports that the Task Group received during its scrutiny investigation from the Learning and Organisational Development Manager in relation to NVQ training for refuse and recycling crews:

**Briefing Note – 21/11/07**

**From Helen Parkinson – Learning & Organisational Development Manager**

Training / NVQ provider	Pros	Cons
NEW College – NVQ in waste management operations from Waste Management Industry (WAMITAB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Qualification is industry-specific</li> <li>○ Assessment and training is carried out on site, out on the rounds</li> <li>○ No agency backfill costs associated with taking staff off the rounds</li> <li>○ Includes a basic skills assessment, training and support</li> <li>○ Relationship already established with NEW College and discussions about qualifications underway since May</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Qualification not specifically aimed at improving the business</li> <li>○ Lingering concerns about how NVQs can be used to drive up standards of service</li> </ul>
RDI – NVQ in Business Improvement Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Qualification specifically aimed at improving the business</li> <li>○ Includes support for basic skills issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 14 weeks (half day sessions) of training for groups of 10, on site, but off the rounds – <b>agency backfill costs of £14,000</b> (@ £100 per person per day)</li> <li>○ Qualification is not industry specific</li> </ul>

**Briefing Note – 12/12/07**

**From Helen Parkinson – Learning & Organisational Development Manager**

Information received from Mr. B. Johnson, Workforce Relationship Manager at NEW College:

“...research has shown that above and beyond developing the skills of employees the benefits are improved morale and reduced staff turnover.

Improved morale amongst staff generally leads to more productive interactions with clients and improvements in customer service.

We would be happy to give you reference to employers, that have employees who have completed NVQ's with us, so that you can ask them directly for their views, or if you go on to the website of [www.traintogain.gov.uk](http://www.traintogain.gov.uk) they have numerous reported success stories already collated from actual employers.

NEW college is Beacon Status and there are only 98 other organisations within the country that have this and other colleges often come to us for guidance. We have also achieved 5, 1's in OFSTED."

Qualifications take upwards of 6 months to complete normally but some employees may complete their training within a shorter timescale whilst others may take longer. A lot depends on how many assessors NEW College can provide.

### **Briefing Note – 17/12/07**

#### **From Helen Parkinson – Learning & Organisational Development Manager**

The current issue with resident satisfaction is caused by the current customer standards for refuse and recycling not always being carried out consistently, e.g. the placement of recycling boxes or grey bins after emptying. This assumes that if the service is carried out 'perfectly' to the agreed standard, residents will be satisfied. This assumes in turn that the customer standard is based on what residents have said would satisfy them.

The training and qualification will be used to reinforce the standard, ensure it is carried out consistently, thus having potential to drive up customer satisfaction. The training/qualification will be carried out within the WAMITAB NVQ framework, with 'local conventions' to make the standard specific rather than general.

The information below is taken from [www.letsrecycle.com](http://www.letsrecycle.com)

Please note that **Bromsgrove District Council** and **neighbouring authorities** within Worcestershire County are highlighted in **YELLOW**.

You will see that **Bromsgrove District Council** is ranked 50 out of 393

## English local authorities - performances on waste (2006/07)

The following table contains municipal waste data issued by Defra to letsrecycle.com in November 2007 for the period covering the financial year 2006/07.

The data shows household waste recycling and composting rates for English councils from April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007, showing recycling rate (dry recyclables), composting rate (green waste and food waste) as well as the total amount of combined recycling and composting for the year.

Councils are listed in overall performance order:

Rank	Local Authority	Recycling %	Composting %	Total
1	North Kesteven District Council	28.08	27.41	55.49
2	South Shropshire District Council	21.84	31.36	53.2
3	Rushcliffe Borough Council	27.07	25.11	52.18
4	Huntingdonshire District Council	24.49	27.23	51.72
5	Ryedale District Council	20.13	30.88	51.01
6	South Cambridgeshire District Council	18.24	32.74	50.98
7	Teignbridge District Council	19.84	30.6	50.44
8	St Edmundsbury Borough Council	23.2	26.83	50.03
9	South Hams District Council	27.7	21.06	48.76
10	Harborough District Council	19.64	28.96	48.6
11	Cambridgeshire County Council	22.08	26.42	48.5
12	Waveney District Council	26.33	22.08	48.41
13	Melton Borough Council	22.79	25.11	47.9
14	Lichfield District Council	23.31	24.28	47.59
15	Fenland District Council	19.54	27.83	47.37
16	Somerset County Council	26.5	20.78	47.28
17	Daventry District Council	17.1	29.93	47.03
18	Forest Heath District Council	22.06	23.96	46.02
19	Devon County Council	26.2	19.6	45.8
20	South Somerset District Council	27.02	18.69	45.71
21	Broadland District Council	32.27	13.42	45.69
22	Three Rivers District Council	20.4	25.2	45.6
23	Kettering Borough Council	22.3	22.78	45.08

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24	Chiltern District Council	32.44	12.59	45.03
25	Vale Royal Borough Council	19.02	26.01	45.03
26	Canterbury City Council	28.08	16.91	44.99
27	Cherwell District Council	22.96	21.67	44.63
28	South Staffordshire Council	20.65	23.6	44.25
29	South Ribble Borough Council	22.5	21.7	44.2
30	Chorley Borough Council	23.53	20.55	44.08
31	Mid Devon District Council	17.77	26.31	44.08
32	Hambleton District Council	14.69	29.23	43.92
33	Peterborough City Council	19.22	24.53	43.75
34	Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council	24.96	18.21	43.17
35	Dacorum Borough Council	20.61	22.42	43.03
36	Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	17.93	25.09	43.02
37	Suffolk County Council	23.92	18.98	42.9
38	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	21.97	20.79	42.76
39	Uttlesford District Council	30.06	12.69	42.75
40	Leicestershire County Council	20.57	21.96	42.53
41	Dorset County Council	23.78	18.56	42.34
42	Mendip District Council	22.55	19.35	41.9
43	Oswestry Borough Council	18.45	23.39	41.84
44	North Norfolk District Council	26.08	15.53	41.61
45	Cotswold District Council	18.11	22.93	41.04
46	Taunton Deane Borough Council	23.95	17.08	41.03
47	North Shropshire District Council	13.03	27.9	40.93
48	Erewash Borough Council	25.49	15.41	40.9
49	South Northamptonshire District Council	15.93	24.95	40.88
50	<b>Bromsgrove District Council</b>	<b>21.22</b>	<b>19.61</b>	<b>40.83</b>
51	Oadby and Wigston Borough Council	22.85	17.52	40.37
52	Lincolnshire County Council	23.27	17.04	40.31
53	Macclesfield Borough Council	20.37	19.87	40.24
54	Stratford-on-Avon District Council	14.32	25.91	40.23
55	Wyre Borough Council	19.23	20.96	40.19
56	Shepway District Council	26.79	13.37	40.16
57	Buckinghamshire County Council	23.51	16.59	40.1
58	West Wiltshire District Council	18.79	21.31	40.1
59	Fylde Borough Council	17.81	22.2	40.01
60	Bexley LB	22.21	17.79	40
61	York City Council	23.3	16.63	39.93
62	Bath and North East Somerset Council	25.59	14.24	39.83
63	Cambridge City Council	17.09	22.54	39.63
64	West Devon Borough Council	20.65	18.98	39.63
65	South Gloucestershire Council	20.76	18.78	39.54
66	Wycombe District Council	21.01	18.39	39.4
67	Northamptonshire County Council	21.4	17.9	39.3
68	Eden District Council	21.05	18.17	39.22
69	Mole Valley District Council	31.61	7.56	39.17
70	Lancashire County Council	24.83	13.91	38.74
71	Broxtowe Borough Council	26.54	12.12	38.66
72	Breckland Council	27.55	10.92	38.47

## Appendix 5

73	Norfolk County Council	26.1	12.36	38.46
74	Blaby District Council	27.52	10.9	38.42
75	North Lincolnshire Council	17.27	21.15	38.42
76	Woking Borough Council	27.18	11.21	38.39
77	Fareham Borough Council	27.18	11.19	38.37
78	Oxfordshire County Council	22.83	15.52	38.35
79	Tamworth Borough Council	23	15.34	38.34
80	Suffolk Coastal District Council	16.55	21.76	38.31
81	Wiltshire County Council	24.24	14.04	38.28
82	West Lancashire District Council	18.11	19.89	38
83	Shropshire County Council	17.81	20.11	37.92
84	Nottinghamshire County Council	25.29	12.54	37.83
85	Horsham District Council	14.91	22.84	37.75
86	Bridgnorth District Council	19.66	18.01	37.67
87	Eastleigh Borough Council	31.26	6.2	37.46
88	Northampton Borough Council	20.41	16.81	37.22
89	Cannock Chase Council	18.64	18.41	37.05
90	Staffordshire County Council	19.55	17.44	36.99
91	Epping Forest Borough Council	25.17	11.79	36.96
92	Castle Morpeth Borough Council	28.41	8.51	36.92
93	Ipswich Borough Council	18.92	17.86	36.78
94	Hampshire County Council	25.19	11.55	36.74
95	East Lindsey District Council	19.23	17.44	36.67
96	Kennet District Council	22.98	13.67	36.65
97	Gedling Borough Council	32.08	4.49	36.57
98	Derbyshire Dales District Council	18.25	18.24	36.49
99	Babergh District Council	28.63	7.83	36.46
100	Bournemouth Borough Council	29.11	7.16	36.27
101	Lincoln City Council	17.64	18.63	36.27
102	Cheshire County Council	17.93	18.29	36.22
103	Congleton Borough Council	13.39	22.68	36.07
104	Charnwood Borough Council	27.95	7.94	35.89
105	Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council	20.86	15.03	35.89
106	Weymouth and Portland Borough Council	24.64	11.25	35.89
107	Hertfordshire County Council	19.69	16.09	35.78
108	Forest of Dean District Council	14	21.76	35.76
109	Braintree District Council	23.4	12.1	35.5
110	Bracknell Forest Borough Council	23.93	11.56	35.49
111	North West Leicestershire District Council	14.31	20.96	35.27
112	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	14.28	20.91	35.19
113	North Devon District Council	18.43	16.68	35.11
114	East Cambridgeshire District Council	16.8	18.3	35.1
115	North Yorkshire County Council	18.9	16.17	35.07
116	Milton Keynes Council	24.38	10.57	34.95
117	Telford and Wrekin Council	19.82	15.09	34.91
118	Waverley Borough Council	31.15	3.74	34.89
119	Bedfordshire County Council	21.27	13.59	34.86
120	East Hampshire District Council	29.31	5.52	34.83
121	Carlisle City Council	17.23	17.28	34.51

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122	Reigate and Banstead Borough Council	25.87	8.58	34.45
123	Watford Borough Council	18.43	16.01	34.44
124	Exeter City Council	29.17	5.15	34.32
125	Mid Suffolk District Council	34.21	0	34.21
126	Essex County Council	21.28	12.91	34.19
127	West Sussex County Council	22.34	11.83	34.17
128	Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	18.38	15.72	34.1
129	Guildford Borough Council	25.65	8.41	34.06
130	Easington District Council	13.14	20.85	33.99
131	Wokingham Council	22.82	11.17	33.99
132	Alnwick District Council	28.86	5.08	33.94
133	Chichester District Council	32.6	1.22	33.82
134	Chelmsford Borough Council	16.17	17.41	33.58
135	Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council	22.11	11.47	33.58
136	Poole Borough Council	23.32	10.26	33.58
137	Northumberland County Council	24.08	9.47	33.55
138	Hyndburn Borough Council	24.91	8.6	33.51
139	South Oxfordshire District Council	27.17	6.11	33.28
140	South Bucks District Council	26.18	7.04	33.22
141	North Hertfordshire District Council	15.26	17.95	33.21
142	West Lindsey District Council	19.6	13.41	33.01
143	Gloucestershire County Council	19.24	13.77	33.01
144	Mid Bedfordshire District Council	24.44	8.52	32.96
145	Allerdale Borough Council	16.83	16.09	32.92
146	Maldon District Council	19.77	13.1	32.87
147	South Norfolk Council	28.58	4.27	32.85
148	Derby City Council	18.63	14.09	32.72
149	Warwickshire County Council	15.93	16.79	32.72
150	Stockport MBC	15.61	16.9	32.51
151	Kent County Council	21.79	10.64	32.43
152	Medway Borough Council	20.12	12.27	32.39
153	Arun District Council	25.72	6.66	32.38
154	St Albans City and District Council	19.14	13.16	32.3
155	Worcestershire County Council	22.5	9.78	32.28
156	Cumbria County Council	18.42	13.79	32.21
157	Swindon Borough Council	22.52	9.61	32.13
158	Carrick District Council	23.95	8.1	32.05
159	Blackpool Borough Council	20.03	11.94	31.97
160	South Bedfordshire District Council	16.78	15.17	31.95
161	Bristol City Council	21.44	10.5	31.94
162	Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Council	24.62	7.31	31.93
163	South Kesteven District Council	18.06	13.83	31.89
164	Bromley LB	25.96	5.89	31.85
165	Pendle Borough Council	21.23	10.61	31.84
166	Richmond upon Thames LB	22.78	8.93	31.71
167	Chesterfield Borough Council	15.28	16.41	31.69
168	North Dorset District Council	24.59	7.06	31.65
169	Richmondshire District Council	16.89	14.75	31.64
170	Derbyshire County Council	19.01	12.61	31.62

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171	Burnley Borough Council	22.02	9.59	31.61
172	East Dorset District Council	21.52	10.06	31.58
173	Torridge District Council	18.03	13.46	31.49
174	Brentwood Borough Council	19.82	11.39	31.21
175	North Somerset Council	18.19	12.98	31.17
176	Colchester Borough Council	18.45	12.51	30.96
177	Surrey County Council	21.46	9.49	30.95
178	South Lakeland District Council	16.83	14.11	30.94
179	Chester City Council	15.77	15.09	30.86
180	Hart District Council	25.91	4.94	30.85
181	Corby Borough Council	18.61	12.05	30.66
182	Cornwall County Council	21.58	9.07	30.65
183	Hillingdon LB	18.56	12.08	30.64
184	Copeland Borough Council	15.18	15.35	30.53
185	Purbeck District Council	30.32	0.13	30.45
186	Wellingborough Borough Council	17.83	12.49	30.32
187	Havant Borough Council	29.92	0.39	30.31
188	Wealden District Council	13.5	16.77	30.27
189	Sutton LB	20.81	9.45	30.26
190	Sevenoaks District Council	24.59	5.54	30.13
191	Hertsmere Borough Council	12.46	17.4	29.86
192	Surrey Heath Borough Council	20.15	9.65	29.8
193	Isle of Wight Council	14.89	14.87	29.76
194	North East Derbyshire District Council	13.49	16.21	29.7
195	Stafford Borough Council	11.4	18.26	29.66
196	Enfield LB	19.36	10.28	29.64
197	East Riding of Yorkshire Council	20.8	8.79	29.59
198	Selby District Council	14.45	15.14	29.59
199	Barnet LB	17.92	11.55	29.47
200	Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council	23.97	5.46	29.43
201	Warwick District Council	15.27	14.08	29.35
202	Bolton MBC	18.5	10.76	29.26
203	Durham County Council	16.62	12.63	29.25
204	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	19.83	9.31	29.14
205	Vale of White Horse District Council	22.82	6.28	29.1
206	Derwentside District Council	19.47	9.54	29.01
207	East Sussex County Council	18.38	10.54	28.92
208	Luton Borough Council	19.53	9.26	28.79
209	New Forest District Council	26.27	2.44	28.71
210	Preston Borough Council	16.24	12.33	28.57
211	Craven District Council	17.72	10.63	28.35
212	Rotherham MBC	17.21	11.13	28.34
213	Durham City Council	16.99	11.32	28.31
214	Cheltenham Borough Council	16.56	11.71	28.27
215	Ashfield District Council	27.62	0.59	28.21
216	East Staffordshire Borough Council	12.5	15.7	28.2
217	City of London	28.1	0.09	28.19
218	Rossendale Borough Council	21.29	6.85	28.14
219	Camden LB	22.38	5.67	28.05

## Appendix 5

220	Welwyn Hatfield Council	12.94	15.1	28.04
221	Wansbeck District Council	22.03	5.96	27.99
222	Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council	13.86	14.1	27.96
223	Warrington Borough Council	15.62	12.32	27.94
224	Wyre Forest District Council	27.89	0	27.89
225	North Cornwall District Council	21.1	6.66	27.76
226	Harrow LB	14.7	13	27.7
227	Reading Borough Council	22.86	4.78	27.64
228	Hartlepool Borough Council	17.22	10.4	27.62
229	Broxbourne Borough Council	13.71	13.89	27.6
230	South Derbyshire District Council	14.25	13.33	27.58
231	Teesdale District Council	17.42	10.11	27.53
232	West London Waste Authority	17.37	10.16	27.53
233	East Northamptonshire Council	23.26	4.26	27.52
234	Waltham Forest LB	17.23	10.28	27.51
235	West Dorset District Council	27.04	0.3	27.34
236	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	20.62	6.69	27.31
237	Brighton and Hove Council	23.86	3.41	27.27
238	Bedford Borough Council	14.26	12.97	27.23
239	Leicester City Council	16.3	10.88	27.18
240	Test Valley Borough Council	21.61	5.4	27.01
241	Caradon District Council	20.69	6.21	26.9
242	Stevenage Borough Council	15.85	11.02	26.87
243	Plymouth City Council	19.92	6.94	26.86
244	Mansfield District Council	21.34	5.48	26.82
245	West Oxfordshire District Council	22.98	3.83	26.81
246	East Hertfordshire District Council	14.48	12.08	26.56
247	Tynedale District Council	21.85	4.71	26.56
248	Wear Valley District Council	18.23	8.26	26.49
249	Crawley Borough Council	26.14	0.29	26.43
250	Tewkesbury Borough Council	17.97	8.42	26.39
251	Walsall MBC	14.17	12.2	26.37
252	North East Lincolnshire Council	11.97	14.37	26.34
253	Sedgefield Borough Council	16.61	9.67	26.28
254	Kerrier District Council	18.43	7.79	26.22
255	Boston Borough Council	26.15	0	26.15
256	Torbay Council	18.48	7.58	26.06
257	Basildon District Council	18.77	7.29	26.06
258	Elmbridge Borough Council	24.01	1.98	25.99
259	Herefordshire Council	18.59	7.33	25.92
260	Castle Point Borough Council	16.74	9.13	25.87
261	Worcester City Council	25.79	0.06	25.85
262	Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council MBC	15.27	10.54	25.81
263	Great Yarmouth Borough Council	25.76	0	25.76
264	Lancaster City Council	15.88	9.88	25.76
265	Greater Manchester WDA (MBC)	17	8.72	25.72
266	Newark and Sherwood District Council	25.71	0	25.71
267	Amber Valley Borough Council	25.64	0	25.64
268	Adur District Council	25.22	0.4	25.62



## Appendix 5

269	Penwith District Council	18.82	6.75	25.57
270	Southampton City Council	17.77	7.74	25.51
271	Trafford MBC	14.7	10.75	25.45
272	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council	10.87	14.36	25.23
273	Mid Sussex District Council	20.54	4.65	25.19
274	Halton Borough Council	14.55	10.5	25.05
275	Merton LB	21.33	3.72	25.05
276	Sheffield City Council	18.31	6.63	24.94
277	Restormel Borough Council	22.18	2.75	24.93
278	North Warwickshire Borough Council	9.76	15.16	24.92
279	Ealing LB	17.97	6.95	24.92
280	Haringey LB	19.35	5.37	24.72
281	Bradford City MDC (MBC)	12.52	12.18	24.7
282	Malvern Hills District Council	24.7	0	24.7
283	Oxford City Council	16.93	7.77	24.7
284	Chester-Le-Street District Council	17.08	7.58	24.66
285	Gravesham Borough Council	24.58	0	24.58
286	West Somerset District Council	22.14	2.29	24.43
287	Doncaster MBC	15.68	8.72	24.4
288	Tameside MBC	18.44	5.84	24.28
289	Wakefield City MDC	13.38	10.9	24.28
290	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	23.58	0.7	24.28
291	Winchester City Council	22.33	1.93	24.26
292	Coventry City Council	13.14	11.07	24.21
293	Rugby Borough Council	12.51	11.67	24.18
294	Rutland County Council	13.15	11.02	24.17
295	Barnsley MBC	14.01	10.09	24.1
296	Gosport Borough Council	22.78	1.32	24.1
297	Tandridge District Council	24.1	0	24.1
298	South Tyneside MBC	12.56	11.4	23.96
299	Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames	18.37	5.53	23.9
300	Nottingham City Council	15.22	8.57	23.79
301	Wolverhampton MBC	9	14.79	23.79
302	Sefton MBC	15.3	8.43	23.73
303	Sunderland City Council	14.95	8.77	23.72
304	Thurrock Council	18.2	5.5	23.7
305	Western Riverside Waste Authority	21.96	1.72	23.68
306	Hammersmith and Fulham LB	22.74	0.89	23.63
307	Greenwich LB	21.28	2.33	23.61
308	Blyth Valley Borough Council	22.7	0.86	23.56
309	Islington LB	18.85	4.65	23.5
310	Solihull MBC	15.35	8.12	23.47
311	Salisbury District Council	18.53	4.85	23.38
312	Stroud District Council	23.24	0	23.24
313	Harrogate Borough Council	17.74	5.46	23.2
314	Lambeth LB	20.54	2.56	23.1
315	North London Waste Authority	15.95	7.14	23.09
316	Portsmouth City Council	19.36	3.67	23.03
317	Dudley MBC	12.85	10.12	22.97

## Appendix 5

318	Eastbourne Borough Council	18.14	4.78	22.92
319	Bury MBC	12.98	9.93	22.91
320	Tendring District Council	22.88	0	22.88
321	Wandsworth LB	22.6	0.27	22.87
322	Christchurch Borough Council	21.21	1.58	22.79
323	Darlington Borough Council	16.02	6.69	22.71
324	South Holland District Council	22.57	0.07	22.64
325	Rushmoor Borough Council	19.7	2.77	22.47
326	Slough Borough Council	14.68	7.79	22.47
327	Merseyside WDA (MBC)	13.73	8.66	22.39
328	Leeds City Council MBC	15.83	6.47	22.3
329	North Tyneside Council	12.9	9.25	22.15
330	Lewes District Council	21.48	0.66	22.14
331	West Berkshire District Council	15.89	6.23	22.12
332	Gateshead MBC	12.95	9.13	22.08
333	Wychavon District Council	21.95	0.05	22
334	Sedgemoor District Council	15.32	6.57	21.89
335	Wigan MBC	12.92	8.95	21.87
336	Worthing Borough Council	18.8	2.83	21.63
337	Kirklees MBC	16.27	5.31	21.58
338	St Helens MBC	8.69	12.89	21.58
339	Brent LB	11.25	10.27	21.52
340	Ribble Valley Borough Council	12.5	8.91	21.41
341	Gloucester City Council	15.18	6.13	21.31
342	Calderdale MBC	15.15	6.15	21.3
343	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	15.17	6.09	21.26
344	Barking and Dagenham LB	15.15	5.93	21.08
345	North Wiltshire District Council	16.41	4.65	21.06
346	Kingston-upon-Hull City Council	14.21	6.81	21.02
347	Bassetlaw District Council	20.98	0	20.98
348	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council	19.69	1.24	20.93
349	Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council	20.12	0.41	20.53
350	Havering LB	13.48	6.95	20.43
351	Sandwell MBC	14.09	6.3	20.39
352	Westminster City Council	19.57	0.81	20.38
353	Salford City Council MBC	13.56	6.81	20.37
354	Redditch Borough Council	20.31	0	20.31
355	Bolsover District Council	9.55	10.58	20.13
356	Croydon LB	14.63	5.48	20.11
357	Stoke-on-Trent City Council	14.81	5.18	19.99
358	High Peak Borough Council	15.14	4.82	19.96
359	Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	19.31	0.6	19.91
360	Aylesbury Vale District Council	19.04	0.81	19.85
361	Hounslow LB	15.7	3.92	19.62
362	Hackney LB	14	5.57	19.57
363	Ashford Borough Council	14.33	5.15	19.48
364	Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	13.5	5.98	19.48
365	Spelthorne Borough Council	17.05	2.41	19.46
366	Harlow District Council	17.61	1.69	19.3

## Appendix 5

<b>367</b>	Maidstone Borough Council	12.82	6.39	19.21
<b>368</b>	Manchester City Council MBC	15.05	3.94	18.99
<b>369</b>	Dover District Council	11.73	7.05	18.78
<b>370</b>	Scarborough Borough Council	9.05	9.66	18.71
<b>371</b>	Rochdale MBC	11.48	7.21	18.69
<b>372</b>	Dartford Borough Council	18.63	0	18.63
<b>373</b>	Redbridge LB	13.63	4.97	18.6
<b>374</b>	Runnymede Borough Council	16.76	1.8	18.56
<b>375</b>	Southwark LB	14.28	4.18	18.46
<b>376</b>	Birmingham City Council	11.66	6.73	18.39
<b>377</b>	East London Waste Authority	13.46	4.91	18.37
<b>378</b>	Norwich City Council	18.37	0	18.37
<b>379</b>	East Devon District Council	18.36	0	18.36
<b>380</b>	Hastings Borough Council	17.62	0.63	18.25
<b>381</b>	Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council	9.7	7.9	17.6
<b>382</b>	Thanet District Council	14.11	3.16	17.27
<b>383</b>	Rochford District Council	15.21	1.79	17
<b>384</b>	Rother District Council	16.43	0	16.43
<b>385</b>	Knowsley MBC	8.62	7.37	15.99
<b>386</b>	Swale Borough Council	15.06	0.7	15.76
<b>387</b>	Lewisham LB	15.49	0.26	15.75
<b>388</b>	Oldham MBC	10.14	5.41	15.55
<b>389</b>	Middlesbrough Borough Council	13.54	1.88	15.42
<b>390</b>	Wirral MBC	9.1	5.05	14.15
<b>391</b>	Newham LB	11.76	1.82	13.58
<b>392</b>	Liverpool City Council	8.37	4.35	12.72
<b>393</b>	Tower Hamlets LB	11.64	0.11	11.75

## Waste Strategy for England 2007: Incentives for Recycling by Households

Following consultation over the summer of 2007 we announced that the Climate Change Bill will provide a power for local authorities to pilot incentives for household waste minimisation and recycling. This will allow pilot authorities to recognise more effectively the efforts of those householders who reduce, reuse and recycle their waste, and provide an incentive to those who do not change their behaviour.

A maximum of five local authorities will be able to pilot the schemes. Councils will be able to come forward with their own schemes, for approval by the Secretary of State, that fit local circumstances. This approach will allow us to monitor the impacts of incentives in England and report back to Parliament before a decision is made whether to roll them out more widely.

Powers in the Bill would enable authorities to pay rebates to householders for good performance on recycling and waste minimisation. They would also allow an authority, if it wanted to, to collect incentive based payments from householders for their waste collection. To avoid placing additional burdens on local residents, we are requiring that any pilot requesting payments from householders must return to residents all the revenue it collects. This means that residents as a whole will not be paying more. We are also enabling authorities to pay back rebates, and collect any payments, through Council Tax, should they wish to do so. (Once the powers come into force Government will publish guidance on the operations of the schemes.)

We have built in further checks and balances to help ensure the right level of public protection. Pilots could only be introduced where there was a good kerbside recycling service in place. Authorities will have to take account of the needs of, or impacts on, potentially disadvantaged groups – for example families with young children or the elderly. Pilot authorities will also have to have a flytipping prevention strategy in place. Evidence from other countries suggests that fly tipping would not necessarily increase, but we consider that having a strategy in place is good common sense. (Guidance would give more detail of these safeguards.)

Government also intends to retain a reserved power to create a cap in the future on the level of incentive, should this be necessary. We consider that this power provides a further protection for households.

**Below is a selection of extracts of some of the comments made by local residents in response to the Refuse and Recycling Task Group requesting their views:**

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“We find these services (Refuse and Recycling) very good. Having, in the beginning, doubts about the use of these large wheelie bins we have been won over completely.”

- “1. Recycling is **THE** major success of BDC and from our UK travels and UK holidays is one of the best in England.
2. We have had **NO** problems with our grey bin – even when we were a family of 5.”

“I would like to say that we are very happy with the fortnightly system and have adjusted to it without any problems.”

“We need to review your barmy and disgusting decision to leave festering food rubbish around for up to two weeks.”

“I should like to express my support for and approval of the current waste collection arrangements.”

“As far as I am concerned there are two main areas of concern, namely the insistence that the collection is every fortnight for household rubbish which, to my mind, is unhealthy. The second issue is that, although the Council are prepared to congratulate themselves on the amount that is recycled, there are omissions to the types of material that can be dealt with.”

“Thank you very much for a reliable and regular Rubbish Collection.”

“Please bring back weekly collections. Food waste, no matter how well wrapped, is encouraging rodents.”

“I think it requires a return to the weekly collections...”

“My experience is that the current provision of the boxes for paper and plastic waste for recycling and a large green wheelie bin for garden waste – does not reflect our particular needs and we have to dispose of potentially recyclable material in the black wheelie bin.”

“I’m all for the recycling service – but when are we going to get it??!!”

“I write to applaud the current bin collection service with alternative collections on a weekly basis.”

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET

2ND APRIL 2008

#### ANNUAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2006/07

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Financial Services

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council's previous External Auditor (KPMG LLP) has issued the Annual External Audit Report for 2006/07 (Appendix A). This was issued to Officers of the Council in draft form at the end of December and has been amended to take account of the majority of those comments. It also includes the management response to the recommendations.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Cabinet is asked to consider the Annual External Audit Report for 2006/07; and
- 2.2 The Cabinet is asked to endorse the management response to the Annual External Audit Report for the 2006/07 recommendations.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Attached at Appendix A is the Annual External Audit Report for 2006/07 which reports the significant findings from work undertaken by KPMG LLP (the Council's appointed auditors for 2006/07) as part of the 2006/07 Audit and Inspection Plan. The report focuses on the following main areas:
- Audit of Accounts
  - Audit of Use of Resources
- 3.2 The report also includes:
- Data Quality
  - Follow up of previous years Annual Audit and Inspection Letter recommendations
  - Statutory report on Best Value Performance Plan
  - Summary of audit reports issued during the year
- 3.3 The findings of the report include the demonstration of clear improvements in a number of areas including the Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget monitoring arrangements. The score of 2 in relation to Use of Resources shows the Council is sustains its improvements in Financial Management and has the procedures in place to improve in the future.

3.4 From the 12 criteria that the Council is assessed on the auditors concluded that we met 9 of the criteria. This is an improvement on the 2005/06 judgement of 4 out of the 12 criteria being met.

3.5 The areas where the Council did not meet the criteria were:

- Setting strategic and operational objectives
- Consultation with stakeholders
- Monitoring and Scrutiny of performance.

3.6 It is considered by officers that the above areas have been addressed during 2007/08 and further improvements have been identified in the Management Response to the recommendations as identified by KPMG in the report.

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

4.1 None

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

5.1 The presentation of the Annual Report is a responsibility of the External Auditors under the Audit Commissions Code of Practice

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

6.1 Council Objective 02: Improvement.

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

7.1 Addressing the recommendations identified will further support the Councils Use of Resources scoring in ensuring that we have a robust internal control and financial management framework for officers to work within.

#### **8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 No customer implications.

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

9.1 No equalities and diversity issues.

#### **10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues: None
Personnel Implications: None



Governance/Performance Management: Effective governance process.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998: None
Policy: None
Environmental: None

## 11. **OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

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

## 12. **APPENDICES**

12.1 Appendix A – External Audit Report.

## 13. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

13.1 None.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

Jayne Pickering – Head of Financial Services  
E Mail: j.pickering@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Tel: (01527) 881207

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INFRASTRUCTURE, GOVERNMENT  
& HEALTHCARE

## **Annual External Audit Report**

**2006/07**

**Bromsgrove District  
Council**

January 2008

AUDIT

The contacts at KPMG LLP in connection with this report are:

**Jon Gorrie**  
Director  
KPMG LLP (UK)

Tel: 0121 335 2367  
Fax: 0121 232 3578  
[jonathan.gorrie@kpmg.co.uk](mailto:jonathan.gorrie@kpmg.co.uk)

**Andrew Cardoza**  
Senior Manager  
KPMG LLP (UK)

Tel: 0121 232 3694  
Fax: 0121 232 3578  
[andrew.cardoza@kpmg.co.uk](mailto:andrew.cardoza@kpmg.co.uk)

**Tim Pearce**  
Audit Manager  
KPMG LLP (UK)

Tel: 0121 232 3694  
Fax: 0121 232 3578  
[timothy.pearce@kpmg.co.uk](mailto:timothy.pearce@kpmg.co.uk)

**Nasir Rafiq**  
Assistant Manager  
KPMG LLP (UK)

Tel: 0121 232 3694  
Fax: 0121 232 3578  
[nasir.rafiq@kpmg.co.uk](mailto:nasir.rafiq@kpmg.co.uk)

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- 1.2 Summary of findings
- 1.3 Looking forward
- 1.4 Acknowledgements

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- 2.1 Audit of the Authority's accounts
- 2.2 Certification of grant claims and returns
- 2.3 Questions and objections from electors

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- 3.1 Use of Resources scored judgment
- 3.2 Audit of data quality
- 3.3 Best Value Performance Plan

## Appendices

- Appendix A: Summary of 2006/07 recommendations and action plan
- Appendix B: Audit reports issued
- Appendix C: Fee summary

This report is addressed to the Authority and has been prepared for the sole use of Bromsgrove District Council ("the Authority"). We take no responsibility to any member of staff acting in their individual capacities, or to third parties. The Audit Commission has issued a document entitled: *Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies*. This summarises where the responsibilities of auditors begin and end and what is expected from the audited body. We draw your attention to this document.

External auditors do not act as a substitute for the audited body's own responsibility for putting in place proper arrangements to ensure that public business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

If you have any concerns or are dissatisfied with any part of KPMG LLP's work, in the first instance you should contact Jon Gorrie who is the engagement director to the Authority, telephone 0121 335 2741 email : [jonathan.gorrie@kpmg.co.uk](mailto:jonathan.gorrie@kpmg.co.uk) who will try to resolve your complaint. If you are dissatisfied with your response please contact Trevor Rees on 0161 246 4000, e-mail [trevor.rees@kpmg.co.uk](mailto:trevor.rees@kpmg.co.uk) , who is the national contact partner for all of KPMG's work with the Audit Commission. After this, if you are still dissatisfied with how your complaint has been handled you can access the Audit Commission's complaints procedure. Put your complaint in writing to the Complaints Team, Nicholson House, Lime Kiln Close, Stoke Gifford, Bristol, BS34 8SU or by e-mail to: [complaints@audit-commission.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@audit-commission.gov.uk). Their telephone number is 0117 975 3131, textphone (minicom) 020 7630 0421.

## Section 1

### Executive summary

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#### 1.1 Scope of this report

This report summarises the 2006/07 external audit work carried out by KPMG LLP ("KPMG") at Bromsgrove District Council ("the Authority") with regards to the areas of our audit responsibility under the Audit Commission's *Code of Audit Practice* ("the Code"). Under the Code we are required to review and report on two specific areas which we have used to structure this report. In particular, this report includes our findings in relation to the:

- audit of accounts (section 2) and
- audit of Use of Resources (section 3).

#### 1.2 Summary of findings

##### **Accounts and Statement of Internal Control**

This area is concerned with the accounts production process and the associated opinions that we provide on the Authority's financial statements and the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) submission (section 2).

To bring local government into line with other parts of the public sector, the timetable for preparation and publication of accounts has been gradually brought forward. For 2006/07, the accounts needed to be prepared by the end of June 2007 and published by the end of September 2007. Whilst this is not formally an audit deadline, it is desirable for the accounts to be published with the audit opinion included, so we plan our audit work to deliver the opinion by this date.

We issued our unqualified opinion on 24 September 2007.

At the same time as giving our opinion on the Authority's accounts, we issued our audit certificate, which marks the conclusion of our statutory responsibilities for the year. We also reviewed the Authority's WGA submission and concluded that it was consistent with the statutory accounts.

##### **Use of resources**

Between August and October 2007, we completed our third scored judgement on the Authority's use of resources. This assesses the Authority against Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) specified by the Audit Commission, on which the Authority is scored on a scale between 1 (below minimum requirements) and 4 (performing strongly). The scores were reviewed by both KPMG's local and national quality control processes and then by the Audit Commission to ensure consistency in scoring with other auditors and authorities.

We assessed the Authority's arrangements as adequate, giving an overall score of 2. This sustains the good performance of the previous year's assessment. We noted clear improvements in a number of areas of the assessment, including the Authority's medium term financial strategy and budget monitoring arrangements. We have summarised our findings and conclusions in section 3 with a summary of our recommendations included in Appendix A. We also reconsidered all our recommendations made in the previous year and have reiterated those that we consider significant within this year's recommendations.

We reported our conclusion on the Authority's use of resources alongside our accounts opinion on 24 September 2007. The conclusion is based on to the extent to the Authority meets 12 criteria specified by the Audit Commission which link to our other audit work – for example, on Use of Resources scored judgement and Data Quality. It is unqualified where these are all met and qualified if there are areas where the minimum standards are not fully addressed.

We concluded that the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on 9 of 12 criteria determined by the Audit Commission. The Authority was not able to meet 3 criteria as follows: setting strategic and operational objectives, consultation with stakeholders and monitoring and scrutiny of performance. This represents an improvement from last year as the Authority failed to achieve 8 of the 12 Audit Commission criteria last year. We reported our findings in the report to those charged with governance (ISA 260) in September 2007.

##### **Audit of data quality**

In 2007, we completed our second review of data quality at the Authority using a methodology developed by the Audit Commission. We considered the Authority's arrangements to be adequate overall. This marks significant progress over last year's assessment when the Authority's arrangements were judged inadequate overall. We have reported in detail on our findings and made appropriate recommendations in section 3.

## Section 1

### Executive summary

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#### 1.3 Looking Forward

Section 4 of this report includes an outline of the changes that are anticipated as a result of both the implementation of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) and the potential introduction of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). In light of the difficulties experienced this year with the changes arising in the 2006/07 SORP, the Council should monitor these 2007/08 changes carefully .

#### 1.4 Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank officers and Members for their continuing help and co-operation throughout our audit work.

## Section 2

# Accounts and Statement on Internal Control

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Our *Report to Those Charged with Governance 2006/07* (“ISA 260 report”) detailed our findings and initial conclusions in relation to the Authority’s 2006/07 accounts and set out our findings in relation to the Authority’s controls and internal audit function.

This report summarises our findings from the audit of the accounts and Statement on Internal Control for 2006/07, including the submission process for Whole of Government Accounts (WGA).

### 2.1 Audit of the Authority’s accounts

#### **Opinion and certificate**

We issued an unqualified opinion on the accounts on 24 September 2007. Our audit report also incorporated a conclusion on the Authority’s use of resources. This is discussed in more detail in section 3 and in our *Report to Those Charged with Governance*, issued on 10 September 2007.

The Authority coped well with the additional challenges in the accounts process this year. The requirements of the SORP changed significantly for the 2006/07 year which resulted in more adjustments being required than in 2005/06. However, in other respects, the Authority has improved its accounts production process over prior years – for example, the accounts were supported by clear working papers from the outset.

A number of adjustments were required to the accounts to ensure compliance with the SORP. None of these however, were considered to be material. There was one uncorrected error, where the Authority was not able to provide sufficient evidence to support a VAT creditor balance. We therefore agreed that an adjustment was not required and this did not impact our proposed unqualified audit opinion.

#### **The Statement on Internal Control**

We also reviewed the information supporting the Authority’s Statement on Internal Control for 2006/07. The statement was amended to include a clear reference to the Authority’s improvement plan. Once amended we concluded that it was consistent with our understanding of the Authority.

#### **Evaluation of Internal Audit**

We also concluded that we were able to place reliance on the work of Internal Audit in 2006/07. We noted that Internal Audit raised a number of recommendations aimed at improving the Authority’s financial controls throughout the year and we continue to support Internal Audit in raising these issues and recommendations.

We have also assessed the Authority’s Internal Audit function as part of the Internal Control Use of Resources KLOE. We concluded that the Authority has adequate arrangements in place to maintain a sound system of internal control. For further detail see section 3.

#### **Whole of government accounts opinion**

Whole of Government Accounts (“WGA”) are accounts that cover the whole of the public sector and include some 1,300 separate bodies. Each of these bodies is required to submit a consolidation pack which is based on, but separate from, their statutory accounts.

The 2006/07 year was the year of full “live” consolidation for the WGA process, and as auditors we were required to review and report on the WGA consolidation pack.

We submitted the Authority’s WGA pack to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) within the Government deadline. In our opinion, the consolidation pack, with the adjustments schedule addendum, is consistent with the statement of accounts for the year ended 31 March 2007.

#### **Summary of issues arising**

We reported our performance improvement observations relating to the accounts production process in our *Report to Those Charged with Governance*, issued on 10 September 2007. We have no further issues to report which have not already been addressed in sufficient detail in that document.

The Authority’s accounts production process is also assessed as part of our Use of Resources assessment. As part of our feedback on this process we have also considered the production process against the Financial Reporting Key line of Enquiry in section 3 of this report (Section 3.1).

## Section 2

# Accounts and Statement on Internal Control

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### ***Future accounting developments***

Further changes to accounting requirements take effect in 2007/08. The 2007 SORP incorporates the provisions of FRS 25 (Financial instruments: disclosure and presentation), FRS 26 (Financial instruments: recognition and measurement) and FRS 29 (Financial instruments: disclosure).

The new requirement for a Revaluation Reserve and Capital Adjustment Account will significantly alter capital accounting requirements. They are expected to prove challenging for many authorities – this change was originally to be brought in for 2006/07 but was postponed to allow more preparation time, given that significant changes will be required to fixed asset records going forward.

In the March 2007 Budget, the Chancellor confirmed that central government bodies would be required to adopt International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), adapted as necessary for the public sector. The timetable announced by the Government is that adoption will be required for 2008/09. This will require the 2007/08 accounts to be restated for comparative purposes.

In local government, the transition to IFRS is not expected before 2009/10, although the Whole of Government Accounts returns for 2008/09 will have to be prepared under IFRS.

CIPFA has published an analysis of the key differences between the SORP and IFRS and the key issues for local government (accounting for PFI/PPP schemes, leases and accounting for infrastructure) will be the subject of Treasury guidance which is expected to be issued soon.

Given that extensive changes may be required when IFRS is introduced, we believe that the extension of the period available to local government to prepare for IFRS must be used wisely if some of the problems experienced by companies in moving to IFRS are avoided and we would be happy to work with you to identify the key areas where progress really needs to be made.

### **2.2 Certification of grant claims and returns**

We have now certified all applicable grant claims and returns for the financial year 2006/07. No amendments to, or qualifications of, these claims were required.

### **2.3 Questions and objections from electors**

Electors of the Authority can raise with the auditor questions or objections to items of account. Any such queries can then require us to investigate the issue raised.

We did not receive any such questions or objections during the 2006/07 audited year.



## Section 3

### Use of Resources

The following section comments on our work on the Use of Resources scored judgement, and makes links to the risk areas we have identified in our 2006/07 Audit Plan where relevant.

#### 3.1 Use of Resources scored judgement

The Use of Resources assessment is based around five Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs): Financial Management, Financial Standing, Financial Reporting, Internal Control and Value for Money.

The Authority prepared a self assessment against the five KLOEs to help inform our review. We formulated our judgement against the KLOEs by considering the evidence in the self assessment, holding interviews with the Authority's Officers and Members and through consideration of evidence from our other audit work. Following internal quality control processes by KPMG at both a local and national level, the draft scores were submitted to the Audit Commission to ensure comparability of scoring with other audit suppliers, and have now been approved. The 2007 scores for the five individual KLOEs for the Authority are:

KLOE	2007	2006
Financial Reporting	2	2
Financial Management	2	2
Financial Standing	2	2
Internal Control	2	2
Value for Money	1	1
Overall Score	2	2

Improvement opportunities within each KLOE assessment area are detailed in the following sections.

#### ***KLOE 1: Financial Reporting***

KLOE	Score
1.1: Production of statutory annual accounts	2
1.2: Promoting external accountability	2
<b>Overall score for KLOE 1</b>	<b>2</b>

The overall aim of the financial reporting assessment is to understand how effective the Authority's arrangements are for producing and publicising its annual accounts in accordance with relevant standards and timetables.

The accounts were prepared and published in accordance with statutory requirements and made available to audit within the agreed timetable. The accounts presented for audit were supported by adequate quality working papers and were provided at the start of the audit.

The accounts were presented to the Audit Board and were subject to Member scrutiny before approval.

All adjustments identified by audit were agreed by management and corrected in the final version of the accounts with one exception, where the Authority was not able to provide sufficient evidence to support a VAT creditor balance. This did not impact the proposed unqualified audit opinion.

In order to improve its score, the Authority should further refine its quality assurance procedures to reduce the level of adjustments needed to the accounts. As noted in section 4, given that there are further changes in accounting standards in 2007/08, it may be beneficial to engage with the Authority's new auditors at an early stage to establish a dialogue over how these changes should be interpreted.

## Section 3

### Use of Resources

In recent months, the Authority has consulted with the public on whether it should produce an annual report. The Authority can demonstrate the impact of this consultation by implementing its findings, producing an annual report which meets users' requirements.

#### Summary of recommendations on KLOE 1:

**Recommendation 1:** The Authority should seek to refine the quality assurance procedures over the accounts further to reduce the level of adjustments needed through the audit process. In relation to new accounting requirements in particular, the Authority should engage early with its external auditors to establish a dialogue over the implications of the changes.

**Recommendation 2:** The Authority should follow through the results of its public consultation exercise on reporting by publishing an annual report which addresses users' requirements.

#### KLOE 2: Financial Management

KLOE	Score
2.1: Financial planning and budget setting	2
2.2: Managing performance against budgets	2
2.3: Asset management	2
<b>Overall score for KLOE 2</b>	<b>2</b>

The aim of the Financial Management assessment is to understand how effectively the Authority plans its finances and delivers on these plans.

The Authority's arrangements for financial and service planning have become more established since our previous assessment. For example, in terms of its budget setting arrangements (**KLOE 2.1**), the Authority has made progress by explicitly linking top-level priorities to individual objectives and budgetary pressures for both revenue and capital expenditure. It is easier to see how corporate objectives and the Medium Term Financial Plan drive service plans. The links between risk and finance have also been made clearer.

At present, the Medium Term Financial Plan does not explicitly refer to other strategies, such as HR and IT. This presents the risk that other strategies may propose developments for which the costs and potential savings are not incorporated into medium term financial plans.

All organisations face financial uncertainties – Single Status, as referred to in section 2, is just one example. It is important to have mechanisms in place to ensure that financial planning takes account of these uncertainties – sensitivity analysis is one way to do this.

Broadly, sensitivity analysis sets out to consider the effect of financial uncertainties by considering various scenarios – for example, considering the effect of different pay models under Single Status, or of varying inflation assumptions – and calculating the effect on the Authority's financial position in the medium term.

Officers take account of past history in setting budgets to ensure that they reflect experience, but it would be beneficial to consider known risk factors more formally, as described above. Similarly, there would be scope to provide a greater focus on risk in monitoring budgets – for example, using a "traffic light" system to show clearly the budgets which need the greatest focus from officers and Members.

As shown above, the Authority has made strides in improving its financial management arrangements, there are benefits to performing a comprehensive review – for example, using the CIPFA Financial Management model – to capture all improvement opportunities in a single action plan.

To improve decision making, it is important that not only accountants receive finance training. Service managers and Members should also be trained in the issues which affect the decisions they need to make in their respective roles. This should then be supported by periodic reviews of the training to ensure that it achieves its objectives.

The Authority has improved its asset management arrangements (**KLOE 2.3**) in a number of respects. For example, it has recently introduced a revised Asset Management Plan and established an Asset Management Group to implement and monitor the Asset Management plan.

## Section 3

### Use of Resources

To demonstrate the effectiveness of these arrangements, the Authority needs to ensure that the actions in the Asset Management Plan are fully implemented and that Members are fully involved in scrutinising the management of the Authority's asset base.

#### **Summary of recommendations on KLOE 2:**

**Recommendation 3:** The Authority should ensure that the medium term financial plan explicitly refers to and reflects the implications of key strategies, such as HR and IT.

**Recommendation 4:** The Authority should make use of sensitivity analysis for key risks in the medium term financial planning process and should ensure that budget monitoring also focuses on areas of risk.

**Recommendation 5:** The Authority should perform an overall review of its financial management arrangements to create an action plan for improvement. The action plan should be monitored by an appropriate Member committee.

**Recommendation 6:** The Authority should ensure that appropriate finance training is provided to Members and service managers, and should periodically evaluate the training programme to determine its effectiveness.

**Recommendation 7:** The Authority should ensure that the actions set out in its Asset Management Plan are fully implemented and should involve Members in scrutinising the management of the Authority's asset base.

#### **KLOE 3: Financial Standing**

KLOE	Score
3.1: Managing spending within available resources	2

The aim of the Financial Standing assessment is to evaluate how the Authority ensures that its finances are sustainable.

The Authority's policy is to maintain reserve levels above £0.6m. As at 31 March 2007, the General Fund balance stood at £1.8m, so the targeted level is achieved at present.

However, in considering the sustainability of these arrangements, it is important to consider whether the target level of reserves is, in fact, appropriate. This should be done by quantifying the financial implications of the risks to which the Authority is exposed. This should be set out in budget setting reports to Members.

The Authority has made progress in managing its budget during 2006/07. Despite overspends in the Street Scene and Waste Management service areas, the Authority balanced its budget overall, achieving a small underspend at a corporate level.

The overall underspend was achieved through management of staff vacancies and investment income exceeding budget because of variations in interest rates. However, as these factors are not within the Authority's control, they cannot be relied upon to achieve financial balance. Therefore, the Authority should continue to work to refine budget setting and management to ensure that the overall budget is achieved in a controlled and managed fashion. The recommendations on budget setting and monitoring above should help to achieve this.

#### **Summary of recommendations from KLOE 3:**

**Recommendation 8:** The Authority should review the financial impact of the risks it faces. This should be used to compute a fully risk-based target reserve level. The risk assessment and resulting reserves policy should be reported to Members on an annual basis.

## Section 3

### Use of Resources

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#### **KLOE 4: Internal Control**

<b>KLOE</b>	<b>Score</b>
4.1: Risk management	2
4.2: Internal control	2
4.3: Ethics and conduct	2
<b>Overall score for KLOE 4</b>	<b>2</b>

The aim of the Internal Control assessment is to understand the Authority's governance and control arrangements, encompassing risk management, the internal control framework and how the Authority ensures a high standard of conduct by Members and officers.

The Authority has made some refinements to the arrangements in place and has, as a result, sustained the scores from the previous assessment.

We confirmed that the Authority has an approved and risk management strategy in place. During 2006/07, the Audit Board reviewed and approved the Statement on Internal Control, the risk management process and the systems of internal control. The Authority also has a fully resourced internal audit function that operates in accordance with the CIPFA *Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government*. The Authority has adopted a formal codes of conduct for Members and officers. The Standards Committee's membership and functions accord with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000. The Authority also has an appropriate anti fraud corruption policy in place.

To develop its risk management arrangements (**KLOE 4.1**) further, the Authority needs to demonstrate that the risk management process is embedded within the Authority and is integral to how the organisation is run – for example, consideration of risk should be pervasive in financial management. The Authority can take steps to achieve this by providing regular risk management training to officers and risk awareness training to Members.

The Authority needs to consider risks in relation to partnerships explicitly to ensure that these are always considered and managed. It should revisit its corporate risks at least twice a year and ensure that Members are kept informed and also have the opportunity to input actively into identifying and managing risks themselves.

In recent years, significant improvements in internal control (**KLOE 4.2**) have been achieved. These can now be further refined. For example, the Authority now has well-established procedure notes and manuals for key systems; to maintain the usefulness of these documents, they should now be subject to scheduled, periodic review and updating.

The Audit Board has now been in place for some time. The next step is for it to demonstrate its own effectiveness more clearly; it should be evident how the Board has successfully influenced management. For example, we would expect that the Board would regularly call service managers to account where prompt action has not been taken to address weaknesses, such as where the recommendations of Internal Audit have not been implemented in a timely fashion.

To improve the score in relation to ethical conduct (**KLOE 4.3**), the Authority needs to enhance its arrangements for ensuring high standards of conduct – such as through regular ethics training – but also to demonstrate the effectiveness of these arrangements. This could be achieved through surveying Members and officers on their understanding and compliance with ethical codes. The Audit Commission's Ethical Governance Toolkit is one way to facilitate this assessment.

There is also more scope for proactive counter fraud and corruption work to provide assurance that potential fraud risk areas are adequately controlled.

## Section 3

### Use of Resources

#### Summary of recommendations on KLOE 4

**Recommendation 9:** The Authority should introduce a programme of regular risk management training to officers and risk awareness training to Members.

**Recommendation 10:** The Authority should ensure that its risk register explicitly considers risks arising from its significant partnerships.

**Recommendation 11:** The Audit Board should consider further how it can demonstrate its effectiveness and, where necessary, strengthen its working practices – for example, calling managers to account for weaknesses identified by internal and external audit which have not been addressed by the due date.

**Recommendation 12:** The Authority should ensure that the procedure notes and manuals for key systems remain up to date.

**Recommendation 13:** The Authority should further develop its arrangements which ensure ethical conduct through the provision of training to Members and officers and through proactive counter fraud audit work. It should review the effectiveness of these arrangements by assessing officers' and Members' views on ethical behaviour – for example, by applying the Audit Commission Ethical Governance Toolkit.

#### KLOE 5: Value for Money

KLOE	Score
5.1: Achievement of value for money	1
5.2: Processes to improve value for money	2
<b>Overall score for KLOE 5</b>	<b>1</b>

The Authority has now continued to strengthen its arrangements for managing and improving its value for money (**KLOE 5.2**) during 2006/07 and there is a much stronger understanding of the Authority's costs and performance. The Authority's new performance management system has helped it to produce quarterly performance reports for its Performance Management Board. This together with its Procurement Steering Group has helped to deliver efficiencies and reduced costs.

However, in terms of achievement of value for money (**KLOE 5.1**), the Authority recognises that there are further improvements required to improve its value for money, such as reducing costs whilst improving performance compared to similar authorities. This will need to be addressed through the use of more formalised benchmarking in a consistent and robust manner.

At the time of our review, there was not clear evidence that a culture of value for money exists, though we noted increased awareness of performance information, amongst both middle managers and other staff.

In order to improve the score for value for money, the Authority should now analyse and report on the links between costs and performance across its services. The Authority should align these reports to its corporate priorities. The Authority should build and develop the VFM and efficiency culture by involving the understanding and ownership of Members.

#### Summary of recommendations for KLOE 5:

**Recommendation 14:** The Authority should further develop how performance and financial information is reported through to Members together and should ensure that formal benchmarking is in place to drive action to improve performance or reduce costs.

## Section 3

# Use of Resources

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### 3.2 Audit of data quality

#### Scope of our work

This is the second review of data quality using a methodology set out by the Audit Commission.

Data quality is important because of the reliance on information for decision-making and performance management, so the accuracy of the information is vital for effective management of the organisation. Data is also important to external stakeholders wishing to review authorities' performance. Our work includes the validation of certain indicators to assist the Audit Commission with the CPA process.

Our review of data quality was performed following Audit Guides specified by the Audit Commission. These divide our work into three phases.

- **Stage 1: Review of management arrangements.** We consider the arrangements in place by which the Authority defines its objectives for data quality and aims to achieve them. The conclusion of this work also decides if the Authority has met the criterion relating to data quality out of the 12 for our Use of Resources Conclusion.
- **Stage 2: Comparison to other authorities.** This step involves high-level validation of a selection of indicators, considering factors such as variances year on year and disparities with the values reported by the Authority's peers. This includes considering questions raised by the Audit Commission and responding with our findings.
- **Stage 3: Data testing.** We perform sample testing on some indicators from a list selected by the Audit Commission, carrying out the tests specified in the Audit Guide. The number of indicators tested is dependent upon our assessment of the adequacy of arrangements in Stage 1 and any areas of concern raised at Stage 2.

This section of the report sets out our findings from each of these three stages.

#### Summary of our assessment

**Stage 1:** Following our review of the management arrangements over data quality we passed the Authority on the related Audit Commission criteria for our Use of Resources Conclusion issued in September 2007. This shows a clear improvement from last year as the Authority failed to meet this criterion.

We have made a number of recommendations these will provide the Authority with an opportunity to improve its arrangements in the coming year. The recommendations are set out overleaf and summarised in Appendix A.

**Stage 2:** We followed up questions raised by the Audit Commission on eight indicators and found all variances as real and consistent with our understanding of the Authority's performance.

**Stage 3:** Based on our risk assessment on indicators selected by the Audit Commission, we selected BV82a Recycling performance, BV82b Composting performance and non BVPI HIP HSSA private sector Percentage of total private sector homes vacant for more than six months to test. We found all indicators to be fairly stated.

#### Governance arrangements

This section of our management arrangements review covered the Authority's leadership over data quality, including:

- its top level commitment to data quality;
- how responsibilities for data quality are defined and communicated;
- its data quality objectives in place; and
- how standards for data quality are monitored and reviewed.

This area is important because it defines what is expected from staff and how officers and Members will ensure that this is achieved.

## Section 3

### Use of Resources

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The Authority's governance arrangements for data quality have improved from the time of our previous assessment. The Authority has now employed a Performance Policy officer who has helped to improve the arrangements in place for data quality. The 'Council Results' document now clearly refers to the importance of data quality. Data quality also features in the corporate risk register.

Individual service plans for service areas specify the officer responsible for the calculation of each performance indicator. The Performance Policy officer reviews the performance indicators submitted to him and feeds back data quality issues to Heads of Service.

From a leadership perspective, the Assistant Chief Executive leads on data quality, though the nature of this role has not been formally defined. At the time of our review, a Member lead for data quality had not been established. Formally defining these roles would help to raise the profile of data quality amongst Members and senior officers; this should help improve the robustness of the performance management framework.

**Recommendation 15:** The Authority should nominate Member and officer leads for data quality to reinforce the importance of data quality within the performance management framework.

#### ***The policy framework for data quality***

This review area considered the Authority's policies in relation to data quality and how they are implemented.

The Authority now has a data quality strategy in place approved by the Cabinet in June 2007. The strategy sets out an action plan to embed the arrangements over data quality. The action plan covers important aspects of data quality such as data quality training.

In order to improve the arrangements the Authority needs to ensure that the action plan approved as part of the data quality strategy is implemented and progress reported to Members.

**Recommendation 16:** The Member and officer leads for data quality should take an ongoing role in monitoring progress with the data quality action plans.

#### **Information systems and processes**

Fundamental to the reliability of the Authority's information is the robustness of the systems which store the underlying data. This section of the management arrangements review considers the robustness of the systems in place, including management's action in relation to previously identified weaknesses, and consideration of data security and integrity. It also considers the systems for collating indicators and sharing information.

The Corporate Communication Policy and Performance Team is responsible for collating and reporting on performance indicators. The team was fully resourced during the year. The Authority's Internal Audit function has been involved in collating performance indicators and performing a high level review of performance indicators. The Authority is in the process of implementing the LAMP (Local Authority Modernisation Project) project which will result in data cleansing, updating and linking of data, covering multiple data sets produced and maintained by the Authority.

We did not identify weaknesses in the systems used for producing indicators for those where we performed in-depth work at Stage 3.

In some cases, the Authority is dependent on other organisations to provide it with cost or performance data, so it is more difficult to be certain of the quality of this data. It is considered good practice to have protocols in place with these third parties to obtain assurance over the data which the Authority would wish to rely on. Introducing such protocols across key partnerships, including the Local Area Agreement, would help ensure consistency in the quality of all performance information, whatever its source.

**Recommendation 17:** The Authority needs to ensure that formal protocols and standards are developed to ensure data quality is achieved for all instances of internal and external data sharing.

## Section 3

# Use of Resources

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### People and skills

The sections set out above require a range of skills for successful implementation – whether knowledge of information systems or the knowledge of processes to ensure that they are appropriately designed to deliver high-quality data. It is, therefore, important that the Authority considers the skills it needs to deliver its data quality objectives. Once these have been identified, it will be necessary for the Authority to implement training programmes and briefings in order to fully develop these skills.

The IT department has facilitated workshops to introduce staff to the LAMP project explaining how the project will ensure clean, current and up to date data.

We noted that the new Performance Plus User Group, attended by departmental performance officers plays an effective role in debriefing and sharing good practice and in highlighting potential issues/problems.

The data quality strategy action plan includes an action point relating to data quality training. The strategy also requires roles and responsibilities regarding data quality to be written in job descriptions of officers who deal with data.

All staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities; performance appraisals provide an opportunity to reinforce these. Any issues in relation to data quality training can also be highlighted. However, there would be scope to formalise further how officers' performance in achieving data quality is measured. In particular for "transactional" areas of service, such as processing benefit claims, council tax details or creditor payments, it would be possible to set performance targets for each indicator, cascaded through to each individual. This would allow the achievement of data quality to be monitored and also linked into individual performance.

**Recommendation 18:** The Authority needs to develop data quality targets and indicators to measure data quality. The performance of the staff responsible for data quality should be assessed against these targets.

### Using data effectively

Performance data should be used by Members to inform decision-making and improvement. In order to facilitate this, performance information should be appropriate, timely and subject to a thorough review by senior staff before used by Members.

The Authority reports to the Performance Monitoring Board and staff against a 'basket' of 45 performance indicators on a quarterly basis. Reports are produced on an exception basis, to focus Member and senior officer attention on areas where clear action is required. Reported data is submitted back to heads of services where performance is discussed in department management team meetings. Performance review clinics led by the Director of Improvement are held for areas where performance is below target.

The Senior Policy and Performance officer maintains a file of indicators which includes evidence of the reports used to compile each performance indicator with background information on its compilation and explanations for variances.

### 3.3 Best Value Performance Plan

We are required to audit the Authority's Best Value Performance Plan to ensure that its contents comply with statutory requirements. We issued an unqualified opinion on the 2007/08 Plan on 3 December 2007. There are no issues arising from our work which we wish to bring to Members' attention.



## Section 4

# Accounting Policies

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### 4.1 Financial Reporting Requirements

Further changes to accounting requirements take effect in 2007/08, a result of the 2007 SORP, including a new requirement for a Revaluation Reserve and Capital Adjustment Account will significantly alter capital accounting requirements. They are expected to prove challenging for many authorities – this change was originally to be brought in for 2006/07 but was postponed to allow more preparation time, given that significant changes will be required to fixed asset records going forward. We will evaluate the impact of any other changes and liaise with the Authority accordingly.

- In a statement in the March 2007 budget, the Chancellor confirmed that Central Government bodies covered by the FReM would be required to adopt International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), adapted as necessary for the public sector. The timetable announced by the Government is that adoption will be required for 2008/09. This will require the 2007/08 accounts to be restated for comparative purposes.
- The CIPFA/LASAAC Joint Committee which is responsible for the LA SORP has indicated that IFRS will not be adopted in the local government sector until 2009/10, at the earliest, although the WGA returns for 2008/09 will have to be prepared under IFRS. CIPFA has published an analysis of the key differences between the SORP and IFRS and two of the key issues for local government (accounting for PFI/PPP schemes and accounting for infrastructure ) will be the subject of Treasury guidance to be issued before the end of 2007.
- As we get more guidance as to how IFRS are to be adapted for the public sector we will liaise with the Authority's finance team to ensure that they have appropriate plans in place to manage the transition. We are also working closely with our private sector IFRS team to ensure we benefit from our experience of the IFRS convergence process and we will work closely with you to ensure that we can transfer those benefits to you in the period leading up to full adoption. We also believe that the extension of the period available to local government to prepare for IFRS must be used wisely if some of the problems experienced by companies in moving to IFRS are avoided and we would be happy to work with you to identify the key areas where progress really needs to be made.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Summary of 2006/07 recommendations and action plan

No.	Recommendation	Priority	Management response	Timescale
1	The Authority should seek to refine the quality assurance procedures over the accounts further to reduce the level of adjustments needed through the audit process. In relation to new accounting requirements in particular, the Authority should engage early with its external auditors to establish a dialogue over the implications of the changes.	High	Discussions commenced with new external auditors in relation to quality assurance an implications of new SORP.  Workshops arranged with Audit Commission for accountancy staff to attend to ensure consistency of approach	Feb–March 2008
2	The Authority should follow through the results of its public consultation exercise on reporting by publishing an annual report which addresses users' requirements.	High	Annual report to be prepared following public consultation in July 08.	July 2008
3	The Authority should ensure that the medium term financial plan explicitly refers to and reflects the implications of key strategies, such as HR and IT.	Medium	Plan to be specific in inclusion of reference to other strategies.	Dec 2008
4	The Authority should make use of sensitivity analysis for key risks in the medium term financial planning process and should ensure that budget monitoring also focuses on areas of risk.	High	Key risks included in the MTFP. Budget monitoring for 2008/09 to be reviewed in relation to higher risk areas.	Quarterly 2008/09
5	The Authority should perform an overall review of its financial management arrangements to create an action plan for improvement. The action plan should be monitored by an appropriate Member committee.	High	Initial action plan in respect of improvements to Use of Resources including financial management prepared.  Council has now recruited to the post of Accountancy Services Manager with effect from March 2008. This post will drive the improvements required to improve financial management at the Council.	April–June 2008
6	The Authority should ensure that appropriate finance training is provided to Members and service managers, and should periodically evaluate the training programme to determine its effectiveness.	High	Finance training included in the corporate training directory and the member development programme.	Scheduled during 2008/09
7	The Authority should ensure that the actions set out in its Asset Management Plan are fully implemented and should involve Members in scrutinising the management of the Authority's asset base.	High	Asset Management Plan under review by lead officer (Head of Legal & Democratic Services)	Action plan during 2008/09

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Summary of 2006/07 recommendations and action plan

No.	Recommendation	Priority	Management response	Timescale
8	The Authority should review the financial impact of the risks it faces. This should be used to compute a fully risk-based target reserve level. The risk assessment and resulting reserves policy should be reported to Members on an annual basis.	Medium	MTFP includes assessment of balances based on % of budget. Risk Registers highlight the financial risk and are reviewed monthly at DMT and Audit Board.	Quarterly during 2008/09
9	The Authority should introduce a programme of regular risk management training to officers and risk awareness training to Members.	High	Risk Management Training for staff being undertaken. Training for members to be arranged as part of member development programme.	Quarterly during 2008/09
10	The Authority should ensure that its risk register explicitly considers risks arising from its significant partnerships.	High	Corporate Risk Registers detail impact of partnership arrangements – monitored monthly at DMT and quarterly at Audit Board.	Quarterly during 2008/09
11	The Audit Board should consider further how it can demonstrate its effectiveness and, where necessary, strengthen its working practices – for example, calling managers to account for weaknesses identified by internal and external audit which have not been addressed by the due date.	High	Recommendation tracker reviewed by Audit Board quarterly – HOS attend meetings with Board to address issues of weakness.	Quarterly during 2008/09
12	The Authority should ensure that the procedure notes and manuals for key systems remain up to date.	High	Included in PDR targets to prepare the system notes for systems.	Per PDR reviews. Monthly reviewed by line manager and 6 month formal reviews together with annual review
13	The Authority should further develop its arrangements which ensure ethical conduct through the provision of training to Members and officers and through proactive counter fraud audit work. It should review the effectiveness of these arrangements by assessing officers' and Members' views on ethical behaviour – for example, by applying the Audit Commission Ethical Governance Toolkit.	High	In January 2007 IDEA undertook an Ethical Governance Review of the Council.  An action plan was developed to redress issues identified within this audit and all actions continue within timescales.  The actions are mapped and monitored through the Council's Improvement Plan and regular reports to the Government Monitoring Board.  A fraud news letter is issued quarterly to officers and Members.	To continue throughout 2008/9

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Summary of 2006/07 recommendations and action plan

No.	Recommendation	Priority	Management response	Timescale
14	The Authority should further develop how performance and financial information is reported through to Members together and should ensure that formal benchmarking is in place to drive action to improve performance or reduce costs.	High	Performance reported monthly to PMB and quarterly as an integrated report with finance to PMB and Cabinet.  Benchmarking to be used to inform reports presented to members from June 2008.	June 2008 and quarterly to members from that date
15	The Authority should nominate Member and officer leads for data quality to reinforce the importance of data quality within the performance management framework.	High	Officer lead Assistant CEO – Hugh Bennett. Member lead Roger Hollingworth. Data quality action plan reported to Performance Management Board quarterly.	Completed and reported monthly and quarterly to members
16	The Member and officer leads for data quality should take an ongoing role in monitoring progress with the data quality action plans.	High	Lead officer reports to members via monthly report to PMB and quarterly to Cabinet.	Completed and reported monthly and quarterly to members
17	The Authority needs to ensure that formal protocols and standards are developed to ensure data quality is achieved for all instances of internal and external data sharing.	High	Data Quality strategy prepared. Includes protocols and standards in respect of data. Procurement code to include responsibility for data quality.	Completed and reviewed annually
18	The Authority needs to develop data quality targets and indicators to measure data quality. The performance of the staff responsible for data quality should be assessed against these targets.	High	Personal Development reviews (PDRs) to include specific target re data quality on relevant individual PDR.	To be actioned by April 2008

## Appendices

### Appendix B: Audit reports issued

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This appendix sets out the reports that we issued during the year.

Report title	Date issued
Annual Audit and Inspection Plan 2006/07	March 2006
Report to Those Charged with Governance 2006/07	September 2007
Auditors' report on 2006/07 accounts	September 2007
Whole of Government Accounts opinion 2006/07	October 2007
Auditors' report on the Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08	December 2007
Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2006/07	Pending (Scheduled for March 2008)

## Appendix C: Fee summary

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The table below summarises our fees for the 2006/07 audit.

<b>Area of audit work</b>	<b>Planned fee /£</b>	<b>Actual fee /£</b>
Audit of accounts	52,000	52,000
Use of Resources	42,000	42,000
Grant claim certification	12,000	15,370
<b>Total</b>	<b>106,000</b>	<b>109,370</b>

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET

2ND APRIL 2008

#### AUDIT COMMISSION – ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Cllr Roger Hollingworth, Leader of the Council
Responsible Head of Service	Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive

#### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To formally report the Audit Commission's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter to the Council, at a public meeting, as required by the Audit Commission.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that:

- i) the Cabinet considers the report (Appendix 1); and
- ii) the Cabinet receives an updated Improvement Plan at its July meeting, which will incorporate the recommendations from the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council underwent its first CPA in February 2007 and received a Poor rating (this was largely due to the use of historic 2005/2006 performance data). The Council has significantly improved its governance, management processes and performance since then. As part of its standard programme of audit work for every council, the Audit Commission provides an Annual Audit and Inspection Letter, which brings together a summary of all audit work undertaken during the year. This report also includes the Direction of Travel assessment that was conducted in November 2007.

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

- 4.1 There are no financial implications.

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

- 5.1 There are no legal implications.

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

- 6.1 Improvement is a Council Objective. The Direction of Travel offers an external assessment of our rate of improvement.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

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

- Loss of reputation.
- Not taking the last opportunity to remove the tag of Poor before we enter a new inspection regime.

7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

- Setting up a project group and ensuring sufficient preparation.
- Requesting a CPA for later this year.

## **8 CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Obtaining a better rating, gives the public an assurance that the Council has sound governance and is well managed.

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

9.1 The good work undertaken by the Council in this area should help us achieve the required rating.

## **10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The CPA should provide further assessment of our progress in this area.

## **11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues - the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.
Personnel Issues - the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.
Governance/Performance Management – the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act 1988 - the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.
Policy - the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.
Environmental - the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.

## **12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	At Leader's
Chief Executive	Yes (at CMT)
Executive Director (Partnerships & Projects)	Yes (at CMT)
Executive Director (Services)	Yes (at CMT)
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes (at CMT)
Head of Financial Services	Yes (at CMT)
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes (at CMT)



Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes (at CMT)
Corporate Procurement Team	No

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**

All Wards.

**14. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Audit Commission, Annual Audit and Inspection Letter.

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Bromsgrove District Council, CPA Report (June 2007).

**Contact officer**

Name: Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive  
email: h.bennett@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Tel: (01527) 881430

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# Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

**Bromsgrove District Council**

External audit is an essential element in the process of accountability for public money and makes an important contribution to the stewardship of public resources and the corporate governance of public services.

Audit in the public sector is underpinned by three fundamental principles.

- Auditors are appointed independently from the bodies being audited.
- The scope of auditors' work is extended to cover not only the audit of financial statements but also value for money and the conduct of public business.
- Auditors may report aspects of their work widely to the public and other key stakeholders.

The duties and powers of auditors appointed by the Audit Commission are set out in the Audit Commission Act 1998, the Local Government Act 1999 and the Commission's statutory Code of Audit Practice. Under the Code of Audit Practice, appointed auditors are also required to comply with the current professional standards issued by the independent Auditing Practices Board.

Appointed auditors act quite separately from the Commission and in meeting their statutory responsibilities are required to exercise their professional judgement independently of both the Commission and the audited body.

### **Status of our reports**

This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council, drawing on audit, inspection and performance assessment work and is prepared by your Relationship Manager.

In this report, the Commission summarises findings and conclusions from the statutory audit, which have previously been reported to you by your appointed auditor. Appointed auditors act separately from the Commission and, in meeting their statutory responsibilities, are required to exercise their professional judgement independently of the Commission (and the audited body). The findings and conclusions therefore remain those of the appointed auditor and should be considered within the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission.

Reports prepared by appointed auditors are:

- prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission; and
- addressed to members or officers and prepared for the sole use of the audited body; no responsibility is taken by auditors to any member or officer in their individual capacity, or to any third party.

### **Copies of this report**

If you require further copies of this report, or a copy in large print, in Braille, on tape, or in a language other than English, please call 0844 798 7070.

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For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 020 7828 1212 Fax: 020 7976 6187 Textphone (minicom): 020 7630 0421

[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)

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## Key messages

- 1 Overall, Council services are improving. The Council is improving at a faster rate than other councils over the last year but from a low base. Based on a sample of performance indicators (PIs) from the Audit Commission, 63 per cent of PIs improved in 2006/07. The first quarter performance in 2006/07 was disappointing so this good performance is due to significant improvements in the second, third and fourth quarters. However, only 6 per cent of PIs were among the best performing councils compared with the national average of 33 per cent. Overall customer satisfaction with the Council was below average and had not improved.
- 2 Until recently, the Council's focus has by need been largely internal, to rebuild itself and meet the requirements of its improvement plan. It is now shifting its attention more to external, public facing services. It is starting to take effective action to improve priority services such as on recycling, planning and housing and is increasing capacity through effective partnership work. It is delivering improvements in line with most of its plans. It has a robust improvement plan, focused on areas raised in the corporate assessment and linked to priorities. The Council has yet to sustain these improvements and embed the recent changes.

## Action needed by the Council

- 3 The Council has to sustain these improvements and embed the recent changes. It needs to continue to respond positively to the recommendations set out in the corporate assessment published in June 2007. These are set out in the Inspections section below. In particular it needs to:
  - continue to improve priority services such as refuse collection to provide a value for money service;
  - embed VFM mechanisms so the Council can build and develop a value for money and efficiency culture;
  - keep focused and develop robust plans to deliver against its priorities in the Town Centre and Longbridge areas. This is challenging agenda and the Council needs to ensure it has assessed its current capacity and what it needs to deliver;
  - boost capacity through considering the business case for shared services with partners and more innovative funding such as sponsorship;
  - continue to manage the Spatial project closely;
  - embed the changes that are helping to improve member capacity and decision making to ensure the Bromsgrove agenda can be delivered effectively; and
  - respond positively to the findings of the ongoing reinspection of the Council's housing services in February 2008.

- 4 The Council should also respond to the recommendations set out in the Annual External Audit Report 2006/07 dated 29 January 2008. In particular, to further improve value for money the Council should now analyse and report on the links between costs and performance across its services. The Council should align these reports to its corporate priorities. The Council should build and develop the VFM and efficiency culture by involving the understanding and ownership of Members.

## Purpose, responsibilities and scope

- 5 This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. It draws on the most recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council for 2006/07 and from any inspections undertaken since the last Annual Audit and Inspection Letter.
- 6 We have addressed this letter to members as it is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business and that it safeguards and properly accounts for public money. We have made recommendations to help the Council in meeting its responsibilities.
- 7 This letter also communicates the significant issues to key external stakeholders, including members of the public. We will publish this letter on the Audit Commission website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk). In addition the Council is planning to publish it on its website.
- 8 Your appointed auditor is responsible for planning and carrying out an audit that meets the requirements of the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice (the Code). Under the Code, the auditor reviews and reports on:
  - the Council's accounts;
  - whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (value for money conclusion); and
  - whether the Council's best value performance plan has been prepared and published in line with legislation and statutory guidance.
- 9 This letter includes the latest assessment on the Council's performance under the CPA framework, including our Direction of Travel report, and the results of any inspections carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999. It summarises the key issues arising from the CPA and any such inspections. Inspection reports are issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under section 13 of the 1999 Act.
- 10 We have listed the reports issued to the Council relating to 2006/07 audit and inspection work at the end of this letter.



## How is Bromsgrove District Council performing?

- 11 Bromsgrove District Council was assessed as Poor in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment carried out in 2007. These assessments have been completed in all district councils and we are now updating these assessments, through an updated corporate assessment, in councils where there is evidence of change. The following chart is the latest position across all district councils.

**Figure 1 Overall performance of district councils in CPA**



Source: Audit Commission

## The improvement since last year - our Direction of Travel report

### What evidence is there of the Council improving outcomes?

#### Housing

- 12 Performance on Housing was poor in 2006/07. There was an increasing use of poor quality temporary accommodation, putting the Council's performance among the worst 25 per cent of councils, and a lack of affordable housing for local people. Performance on housing is now improving. Following its housing inspection in 2006, the Council has made positive progress to improve housing services which needs sustaining. The Audit Commission will reinspect the Council's housing services in February 2008. This will provide an in depth assessment of progress made.

- 13 Early signs are that it is taking an improved approach on homelessness with partners, providing more support and mediation, particularly for young people and their families. This has reduced the number of homeless people needing accommodation. One hostel has closed and another two are due to close shortly, and no people are in bed and breakfast. The Council has provided 35 self-contained units throughout the community over the last year and is bringing empty homes back into use faster. Better signposting of housing services on the website and in the Customer Service Centre and faster processing of housing benefit applications has improved service. Consultation with the more vulnerable such as homeless, disabled people and hard to reach groups such as gypsies and travellers on their needs, and customer care training for staff has also improved.
- 14 However, although the Council is increasing the supply of affordable housing from a low base, there are some significant challenges in this area for the future particularly given the settlement currently set out in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy. The Council is delivering around 75 new affordable homes a year, just under target, but is constrained by its share of affordable housing over the next 20 years and a high proportion of green belt land. In an area of high house prices this may place pressure on individuals and families seeking to buy affordable houses in Bromsgrove.

#### **A clean district**

- 15 The Council has made good progress on recycling, but refuse collection and street cleanliness were not performing to an adequate standard in 2006/07. Over 40 per cent of household waste was recycled in 2006/07 which is among the top performing councils and satisfaction was high at nearly 80 per cent. Satisfaction with parks and open spaces was high and improving, but performance on street cleaning, a Council priority, was poor. The Council has recently improved street cleansing, such as providing more equipment and 'Hit squads'.
- 16 Refuse collection is high cost and satisfaction is low. Recent performance has improved with fewer missed bins, but the Council needs to continue to improve this area to provide a value for money service, including a review of the fleet of refuse collection vehicles.

#### **Planning**

- 17 Planning performance was poor in 2006/07 but has improved recently. Staff have been recruited and teams restructured to provide a better service for customers. The time taken to determine planning applications has improved and is now at 100 per cent for major applications (Council data). There is better access to planning services with surgeries held three days a week where officers are available for drop in sessions.

### **Customer service, reputation and performance**

- 18 Access to Council services is improving but much remains to be done. The Council has made progress on the e-government agenda, with a new Customer Service Centre (CSC) and an improved website which allows payments online. There is a greater customer focus emerging across the Council with staff training, better signposting of services in the CSC and on the website and face-to-face meetings available on Planning and waste services. Processing of housing benefits has improved according to recent Council data. The Council has achieved level 2 of the Equality Standard for local government.
- 19 However, there are still weaknesses in customer service. Overall customer satisfaction with the Council was below average in 2006 at 51 per cent<sup>1</sup>. The Council is not meeting its target for answering and handling customer calls. The Council is working to improve these areas to provide a joined-up, efficient and customer focused service. A recent customer survey showed that 71 per cent of people found accessing the Customer Service Centre easy. The Council plans to introduce a new complaints handling system, service standards and further customer care training for staff in 2008. It is also investing £6 million over the next seven years on improving systems and processes which are central to improving customer service as part of the Spatial Project.
- 20 The Council is engaging positively with the public including the vulnerable to improve services. It holds Partners and Communities Together (PACT) neighbourhood meetings, a disabled user group and an equalities forum. These all provide valuable feedback to help the Council shape its services such as on parking and regenerating the town centre. The Council has also employed an outreach worker to work with people in the disabled community to find out their needs, and centres for reporting hate crime have been set up across the district. Because of these initiatives, the Council is gaining a better understanding of the needs of local people.

### **Community influence and partnership working**

- 21 The Council is starting to make a greater contribution to wider community outcomes. It plays an active role on the Bromsgrove partnership, such as helping to improve the health of local people and providing activities for young people. Activities for young people include a skate park, play areas, events during school holidays, and sport sessions provided by neighbourhood wardens. The work of the crime and disorder reduction partnership has contributed to reducing overall levels of crime and fear of crime over the last three years.
- 22 Community leadership is improving. The Council is providing greater leadership in the community and is using customer feedback more to deliver improved services. Following feedback from PACT meetings it has set up 'Hit Squads' to target street cleansing, and neighbourhood wardens are working more closely with the Police on reducing anti-social behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> based on 2006 Best Value User Satisfaction Survey.

- 23 Alongside the improvements in community leadership, political and managerial leadership are also improving. The current leadership are well thought of internally and externally. They are taking a strong lead in Bromsgrove's recovery and maintaining a good profile locally in communities and increasingly in the region.
- 24 Discussions continue to be held about shared services, primarily with Redditch, to progress various issues and while none have been delivered so far good progress is now being made on several areas. Work also continues with Worcestershire County Council on Town Centre and Asset Management and Wychavon Leisure Trust on Leisure Services.
- 25 Key areas of focus for shared working where tangible progress has been made are:
- procurement with the Council now providing procurement services to RBC and Wychavon District Council;
  - payroll – agreement as part of report on Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to transfer service to Redditch;
  - elections – proposal submitted to RBC for BDC to run both authorities elections; and
  - CDRP – the merger of North Worcestershire CDRPs being progressed for completion in early 2008/09. The host authority is to be decided.

### **Town centre and Longbridge**

- 26 The Council has a clear understanding of what it wants to achieve in the area, but detailed plans are yet to be developed. It is making positive progress on plans with partners to regenerate the town centre and Longbridge, but it is too soon to see any outcomes from this work. The Council needs to keep focused and develop robust plans to deliver against its priorities in these areas. This is challenging agenda and the Council needs to ensure it has assessed its current capacity and what it needs to deliver.

### **Improving value for money**

- 27 The Council's approach to value for money is developing. The recent assessment of Use of Resources found the Council was not delivering adequate value for money but processes had improved. Costs were above or at average and performance was often below average, such as on refuse collection.
- 28 Processes for improving value for money in the future are in place. The Council now has a value for money strategy and action plan to improve its performance. There is a procurement steering group to help drive efficiency and reduce costs, a more robust performance management framework under a Performance Management Board (PMB), and better use of benchmarking information. Investment for 2008/09 is targeted at Council priorities and savings are being identified in non-priority areas. These mechanisms need to be fully embedded so the Council can build and develop a value for money and efficiency culture.

### **Progress on implementing improvement plans to sustain future improvement**

- 29** The Council is delivering improvements in line with most of its plans. It has a robust improvement plan, focused on areas raised in the corporate assessment and linked to priorities. It is detailed, SMART<sup>2</sup> and closely monitored. Most areas are on track and key milestones have been met. Positive progress is being made on the housing action plan with nearly 90 per cent of actions complete. Implementing the housing strategy is on track, although the issues around affordable housing need addressing particularly given the settlement currently set out in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 30** The Council is developing plans for the longer term to sustain future improvements, but these are not yet fully developed and embedded. It has reduced its priorities to focus on five key areas in its Council Plan for 2008-2011, and financial planning is being aligned to these areas. A new Community Strategy has been prepared with partners with which the Council Plan has been aligned. This outlines shared aspirations for the district for the next ten years. The Council is playing an active role in regenerating the town centre and Longbridge with neighbouring authorities, but detailed plans are yet to be developed.
- 31** The Council is increasing capacity through effective partnership work. For example, better partnership working on housing is improving homelessness services, and work on the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership has contributed to reducing crime. However, the Council can do more to boost capacity through considering the business case for shared services with partners and more innovative funding such as sponsorship.
- 32** A robust performance management framework is in place and is becoming embedded through the Council. Regular performance monitoring is well established at various levels with individual staff targets, and performance reports are clear and focused. Performance is being managed more effectively, with quarterly reports to cabinet and performance clinics have improved areas such as sickness absence and paying invoices. Benchmarking with excellent authorities has begun. The Council now has a data quality strategy in place and risk management has improved. However, there is no standard approach to managing projects, apart from ICT projects, which is a risk in delivering the Council's plans.
- 33** The Council has effective mechanisms in place for communicating progress on plans and performance. It has won an award on internal communications. Communication with staff has improved including back to the floor visits by managers. There is good coverage on performance development reviews in all departments, targets are linked to priorities and training needs identified. This is helping to engage staff in the Council's improvement agenda.

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<sup>2</sup> SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

- 34 The Council generally has the capacity to deliver its plans but there is uncertainty in some areas. Capacity has been strengthened through restructuring the senior management team with a permanent chief executive and executive director, training for middle managers and members and reducing sickness absence. Staff morale has improved, but concerns about job security with future budget cuts and job evaluation need to be managed to avoid any impact on corporate performance. There is also some uncertainty over the deliverability of the ambitious Spatial Project, a major change programme and IT project. However the Council are managing the project closely. Although the project is four months behind, the delay is almost entirely down to a conscious decision to change supplier to ensure the project delivers the benefits the Council needs.
- 35 Member capacity and working relationships have improved. A comprehensive member training programme has helped members have a better understanding of their role and the workings of the Council. Scrutiny has been strengthened and mentors assigned for the cabinet. But although member training continues in accordance with set timescales, poor attendance issues have been raised. It has now been decided that catch up sessions would be arranged for those members who had been unable to attend earlier sessions. It is believed the inclusion of all group leaders on the board is having a positive effect on the programme and attendance.
- 36 The Council has made good progress on improving its governance arrangements, but changes need to be fully embedded. There is a new Code of Conduct and a broad member development programme. New members have brought new skills to the Council and have undergone an induction programme. The constitution has been updated with a smaller Board and more specific roles and responsibilities and the role of the Standards Committee has been strengthened. These changes are helping to improve member capacity and decision making but need to be fully embedded to ensure the Bromsgrove agenda can be delivered effectively.

## Inspections

- 37 The Council's first full CPA was conducted in 2007. The CPA assessment was on site in February 2007 and was published in June 2007 and this resulted in a categorisation of 'poor'. The key strengths in the Council's performance included:
- council leadership has a clear idea about what it wants to achieve and is self aware about the scale of the task required if the Council is to achieve minimum standards;
  - some recent positive progress in addressing area of poor performance; and
  - significant improvement in financial management.

- 38** At the time of the inspection, there were some important areas for improvement in the Council's performance and there was too much complacency about the changes needed to achieve the required improvements in performance. These included:
- overall performance remained below acceptable standards - service performance is poor and recent improvements in some areas have yet to be experienced by the public;
  - there is not yet an adequate vision for the area in place and stakeholders (partners, councillors, partners and the wider public) are not clear about the Council's aims;
  - the relationship with the County Council is not effective;
  - priorities are not sufficiently specific and limited progress in using these to allocate resources;
  - many councillors have a poor understanding of their role, a lack of trust between some councillors and staff and this has had a destabilising effect and has damaged the Council's reputation;
  - over reliance on key senior individuals to provide leadership resulting in significant risks to the sustainability of capacity; and
  - performance management is not yet embedded and there are no processes in place for managing partnerships. The quality of management information is poor and the processes for ensuring value for money are not robust.
- 39** However, since the publication of the report there has been steady progress and many changes. These include:
- the improvement plan is being implemented successfully;
  - a senior management restructure to increase capacity at a senior level and the Council has set up an extensive training programme for members;
  - performance indicators for 2006/07 show that Bromsgrove is improving faster than other councils;
  - inter authority working is moving forward; and
  - the 2006/07 accounts have been closed on time with an unqualified opinion but VFM will have a qualified opinion.

## The audit of the accounts and value for money

- 40 Your appointed auditors have issued an Annual External Audit Report which sets out the findings of work completed in the past year. Your auditors also issued the following opinions:
- an audit report, comprising an opinion on your accounts and a conclusion on your use of resources, issued on 24 September 2007; and
  - a report on the best value performance plan confirming that the Plan has been audited and complies with statutory requirements.
- 41 The opinion on your accounts was unqualified, but the use of resources conclusion reported that arrangements in place are adequate except in respect of three areas, as described further below.
- 42 At the same time as giving an opinion on the Authority's accounts, your auditors issued an audit certificate, which marks the conclusion of their statutory responsibilities for the year. Your auditors also reviewed the Authority's WGA submission and concluded that it was consistent with the statutory accounts.
- 43 In 2007, your auditors completed the second review of data quality at the Authority using a methodology developed by the Audit Commission. They considered the Authority's arrangements to be adequate overall. This marks significant progress over last year's assessment when the Authority's arrangements were judged inadequate overall. Their Annual External Audit Report provides further detail on the findings and recommendations arising from the audit.

### Use of Resources

- 44 The findings of the auditor are an important component of the CPA framework described above. In particular the Use of Resources score is derived from the assessments made by the auditor in the following areas.
- Financial reporting (including the preparation of the accounts of the Council and the way these are presented to the public).
  - Financial management (including how the financial management is integrated with strategy to support council priorities).
  - Financial standing (including the strength of the Council's financial position).
  - Internal control (including how effectively the Council maintains proper stewardship and control of its finances).
  - Value for money (including an assessment of how well the Council balances the costs and quality of its services).



- 45 Between August and October 2007, your auditors completed the third scored judgement on the Authority's use of resources. This assesses the Authority against key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) specified by the Audit Commission, on which the Authority is scored on a scale between 1 (below minimum requirements) and 4 (performing strongly). The scores were reviewed by both KPMG's local and national quality control processes and then by the Audit Commission to ensure consistency in scoring with other auditors and authorities.
- 46 Your auditors assessed the Authority's arrangements as adequate, giving an overall score of 2. This sustains the good performance of the previous year's assessment. Your auditors noted clear improvements in a number of areas of the assessment, including the Authority's medium term financial strategy and budget monitoring arrangements. Your auditors have summarised the findings and conclusions in section 3 of their report with a summary of our recommendations included in Appendix A. They also reconsidered all recommendations made in the previous year and have reiterated those that they consider significant within this year's recommendations.
- 47 Your auditors reported their conclusion on the Authority's use of resources alongside the accounts opinion on 24 September 2007. The conclusion is based on to the extent to the Authority meets 12 criteria specified by the Audit Commission which link to the other audit work – for example, on Use of Resources scored judgement and Data Quality. It is unqualified where these are all met and qualified if there are areas where the minimum standards are not fully addressed.
- 48 Your auditors concluded the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on 9 of 12 criteria determined by the Audit Commission. The Authority was not able to meet three criteria:
- setting strategic and operational objectives,
  - consultation with stakeholders, and
  - monitoring and scrutiny of performance.
- 49 This represents an improvement from last year when the Authority failed to achieve 8 of the 12 Audit Commission criteria. Your auditors reported the findings in the report to those charged with governance (ISA 260) in September 2007.

- 50 For the purposes of the CPA your auditor has assessed the Council's arrangements for use of resources in these five areas as follows.

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**Table 1**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Financial reporting	2 out of 4
Financial management	2 out of 4
Financial standing	2 out of 4
Internal control	2 out of 4
Value for money	1 out of 4
<b>Overall assessment of the Audit Commission</b>	<b>2 out of 4</b>

*(Note: 1 = lowest, 4 = highest)*

## Looking ahead

- 51 The public service inspectorates are currently developing a new performance assessment framework, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). CAA will provide the first holistic independent assessment of the prospects for local areas and the quality of life for people living there. It will put the experience of citizens, people who use services and local tax payers at the centre of the new local assessment framework, with a particular focus on the needs of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. It will recognise the importance of effective local partnership working, the enhanced role of Sustainable Communities Strategies and Local Area Agreements and the importance of councils in leading and shaping the communities they serve.
- 52 CAA will result in reduced levels of inspection and better coordination of inspection activity. The key components of CAA will be a joint inspectorate annual area risk assessment and reporting performance on the new national indicator set, together with a joint inspectorate annual direction of travel assessment and an annual use of resources assessment. The auditors' use of resources judgements will therefore continue, but their scope will be widened to cover issues such as commissioning and the sustainable use of resources.
- 53 The first results of our work on CAA will be published in the autumn of 2009. This will include the performance data from 2008/09, the first year of the new Local Area Agreements.

## Closing remarks

- 54 This letter has been discussed and agreed with officers from the Council. A copy of the letter will be presented at the performance board on 18 March 2008. Copies need to be provided to all Council members.
- 55 Further detailed findings, conclusions and recommendations on the areas covered by audit and inspection work are included in the reports issued to the Council during the year.

**Table 2 Reports issued**

Report	Date of issue
Audit and inspection plan	March 2006
Role of the Monitoring Officer	June 2007
Report to those charged with governance	September 2007
Opinion on financial statements	September 2007
Value for money conclusion	September 2007
Annual External Audit Report	January 2008
Corporate Performance Assessment Report	June 2007
Annual audit and inspection letter	March 2008

- 56 The Council has taken a positive and constructive approach to audit and inspection work, and I wish to thank the Council's staff for their support and cooperation during the audit.

## Availability of this letter

- 57 This letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk), and also on the Council's website.

**Gary Stevens**  
**Relationship Manager**

March 2008

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET

2ND APRIL 2008

#### IMPROVEMENT PLAN EXCEPTION REPORT [JANUARY 2008]

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 January 2008.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the Cabinet considers and approves the revisions to the Improvement Plan Exception Report, and the corrective action being taken; and
- 2.2 That the Cabinet notes that for the 140 actions highlighted for January within the plan 84.3 percent of the Improvement Plan is on target [green], 11.4 percent is one month behind [amber] and 1.4 percent is over one month behind [red]. 2.9 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 JANUARY 2008**






Overall performance as at the end of January 2008 is as follows: -

December 2007

January 2008

<b>RED</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>RED</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.4%</b>
<b>AMBER</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>AMBER</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11.4%</b>
<b>GREEN</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>82.3%</b>	<b>GREEN</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>84.3%</b>
<b>REPROGRAMMED</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>REPROGRAMMED</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2.9%</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 140 actions for the month, 6 actions have been suspended or the timescales have been extended. This amounts to 4.3 percent of the plan. These actions are: Modernised Strategic Housing Service (3.2); Overall Customer Satisfaction (4.1) x 2; Improve Customer Perception of Cleanliness (9.2) and Improve Member Capacity (16.4) x 2.

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 10 priorities as per the 2007/2010 Council Plan.

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

**14. WARDS AFFECTED**

14.1 All wards

**15. APPENDICES**

15.1 Appendix 1 Improvement Plan Exception Report January 2008

**16. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

- 16.1 Full Improvement Plan for January will be e- mailed to all Members of the Cabinet and 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



<b>CP4: Customer Service</b>																	
Ref	January 2008 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
4.1.2	Undertake survey				Survey now with the contractor.										HB	Nov-07	Feb-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
4.1.	<b>Overall Customer satisfaction</b>																
4.1.2	Undertake survey	HB													Questions agreed and now with supplier. Results will be reported in April/ May 08		

<b>CP4: Customer Service</b>																	
Ref	January 2008 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
4.1.3	Report survey				Results delayed due to survey going out later than originally planned. Will be reported from April 2008										HB	Nov-07	Apr-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
4.1.	<b>Overall Customer satisfaction</b>																
4.1.3	Report survey	HB													Delayed, due to survey going out later than originally planned		

<b>CP4: Customer Service</b>																	
Ref	January 2008 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
4.1.6	Develop posters for internal display.				Posters will be produced in February.										HB	Dec-07	Feb-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
4.1.	<b>Overall Customer satisfaction</b>																
4.1.6	Develop posters for internal display.	HB														Other work within the customer feedback software project has been given priority. Posters will be produced in February.	

<b>CP4: Customer Service</b>																	
Ref	January 2008 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
4.1.9	Agree new set with Cabinet.				Now going to Cabinet in March, as special budget Cabinet cancelled in February.										HB	Jan-08	Mar-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
4.1.	<b>Overall Customer satisfaction</b>																
4.1.9	Agree new performance indicator set with Cabinet.	HB														Now going to Cabinet in March, as special budget Cabinet cancelled.	

<b>CP6: Performance</b>																		
Ref	January 2008 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.		A review of all the dates for next year was completed in December and this will be reported to February CMT													HB	Nov-07	Feb-08
<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. Also, initial feedback from the Audit Commission indicates our performance management processes are robust. A review of all the dates for next year was completed in December and this will be reported to February CMT. A key issue is greater middle manager involvement		

<b>CP7: Community Influence</b>																		
Ref	January 2008 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			
7.1.4	Develop delivery plan for further roll out.															HB	Jan-08	Mar-08
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Area Committee pilots (probable expansion of two)</b>																	
7.1.4	Develop delivery plan for further roll out.	HB															Dependent on outcome of meeting with Leader and Leader of Opposition on 05 March.	

<b>CP7: Community Influence</b>																		
Ref	January 2008 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			
7.5.3	Consultation with Leader's Group.															HB	Nov-07	Mar-08
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Parish Council Influence (and Parish Council Charter)</b>																	
7.5.3	Consultation with Leader's Group.	HB															PP guidance went to February's Leader's meeting, but agreed that it would not go forward to Cabinet in March.	

## Exception Report for January 2008 Improvement Plan

## Appendix 1

<b>CP9: Clean District</b>																	
Ref	January 2008 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
9.2.2	Development of Policy Document				Policy will be completed by end of February										MB	Dec-07	Feb-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
<b>9.2</b>	<b>Improve Customer Perception of Cleanliness</b>																
9.2.2	Development of Policy Document	MB														The Policy document will set out the Council's approach. Policy will be completed by end of February	

<b>FP1: Value for Money</b>																	
Ref	January 2008 Action		Colour		Corrective Action										Who	Original Date	Revised Date
11.1.3	Monitor provision through client reviews.				Not due to commence until July/ August 08 following transfer										JP	Dec-07	July-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action		
<b>11.1</b>	<b>Realisation of cashable savings by alternative methods of service delivery</b>																
11.1.3	Monitor provision through client reviews.	JP														The monitoring of the services provided by external agencies (eg Payroll – Redditch, Leisure – Wychavon Leisure Trust) are not due to commence until July – August. A robust framework of monitoring cashable efficiencies realised by the changes services will commence following transfer.	

<b>FP1: Value for Money</b>																
Ref	January 2008 Action	Colour	Corrective Action											Who	Original Date	Revised Date
11.3.5	Identify services for detailed benchmarking & cost analysis to be undertaken.		New accountancy manager will start work in March 08 to drive this work forward.											JP	Aug-07	March-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action	
11.3	<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.

<b>FP2: Financial Management</b>																
Ref	January 2008 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.		Ongoing											JP	July-07	Mar-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action	

# Exception Report for January 2008 Improvement Plan

# Appendix 1

<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. Roll out to Customer Service Centre and Revenues and Benefits section took place in Jan 08	
<b>FP2: Financial Management</b>																
<b>Ref</b>	<b>January 2008 Action</b>	<b>Colour</b>	<b>Corrective Action</b>											<b>Who</b>	<b>Original Date</b>	<b>Revised Date</b>
12.1.3	Train all managers to use web access for Agresso reporting.		Accountancy Manager post to start in March 08 and to plan a proposed start date for the remainder of the Council.											JP	Sept-07	Mar-08
<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>Aug.</b>	<b>Sep.</b>	<b>Oct.</b>	<b>Nov.</b>	<b>Dec.</b>	<b>Jan.</b>	<b>Feb.</b>	<b>Mar.</b>	<b>Apr.</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>Corrective Action</b>	
<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. Accountancy Manager post to start in March 08 and to plan a proposed start date for the remainder of the Council.	

<b>FP2: Financial Management</b>																	
Ref	January 2008 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		
12.1.4	Commence pilot of relaunch of CIPFA FM model to enable diagnostic of areas of weakness to be developed.		To be readdressed in April as part of closedown process												JP	Jan-08	Apr-08
<b>12.1</b>	<b>Improved Financial Management by budget holders</b>																
12.1.4	Commence pilot of relaunch of CIPFA FM model to enable diagnostic of areas of weakness to be developed.	JP														HOFS undertaken joint approach with other districts to identify areas of weakness that need addressing at Bromsgrove. Report to CMT delayed due to lack of Accountancy Manager .	



<b>FP2: Financial Management</b>																				
Ref	January 2008 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					
12.4.3	Undertake programme.																The Council officers are participating in all networking groups and formal support offered by the External Auditors ( eg final accounts workshops). This will continue during 2008/09.	JP	Sept-07	Mar-08
12.4	<b>Increase Benefit from External Audit</b>																			
12.4.3	Undertake programme.	JP															Audit Commission focus on preparation for year end – workshops on final accounts arranged by AC for BDC staff. Other support to be reviewed once final accounts completed ( August 08)			

<b>PR2: Improved Governance</b>																				
Ref	January 2008 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					
16.4.1	Develop and run a training and development programme for Cabinet Members.																Project planning commenced in January and the first Cabinet session will take place in March	CF	Dec-07	Mar-08
16.4	<b>Improve Member Capacity</b>																			
16.4.1	Develop & run a training & development programme	CF															Met with Leader and identified training need and training provider.			

# Exception Report for January 2008 Improvement Plan

# Appendix 1

	for Cabinet Members.																		
<b>PR2: Improved Governance</b>																			
Ref	January 2008 Action	Colour	Corrective Action														Who	Original Date	Revised Date
16.4.2	Identify peer mentors for the Leader (and Cabinet Members) and the Leader of the Opposition.		Mentoring commenced in January. The first session will be facilitated with the Cabinet in March														CF	Oct-07	Mar-08
Ref.	Action	Lead	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Corrective Action				
<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 have been identified. Mentoring was due to start in September, but will now commence in January. The first session will be facilitated with the Cabinet in March		

PR2: Improved Governance																			
Ref	January 2008 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				
16.4.6	Review roles and responsibilities for Leader, Leader of Opposition and Cabinet Members.															CF	Dec-07	Autumn-08	
16.4	<b>Improve Member Capacity</b>																		
16.4.6	Review roles and responsibilities for Leader, Leader of Opposition and Cabinet Members.	CF																	It has been agreed that although the constitution review will go some way to identifying the existing roles and responsibilities that whole scale change will not occur until the consequence of the Local Government and Public involvement in Health Act is know.

<b>HR&amp;OD2: Modernisation</b>																		
Ref	January 2008 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			
20.3.1	Review, develop, consult, train and Implement on all HR policies and procedures as detailed in the People Strategy.		HR policy review programme has slowed down as a result of other organisational priorities (e.g. HR implications of the budget) and case management. This will be picked up again in the new Business Planning year													JP	Dec-07	April-08
<b>20.3</b>	<b>Policy Development</b>																	
20.3.1	Review, develop, consult, train and Implement on all HR policies and procedures as detailed in the People Strategy.	JP														Health and Safety policies have been subject to review during this period and updated accordingly. HR policy review programme has slowed down as a result of other organisational priorities (e.g. HR implications of the budget) and case management. This will be picked up again in the new Business Planning year.		

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET

2ND APRIL 2008

#### COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT RE-CATEGORISATION REQUEST

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

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Council to put itself forward for another Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) with the aim of achieving either a Fair or Good rating.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council agrees the attached letter setting out why the Council believes it is suitable for another CPA and requesting one for November 2008.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council underwent its first CPA in February 2007 and received a Poor rating. The Council has significantly improved its governance, management processes and performance since then, as set out in the attached letter, and Cabinet now feel the time is right to request a second CPA. This will be our last opportunity to do so, as CPA will be replaced from 01 April 2009 with Comprehensive Area Assessment.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications.

#### 6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 Improvement is a Council Objective. CPA offers an external assessment of our improvement.

#### 7. RISK MANAGEMENT

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

- Loss of reputation.
- Not taking the last opportunity to remove the tag of Poor before we enter a new inspection regime.

7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

- Setting up a project group and ensuring sufficient preparation.
- Requesting a CPA for later this year.

## 8 **CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Obtaining a better rating, gives the public an assurance that the Council has sound governance and is well managed.

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

9.1 The good work undertaken by the Council in this area should help us achieve the required rating.

## 10. **VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The CPA should provide further assessment of our progress in this area.

## 11. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues - the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.
Personnel Issues - the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.
Governance/Performance Management – the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act 1988 - the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.
Policy - the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.
Environmental - the CPA will assess our arrangements in this respect.

## 12. **OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	At Leader's.
Chief Executive	Yes (at CMT)
Executive Director (Partnerships & Projects)	Yes (at CMT)
Executive Director (Services)	Yes (at CMT)
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes (at CMT)
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes (at CMT)
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes (at CMT)
Corporate Procurement Team	Yes (at CMT)

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**

All Wards.

**14. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Re-categorisation Request Letter

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Bromsgrove District Council, CPA Report (June 2007).

**Contact officer**

Name: Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive  
email: h.bennett@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Tel: (01527) 881430

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Michael Scott,  
Regional Director,  
Audit Commission,  
Central Region,  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Bridge Business Park,  
Bridge Park Rd,  
Thurmaston, Leicester,  
LE4 8BL

April 2008

Dear Michael,

### **Bromsgrove District Council – Request for CPA**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council's Members to formally request that Bromsgrove District Council be considered for a second CPA. As you know, the Council's performance indicators have improved significantly over the last two years and we are keen that the re-assessment takes place towards the end of 2008, so that our 2007/08 outturn performance can be used as part of the assessment. We are applying now, as we understand that the October regional categorisation panel has been cancelled due to CPA being replaced from 01 April 2009.

The Council understands from the CPA – District Council Framework from 2006, that re-categorisation requests will be successful where a council is "able to demonstrate significant evidence of improvement". We have set out below our progress against the five CPA key lines of enquiry and in particular, addressed the areas for improvement identified in our first CPA. As you know, we requested this first CPA to help provide us with a view on the areas we needed to improve.

#### **1. Ambition**

- 1.1 The Council continues to demonstrate its ambition of the District.
- 1.2 The Council has undertaken a robust needs analysis of deprivation, demographic and other data as part of its work on developing a community strategy.
- 1.3 The Council has also undertaken a customer satisfaction survey through its customer panel, is about to undertake a second survey on quality of life and will have undertaken a third survey, tracking progress against the first customer satisfaction survey, by the time the Audit Commission are on site. The Council also undertook a specific and innovative public consultation on the draft community strategy.

- 1.4 The Council has used this data (and the results of the BV Satisfaction survey) to develop both the Community Strategy 2007/2010 and Council Plan 2008/2011.
- 1.5 The Community Strategy cross references to the County wide Local Area Agreement and we now have a functioning LSP Board and Theme Groups, supported by a terms of reference, work programme and performance framework.
- 1.6 Through the LSP, "town hall" meetings, the resident's magazines and regular meetings with our partners, we now believe that key partners are aware of the Council's ambitions. Partnership relations are much improved.
- 1.7 There has been significant investment in Member training on key issues the Council faces and on the protocols and standards for political life. The recent Full Council debates on the budget and Council Tax demonstrate political leadership, differences of policy, but generally a broad cross party support for the Council's five priorities.
- 1.8 The Council now clearly has a strategic framework and within this has taken difficult decisions, including the recent closure of the Bromsgrove Museum, the planned transfer to a trust of the Dolphin Leisure Centre, 35 posts deleted from non-priorities area through the 2008/2009 budget round, charging for green waste and the removal of concessionary car parking. As part of the Dolphin Centre transfer the Council is refurbishing the leisure centre, in particular, the fitness suite to help ensure sufficient revenue generation by the new trust (and therefore revenue savings to the Council).
- 1.9 The Council has a much more effective relationship with the County Council, with regular meetings between senior managers of both organisations. The Council particularly welcomes the support it is receiving from the County Council on the town centre redevelopment and the railway station regeneration.

## **2. Prioritisation**

- 2.1 For 2008/2009 and beyond the Council has clearly identified its priorities and non-priorities.
- 2.2 The Council has reduced its previous 10 priorities to five: a thriving market town, housing, customer service, sense of community and a clean district and recycling.
- 2.3 The Council now has a clear framework for arriving at the five priorities, which takes into account national, regional and county policy, customer feedback, deprivation/demographic information, our financial position and performance. This information is brought together in the Council Plan Part 1 report which sets out the remit for the forthcoming budget

round. Heads of Service are then asked to produce their business plans, including budget bids within this framework. This information then goes through the political process, before being brought together as the Council Plan Part 2 and Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Council can demonstrate a very clear link between its stated priorities and its planned expenditure and disinvestment in non-priority areas for 2008/2009 and beyond.

- 2.4 The LSP Board and Theme Groups are now contributing to the delivery of the Council's priorities. Partnership project groups under the umbrella of the LSP have been established for the town centre and Longbridge. The Housing Theme Group is chaired by the Chief Executive of the Housing Trust and the Older People's Theme Group by the voluntary sector. A Transport Theme Group has also been recently established, in conjunction with the County Council.
- 2.5 The Council now has regular meetings with most key partners to ensure regular feedback on decisions. Similarly, the Council's Consultation Policy aims to ensure feedback is provided to residents on consultations undertaken. The Council has overhauled its residents magazine, re-titled "Together Bromsgrove" to ensure we communicate our priorities to residents. In addition, we have undertaken press briefings and increased the number of press releases to help improve residents understanding of the Council's priorities. Senior officers from the Council also attend a high number of Partners and Communities Together (PACT) residents meetings. The Leader of the Council now has a regular column in one of the local papers.
- 2.6 The Council has now fully integrated its strategic framework, ensuring a strong alignment between the Community Strategy, Council Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan, Improvement Plan, other plans e.g. asset management plan, housing strategy etc., service business plans and individual appraisals.
- 2.7 The Council has a good approach to equalities and diversity and is currently working towards level three of the local government standard. The Council is currently working on an impact assessment of the community strategy and will involve partners more with the Council's Equalities and Diversity Forum and Disabled Users Forum to help promote this agenda with our partners. The Equalities and Diversity Forum submitted a number of budget bids to the Council, which were approved. The Forum has also been consulted on plans for the town centre and the LSP has set up a specific project group to look at community transport, a key service gap identified by both Forums.

### **3. Capacity**

- 3.1 Councillor capacity has been significantly improved through an extensive Modern Councillors programme. Training has included comprehensive induction of new and returning councillors, formal inductions of Boards, a

comprehensive 12 month programme of training and development around scrutiny and planning, various training sessions around the budget, ICT, code of conduct and bias and pre-determination. Cabinet and Corporate Management Team have been through one "Top Team" programme and the new Cabinet will go through a second programme this year. The Leader of the Council also has a mentor through the I&DeA.

- 3.2 The Council has addressed its senior management capacity by recently recruiting to a new post, Executive Director Services.
- 3.3 Staff capacity through vacancies and sickness was impacting on the Council's performance. The Council has introduced a sickness management policy and sickness levels are falling. Vacancies in both planning and benefits have been filled and in both cases performance has significantly improved (see section on achievements).
- 3.4 Value for Money remains an issue for the Council, but the Council recognises this. The previous piecemeal approach has now been consolidated. The Council has produced a VFM Strategy and action plan. Each service has been challenged by the Head of Financial Services over their VFM plans and each service has an approved VFM action plan. The Council has also permanently recruited a procurement officer, is making savings through improved procurement and generating income through selling procurement advice to other neighbouring councils. Overall, the Council has recently achieved a 2 out of 4 for its Use of Resources.
- 3.5 The implementation of workforce planning has been re-phased to enable the Council to focus on delivering Single Status. The Council has worked constructively with the unions through the Union Liaison meeting and the new terms and conditions are about to be subject to ballot.
- 3.6 100% of staff received a Performance Development Review (PDR) in 2007. The scheme has been reviewed and all PDRs for 2008 will be completed by 30 April 2008. The uplift in the Council's performance suggests this scheme is having an impact.
- 3.7 The Council's communications has benefited from the appointment of an experienced Communications and Customer First Manager. The Council's communications have improved, with the Council receiving national recognition through the Local Government Reputation Awards, for both internal communications and reputation management. The Council also hosted a national workshop on communications in 2007. Corporate Management Team receives a communications planner every two weeks.
- 3.8 The Council has addressed the issue of poorly run Full Council meetings through mock council meetings and additional training for Members. Recent meetings demonstrate this intervention has been effective.

- 3.9 Concerns about the Council's ICT Spatial Project have been addressed through changing the sub-contractor and improving the working relationship with the programme management contractor. The project has been re-phased and is on track to be delivered in 2008.
- 3.10 Relations between the ruling group and the opposition (and officers) have been improved through regular meetings between the four group leaders, the Leader of the Opposition becoming the Chairman of the Scrutiny Steering Board, the three non-executive Board Chairman and the Leader meeting quarterly and the Chief Executive meeting monthly with the Leader of the Opposition.

#### **4. Performance Management**

- 4.1 The Council had a corporate performance management framework at the time of the previous CPA, but this framework was not embedded. The performance management framework is now into its third year and the recent Direction of Travel described this as "robust" and "becoming embedded".
- 4.2 The Council's Performance Management Board makes regular recommendations to Cabinet, whose progress is tracked on a quarterly recommendation tracker report.
- 4.3 The Council has recently launched a set of corporate customer standards and departmental customer standards, along with a customer manual for staff, customer care training and an electronic complaints management system. The Council also commissioned an I&DeA Peer Review of its customer services and has re-launched its Customer First Strategy.
- 4.4 The Council, working with its partners, has also agreed a community strategy and underpinned this with a performance management framework that mirrors the Council's own approach.
- 4.5 Financial management has been integrated with performance management through the budget bidding process and through quarterly joint monitoring reports.
- 4.6 Risk management is also based on the corporate priorities and the key deliverables within each service business plan.
- 4.7 Each head of service has to produce a monthly report for their portfolio holder that brings together financial, performance, customer and risk management information.
- 4.8 Programme and project management remains an area of concern, but the Council has recently been successful in a bid to RIEP for an

Improvement Manager, whose primary focus will be programme management and BPI.

- 4.9 The Council has also recently improved its rating from 1 out of 4 to 2 out of 4 for its data quality arrangements.
- 4.10 These systems are clearly impacting on performance (see achievements).

## **5. Achievements**

- 5.1 The Council has set itself five priorities for 2008/2011. Progress against these is set out below:-

### CP1 - A Thriving Market Town

- 5.2 The Council has recently appointed consultants to develop an area action plan for the town centre.
- 5.3 The Council has also recently agreed to redevelop the market hall site and has entered into negotiations with various retail companies to complete this work.
- 5.4 The County Council has agreed to part fund the appointment of a project manager for the town centre and the Council is currently out to advert for this post.

### CP 2 – Housing

- 5.5 Despite difficult regional planning constraints, the Council delivered 72 units of affordable housing in 2006/07, is projecting 70 for 2007/08 and 152 for 2008/09. The Council has recently commissioned a housing market survey to identify the extent of affordable housing need and is challenging the proposed RSS2 allocation.
- 5.6 The Council has reduced the number of people in temporary accommodation from 97 (March 2006) to 33 (December 2007), meeting the Government's target for a 50% reduction by 2010.
- 5.7 The Council has closed two of its hostels and the third will close in March. Homeless people are dispersed to self contained units run by Bromsgrove District Housing Trust that meet the Decent Homes Standard.
- 5.8 The Council has worked hard with private sector landlords through the landlord's forum and the "Step Up" scheme to increase private sector provision. This has led to 19 successful tenancies.
- 5.9 Two members of staff have now been made full time to enable the process for DFG to be quicker. As a result, in the last quarter (Oct-Dec

07) we have done three times more DFGs than the previous quarter. We have also reduced the time from referral to completion from 56 weeks to 26 in the last quarter.

- 5.10 The Council has already allocated all of its discretionary grant budget for 2007/08.

#### CP 3 – Customer Service

- 5.11 The average speed of answering customer calls at the Customer Service Centre (31 seconds) is now consistently within target (35 seconds). Similarly, call resolution at the first point of contact is now above 90% (target 85%).
- 5.12 72% of CSC customer would recommend the Customer Service Centre to a friend (Customer Panel July 2007).
- 5.13 65% of customers were satisfied with the service received at the CSC (Customer Panel July 2007).
- 5.14 98% of other planning applications are now determined within 8 weeks and 88% of minor applications
- 5.15 The average number of days taken to process a new benefits application has fallen from 34 days (April 2007) to 23 days (December 2007).
- 5.16 The overall basket of BVPIs indicates that 62% will achieve a 2007/08 outturn above the 2006/07 All England median.

#### CP4 – Sense of Community

- 5.17 Overall crime levels are predicted to be down in the District by 32% over the last 3 years (period ending 31 March 2008), compared to the target of 17.5%.
- 5.18 The number of violent crimes in the District is comparatively low and there were only 3 recorded violent crimes in the town centre over the Christmas period with the changes to the provision of taxis after closing time proving very successful.
- 5.19 Improvements to domestic violence reporting mean that the number of such incidents are increasing. The Police treat every instance of domestic violence very seriously, on the basis that a phone call is probably the first call after 15 previous incidents. Currently the Police make an arrest in 89% of cases.
- 5.20 The actual number of robberies is very low (between 5 and 8 a month against a target of 3). The target is based on last year's very good outturn and is thought to be too low by both the Police and Culture and Communities staff.

- 5.21 The Council has a successful CDRP and works closely with the Police and residents through Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings, to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- 5.22 The Council runs a successful street theatre every summer which will be expanded into three new areas in 2008/2009.
- 5.23 The Council has recently been successful in achieving a £200,000 Big Lottery grant for teenage play facilities.
- 5.24 The Council has already installed play facilities in Charford and Sidemoor, the latter leading to a 10% reduction in anti-social behaviour. Two more sites, Rubery and Catshill are imminent. During 2007 the Council will be reviewing play provision across the whole District and developing a Play Strategy and action plan.
- 5.25 The Council will be starting its angling diversionary project for young people in April. The Council is already operating a successful boxing scheme in south Bromsgrove and a football coaching course.
- 5.26 The Council has recently held a very successful Sports Award evening for young people and their coaches; and under the umbrella of the LSP, is currently creating a Community Sports Network, bringing together the voluntary sector, sports clubs, the District Council and County Council

#### CP5 – Clean District and Recycling

- 5.27 The Council continues to achieve a high level of recycling and composting with an estimated 2007/2008 outturn of 42% of household waste either recycled or composted.
- 5.28 The Council has recognised that cleaner streets is the number one priority for residents and has invested in additional vehicles, staff and area cleaners through the current budget round.

The long term nature of some of the projects, particularly, the town centre, means that some of these achievements are proxy outcomes, nevertheless, the Council has clearly made significant progress in delivering improvements for our residents since the last assessment.

Based on our progress, we will be submitting a self assessment which rates the Council as Good.

I hope you will agree that the Council has made significant progress since its last CPA and I look forward to hearing the results of the regional re-categorisation board's decision.



Yours sincerely,

Kevin Dicks  
Chief Executive  
Bromsgrove District Council

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## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET

2ND APRIL 2008

#### INTEGRATING AND ADOPTING PARISH PLANS WITHIN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY & LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: A PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

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

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposed methodology for the integration and adoption of Parish Plans within the district-wide Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the Local Development Framework (LDF), the latter prepared by the Council as local planning authority. The benefits of formally recognising Parish Plans will mean that the content can assist in giving many services provided by the District Council and partners community focus. In turn, many of the services provided by the Council and partners within the LSP can, and do feed into the Parish Plan process, creating more informed Action Plans.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that:
1. the proposed methodology for integration of Parish Plans within the LSP and LDF is ratified; subject to
  2. a 12-week period of consultation be undertaken within the Council, members of the LSP, Community First/CALC and the County Council.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Parish Plans are an established part of the local governance structure, since their launch in the 2000 Rural White Paper 'Our Countryside, the Future' and promoted through the Countryside Agency's 'Vital Villages' initiative. Parish (or Town) Plans are led, prepared and owned by the local community, usually with the support of the parish/town council. The content will reflect local circumstances and issues, but broadly they will address social, economic and environmental issues identified by the local community through a rigorous process of public participation.
- 3.2 In addition, communities may also choose to prepare a Village Design Statement (VDS). In many ways the forerunner to Parish Plans set our design guidance for new development based on distinctive local

character. It is prepared by the local community and demonstrates a commitment to good design and identifies what the community value in their local environment. Design statements can be prepared as stand-alone documents or be incorporated within the broader Parish Plan.

- 3.3 An effective Parish Plan will pull all these issues together into an Action Plan (AP) which, under specific topic headings, will prioritise issues and identify opportunities to address problems and seek support from a range of partners and key stakeholders. As such, they provide a valuable source of local information that can inform the work of the LSP and integrate or supplement the local planning authority's LDF.
- 3.4 Within the LSP, the Parish Plan can inform key partners and stakeholders of issues and needs, helping to direct resources and support to where it is needed. By adopting the Parish Plan contents as a local information source, the LSP can ensure that the Parish Plan can help key organisations deliver practical projects locally that can improve the quality of life in line with the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).
- 3.5 Parish Plans (or VDS) can add value to planning at a local level by expressing a greater level of detail than the LSP or local authority might be able to include in the SCS or Development Plan Documents (DPD). The planning benefits and opportunities of Parish Plans for both local authorities and parish/town councils have been detailed in 'Parish Plans and the Planning System', published by the Countryside Agency (2003). The contents or Action Points (AP) can inform planning policies, influence planning proposals, and set out locally based criteria against which planning applications can be judged if adopted as SPD.

#### **4. PARISH PLANS IN BROMSGROVE**

- 4.1 Parish Plan work in the District is principally supported by Community First and CALC, with both organisations having a remit to work across Worcestershire with local rural communities on Parish Plans.
- 4.2 At December 2007, there were 7 communities which had completed a Parish Plan, and one in production to be completed during 2008.

#### **5. ADOPTING PARISH PLANS AS A LOCAL INFORMATION SOURCE FOR THE LSP**

- 5.1 It is proposed to put in place a framework within the Council and LSP to allow the Action Points in Parish Plans to be adopted as a 'Local Information Source'. This will essentially seek to formalise the existing approach to circulating and implementing specific Action Points but provide greater weight as the Parish Plan would be 'adopted' by both the Council and LSP.
- 5.2 This will allow a Parish Plan to be taken into account in the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy, the aims and objectives of which will feed into the Development Plan Documents which form part of the Council's Local Development Framework. In addition, each Action Point will be given a 'commitment' to support implementation or

an undertaking to bring it to the attention of the relevant Council department, or LSP stakeholder etc. (Appendix 1).

### 5.3 **Proposed approach for dealing with Parish Plans:**

- **Parish Council** adopts or endorses the final version of the Parish Plan and copies sent to the relevant Officer in the Planning Policy Team/LSP Manager at the District Council. Copies are also provided to Community First and CALC.
- **Bromsgrove District Council/LSP** to circulate a copy of summary of each Parish Plan and Action Point to LSP Members via the LSP Manager. LSP Manager and Planning Policy Officer to prepare a joint 'Action Point Report' to Executive Cabinet of the Council via the Scrutiny Board to seek formal adoption as 'Local Information Source'.
- **Bromsgrove District Council** to circulate Parish Plan, Action Point Report (if adopted) to the appropriate officers within the Council to deliver the appropriate level of support. Planning Policy Officer to inform Parish Clerk of the Committee decision in writing and attach copy of minute.
- **LSP** to discuss the Parish Plan at its next available meeting and consider the following:
  - Whether to adopt it as a 'local information source' based on the criteria in Appendix 1 and having regard to the decision of the Council.
  - What support the LSP can offer, if any, e.g. funding advice, influencing ability, contacts, invitation to bid for funds (if available).
  - Identify whether the Parish Plan has any common themes that are shared across a number of parishes and take appropriate action, e.g. encouraging joint working, influencing at a more strategic level.
- **Area Committees** – Where an Area Committee exists, the Committee could perform the role of the LSP described above, feeding back to the LSP Board about the decisions taken and to discuss any further support the Area Committee or LSP can offer etc.
- **LSP Chairman** to write a letter of congratulations to Parish Plan Steering Group, setting out whether the LSP is adopting the Plan as a local information source and if appropriate, offering advice and support.
- **LSP Manager** to keep the Board informed of progress with Parish Plans and raise any common themes arising from Parish Plans across a number of parishes.
- **Individual LSP Members** may also wish to take Parish Plans back to their own organisations and if appropriate, respond directly to the Parish Plan Group.

- 5.4 The Council and the LSP will monitor the process to ensure the range and level of support provided is appropriate to the original 'commitment' in the Action Point Report.
6. **Adopting Parish Plans/VDS as Supplementary Planning Documents**
- 6.1 The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new planning framework, replacing the district-wide Local Plan with Local Development Frameworks (LDF). Within the new system, local planning authorities are required to prepare both a range of planning policy documents as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).
- 6.2 Although the local planning authority does not prepare Parish Plans or VDS, where the content relates to land use planning they may be adopted as SPD. When a Parish Plan/VDS has been adopted as SPD, the content of the Action Plan that relates to land use planning issues can be used as material planning considerations. The Parish Plan/VDS may also provide 'pointers' to topic areas, from which the local authority planning may choose to prepare further SPD.
- 6.3 Adoption of extracts from the Parish Plan/VDS as SPD is dependent on a range of criteria being met:
- The Parish Plan, which the local authority intends to adopt, have to be named in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) which forms part of the LDF.
  - The Action Points need to broadly conform to the adopted policies of the Development Plan Documents (DPD) within the LDF, i.e. policies of the saved Local Plan Review or Core Strategy etc.
  - The Parish Plan content has to have been based on extensive public participation with the local community and evidence provided to support this.
  - The Parish Plan content needs to have undergone a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) undertaken either by the Parish Plan Steering Group, parish council, or local authority.
  - Subject to a six-week consultation period in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 6.4 It should be noted that it is not possible to adopt an element of a Parish Plan unless it is identified in the current LDS, and that adoption can not be done retrospectively, i.e. Parish Plans that have already been published (however, published plans can still follow the process set out in 5.3 and 5.4).
- 6.5 On submission of the completed Parish Plan/VDS, an assessment of the preparation process and extent of the community involvement will be undertaken by the Council (Section 3). At this stage, an initial appraisal of the relevant sections the Action Plan will determine if the

content is appropriate for adoption as SPD.

- 6.6 If the Council is satisfied part of the content of the Parish Plan/VDS can be adopted as SPD, then the adoption process will follow the statutory SPD adoption process, in parallel with the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) under the regulations of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Having completed the technical work on the SA, agreement from Members to publish a draft SPD and SA report for the statutory 4-6 week period of public consultation will be sought. Following consideration of representations on the draft SPD will be resubmitted for adoption by the Council and published as SPD.
- 6.7 Start-up guidance for new Parish Plans should clearly set out the hurdles for adoption as SPD so the Steering Group can make a judgement as to whether they want to seek SPD status and therefore develop the land use/spatial planning element of the final document accordingly.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 No financial implications.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 None.

## **7. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

- 7.1 This issue links to all corporate objectives.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 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. The Bromsgrove Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010 (ratified by Cabinet in November 2007) considered the Parish Plans published to date whilst gathering evidence to ensure local issues were reflected appropriately.

## **9. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Working in partnership delivers joined up outcomes, which is what customers expect and adoption of Parish Plans would ensure linking to customers at a very local level.

## **10. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 If Parish Plans are produced, there is opportunity for all residents of any age, sex, ethnicity, disability etc to be involved in the consultation, and if the proposed methodology is accepted, the Parish Plans may inform future plans and strategies.

**11. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 By integrating Parish Plans within the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework, 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.

**12. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Please include the following table and spell out any particular implications in the relevant box. If there are no implications under a particular heading, please state 'None':-

Procurement Issues - None
Personnel Issues - None
Governance/Performance Management- The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new planning framework, replacing the district-wide Local Plan with Local Development Frameworks (LDF).
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

**13. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Please include the following table and indicate 'Yes' or 'No' as appropriate. Delete the words in italics.

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

**14. WARDS AFFECTED**

All wards with parish councils.



**15. APPENDICES**

Please list the appendices attached to the report as shown in the example below.

Appendix 1: Guidance for the Assessment of Parish/Town Plans for Adoption as a Local Information Source for the LSP

**16. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

16.1 None.

**Contact officer**

Name: Louise Berry, Senior Policy & Performance Officer  
E l.berry@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Mail:  
Tel: (01527) 881412

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**Guidance for the Assessment of Parish/Town Plans for Adoption as a Local Information Source for the LSP**

- 1.1 In assessing Parish Plans, the following considerations should be taken into account:  
**Evidence and extent of research work to justify conclusions.**  
**Evidence and extent of analysis related to conclusions.**  
**Public involvement and endorsement at local level, i.e. adoption by Parish/Town Council.**  
**Level of implementation available to District Council services.**  
**Conformity with District Council's policies and Sustainable Community Strategy.**
- 1.2 The above criteria will enable the production of recommendations regarding the acceptance of each of the Parish/Town Council's detailed conclusions and Action Points.
- 1.3 A response to each of the detailed conclusions and Action Points will be one of the following:
- A ENDORSE**  
The specific recommendation will be accepted and taken into account on the decision making of the Council.
- B ACTION**  
The specific recommendation will be accepted in principle and, subject to financial, procedural and legal constraints, implemented by or with support of the District Council.
- C INVESTIGATE**  
Further information to be obtained by the Parish/Town Council or other agency may be required in order that the District Council may establish if the specific recommendation can be supported.
- D SUPPORT**  
The specific recommendation relates to a matter that is not the responsibility of the District Council. However, the proposal is supported and will be forwarded to the appropriate authority.
- E NOT SUPPORTED**  
The specific recommendation relates to a matter that is contrary to the policy of the District Council or is beyond the powers of the authority or that insufficient and/or unsatisfactory information has been submitted to substantiate the recommendation.

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