



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER 2020
AT 6.00 P.M.

VIRTUAL MEETING - SKYPE - VIRTUAL

MEMBERS: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), G. N. Denaro (Deputy Leader),
A. D. Kent, M. A. Sherrey, P.L. Thomas and S. A. Webb

AGENDA

1. To receive apologies for absence
2. Declarations of Interest

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.
3. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 6th August 2020 (Pages 1 - 10)
4. Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 6th August 2020 (Pages 11 - 24)
 - (a) To receive and note the minutes
 - (b) To consider any recommendations contained within the minutes
5. Draft Council Tax Support Scheme (Pages 25 - 66)
6. Budget Framework - Presentation
7. Revenue Monitoring Quarter 1 Report (Pages 67 - 80)
8. New Homes Bonus Community Grants Scheme (Pages 81 - 86)

9. 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

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Worcestershire
B61 8DA

1st September 2020



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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

6TH AUGUST 2020, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), G. N. Denaro (Deputy Leader), A. D. Kent, M. A. Sherrey, P.L. Thomas and S. A. Webb

Observers: Councillor M. Glass and Councillor M. Thompson (Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board)

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mrs. S. Hanley, Ms. J. Pickering, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr C. Forrester, Mr. G. Revans, Mr. D. Allen and Ms. J. Bayley

14/20 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

15/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

16/20 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 8TH JULY 2020**

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 8th July 2020 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 8th July 2020 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17/20 **PARTNERSHIP WASTE STRATEGY OFFICER REPORT**

The Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented a report which set out proposals for Bromsgrove District Council to fund a joint Partnership Waste Strategy Officer for Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Cabinet was informed that all Councils in Herefordshire and Worcestershire had worked in partnership in recent years to ensure that there was a consistent approach to waste collection services in the area. All of the Councils in the two counties had been approached about the potential to establish and fund this joint officer post.

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The post had been proposed in a context in which the Government was proposing a number of changes to waste collection services nationally and a new Environment Bill was going through the Parliamentary process. The final content of the legislation arising from this bill remained to be confirmed, however, the bill contained proposals for Councils to introduce a food waste collection service. There were also proposals that garden waste collection services should become free nationally and other proposals designed to ensure that service delivery became more consistent across the country.

The introduction of a food waste collection service in Bromsgrove District would cost approximately £8 million across the whole of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire region. There would be costs of approximately £800,000 for Bromsgrove District Council arising from the introduction of this service. This included costs arising from the need to purchase new vehicles for the service as well as staff and bins, as containers for the food waste. Should the Council be required to cease to charge for garden waste collection services, this would result in a loss of £900,000 income for the authority. The Government had indicated that financial support would be provided to Councils in respect of the costs arising from changes to waste services, but it was uncertain how much funding would be received by Bromsgrove District Council.

The Partnership Waste Strategy Officer would be responsible for co-ordinating the partner authorities' response to the Government legislation in respect of waste services. There would be a particular focus on the response of the Councils in respect of the introduction of food waste and the removal of charges for garden waste, and the Officer would ensure that a consistent approach continued to be adopted across the region.

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

- The potential consequences of introducing a food waste collection service. Concerns were raised that this could encourage residents to waste food.
- The need to educate residents about the purpose of the service and the value in terms of keeping food waste to a minimum.
- The financial costs involved in introducing a food waste collection service in the District.
- The frequency with which the food waste collection service would operate. Officers explained that the Government was proposing that this should be a weekly collection service.
- The average weight of the food waste collected by local authorities where this service was already available. Officers advised that the average yield at these authorities was 2.4 to 4.5 kilos per household per week.
- The traditional approach to food waste that had been adopted in Worcestershire in the past, involving the 'love food, hate waste' campaign.

- The potential risks arising from the use of bins to store food waste and the possibility that this would attract rats and other pests.
- The options available in terms of the Council acquiring dual purpose vehicles to enable the authority to collect other forms of waste alongside food waste, thereby making the service more efficient. Officers explained that this would be an area that could be investigated further by the post holder.
- The potential for Bromsgrove District Council to invest in an anaerobic digester and the financial costs of doing so. Officers explained that an anaerobic digester cost approximately £18 – 20 million. This would be too expensive for the Council to purchase but it was possible that there might be opportunities to work in partnership with other local authorities in the region or an organisation from the private sector to introduce an anaerobic digester.
- The rate of return from an anaerobic digester. Cabinet was advised that the financial return would need to be reviewed but it was likely that there would be income as a result of the anaerobic digester supplying gas to the national grid.
- The higher costs in Bromsgrove in terms of delivering a food waste collection service, when compared to other authority areas, due to the large rural geographical area served by the Council.
- The information in respect of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that had been prepared by Officers in relation to this subject and the need for this information to be shared with Members.

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) **Bromsgrove District Council agree to the establishment of a Joint Waste Strategy Officer to work on behalf of the partnership of all 8 Local Authorities in Herefordshire and Worcestershire;**
- (2) **Bromsgrove District Council allocate £8,000 per annum from existing funds for a fixed term of three years; and**
- (3) **Bromsgrove District Council will consider requests for additional funding to support further work which has been identified and proposed via the partnership Senior Waste Officer Group.**

18/20

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 6TH JULY 2020

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Councillor M. Thompson, presented the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 6th July 2020. Members were advised that there were no recommendations arising from this meeting for Cabinet's consideration. Cabinet was informed that a new Task Group had been established during that meeting and would report back in due course.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 6th July 2020 be noted.

19/20

FINANCE OUTTURN 2019/20 AND RESERVES

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Financial Outturn Report 2019/20 and Reserves and in so doing highlighted the following for Members' consideration:

- There had been an overall underspend, across all Council departments, of £231,000 in 2019/20.
- However, there had been an overspend of £136,000 during the year in respect of the strategic purpose 'keep my place safe and looking good'.
- A key area of savings had been in respect of Enabling Services, at £314,000.
- A total of £396,000 had been returned to balances at the end of the year.
- The capital budget had been increased from £4.515 million to £11.9 million but there had been an underspend in the budget of £8.3 million.
- Heads of Service had recognised that the Capital Programme needed to be reviewed and more accurate forecasting put in place as the Council's underspend in the Capital Programme had implications for borrowing.
- The Council's reserves would be useful moving forward in respect of enabling the authority to respond to community needs following the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) would be invited to meet to discuss delegations to the Section 151 Officer in respect of grants and use of Section 106 funding. Currently all such proposals had to be reported to Council and this caused delays.

Members subsequently discussed the report in detail and commented on the following points:

- The justification for the level of savings that had been achieved in 2019/20 and the reasons why the final budget position was different to that which had been anticipated in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Officers explained that the Financial Services Team were undertaking a review of the savings that had been achieved and the causes of this.
- The opportunity to use some of the savings that had been generated during the year to support local residents and businesses impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The reasons for the underspend in the Capital Programme. Members noted that some planned capital expenditure would have been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown.

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- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the local economy, particularly the retail sector, and the need to support businesses effected by the reduction in footfall.
- The potential for the Council to make investments under the Council's Investments and Acquisitions Strategy in order to generate income as well as to support local businesses. Officers explained that, whilst opportunities had been identified, none had been found to have a sufficient level of return to justify the investment to date. However, the Council might want to consider making investments that would result in a social value moving forward.
- The potential for Council investments to support economic development in Bromsgrove town centre and the retailers located in other parts of the district.
- The impact that the withdrawal of the furlough scheme might have on unemployment levels locally and the need for the Council to support businesses and job opportunities to help address this risk.
- The skills required by local businesses in the Twenty First Century and the need to ensure that young people aged 16 to 25 were trained to develop these skills.
- The work that the Council was undertaking with colleagues from Worcestershire County Council to understand the funding available for training and the skillset required by local businesses.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets for the Financial Year April 2019 – March 2020 be noted;

RECOMMENDED that

- (2) The movement of £381k in existing reserves be approved;
- (3) The addition of new reserves of £1,411k be approved;
- (4) The carry forward to the 2020/21 capital programme of £8,600k be approved;
- (5) An increase in the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £163k for Disabled Facilities Grants be approved. This is due to the budget allocations having now been announced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This will increase the available budget to £913k;
- (6) An increase in the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £119k for additional funds towards the already approved capital project for Environmental services new IT system, to be funded from borrowing, be approved;
- (7) Approval of the funding from balances of the overspend from the demolition of the Dolphin Centre of £217k;
- (8) An increase in the 2020/21 Capital programme 2019/20 of £100k due to match funding being received for a ULEV Taxi infrastructure scheme in Bromsgrove be approved;
- (9) An increase to the revenue budget for 2020/21, due to receiving £40k SEP Grant (Strategic Economic Plan), be approved;

- (10) An increase to the Capital programme 2020/21 of £13k s106 monies for the Bromsgrove Town Centre be approved;
An increase to the Capital programme 2020/21 of £150k ringfenced capital receipts for a grant to be provided to BDHT for the provision on new affordable homes be approved.

20/20

AMENITY STANDARDS REPORT

The Housing Strategy Manager presented a report focusing on amenity standards for properties in the private rented sector, particularly Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

The amenity standards would ensure that there was clarity for landlords and tenants about the minimum standards that could be expected of a property in the private rented sector. It was important for the Council to have an Amenity Standards Policy in case legal action had to be taken against landlords.

Members were advised that there were only five licensed HMOs in Bromsgrove District, which was a relatively small number compared to Redditch Borough, where there were over 80 licensed HMOs.

RECOMMENDED that power be delegated to the Head of Community and Housing Services to approve the adoption of the Amenity Standards documents.

21/20

REPLACEMENT OF BURCOT HOSTEL REPORT

The Housing Strategy Manager presented a report in respect of the replacement of Burcot Hostel with alternative homelessness provision. At previous meetings of Cabinet, Members had agreed that the site could be disposed of and that Officers could investigate alternative options.

Burcot Hostel was no longer considered to be fit for purpose, so an alternative form of homelessness provision needed to be identified. The Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) had identified options for the replacement of the hostel which would enable the redevelopment to occur and for there to be homelessness provision.

The report had taken into account the worst-case scenario, from a financial perspective, though Officers were anticipating that there would be a more positive outcome. BDHT had a good track record in tackling homelessness and housing benefit was paid directly to the landlord in homelessness cases. The Council had a statutory duty to provide housing to Bromsgrove residents who were homeless. Whilst there was no requirement to provide furniture in any accommodation offered to homeless people, Bromsgrove District Council, like most authorities, offered basic furniture to people in this position.

There were risks associated with providing accommodation to homeless people for all local authorities. The majority of Councils were worried about issues with supply and demand and housing was expensive to provide.

During consideration of this item Members noted that the report had been pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board earlier that evening. The Chairman of the Board, Councillor M. Thompson, presented a recommendation that had been proposed by the Board, which suggested that the creation of the £35,000 capital budget for the scheme should be funded from balances rather than borrowing.

The Cabinet considered the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Board and on being put to the vote the suggestion that the capital budget should be funded from balances was approved.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) The creation of a £35k capital budget for the scheme for the 2020/21 capital programme funded from balances;
- (2) The creation of a new net revenue budget of £41k, to be funded from balances in 2020/2021, and an ongoing unavoidable revenue pressure for future years to be considered as part of the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan
- (3) The creation of a bad debt provision of £5k per annum for potential non-payment of Council Tax liabilities, to be funded from balances in 2020/21 and as an unavoidable pressure from 2021/22 onwards.

22/20

BURCOT LANE SITE REDEVELOPMENT - NEXT STEPS REPORT

The Housing Strategy Manager presented a report in respect of the redevelopment of the Burcot Lane site. This report followed previous updates to Cabinet in September 2017 and October 2018 and focused on the options available to the Council.

There were three main options available to the Council. The option that was more likely to work for the Council would be for the authority to retain the land and to develop properties that would form the basis of a revenue stream. Some of the properties could be retained by the Council to rent out, some could be sold at market rent and some properties could be made available as affordable housing. However, the financial implications of this redevelopment had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and would require further investigation.

There were different models available for the affordable housing that might be developed on the site. This included the potential to transfer any affordable housing units to an existing social housing provider, the Council becoming a registered provider of social housing and the Council setting up a light touch registered provider to manage a small number of affordable housing units.

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There was documentation available to guide Councils in respect of becoming a registered provider of social housing. Members were advised that properties managed by Council housing companies were not subject to right to buy rules, but registered providers were.

During consideration of this item Members were advised that the report had been pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Board earlier in the evening. The Chairman of the Board, Councillor M. Thompson, explained that the Board had proposed the following two recommendations:

- (1) "Cabinet have full sight of information in respect of other local authorities who have set up housing companies, including successes and failures (to include the reasons for failure).
- (2) Full consideration be given to the Council becoming a registered provider."

Councillor Thompson explained that in discussing the report, the Board had identified the need for Members to review the information available about local authority housing companies established in other parts of the country. Members had been particularly keen to ensure that case study information could be considered by Cabinet and there was the possibility that whilst some of these examples would involve positive experiences, others would illustrate some of the difficulties that could occur when launching a Council housing company.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board had concluded that consideration needed to be given to the Council becoming a full registered provider for the social housing in order to meet the needs of local residents. The Board had noted that the Council would receive rental income in this scenario and would be able to ensure good quality housing was provided to residents in need of social housing.

The first recommendation from the Board was discussed in some detail. Officers confirmed that information could be shared with Members in respect of examples of housing companies that had been established by other local authorities. It was confirmed that the circulation of this information would not cause any delays to the redevelopment process. Members agreed that this information should therefore be shared with both members of the Cabinet and members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board to help inform future decision making and the following amended wording was proposed to this recommendation:

"The full research information for local authorities that have set up housing companies should be circulated for the consideration of members of Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board."

In relation to the second recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Members commented that the proposal from Officers in the report was that transferring the affordable units to an existing Registered Provider was in the Council's best interest, having due

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regard to all the relevant factors . Given the officers' expertise in this area and the fact that no decisions had yet been taken, Members agreed that the proposal from officers should be retained.

On being put to the vote the second recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Board in respect of the Burcot Lane site redevelopment was lost.

RESOLVED that

- (1) Officers develop a business case for the formation of a Housing Company to hold the market rent units for the Council's consideration;
- (2) The development model is progressed on the presumption that the affordable housing units will be transferred to an existing registered provider; and
- (3) The full research information for local authorities that have set up housing companies should be circulated for the consideration of members of Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

(During the consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). There is nothing exempt, however, in this record of proceedings.)

The meeting closed at 7.39 p.m.

Chairman

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

6TH AUGUST 2020, AT 4.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors M. Thompson (Chairman), J. Till (Vice-Chairman),
A. J. B. Beaumont, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, M. Glass, C.A. Hotham,
A. D. Kriss, P. M. McDonald and C. J. Spencer

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. A. Scarce, Mr C. Forrester,
Mr. D. Allen, Mr. D. M. Birch and Ms. C. Flanagan and Ms. J. Gresham

28/20 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies were received from Cllr. R. Hunter, Cllr. J. King whilst named as substitute for Councillor Hunter, she was unable to attend.

29/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest nor of any whipping arrangements.

30/20 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 6th July 2020 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 6th July 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

31/20 **IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING RACIAL DISPARITIES TASK GROUP**

The Senior Democratic Officer presented the report in relation to the Identifying and Addressing Racial Disparities Task Group and explained that there eight Members who were interested in participating in the Task Group. It was noted that it was usual practice to have no more than seven Members of a task group. However, it was noted that it was at the Board's discretion and this number had been increased on previous occasions. This group had already set a precedent as being the third task group to be undertaken at any one time. Members were happy to accept eight Members plus the Chairman on this occasion.

In respect of the recommendations contained in the report it was suggested by the Senior Democratic Officer that, as there had been discussion regarding the scope and wording within the Terms of Reference at the previous meeting, these be considered at the first meeting of the group which was scheduled for 10th August 2020 at 5pm. Recommendation (a) would not be therefore be voted on at this meeting and any amendments made (by the Task Group) to the Terms of Reference would be considered at the September 2020 meeting of the Board.

As this was an important topic it was suggested that the duration of the Task Group be initially for six months and a report then be brought to the Board and an extension be agreed if needed.

Some Members requested clarification as to whether, given that this was an extra Task Group, there would be any financial cost to the Council or would the suspension of the Corporate Performance Working Group absorb any additional costs. The Senior Democratic Officer reported that the Chairman of the Task Group received a pro-rata allowance however the Members did not receive any payment. It was also confirmed that the Chairman of a Working Group did not receive an allowance.

There was a discussion regarding the number for the quorum as it was thought that it might prove difficult to get all nine Members at a meeting. It was noted that at the first meeting the quorum would be discussed in addition to the number of meetings that a Member could miss before being removed from the Task Group.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the membership of the Task Group be agreed at nine (including the Chairman):
- (b) the length of time the Task Group will have to carry out its investigations be agreed at six months initially; and
- (c) the Task Group commence its investigation as soon as possible.

32/20

BURCOT HOSTEL REPORT - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Strategic Housing Manager presented the Burcot Hostel report and provided the Board with some background to the project and explained that the Burcot Hostel would be replaced by alternative facilities in the district, provided by Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT).

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Overview and Scrutiny Board
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Members were informed that, following discussion with BDHT, it had been agreed to replace the hostel with six units of alternative temporary accommodation from BDHT stock. This accommodation comprised of the following units:-

- 2 x 1 bedroom units,
- 2 x 2 bedroom units
- 2 x 3 bedroom units

Members' attention was drawn to the section of the report where it stated that, since the Covid 19 crisis, Central Government had actively encouraged homeless services not to place homeless households in facilities with shared living spaces and so, from this perspective, the Burcot Hostel was considered no longer fit for purpose.

Some Members questioned whether there were any families currently in Bed and Breakfast accommodation and it was confirmed by officers that there was not. Following on from that Members questioned whether, given that the ban on evictions was likely to be concluded at the end of August, what contingency plans were in place to assist those residents in need of assistance. The Strategic Housing Manager confirmed that his Team were putting in place a communication plan with BDHT by at the end of August, in order to provide signposting for people who required assistance. It was also reported that BDHT were working behind the scenes to create capacity in their service and that all services including benefits were well connected so residents who required assistance knew where to go and would get the support needed.

An amendment to Recommendation 2.1 regarding funding the scheme from borrowing was suggested as it was felt that, as the Council currently had healthy balances, the funding should come from there. The Executive Director, Finance and Resources advised that whilst this was acceptable for consideration by Cabinet, caution should be shown as to the level of funding (from balances) that might be needed in the future to accommodate changes to services impacted by Covid-19 and associated lockdown. However, she stated that she was comfortable that the recommendation be amended and the £35k that was to be approved be used from balances on this occasion.

Members thanked the officers for the report and asked whether there would be an opportunity to bring the Housing Service in-house in future, depending on the length of contract with BDHT which it was understood had two years left to run. Some Members were concerned at the level of payments being made and wanted confirmation that the Council were

getting value for money. Officers explained that this was a new venture and the figures that had been provided in the report were based on a worst case scenario and that officers were asking for an 'in principle' agreement with the understanding that further work needed to be undertaken.

RECOMMENDED that the creation of a £35k capital budget for the scheme for the 2020/21 capital programme funded from balances.

RESOLVED that the Burcot Hostel report be noted.

33/20

BURCOT LANE SITE REDEVELOPMENT REPORT - PRE SCRUTINY

The Chairman thanked those Officers in attendance and explained to Members that this item would begin in public session, but it was highlighted that should they wish to discuss the detail provided in appendix 1 then the Board would need to consider whether it was appropriate to go into private session.

The Deputy Chief Executive provided a brief overview of the project to date and introduced officers that were involved in it and present at this meeting. They were as follows:

- Sue Hanley – Strategic Lead
- Derek Allen – Strategic Housing Manager
- Chris Forrester – Financial Lead
- Dale Birch – Planning Lead
- Laura Ward – Bailey Garner (external consultants)

A presentation had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting and the Strategic Housing Manager provided further clarification on this and presented the timeline and background to the project.

Councillor McDonald queried what investigations had been carried out by officers in order to ascertain the successes and failures of other Local Authorities around the country who had set up similar housing companies. The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that the officers had liaised with a number of Local Authorities to better understand the establishment of a housing company and had sought robust legal advice on how best to establish a housing company. It was further clarified that a large number of Local Authorities had created their own housing company and although this was not a guarantee in itself, it was a well-established model. It was confirmed that any decision made would be subject to a robust business case. The Strategic Housing Manager explained that reports had been tabled previously regarding research on

Local Authorities and their establishment of a housing company and agreed to circulate information to Members. Councillor McDonald requested that this information also be provided to Cabinet Members.

The Head of Finance and Customer Services reported that the sale of the 6 units at market price would cover construction costs and all other costs would be recouped from the transfer to a Housing Provider and Rental Company. Some Members questioned how service charges would be managed and it was confirmed that whichever provider had responsibility for the housing would apply their own charges which would be covered through rental costs. It was also noted that the percentage of affordable houses from a planning perspective was 30%, which was the level that was considered and approved in the planning application.

34/20

BURCOT LANE SITE REDEVELOPMENT - APPENDIX 1
(CONFIDENTIAL ITEM)

It was reported to Members that the most appropriate way to get best value for the affordable units would be to transfer them to a registered provider. However, as yet those exploratory discussions had not taken place and that other considerations needed to be made around quality, maintenance and value for money for the council.

The Head of Finance and Customer Services explained that in respect of the amount of borrowing, the rental of the units would cover those borrowed funds.

There was detailed discussion around the consideration of the Council becoming a Registered Provider and whether this option had or should be considered. Officers highlighted that the whole scheme was a complex piece of work and any decisions would only be made after a robust and detailed business case was submitted to Cabinet with regard to the arrangements for the private rented units. Some Members felt that this was an opportunity to look at recommendation 2.2 as it seemed like an easier option and that perhaps with more detailed research the Council could look to becoming a Registered Provider itself.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being reported to the Board that this was a very important piece of work and that Members would be able to consider all aspects of the business case. The Principal Solicitor did, however, clarify that any business case that was produced would be as recommended in the officers' report.

Members agreed to amend recommendation 2,1 as detailed below.

RECOMMENDED that

1. Cabinet have full sight of information in respect of other local authorities who have set up housing companies, including successes and failures (to include the reasons for failure).
2. Full consideration be given to the Council becoming a Registered Provider.

(During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to financial and business affairs. However, there is nothing exempt in this record of the proceedings.)

35/20

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.

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 5.58 p.m.

Chairman

Burcot Lane Site Redevelopment

Project team



Overview

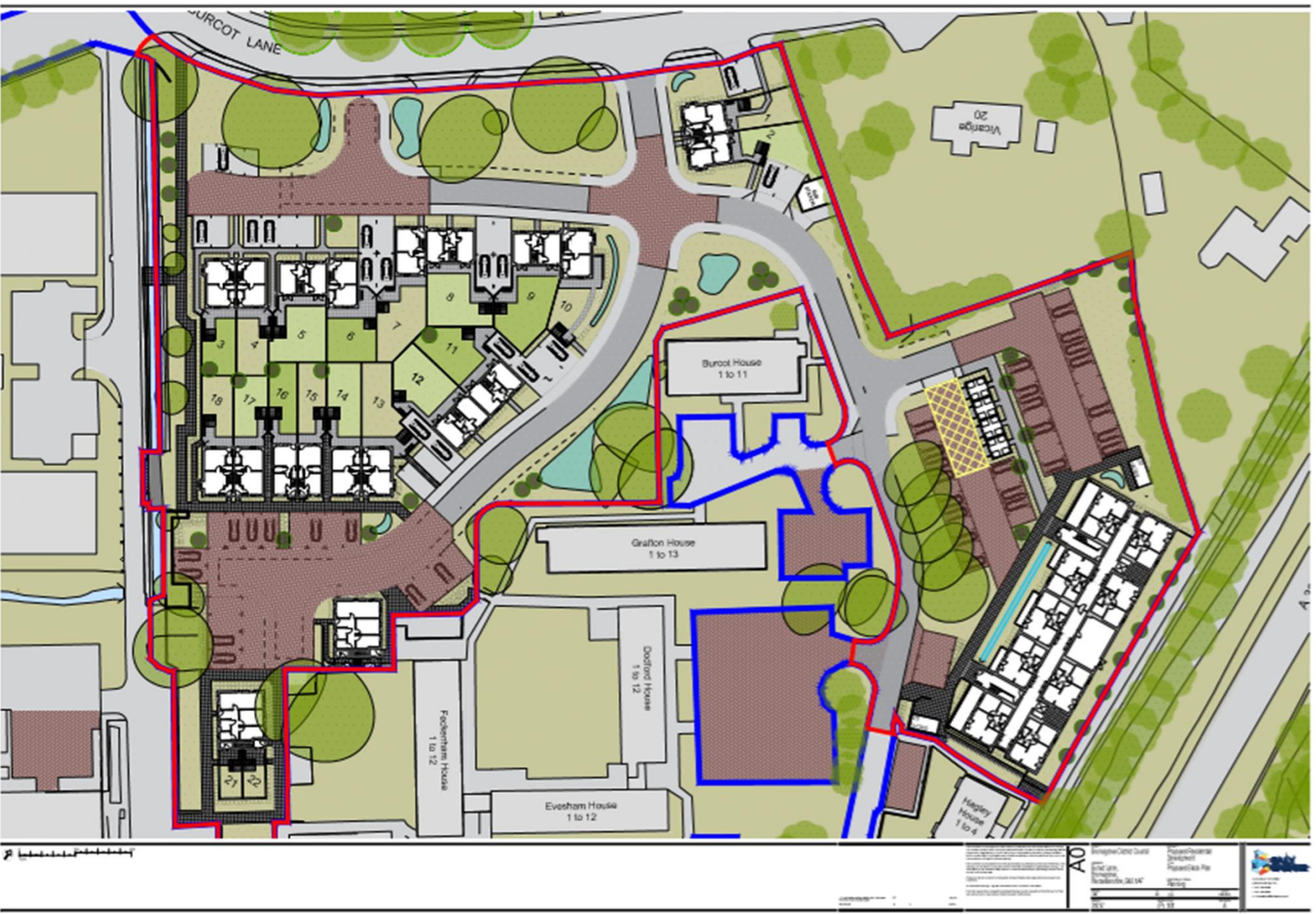
- Introductions (Burcot Lane Project Team & Baily Garner)
- Overview of scheme and significant steps since 2017



Overview of scheme

- Scheme location – site of the former Council House at Burcot Lane
- Will deliver 61 units of accommodation – this will be a mix of homes for sale, market rent and housing association
- Visual plan of the development





Options

Three options for the site have been considered at length:-

1. Sale to a developer
2. Work in partnership with a housing association
3. Council retains and facilitates development
 - Homes England grant awarded
 - Option 3 offers the best housing mix and an opportunity for a revenue stream

Significant steps

Significant steps since 2017 include:-

- Baily Garner appointed to drive project development
- Contract signed with Homes England
- Planning permission secured to develop site
- Tender process – developer
- BDHT have agreed to invest in their adjacent properties and local area



Next Steps

- Cabinet report and recommendations
- Business case for housing company
- Disposal of properties
- O&S views/comments/questions



Agenda Item 4

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DRAFT COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME CABINET

Date 9th September 2020

DRAFT COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Christopher Forrester
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	No

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request permission to undertake a consultation with both the public and the major precepting authorities in respect of proposed changes to the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme with effect from 1st April 2021.
- 1.2 Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with the requirements of schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.
- 1.3 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced from 1 April 2013 when it replaced the Central Government funded Council Tax Benefit regime. From its inception, the funding available to the council from government has reduced year on year.
- 1.4 As with the majority of authorities within England, the District Council needs to make changes to the CTR scheme for working age applicants - the scheme for pension age applicants is prescribed by central Government - in order to reduce the significant administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit.
- 1.5 This report requests approval to consult on changes required to the scheme and makes recommendation to members for the 2021/22 scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that

- (1) The Council will consult with the public and major precepting authorities on the introduction of a new income banded council tax support scheme for working age applicants to be implemented from 1st April 2021.

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3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

3.1 The current Council Tax Reduction scheme costs approximately £4.18m which is borne by the Council's Collection Fund. Costs are shared between the Council and the Major Precepting Authorities in the following proportions:

District Council 12%

Worcestershire County Council 71%

West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner 12%

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service 5%

3.2 The approach and 'shape' of the scheme is changing, and the overall approach will be to provide additional support to those households on the very lowest incomes. There is no intention to reduce the level of support available to other households. Based on current modelling, were the new scheme to be in place at the current time, the costs would be £4.3m.

3.3 Financial modelling has been undertaken and will continue to be undertaken throughout the project and this will be particularly important given the effect of the COVID-19 crisis on the incomes of households within the Council's area.

3.4 Whilst the expected costs of the scheme for 2021/22 are slightly higher, the overall level of Council Tax Reduction as a proportion to Council Tax Base has reduced significantly year on year since 2013 as follows:

Tax Year	Maximum % Reduction	Gross Council Tax £000s	Total CTR awarded £000s	CTR as % Gross CTax
2013/14	100	56,471	4,564	8.08
2014/15	100	58,103	4,441	7.64
2015/16	80	59,662	3,896	6.53
2016/17	80	62,371	3,878	6.22
2017/18	80	64,566	3,808	5.90
2018/19	80	68,110	3,831	5.62
2019/20	85	71,847	4,035	5.62
2020/21	85	74,763	4,182	5.59

Legal Implications

3.5 Schedule 1A(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, states:

Before making a scheme, the authority must:

- a) consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it,
- b) publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
- c) consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

3.6 In addition, in order to set a new scheme, the Council is required to make a resolution by 11th March of the year prior to the scheme coming into place.

3.7 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to commence the statutory consultation process.

Background / Service Implications

3.8 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced by Central Government in April 2013 as a replacement for the Council Tax Benefit scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the introduction, the Government:

- Placed the duty to create a local scheme for **Working Age** applicants with billing authorities.
- Reduced initial funding by the equivalent of ten per cent from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to authorities under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme; and
- Prescribed that persons of **Pension age** would be dealt with under regulations set by Central Government and not the authorities' local scheme.

3.9 Since that time, funding for the Council Tax Reduction scheme has been amalgamated into other Central Government grants paid to Local Authorities and also within the Business Rates Retention regime. It is now generally accepted that it is not possible to identify the amount of funding actually provided from Central Government sources.

3.10 The current Council Tax Reduction scheme administered by the Council is divided into two schemes, with pension age applicants receiving support under the rules prescribed by Central Government, and the scheme for working age applicants being determined solely by the local authority.

- 3.11 Pensioners, subject to their income, can receive up to 100 per cent support towards their council tax. The Council has no power to change the level of support provided to pensioners and therefore any changes to the level of CTR can only be made to the working age scheme.
- 3.12 When Council Tax Reduction was introduced in 2013, for working age applicants, the Council broadly adopted the previous means tested Council Tax Benefit scheme as the basis of awarding support. Due to the reduction in funding from Central Government, the Council also required all working age applicants, even those on the lowest income, to pay a minimum payment of 20%, the minimum payment was reduced to 15% in 2019.
- 3.13 Since that time, other slight changes have been made to bring the scheme into line with Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

The main issues with the current scheme

3.14 There are a number of issues with the current scheme that will need to be addressed if the system is to continue to provide effective support to low income taxpayers and also if the Council is able to provide the service in an efficient manner. The main issues are as follows:

- The need to assist low income households and assist in the collection of Council Tax
- The introduction of Universal Credit for working age applicants; and
- The need for a simplification of the scheme;

each of the issues are examined in detail below.

Low Income Households and Council Tax Collection

- 3.15 Since 2013, the introduction of Council Tax Reduction, the majority of authorities, including the District Council have required all working age applicants to pay a minimum payment. Under the previous scheme (Council Tax Benefit) almost 75% of working age applicants would not have been required to pay any Council Tax and would have received full (100%) support.
- 3.16 As with a large number of authorities, there is a strong view that there should be an increase in the level of support to those households on the lowest incomes. This view has gained momentum over the past few years but has been reinforced since the COVID-19 crisis which has had a major effect on incomes generally.
- 3.17 Whilst the principle of all working age households paying 'something' was initially thought to be an approach that would be central to the design of Council Tax Reduction, the reality is, since its introduction, low income taxpayers in the poorest households, have been unable to pay the balance leading to additional costs, and court and enforcement action. In some cases, the amounts demanded have been

written off as uncollectable. For information, in 2019, Council Tax of approximately £694,000 has been demanded from working age Council Tax claimants and an amount of £234,000, 33% of the amount demanded, is outstanding.

3.18 The costs of administration of these cases by the District Council has increased significantly over the years. These costs are borne solely by the District Council. With the difficulties experienced, the relatively low level of payment and the high administration costs incurred, it no longer makes the amounts economically viable to collect. Notwithstanding the negative effects to those poorest households.

Universal Credit

3.19 The introduction of Universal Credit within the area has, as experienced in all other areas, brought a number of significant challenges to both the administration of Council Tax Reduction and also the collection of Council Tax. All Councils have experienced the following:

- The difficulties for Universal Credit claimants to make a prompt claim for Council Tax Reduction leading to a loss in entitlement;
- A high number of changes to Universal Credit cases are received from the Department for Work and Pensions requiring a change to Council Tax Reduction entitlement. On average 40% of Universal Credit claimants have between eight and twelve changes in entitlement per annum. These changes result in amendments to Council Tax liability, the re-calculation of instalments, delays and the demonstrable loss in collection; and
- The increased costs of administration through multiple changes with significant additional staff and staff time being needed.

3.20 It is clear that the existing means tested Council Tax Reduction scheme, which is too reactive to change, will not be viable in the longer term now that Universal Credit has been rolled out fully within the area and with the significant increase in Universal Credit claimants due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The move to a new more efficient scheme from 2021 is now imperative.

Simplified Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

3.21 Notwithstanding the introduction of Universal Credit, the existing scheme is based on an 'old fashioned;' means tested benefit scheme. It has major defects namely:

- It is difficult for customers to understand and is based on a complex calculation of entitlement;
- The administration for staff is complicated and lengthy, with staff having to request significant amounts of information from applicants;
- Staff have to undergo significant training to be proficient in processing claims;
- The timescales for processing applications is lengthy, mainly due to the complexity and evidence required to support the applications; and
- The administration of the scheme is costly when compared to other discounts for Council Tax.

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3.22 There is a need now to simplify the scheme, not only to mitigate the effects of Universal Credit, but also make it easier for customers to make a claim and to significantly reduce the costs of administration.

Proposed Approach for the 2021/22 Scheme

3.23 In view of the problems being experienced with the current scheme, it is proposed that an alternative approach be taken from 2021/22. The approach has been to redesign the scheme to address all current issues in particular;

- The level of support available to the poorest households;
- The problems with the introduction of full-service Universal Credit; and
- The significant increase in administration costs due to the high level of changes received in respect of Universal Credit;

3.24 Work has been ongoing since early this year on a proposed new scheme which is now ready for consultation.

3.25 Consultation now needs to be undertaken with the public and the precepting authorities. If accepted by the Council, the new scheme will take effect from 1st April 2021

3.26 The proposed new scheme has a number of features as follows:

- More support shall be given to those households on the lowest of incomes than in the current scheme;
- The changes can **only be made to the working age schemes** as the current schemes for pensioners is prescribed by Central Government;
- The current means tested schemes will be replaced by a simple income grid model as shown below:

Discount Band	Discount	Single Person	Single person with one child	Single person with two or more children	Couple	Couple with one child	Couple with two or more children
Income Ranges							
Band 1	100%	£0 to £95.00	£0 to £150.00	£0 to £210.00	£0 to £140.00	£0 to £195.00	£0 to £255.00
Band 2	75%	£95.01 to £115.00	£150.01 to £180.00	£210.01 to £240.00	£140.01 to £160.00	£195.01 to £225.00	£255.01 to £285.00
Band 3	50%	£115.01 to £135.00	£180.01 to £210.00	£240.01 – £270.00	£160.01 to £180.00	£225.01 – £255.00	£285.01 to £315.00
Band 4	25%	£135.01 to £155.00	£210.01 to £240.00	£270.01 – £300.00	£180.01 to £200.00	£255.01 to £285.00	£315.01 to £345.00

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	0%	Over £155.00	Over £240.00	Over £300.00	Over £200.00	Over £285.00	Over £345.00
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- It is proposed that the highest level of discount will be at a maximum level of liability (100%), Band 1, and all current applicants that are in receipt of a 'passported benefit' such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) and Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) receive maximum discount:
- All other discount levels are based on the applicant's, and where applicable their partner's, net income;
- The scheme allows for variation in household size with the levels of income per band increasing where an applicant has a partner, and/or dependants
- There will be no charges made where an applicant has non-dependants living with them. This is a significant change and means that the administration of the scheme will be more straightforward whilst also protecting low income families where adult sons and daughters remain at home;
- To encourage work, a standard £25 per week disregard will be provided against all earnings This will take the place of the current standard disregards and additional earnings disregards.
- Disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Allowance will continue to be disregarded;
- Where any applicant, their partner or dependant child(ren) are disabled, a further disregard of £40 will be given, thereby maintaining the current level of support to those with disabilities;
- Carer's Allowance and the Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance will be disregarded;
- Child benefit and Child Maintenance will continue to be disregarded;
- The total disregard on war pensions and war disablement pensions will continue;
- Extended payments will be removed;
- Second Adult Rebate will be removed; and
- The capital limit will be reduced to £6,000.

Addressing the Issues of the Current Scheme

3.27 With the simplicity of the proposed new scheme and by taking a more 'Council Tax discount approach', it will address the problems associated with the increased administration caused by failings in the current scheme and Universal Credit as follows:

- **The scheme will require a simplified claim process.** Applicants will see a significant reduction in the claiming process and, where possible, Council Tax Reduction will be awarded automatically. For Universal Credit applicants *any* Universal Credit data received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be treated as a claim for Council Tax Reduction. Where information is received from DWP, the entitlement to Council Tax Reduction will be processed automatically without the need to request further information from the taxpayer. These changes will have the following distinct advantages namely:
 - **Speed of processing** – all claims will be able to be calculated promptly and largely automatically without the need to request further information which inevitably leads to delays;
 - **Maximising entitlement to every applicant.** As there will be no requirement for Universal Credit applicants to apply separately for Council Tax Reduction, the claiming process will be simplified significantly. Entitlement to Council Tax Reduction will be maximised with a reduced risk of loss of discount or the need for backdating;
 - **Maintenance of collection rates** – the new scheme will avoid constant changes in discount, the need for multiple changes in instalments and therefore assist in maintaining the high collection rates. The increased level of discount will assist all those applicants on the lowest levels of income, again improving the overall collection rate;
 - **The income bands are sufficiently wide to avoid constant changes in discount.** The current Council Tax Reduction scheme is very reactive and will alter even if the overall change to the person's liability is small. This is leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability, the need to recalculate monthly instalments and the requirement to issue a large number of Council Tax demands. The effect of this is that Council Tax collection is reduced. The new scheme, with its simplified income banding approach will have the following advantages:
 - Only significant changes in income will affect the level of discount awarded;
 - Council Taxpayers who receive Council Tax Reduction will not receive multiple Council Tax demands and adjustments to their instalments; and

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- The new scheme is designed to reflect a more modern approach, where any discount changes it will be effective from the day of change rather than the Monday of the following week;

Transition to the new scheme and Exceptional Hardship Scheme

3.28 The Council must be mindful that any change in scheme or a transition to a new scheme may result in a change to the entitlement of certain applicants.

3.29 Inevitably, with any change in scheme, there will be some winners and losers although the proposed scheme has been designed to protect the most vulnerable. It is proposed that the new scheme will contain additional provisions to protect individuals who experience exceptional hardship. Where any applicant is likely to experience exceptional hardship, they will be encouraged to apply for an exceptional hardship payment. The Council will consider all applications for exceptional hardship on an individual basis, taking into account available income and essential outgoings. Where appropriate further support will be given to the applicant.

3.30 This approach will enable individual applicants to be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. The Exceptional Hardship Scheme will form part of the Council Tax Reduction scheme and fall to be paid through the Collection Fund.

Other Options

3.31 The alternative to introducing a new scheme for Council Tax Reductions to maintain the existing scheme. This would be a short-term option; lead to increasing costs of administration; and in the longer term, significantly affect the collection of Council Tax and the effectiveness of the scheme to support households within the Council's area.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

3.32 A stage one Equality Impact Assessment is attached within Appendix 1 of this report.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 The following risks are associated with the project:

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Property <i>No risk</i>	N/A	N/A
Community Support <i>Potential Changes to the support of some working age applicants</i>	Where an applicant may receive less Council Tax Reduction, they may apply for additional support under the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund	There is an opportunity to: Modernise the current scheme; Enable a scheme that will be fit for purpose; and Reduce administration.

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Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
	In cases, where applicants have the lowest income, they may receive more support under the proposed scheme.	
Timescales <i>It will be essential to meet project timescales if the new scheme is to be introduced for the 2021/22 financial year.</i>	The majority of the work has already been completed with scheme design and extensive modelling.	
Project capacity	Resources have already been allocated to the project which are sufficient	
Financial / VfM <i>Changes to the scheme could potentially lead to changes in overall scheme costs</i>	Extensive modelling has been undertaken to estimate the costs of the scheme. This will continue throughout the life of the project.	The Council has indicated that it is not looking to make savings from scheme changes. The Council will provide additional support to those households on the very lowest of incomes
Legal <i>Failure to set the scheme in accordance with the legislation and failure to comply with the legal requirements for developing a new CTR scheme</i>	The project is being undertaken strictly in accordance with legislative requirements	
Innovation <i>Failure to maximise the potential of change and automation</i>	Throughout the project, we will look to take advantages of the latest automation of claims and the gathering of data	There will be more opportunity to enhance customer's online experience by receiving immediate decisions of discounts being granted.
Reputation <i>Failure to implement the new scheme on time or failure to deliver a</i>	The project is following previous successful implementations by other Local Authorities	There is an opportunity for the Council to enhance its reputation by developing an up to date an effective

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Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<i>comprehensive and robust scheme</i>		Council Tax Reduction scheme

5. **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - First Stage Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 2 – Proposed public consultation document

6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 Council Tax Support Scheme Modelling Reports

7. **KEY**

CT: Council Tax
CTR: Council Tax Reduction
DWP: Department for Work and Pensions
HB: Housing Benefit
UC: Universal Credit

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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Equality Assessment Record



Title of Service, Policy, Procedure, Spending Review being Proposed	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021/22
Name of Service Area	Revenues and Benefits
Name of Officer completing this assessment	Lisa Devey & David Riley
Date Assessment Started	19th August 2020
Name of Decision Maker (in relation to the change)	
Date Decision Made	

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Overview

Provide a clear overview of the aims of the service/policy/procedure and the proposed changes being made. Will the current service users' needs continue to be met? Why is the change being proposed? What needs or duties is it designed to meet?

To introduce a simplified Council Tax Reduction scheme with effect from 1st April 2021 and to increase the level of support to the poorest households.

In addition, the implementation of Universal Credit within the area requires the Council to change its approach to Council Tax Reduction, given the high administrative burden of monthly changes and alterations to applicants' income.

There is a requirement to introduce a simplified, more supportive scheme which can be easily administered without significant additional costs being placed on the Council. The current scheme is too reactive to minor changes in applicant's income leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability.

The scheme changes will only apply to working age applicants, pension age applicants are covered by the Prescribed Requirement Regulations determined by Central Government.

The move to an income-based scheme (without the complexities of a full means tested as required by the current scheme).

The changes will provide the following:

- An increased level of support to households with the lowest income;
- Simplified claiming arrangements for all working age applicants;
- Certainty, at present, multiple changes are leading to some taxpayer's receiving a large number of Council Tax bills per year as their Council Tax Reduction is constantly amended;
- The maximisation of applicant's entitlement with clear straightforward messages to claim;
- Speed of processing - applications will be dealt with more efficiently and without the need for significant levels of evidence; and
- Reduced administration costs. The changes will prevent the administration costs from rising year on year which would be inevitable under the current scheme.

It should be noted that the overall costs of the scheme will increase however the overall level of Council Tax Reduction as a proportion of the overall Council Tax base, will be less than when Council Tax Reduction was introduced in 2013. The costs to the District Council will be in proportion to the Council's share of Council Tax.

Who is the proposal likely to affect?	Yes	No
All residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specific group(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All Council employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specific group(s) of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – Provide more details below	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Details

Outline who could be affected and how they could be affected by the proposal/service change. Include current service users and those who could benefit from but do not currently access the service.

Working age applicants who are currently in receipt of Council Tax Reduction or those who apply on or after 1st April 2021. Pension age applicants will not be affected as their scheme remains unchanged.

Evidence and data used to inform your equality impact assessment

What data, research, or trend analysis have you used? Describe how you have got your information and what it tells you.

Modelling of the new scheme has been undertaken throughout and will continue to be undertaken until such time as the 2021/22 scheme is approved.

The current modelling data is shown below:

	Existing Scheme			New Scheme			Average Weekly Gain / (Loss)
	Numbers	Expenditure	Average Weekly Amount	Numbers	Expenditure	Average Weekly Amount	
Single Person	1164	£958,474.66	£16.76	1051	£1,017,184.48	£19.63	£2.87
Couple no children	213	£236,411.86	£22.82	183	£229,783.82	£25.69	£2.87
Single person with one child	347	£279,376.77	£16.80	338	£296,709.74	£18.52	£1.72
Single person two or more children	436	£339,480.48	£16.77	382	£327,227.36	£18.37	£1.60
Couple with one child	92	£88,521.43	£21.07	81	£91,417.24	£24.43	£3.36
Couple with two or more children	165	£162,541.35	£22.44	138	£162,503.32	£26.74	£4.30

Applicant Gender – Male	887	£779,420.35	£18.10	793	£803,544.80	£20.78	£2.68
Applicant Gender - Female	1563	£1,309,230.84	£17.66	1380	£1,321,281.16	£20.15	£2.49
		£2,088,651.19			£2,124,825.96		

- The scheme is designed to protect the households with the lowest incomes and will redistribute the levels of support available in a fairer manner. The overall costs of the scheme are marginally higher, and this will allow up to 100% support to those applicants on the lowest incomes and those who receive DWP legacy benefits including Income Support, Job Seeker’s Allowance (Income Based), Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related).
- The scheme will protect applicants who are disabled or where any member of their household is disabled;
- The scheme will be more generous to carers and those who have non dependants;
- The scheme will however limit the maximum capital allowable to £6,000 and restrict the calculation to a maximum of two dependants in line with the changes to Universal Credits, Tax Credits and Housing Benefit; and
- All existing income and capital disregards will apply in the new scheme; and
- **All** applicants, if they are detrimentally affected by the new scheme, will be able to apply for an Exceptional Hardship Fund payment from the Council’s new Exceptional Hardship Fund which will be effective from 1st April 2021.

Engagement and Consultation

The Council will need to decide, after consultation, whether to proceed with this new scheme. Should it not proceed then the existing scheme will remain in place in accordance with the legislation.

Consultation with the Major Preceptors (Fire and Rescue, Police and the County Council) will commence on **dd/mmm/yyyy**.

A full public consultation will be undertaken **from dd/mmm/yyyy to dd/mmm/yyyy**.

All consultation documentation can be viewed at the following link:

Bromsgrove to provide link

Further EIA (second stage) and analysis will be provided after all consultations have been completed

Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality Duty Aims	Evidence
<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation How does the proposal/service ensure that there is no barrier or disproportionate impact for anyone with a particular protected characteristic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new scheme has been designed to support all low-income taxpayers and has been created strictly in accordance with the legislative requirements. • The new scheme provides more support to those on the lowest incomes • Existing 'protected' categories or persons who are currently determined as vulnerable within the existing scheme, will continue to be protected in the new scheme. • A new Exceptional Hardship Scheme has been created to assist any applicant who feels that they require additional support.
<p>Advance equality of opportunity between different groups How does the proposal/service ensure that its intended outcomes promote equality of opportunity for users? Identify inequalities faced by those with specific protected characteristic(s).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All working age are covered by the scheme and any taxpayer who meets the criteria will be able to apply for support. • The scheme will allow easier access to support; maximisation of assistance whilst at the same time maintaining the protections from the current scheme; • There will be some applicants with higher levels of capital or higher levels of available income that may receive less support through the new scheme.
<p>Foster good relations between different groups Does the service contribute to good relations or to broader community cohesion objectives? How does it achieve this aim?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, the scheme is designed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be easily accessible by all applicants; ○ Avoid multiple changes to entitlement (and Council Tax) throughout the year; ○ Be less complicated and more easily understood.

Is there evidence of actual or potential unfairness for the following equality groups?

- Does the proposal target or exclude a specific equality group or community?
 - **No, all working age applicants are treated in the same way;**

- Does it affect some equality groups or communities differently and can this be justified?
 - **No**
- Is the proposal likely to be equally accessed by all equality groups and communities? If not, can this be justified? (It may be useful to consider other groups, not included in the Equality Act, especially if the proposal is specifically for them e.g. lone parents, refugees, unemployed people, carers)
 - **Yes**

Impact of proposal

Describe the likely impact of the proposal on people because of their protected characteristic and how they may be affected. How likely is it that people with this protected characteristic will be negatively affected? What are the barriers that might make access difficult or stop different groups or communities accessing the proposal? How great will that impact be on their well-being? Could the proposal promote equality and good relations between different groups? How?

- **Details of the impact of the change have been provided above**

If you have identified any area of actual or potential unfairness that cannot be justified, can you eliminate or minimise this?

What mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove this impact? (Include these in the action plan at the end of the assessment) Equal treatment does not always produce equal outcomes; sometimes you will have to take specific steps for particular groups to address an existing disadvantage or to meet differing needs.

Protected Group	Impact of proposal	Justification for any actual or potential unfairness identified	If you have identified any area of actual or potential unfairness that cannot be justified, can you eliminate or minimise this?
Age	Affects working age applicants only (pension age applicants are dealt with under Central Government Prescribed Scheme)		

Disability	Protected		
Transgender	N/A		
Marriage and Civil Partnership	N/A		
Pregnancy and Maternity	N/A		
Race	N/A		
Religion or Belief	N/A		
Sex (Male/ Female)		The scheme provides a higher level of support to both male and female applicants. As with the existing scheme, more female applicants will be in receipt of Council Tax Reduction	
Sexual Orientation	N/A		

How will you monitor any changes identified?

The scheme will be constantly monitored by the service throughout 2021 /22 to ensure that its objectives are met.

It should be noted that a final decision on the new policy has yet to be made and will only be taken **after** consultation with Major Preceptors and the Public.

The actions required to address these findings are set out below.

Action Required	By Whom	By When	Completion Date
To be determined after public consultation			

Sign off on completion	Name	Signature	Date
Lead Officer completing assessment			
Equalities Officer			

When you have completed this assessment, retain a copy and send an electronic copy to the Policy Team (Equalities) attaching any supporting evidence used to carry out the assessment.

Bromsgrove District Council - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021/22 Consultation

1. Background to the Consultation

What is this consultation about?

Each year the Council has to decide whether to change the Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age applicants in its area. This year the Council has decided that changes should be made to significantly change the Council Tax Reduction scheme so that the overall level of support can be increased for those applicants on the lowest incomes and due to the full roll out of Universal Credit within the Worcestershire area. In effect the traditional link between Housing Benefit (which will no longer be available to new working age claimants) and Council Tax Reduction will no longer exist and it is essential that the scheme is changed to meet future requirements, to reduce administration costs and to ultimately prevent any additional costs being added to the Council Tax.

What is Council Tax Reduction?

Council Tax Reduction is a discount for Council Tax. The level of discount is based on the income of the household. Currently the maximum discount is 85% of Council Tax for most working age households and 100% for pensioners.

Why is a change to the Council Tax Reduction scheme being considered?

In April 2013 the Council Tax Benefit Scheme was replaced by a new Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Council Tax Benefit had been funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and supported people on low incomes by reducing the amount of Council Tax they have to pay.

The Council Tax Reduction scheme is determined locally by Bromsgrove District Council rather than the Department of Work and Pensions. Although the Government initially provided funding for the scheme, the funding has reduced each year in line with the reduction in Revenue Support Grant provided to councils.

Applicants in receipt of income-based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support and Income Related Employment and Support Allowance receive the maximum level of support. Others receive a level of Council Tax Reduction based on their income and other factors.

A separate Central Government scheme is retained for people of pension age and Councils are only able to vary their schemes for people of working age.

Each Council is required to review their schemes each year and decide if they want to make any changes. Before any changes can be implemented, they must be subject to public consultation.

Bromsgrove District Council is proposing a number of changes to its existing scheme and, in line with legislation, we have a duty to consult you and provide you with the opportunity to tell us your views on the proposed changes to our Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The Council is consulting on the following changes to its scheme for 2021/22:

Agenda Item 5

Introducing an income 'grid' scheme for all working age applicants replacing the current scheme which was based on the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme. This will provide up to 100% support in certain cases (currently there is a maximum of 85%) **(Option 1);**

Limiting the number of dependent children used in the calculation of support to two for all working age applicants **(Option 2);**

Removing Non-Dependant deductions **(Option 3);**

Disregarding Carers Allowance, the Support Component of the Employment and Support Allowance and the housing element of Universal Credit in the calculation of income **(Option 4);**

Reducing the capital level to £6,000 from £16,000; **(Option 5);**

Removing all of the current earnings disregards and replacing them with a standard £25 disregard for all applicants where they are in work **(Option 6);**

Where a person is disabled and in receipt of certain disability benefits, allowing a further deduction from their income before calculating any entitlement to Council Tax Reduction **(Option 7);**

Removing the Extended Payment provision **(Option 8);**

Removing the Second Adult Reduction provision **(Option 9);**

Making all new claims and changes in circumstances which change any entitlement to Council Tax Reduction on a daily basis rather than the current (benefit based) weekly basis **(Option 10);** and

Allowing the discretion to backdate any discount to be commencement of the financial year where a

good reason is provided (**Option 11**).

In the Bromsgrove area, over xxxx people currently receive Council Tax Reduction. The gross cost of the scheme is £x.x million which is spread across the District Council (x%), the County Council (xx%), Fire (x%), and the Police (xx% in accordance with the proportion of Council Tax which each organisation levies (which is shown in brackets).

Who will this affect?

Working age households in the District Council's area who currently receive or will apply for Council Tax Reduction.

Pension age households will not be affected as Central Government prescribe the scheme.

Are there any alternatives to changing the existing Council Tax Reduction scheme?

We have also thought about other ways to make the administration simpler. These have not been completely rejected (including maintaining the current scheme) and you are asked about them in the Questionnaire, but, at the moment we do not think we should implement them for the reasons given.

We have considered:

- **Continuing with the current scheme**

This would mean less support and higher administration costs generally. Not making these changes would significantly increase the administration of Council Tax Reduction. The current scheme will not work effectively with the Government's Universal Credit system. The multiple changes in Universal Credit inevitably lead to multiple changes in Council Tax Reduction. This would increase the costs for all council tax payers in the District paying towards the scheme. The decision to increase Council Tax may need to be made by voting in a local referendum; or

Reduce funding to other Council services to pay for additional administration costs

Keeping the current Council Tax Reduction scheme will mean an increase in administration costs and less money available to deliver other Council services.

1. I have read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme: This question must be answered before you can continue. *

Yes

No

2. Paying for the Scheme

2. Should the Council keep the current Council Tax Reduction scheme? (Should it continue to administer the scheme as it does at the moment?) *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

3. Please use the space below to make any comments you have on protecting the Council Tax Reduction Scheme from these changes.

3. Option 1 – The introduction of an Income Grid scheme to replace the current scheme for all applicants of working age

As explained in the background information, the Council is primarily consulting on the following proposals to change the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1st April 2021, which will increase the overall level of support to those households on the lowest income and also reduce the administration cost of the scheme generally. The changes will also make the scheme simpler. Please note that whilst the changes are intended to reduce the level and cost of administration, the Council is not looking to reduce the total overall level of support available in fact for the lowest income households, the changes may increase the amount of reduction received. Your responses are a part of this consultation.

The current scheme for Council Tax Reduction is largely based on the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme which was assessed alongside Housing Benefit. Housing Benefit for working age applicants is being phased out and it is not now possible to make new claims. Whilst Housing Benefit was the main provider of housing support for working age persons, it was logical to maintain a Council Tax Reduction scheme that mirrored the approach. Now that Universal Credit is being rolled out, it gives the Council the opportunity to significantly simplify what is in effect a Council Tax Discount.

It is proposed that a simplified income 'grid' scheme will be introduced with some slight differences where applicants fall within a 'protected group'. For 'non-protected' groups, Table 1 shows the level of discount available.

Table 1

Discount Band	Discount	Single Person	Single person with one child	Single person with two or more children	Couple	Couple with one child	Couple with two or more children
Income Ranges							
Band 1*	100%	£0 - £95.00	£0 - £150.00	£0 - £210.00	£0 - £140.00	£0 - £195.00	£0 - £255.00
Band 2	75%	£95.01 - £115.00	£160.01 - £180.00	£210.01 - £240.00	£140.01 - £160.00	£195.01 - £225.00	£255.01 - £285.00
Band 3	50%	£115.01 - £135.00	£180.01 - £210.00	£240.01 - £270.00	£160.01 - £180.00	£225.01 - £255.00	£285.01 - £315.00
Band 4	25%	£135.01 - £155.00	£210.01 - £240.00	£270.01 - £300.00	£180.01 - £200.00	£255.01 - £285.00	£315.01 - £345.00
	0%	Over £155.00	Over £240.00	Over £300.00	Over £200.00	Over £285.00	Over £345.00

*Where any applicant or their partner are in receipt of Income Support, Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance or Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance, a Band 1 discount will be given (unless they have savings or capital over £6,000).

The key principles of the scheme are as follows:

The level of discount (shown in the grids) will be based on the total net income (determined by the Council) of the applicant and their partner;

Income levels can vary in accordance with household size;

Certain aspects of the current scheme will be carried forward into the new scheme namely:

The maximum support available will be 100%; Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Child Benefit and Child Maintenance will continue to be disregarded from the calculation;

Applicants receiving income support, income related employment and support allowance and income-based jobseeker's allowance. Where applicants are not in receipt of those benefits and their income is above the levels specified in Band 1, Council Tax Reduction shall be awarded at the appropriate level (Bands 2, 3 & 4)

The grid will be limited to a maximum of two dependants (see Option 2)

No charges will be made for non-dependants who live with the applicant (see Option 3)

Disregarding Carers Allowance and the Support Component of the Employment and Support Allowance and the Housing elements of Universal Credit (see Option 4);

Reducing the capital level to £6,000 from £16,000; (see Option 5);

Removing all of the current earnings disregards and replacing them with a standard £25 disregard for all applicants where they are in work (see Option 6);

Where a person is disabled and in receipt of certain disability benefits, allowing a further deduction from their income before calculating any entitlement to Council Tax Reduction (see Option 7);

Removing the Extended Payment provision (see Option 8);

Removing the Second Adult Reduction provision (see Option 9);

Making all new claims and changes in circumstances which change any entitlement to Council Tax Reduction on a daily basis rather than the current (benefit based) weekly basis (**see Option 10**); and

Allowing the discretion to backdate any discount to be commencement of the financial year where a good reason is provided (**see Option 11**).

It is inevitable that there may be both winners and losers; however, the Council is keen to protect as many applicants as possible. The Council is minded to increase the level of support to those on the lowest incomes.

The majority of applicants will receive the same or more support next year. In particular, parents and those in low paid jobs will often have less Council Tax to pay. Inevitably some households will have a little more to pay. Where an applicant experiences exceptional hardship, they will be able to apply for additional support from the Council under its new Exceptional Hardship Fund.

The benefits of changing the scheme:

It provides more support to those on the lowest incomes;

It provides a simpler scheme, easily understood by all applicants;

It will save significant increases in administration costs due to the introduction of Universal Credit; and

It should prevent applicants receiving multiple Council Tax demands during the year and prevents multiple changes to monthly instalments.

The drawbacks of doing this are:

Whilst the Council will look to protect applicants as far as possible, there may be a few winners and losers; and

Some households with more than two children or high capital may receive less support.

4. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

Yes

No

Don't Know

5. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

4. Option 2 - To limit the number of dependant children within the calculation for Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two for all applicants

Within the current scheme, applicants who have children are awarded a dependant's addition within the calculation of their needs (Applicable Amounts). From April 2017 the Government scheme limited dependant's in Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and Tax Credits to a maximum of two. Some applicants were protected where they made a claim for reduction before that date and already had more than two dependants. The new scheme will be based on an income grid system which takes into account the number of dependants within the household; however, it will be limited to two, for all applicants.

Child benefit continues to be paid for every dependant and this will not count towards the applicants' income for the purpose of calculating Council Tax Reduction

The benefits to the Council of doing this are:

Council Tax Reduction will be brought into line for all applicants; and

It is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme

The drawbacks of doing this are:

Applicants who have three or more dependants may receive less Council Tax Reduction. However, this is offset by the Child Benefit not being counted and, if the applicants face exceptional hardship they may apply for additional support through the Council's Exceptional Hardship Scheme.

6. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

7. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

5. Option 3 – To remove Non-Dependant Deductions from the scheme

Currently, where an applicant (and their partner if they have one) has other adults living with them such as adult sons, daughters etc., their Council Tax Reduction may be reduced. Any charge made is called a Non-Dependant Deduction. The Council currently makes a range of deductions depending on the circumstances of the non-dependant. In theory, the applicant should look to recoup this deduction from those adults. The Council cannot recover these charges from the non-dependant and must seek payment from the applicant, who will be in receipt of a low income or benefits.

The benefit of this option is:

Applicants will not be penalised for having additional adults living with them (other than if they are living there commercially); and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

The drawbacks of doing this are:

There may be an overall cost to the scheme with no non-dependant charges being made.

8. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

9. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

6. Option 4 – Disregarding Carers Allowance, the Support Component of the Employment and Support Allowance and the housing element of Universal Credit

By moving to an income-based grid scheme it is essential that certain benefits are disregarded from the calculation of income. In order to protect the most vulnerable applicants, it is proposed that the following are not counted when assessing a person's income. These are:

Carer's Allowance;

The Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance; and

Any amount determined by the authority as being awarded for the Housing Element of Universal Credit;

The benefit of this option is:

It will assist and support the most vulnerable; and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme

The drawbacks of doing this are:

There may be a slight increase in the overall cost of the scheme.

10. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

11. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

12. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

7. Option 5 - To reduce the maximum level of Capital from £16,000 to £6,000

The current scheme has a capital limit of £16,000. It is proposed that the capital limit is reduced to a level of £6,000.

The benefit of this option is:

It will make the administration of the scheme simpler as there will be no requirement to calculate

a 'tariff' or assumed income from capital; and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

The drawbacks of doing this are:

Some applicants who have capital above £6,000 will no longer qualify for Council Tax Reduction.

13. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

Yes

No

14. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

8. Option 6 – Removing the current earnings disregards and replacing them with a standard £25 disregard for all working applicants

Currently, where applicants (or their partner if they have one) have earnings and work over 16 hours per week, an earnings disregard is applied depending on their individual circumstances. The standard disregards (only one is awarded) are £5 per week for a single person, £10 per week for a couple, £20 per week if they meet certain conditions such as disablement or part time special employments or £25 for lone parents. If they work additional hours, in some circumstances they may receive an additional £17.10 disregard per week. Also, if child care is paid by the applicant above that received free from Central Government, then further disregards can be made again earnings for monies paid out.

The proposed change to the scheme would introduce a standard, single disregard of £25 for the applicant where they work. The disregard will apply against earning only. All other disregards will be removed.

The benefit of this option is:

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

The drawbacks of doing this are:

There may be applicants with larger families and who have high child care costs (not met by Government schemes) who may see a reduction in support. (It should be noted that this is offset by the Child Benefit not being counted and that all applicants that face exceptional hardship may apply for additional support under the Council's Exceptional Hardship Scheme)

15. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

16. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

9. Option 7 - To allow further income disregards where an applicant, their partner or any dependant is in receipt of a disability benefit

Where an applicant, their partner or any dependant who resides with them is disabled and in receipt of certain disability benefits, the Council will allow a further deduction from their income before calculating any entitlement to Council Tax Reduction.

This option replicates the rules which exist within the current scheme where by a person who is entitled to a Disability Premium, Enhanced Disability Premium, Severe Disability Premium or Disabled Child Premium will have their income reduced (for calculation purposes) by an amount of up to £40 per week.

The benefit of this option is:

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme; and

It protects the most vulnerable applicants.

The drawbacks of doing this are:

There are no drawbacks

17. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

18. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

10. Option 8 – Removing the Extended Payment provision

In certain cases, where applicants have been in receipt of prescribed benefits (such as Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance) and move into work which ends their entitlement, Council Tax Reduction can be paid for an additional 4 weeks after commencing work or increasing their hours. Similar provisions do not exist for Universal Credit claimants. As Universal Credit is to replace those existing (legacy) benefits, the Council feels that these provisions are no longer appropriate.

The benefit of this option is:

It will treat all applicants in receipt of DWP benefits equally; and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

The drawbacks of doing this are:

Applicants who are still in receipt of legacy benefits and who move into work before being transferred to Universal Credit may lose any potential extended payment.

19. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

20. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

11. Option 9 - Removal of Second Adult Reduction from the scheme

The current Council Tax Reduction scheme can grant a reduction up to 25% in certain cases where the income of a 'second adult' (not the applicant's partner) who resides with the applicant is unemployed or has a low income. The reduction is not based on the applicant's or their partner's income but is purely based on the income of the 'second adult'.

The benefit of this is:

It removes an element of the current scheme where the reduction bears no relationship to the

income of the applicant or their partner (if they have one);

It is administratively simple; and

The drawback of this is:

A very small number of people who currently receive Second Adult Reduction will receive less support.

21. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

22. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

12. Option 10 – Any new claim or change in circumstances which changes Council Tax Reduction entitlement will be made from the date on which the change occurs, (rather than on a weekly basis as at present)

New claims and changes in circumstances that affect entitlement to Council Tax Reduction, under the current scheme, are largely effected on a weekly basis. This is a 'throwback' to previous benefit schemes that were weekly based. As Council Tax is a daily charge, the Council believes it makes more sense to change entitlement to Council Tax Reduction on a daily basis. It should be noted that, the proposed new scheme is designed to reduce the number of changes that will affect entitlement in any event.

The benefit of this option is:

It is in line with the way that Council Tax is charged and operated; and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

The drawbacks of doing this are:

There are no draw backs to this option.

23. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

24. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

13. Option 11 – Extending the ‘backdating’ provisions within the scheme

The current scheme limits the backdating of any application for Council Tax Reduction to 1 month before the date of application where ‘continuous Good Cause’ is proven.

The Council is of the opinion that the backdating of applications should allow for better alignment with the date that the applicant's circumstances changed and that the Council be given a general discretion to backdate any claim where a good reason is provided.

The benefit of this option is:

This option will allow the Council more flexibility in granting support where the applicant has a good reason for not claiming earlier; and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

The drawbacks of doing this are:

There are no drawbacks to this change. It is unlikely to increase the costs of the scheme significantly.

25. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

26. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

14. Alternatives to changing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

If the Council keeps the current scheme, it will be less supportive to low income households and administratively more complex. The proposals set out in this consultation will deliver more support and administration savings. The alternatives are set out in the background information.

Do you think we should choose any of the following options rather than the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme? Please select one answer for each source of funding.

27. Increase the level of Council Tax to cover the additional administration costs *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

28. Find the additional administration costs by cutting other Council Services *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

29. Please use this space to make any other comments on the proposed scheme.

30. Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state).

31. Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state).

32. If you have any further comments or questions to make regarding the Council Tax Reduction scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere, please use the space below.

15. About You

We ask these questions:

To find out if different groups of people in the Council's population have been able to take part in the consultation and identify if any groups have been excluded. This means it is not about you as an individual but to find out if people with similar characteristics have had their say.

To find out if different groups of people feel differently about the options and proposals in comparison to each other and all respondents. This means it is not about you as an individual but to find out if people with similar characteristics have answered in the same way or not.

This information is completely confidential and anonymous. Your personal information will not be passed on to anyone and your personal details will not be reported alongside your responses.

33. Are you, or someone in your household, getting a Council Tax Reduction at this time?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

34. What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

35. Age

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+
- Prefer not to say

36. Disability: Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

37. Ethnic Origin: What is your ethnic group? Select each that apply.

- Prefer not to say
- White British
- White Irish
- White Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Black African
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Black Caribbean
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Asian
- Any other multi mixed background
- Asian or Asian British Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British Indian
- Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi
- Asian or Asian British Chinese
- Any other Asian background
- Black African
- British Caribbean
- Black British
- Any other Black background

38. Other Ethnic Group

16. Next steps....

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Progress reports on the consultation will be added to our website.

You may submit further evidence, ideas, comments or questions (marked CTR consultation) by email to Lisa.devey@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

The consultation closes on dd/mm/yyyy

We will listen carefully to what you tell us and take the responses into consideration when making a final decision on the 2021/22 scheme.

Following the decision, the full results from the consultation will be available on the Council's website.

The new scheme will start on 1 April 2021. The Council will consider the impact of the scheme annually and consult again if it thinks further changes need to be made.

DRAFT

CABINET

9th September 2020

Finance Monitoring Quarter 1 2020/21

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services
Relevant Head of Service	Jayne Pickering, Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources
Non-Key Decision	

1. Purpose and Summary

- 1.1 To report to Cabinet on the Council's financial position for both Revenue and Capital for the financial period April 2020 – June 2020.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet is asked to resolve to note the current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets for the financial period April 2020 – June 2020 as detailed in the report.

That Cabinet recommend to Council

- 2.2 Approval of a change in the 2020/21 Capital Programme of the S106 scheme already approved for Barnt Green Millennium Park – Toilet £62k. This is to be reallocated to a new scheme at Bittell Road Recreation Ground in relation to infrastructure/fitness route improvements due the requirements of the original project no longer needed. (See 6.1)
- 2.3 Approval for requesting that the training budgets that are held within the service Human Resources are combined and therefore operating in a shared services environment which means that any training provided to our staff is beneficial to both councils as we upskill our workforce. (See 3.4) with the resulting savings to be allocated to the savings target for 2020/21.
- 2.4 Approve the inclusion of the £1.154m of Government Grant in relation to Covid pressures and losses of income into the 2020/21 revenue budgets (see 3.6)

Revenue budgets

- 3.1 This report provides details of the financial performance of the Council for 2020/21. The report reflects the finances across all of the New Strategic Purposes to enable Members to be aware of the level of funding attributed to each area and how this compares to budget. The summary below shows the financial revenue position for the Council for 2020/21.

CABINET

9th September 2020

- 3.2 Financial reports are sent to budget holders on a monthly basis. As part of this process a detailed review is undertaken with support from the finance team to ensure that all issues are considered and significant savings or cost pressures are addressed. This report explains the key variances to budget for 2020/21.
- 3.3 The £11.812m original budget as included in the table below is made up of the budget approved in February 2020.
- 3.4 In addition the revised 2020/21 budget of £12.089m includes transfers to/from reserves of £278k which is shown in appendix 1.

**Revenue Budget summary
Financial Year 2020/21 – Overall Council**

Please note figures have been rounded

Strategic Purpose	Original Budget 2020/21 £'000	Revised budget 2020/21 £'000	Budget to date 2020/21 £'000	Actuals to date 2020/21 £'000	Variance to date 2020/21 £'000
Affordable and sustainable home	695	861	174	173	-1
Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	4,972	5,046	63	-32	-95
Enabling the Authority	5,307	5,281	1,235	1,284	49
Living independent , active and healthy lives	377	454	149	153	3
Run and grow a successful business	-51	-74	-28	298	326
Work and financial independence	512	521	1,152	1,201	44
Total	11,812	12,090	2,763	3,077	314
Financing	-11,812	-12,090	-4,616	-4,655	-39
Grand Total	0	0	-1,852	-1,578	275

Financial Commentary:

There are a number of variances across the strategic purposes. The summary above shows the 2020/21 revenue position for the Council for the first quarter and the main variations are as a result of:

Affordable and sustainable home (£1k underspend)

The costs associated with homeless prevention, housing strategy and charges are all included in the strategic purpose.

- There are no material individual variances in quarter 1 to report.

Communities which are safe, well maintained and green (£95k underspend)

These budgets include those relating mainly to environmental services, planning, CCTV and other activities to deliver against the purpose ensuring an area is both safe and attractive for the community.

- Bereavement services have received less income than expected from burial fees in the first quarter of **£26k**.
- Building Control have some small underspends on salaries and supplies and services in the first quarter along with a slight increase in income to profiled budget **£16k**.
- Development control have a slight shortfall in income in the first quarter of 2020/21 to the profiled budget **£12k**
- Environmental services management support and Place teams have some small underspends on general supplies and services budgets and also temporary salary savings **£45k**.
- There is a small underspend on the budget available for Local plans inquiries within strategic planning due to reassessing the local plan work this is currently being addressed along with the future plans **£42k**.
- There are some salary savings in the Tree management team following a services delivery review **£30k**.

Enable others to work/do what they need to do (to meet their purpose) (£49k overspend)

All support services and corporate overheads are held within the enabling purpose. These include; IT, HR, Finance, Management team and other support costs.

- There is a variance in Corporate services **£78k** which is due to a vacancy management factor target to be met. This will be reallocated from other services during 2. See savings monitoring at point 4 to this report.
- Democratic Services and member support have underspends on supplies and services budgets not yet spent along with temporary salary underspend **£24k**.

Living independent, active & healthy lives (£3k overspend)

There are a number of budgets relating to the delivery of the strategic purpose including; Lifeline, Community Transport and Disabled Facilities Grants.

- There is a variance within Business development – Leisure service due to not receiving the first quarter income fee for BSLC which is the impact from the Covid pandemic **£30k**. Members will also be aware of additional payment made to anyone active in terms of the losses uncured

during the forced closure of the site. This has been reflected as transfer from balances and therefore does not show as overspend within Business development.

- Parks and events have some underspends due to events not taking place in the first quarter also due to Covid **£25k**.

Run and grow a successful business (£326k overspend)

The budgets within the strategic purpose include economic development, car parking, all licenses and costs associated with the town and other centres within the District.

- The main overspend is within car parks which is due to the temporary suspension of car parking charges for Covid **£284k**. The government have announced a compensation scheme for lost income and officers are currently working through the application for these funds.
- There is also a variance on markets which again is due to the impact of Covid **£14k**
- Licences has a shortfall of income in the first quarter of 2020/21 **£19k**

Work and Financial independence (£44k over budget)

The strategic purpose includes all costs relating to the support of benefits and the administration and delivery of Council Tax services and business rates in the District.

- Revenues is showing an overspend in the first quarter as there are no recoveries taking place due to Covid **£33k**.
- There are no other material individual variances in quarter 1 to report.

Corporate Financing (£39k saving)

- There is a variance in corporate financing due to a slight saving on Interest/borrowing costs in the first quarter **£39k**.

3.5 Training Budgets – Human Resources

The approval to request the training budgets are shared is ensuring a smoother delivery of our current training programme.

Currently the training budgets are held separately at each authority requiring resources from both Finance and HR to administer and recharge every course undertaken by an employee based on a percentage split. As the head count is comparable at each authority and the training budgets are similar in size, it is proposed to move to a shared services arrangement for training budget, mirroring how employee salaries are managed. It is proposed that the training budgets are combined and held by Redditch as the HR service is hosted by Redditch.

The budget allocations currently are: (excluding the HRA and Worcestershire Regulatory Services)

BDC £133,412

RBC £106,720

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It is proposed that each authority will have £106,000 in a shared training budget. The remaining £27k from BDCs allocation will be allocated to the savings target.

3.6 COVID

As Members are aware funding has been received from Central Government to support the Council in addressing additional pressures resulting from the pandemic. The total received to date is £1.154m and this is to offset additional cost pressures faced by the Council. In addition guidance is expected shortly to detail how the Council can claim the compensation grant for loss of income on fees and charges. This will be claimed to offset the losses in car parking charges. In terms of the current position the Council will continue to monitor the losses in Business Rates and Council Tax to ensure these can be met from the existing grants. It is hoped that a further funding round will be allocated in relation to leisure income losses.

4. Savings Monitoring

The medium term financial plan included £510k of savings identified to be delivered during 2020/21 the breakdown of these savings is attached at appendix 2. £45k of these identified savings is in relation to reductions in enabling costs.

To quarter 1 £122k identified savings have been realised against the budgeted April to June savings of £127k

Officers are working through the vacancy savings targets and reductions in enabling costs to enable these to be shown from quarter 2 in addition to any further savings that can be delivered.

5. Cash Management

5.2 Borrowing

As at the 31st June 2020 there are £10m short term borrowings with associated borrowing costs within the quarter of £41k, there was no long term borrowing.

An interest payable budget had been set of £386k for 2020/21 due to expenditure relating to current capital projects.

5.3 Investments

At 31st June 2020 there were £5.0m investments held.

An interest receivable budget has been set of £161k for 2020/21 for any investments we make

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6. Capital Budgets

**Capital Budget summary
Financial Year 2020/21 – Overall Council**

Please note figures have been rounded

Strategic Purpose	Original Budget 2020/21 £'000	Revised budget 2020/21 £'000	Budget to date 2020/21 £'000	Actuals to date 2020/21 £'000	Variance to date 2020/21 £'000
Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	3,481	3,481	440	358	-81
Enabling the Authority	55	55	14	51	37
Living independent , active and healthy lives	835	835	209	0	-209
Totals	4,371	4,371	662	409	-253

Finance commentary:

- ***Please note capital carry forwards from 2019/20 are not included in the above figures – please see appendix 3 – these budgets now approved will be loaded for quarter 2 monitoring.***

Communities which are safe, well maintained and green

- One of the main projects within this strategic purpose is the capital budget for the Vehicle replacement. Whilst some spend has commenced there are final specifications with service areas for remaining vehicle orders to be placed by the end of September 2020.

Enable others to work/do what they need to do (to meet their purpose)

- The variance for this strategic purpose relates to the New Finance Enterprise System in Financial services which has now commenced. The project is expected to be completed by December 2020 a request has made to re-profile some of the budget into the first quarter of 2020/21 from the last financial year.

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Living independent, active & healthy lives

- The main underspend relates to the Disabled Facilities grant budget (DFG's) there has been no activity on this project in the first quarter of 2020/21 due to the Covid pandemic.

6.1 Bittell Road Recreation Ground infrastructure/fitness route improvements

The request for the change in the 2020/21 Capital Programme of the S106 scheme already approved for Barnt Green Millennium Park – Toilet £62k to be reallocated to a new scheme Bittell Road Recreation Ground infrastructure/fitness route improvements is due the toilets are no longer required.

It is proposed for this funding to be reallocated to infrastructure/fitness route improvements to Bittell Road Recreation Ground. This site is within easy walking distance from the Fiery Hill Development and provides improved access throughout the year.

Detail as follows:

Officers seek retrospective approval for £44k of the S106 B/2011/0741 funding for new circular pathway route at Bittell Road Recreation ground in accordance with the agreement.

There is a remaining interest balance of £4k of this S106 for which Officers seek approval for this to be put forward to be used to provide fitness equipment linked to the above new access route.

Officers request the £18k balances for the Barnt Green Toilet at Hewell to be amended as follows:

- Reduced to £14k (due to the additional S106 interest payment of £4k)
- Aligned to spend on the fitness equipment

7. Earmarked Reserves

- 7.1 The position as at 31st June 2020/21 is shown in Appendix 1. This also details the planned use of the reserves for the future budget years 2021/22.

8. General Fund Balances

- 8.1 The General Fund Balance as at the 31st March 2020 is £4.408m. A balanced budget was approved in February 2020 to include identified savings which have been built into individual budget allocations. This also included a planned return to balances for 2020/21 of £170k.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 No Legal implications have been identified.

10. Service/Operational Implications

10.1 Managers meet with finance officers on a monthly basis to consider the current financial position and to ensure actions are in place to mitigate any overspends.

11. Risk Management

11.1 Effective budget monitoring supports any risks associated with the Council.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Earmarked Reserves 2020/21

Appendix 2 - Savings Monitoring 2020/21

Appendix 3 – Capital Carry forwards

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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Tel: (01527) 881208

FINANCIAL RESERVES STATEMENT 2020/21

Appendix 1

Please note these figures have been rounded

Description	Balance b/fwd 1/4/2020	Budgeted Release 2020/21	Revised Balance b/fwd 1/4/2020	Transfers in existing reserve 2020/21	Transfers out existing reserve 2020/21	New Reserve 2020/21	C/fwd 31/3/2020	Planned use for 2021/22 Budget	Comment
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Building Control	(7)	0	(7)	0	0	0	(7)	0	To Fund the mobile working project
Building Control Partnership	(69)	0	(69)	0	0	(10)	(79)	0	Partnership income has to be reinvested back in to the service.
Commercialism	(10)	0	(10)	0	0	0	(10)	0	To help fund costs in relation to commercialism projects
Community Services	(43)	0	(43)	0	21	0	(22)	0	To help towards a district network feasibility study and unauthorised trespass prevention.
Economic Growth Development	(1,342)	150	(1,192)	0	0	0	(1,192)	150	To fund the Economic Development opportunities across the District
Election Services	(96)	50	(46)	0	0	0	(46)	0	To support the delivery of individual electoral registration and to set aside a reserve for potential refunds to government
Financial Services	(362)	0	(362)	0	0	0	(362)	0	A number of reserves / grants have been set aside to support residents through the changes to welfare reform along with a reserve to support our Business continuity plans.
Corporate Financing	(2,784)	0	(2,784)	0	0	0	(2,784)	0	The reserve has been created to offset the loss on Business rates collection and appeals in 2019/20.
Housing Schemes	(475)	0	(475)	0	145	0	(330)	142	To support the feasibility and implementation of housing schemes across the district
ICT/Systems	(204)	0	(204)	0	0	0	(204)	0	To provide for replacement ICT systems
Leisure/Community Safety	(291)	0	(291)	0	121	0	(169)	0	Grant received and reserves set aside to support a number of leisure and well being schemes across the District
Local Neighbourhood Partnerships	(16)	0	(16)	0	0	0	(16)	0	Grant received in relation to liveability schemes
Other	(115)	0	(115)	0	0	0	(115)	44	General reserves including - support for apprentices, set up costs and Brexit reserve.
Planning	(108)	0	(108)	0	0	0	(108)	0	Reserves in relation to a custom build grant to provide support to the council towards expenditure lawfully incurred in relation to the provision and maintenance of a self-build register, along with reserves to help towards future planning appeals.
Regulatory Services (Partner Share)	(35)	0	(35)	0	0	0	(35)	0	BDC Share of WRS grant related reserves
Shared Services Agenda	(311)	0	(311)	0	0	0	(311)	0	To fund potential redundancy and other shared costs
Grand Total	(6,268)	200	(6,068)	0	287	(10)	(5,790)	337	

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SAVINGS & ADDITIONAL INCOME - BDC

APPENDIX 2

Department	Service	Strategic Purpose	Description of saving	2020-21 £'000	2020-21 Apr - June £'000	Quarter 1			
						On target Y/N	Additional (add to in yr savings) £'000	below target Y/N	Pressure £'000
Community Services	Lifeline	Living independent, active & healthy lives	New Lifeline Digital Upgrade	-11	-3	N		Y	3
Corporate Services	Printing & Reprographics	Enabling	Additional Savings from New Print Contract	-5	-1	Y			
Corporate Services	Corporate Services	Enabling	Management Review	-54	-14	N			
Corporate Services	Corporate Services	Enabling	Reduction in enabling costs - 1% per annum	-45	-11	N			
Corporate Services	Corporate Services	Enabling	Saving on the estimated payment to the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership	-150	-38	Y			
CAFS	CAFS	Work and financial independence	Full Service review	-30	-8	N			
Environmental Services	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Income from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) for design services provided by Engineering & Design Team	-2	-1	N		Y	1
Environmental Services	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Inflation on WCC income for verge maintenance	-2	-1	Y			
Environmental Services	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Garden waste income	-25	-6	Y			
Environmental Services	Bereavement Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Additional income from new structure re commercialism	-11	-3	Y			
Finance	Finance	Enabling	Insurance contract saving	-130	-33	Y			
Leisure and Cultural Services	Facilities Management	Run and grow a successful business	Historic Budgets no longer required.	-2	-1	Y			
Leisure and Cultural Services	Facilities Management	Run and grow a successful business	Historic Budgets no longer required.	-1	-0	Y			
Leisure and Cultural Services	Facilities Management	Run and grow a successful business	Additional income in relation to rents for land around the district	-4	-1	Y			
Leisure and Cultural Services	Business Development	Enabling	Extra income for rental of the Parkside rooms	-1	-0	N		Y	1
Leisure and Cultural Services	Sports and Arts Development	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Reduction in Sports Development budgets	-5	-1	Y			
Leisure and Cultural Services	Business Development	Run and grow a successful business	Reduction in NDR budgets for Town centre Market stalls	-7	-2	Y			
Leisure and Cultural Services	Parks and Events	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Reduction in Tree Works Budgets	-5	-1	Y			
Planning & Regeneration	Development Control	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on car mileage budgets	-4	-1	Y			
Planning & Regeneration	Development Control	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Various general supplies and service budgets savings	-2	-1	Y			
Planning & Regeneration	Strategic Planning	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on employee Expenses budgets and other supplies and service budgets	-6	-2	Y			
Planning & Regeneration	Strategic Planning	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on consultant fee budgets	-1	-0	Y			
Planning & Regeneration	Building Control	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on photocopying & Print budgets	-2	-0	Y			
Planning & Regeneration	Building Control	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on ICT budgets	-1	-0	Y			
Planning & Regeneration	Building Control	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on marketing budgets	-2	-0	Y			

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Department	Service	Strategic Purpose	Description of saving	2020-21 £'000	2020-21 Apr - June £'000	On target Y/N	Additional (add to to in yr savings) £'000	below target Y/N	Pressure £'000
BDC Reg Client	BDC Reg Client	Run and grow a successful business	Inflationary increase	-2	-1	N			
BDC Reg Client	BDC Reg Client	Run and grow a successful business	Inflationary increase	-2	-1	N			
TOTAL				-510	-127	0	0	0	5

Job No.	Description	Department	Strategic Purpose	Funding	Full Year Budget 2019-20	Full Year expenditure 2019-20	Full Year Variance 2019-20	Request for Carry Forward into 2020/21	Comments
					£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
GC894	Burcot Lane	Customer services and financial support	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	3,156	177	-2,979	2,979	The Burcot Lane development is expected to commence during 2020/21 and therefore budgets are requested to be carried forward from 2019/20
GC411	Funding for DFGs	Community Services	help me live my life independently	borrowing/capital receipts	1,088	898	-190	190	It is to be requested to carry forward an underspend on the Disabled Facilities Grants due to delays in referrals from occupational therapists.
GC1341	Energy Efficiency Installation	Community Services	help me live my life independently	borrowing/capital receipts	110	14	-96	96	This fund has been unable to be spent this year due to the need to procure the energy advice service prior to restarting the Bromsgrove Energy Efficiency Fund. However the energy advice service has now been procured and has commenced in the final quarter of the financial year and will continue through to March 31st 2022.
GC1064	Home Repairs Assistance	Community Services	help me live my life independently	borrowing/capital receipts	50	9	-41	41	Discretionary home repairs assistance is underspent which is due to a lack of applications being received despite advertising so a request to roll forward is made to 2020/21.
GC1223	Energy Efficiency	Community Services	help me live my life independently	borrowing/capital receipts	5	0	-5	5	A roll forward is requested to be used in conjunction with Energy efficiency installations project for park homes.
GC1337	CCTV	Community Services	help me live my life independently	borrowing/capital receipts	321	154	-167	167	This is part of large CCTV project which is ongoing with first tranche of expenditure funded by PCC.
GC896	OLEV ULEV Taxi infrastructure scheme	Community Services	help me run a successful business	Grants & Contributions	300	0	-300	300	The project is delayed and is requested to be carried over to new year - Grant funding has already been received £275,000 (project is grant funded)
GC1283	Fleet Replacement	Environmental Services	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	451	99	-352	352	Carry Forward - £90k Tractor, trailer and mowers all ordered with delivery in March 2020 but delayed due to COVID 19 also there is a delay on getting the tractor registered with DVLA. £65k unfortunately as China and Europe closed down early in the year, officers were not able locate and discuss suitable machines. 40k Minor Works van ordered with delivery in March2020 but delayed due to COVID 19. £80k two tippers ordered with delivery in March2020 but delayed due to COVID 19. £25k orders placed for the new Luton van delivery expected March 2020 but delayed due to COVID 19. £35k order placed for 3.5t tipper delivery expected March 2020 but delayed due to COVID 19. £20k car park line marking to be completed in March 2020 unfortunately contractor was unable to complete due to COVID 19 would like to carry forward
GC1345	Replacement lighting at the Depot	Environmental Services	Keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	23	0	-23	23	The improvement/upgrade for the lighting is linked to the quality of the CCTV night images and both this and the fencing security upgade, which we were advised would be cameras with motion detection, need to be undertaken at the same time with lighting levels agreed with the security contractor. The security work contract has delayed please see item below.
GC1355	Depot Site resurfacing phase 2	Environmental Services	Keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	252	0	-252	252	The project is to be delayed until 2020/21 due to demands in the engineering team and until the future of the site is agreed. It is therefore requested to carry this budget forward to the new financial year.
GC889	Perimeter Boundary Security at the Depot	Environmental Services	Keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	20	0	-20	20	Officers have been working with Chub as the existing provider to advise on the best security method to install along the fence line, the existing guardwire is temprimental and giving faulse alarms. Unfortunately the contractor has been very difficult to work with, the necessary on site survey work was initially delayed by them, then their contracts manager who visited left and we had to start the process again. We have also liaised with CCTV as they have recenely unpdated their framework contract. Unfortunately at this point we went into lockdown and we are now looking to undertake a mini tender via
GC1360	BDC Combined F/Path & Cycl	Environmental Services	Keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	431	360	-71	71	The project is funded by Worcestershire County Council Funded and a carry forward is requested as there have been delays due to COVID 19.
GC897	Regeneration Fund	Finance	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	3,350	0	-3,350	3,350	There have been limited opportunities for investment properties during the year and therefore the budget will be requested to be carried forward into 2020/21.
C2334	New Finance Enterprise system	Finance	enabling	borrowing/capital receipts	455	237	-218	218	New Finance Enterprise System in Financial services which has now commenced. The project is expected to be completed by December 2020 and a request is made to re-profile some of the budget into the first quarter of 2020/21.
GC1350	Wythall Park POS Improvement	Leisure & Cultural Services	provide good things for me to see, do & visit	borrowing/capital receipts	15	0	-15	15	The project is waiting for response from Wythall parks association for confirmation to raise the order. This is therefore expected to take place spring 2020
GC1352	Barnt Green Millenium Park - Toilet	Leisure & Cultural Services	provide good things for me to see, do & visit	borrowing/capital receipts	62	0	-62	62	The budget is to be utilised at Bittell Road recreation ground owned by the parish council. The contractor is to commence works in summer 2020.
GC895	Re-landscaping of Recreation Ground	Leisure & Cultural Services	provide good things for me to see, do & visit	borrowing/capital receipts	211	0	-211	211	The consultation has now been completed and the contractor to be appointed and works to be scheduled 2020/21.
GC1344	Sanders Park dda play provision	Leisure & Cultural Services	keep my place safe and looking good	s106 funding	10	6	-4	4	Ongoing project - roll forward requested.
GC1361	Birdbox	Planning & Regeneration	provide good things for me to see, do & visit	borrowing/capital receipts	210	0	-210	210	The new birdbox scheme will also be requested to carry forward into the next financial year due to the project not being approved towards the later end of the financial year - although orders have now been raised
GC1339	Rubery Redevelopment Works	Planning & Regeneration	provide good things for me to see, do & visit	borrowing/capital receipts	36	3	-33	33	The project is still ongoing and a request is therefore mae to roll forward the budget into 2020/21.
		Grand Total			10,557	1,957	-8,600	8,600	

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NHB COMMUNITY GRANTS PANEL

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Jayne Pickering, Executive Director Finance & Resources
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to allow Cabinet to consider the findings and recommendations of the NHB Community Grants Panel for 2020/21.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Cabinet agree the grants, as detailed in the Summary of NHB Grants Panel Recommendations attached at appendix 1.**
- 2.2. **Should the scheme continue into 2021/22 then a full review of the process be carried out prior to the commencement of the grants allocation for that year.**

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 This is the sixth year of the NHB Community Grants Scheme. It was agreed within the Medium Term Financial Plan that the amount of £144,000 would be available for any Ward that could show growth, to submit an application and to be considered by the Panel.
- 3.2 A project needed to be able to provide clear evidence how the community had been affected by growth and that that growth would be met by the project.
- 3.3 Involvement from Ward Councillors was encouraged and all grants had to receive formal approval by the Ward Councillor before being considered by the Panel.
- 3.4 Applications were broken down into two categories, Lower (up to £2,880) and Higher (between £2,881 and £28,800). A “checking” service was once again provided for any potential applications prior to the closing date. This gave applicants an opportunity to amend where

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necessary their applications to ensure that it would be considered by the Panel.

- 3.5 Applications were invited over the period from 8th April 2020 to 30th June 2020, with the NHB Community Grants Panel meeting on 11th and 12th August 2020 to consider the applications at a public meeting and on 21st August 2020 in a private meeting.
- 3.6 Following the public meeting the Panel considered the merits of each application and the recommendations are attached at Appendix 1. This provides details of all applications, together with any conditions attached to those which the Panel recommend receive a grant and the rationale for those which have been refused.
- 3.7 At the private meeting the Panel Members also considered the lengthy, time consuming process that is involved in bringing the scheme to its conclusion each year. The Panel therefore recommend that a full and detailed review be carried out should the NHB Community Grants Scheme continue in future years, in order to establish a more cost effective way to distribute the funds available.

Financial Implications

- 3.8 As detailed in Appendix 1 £144,000 grants have been recommended by the Panel to be approved by Members.

Legal Implications

- 3.9 There are no direct legal implications as a result of the grants being approved.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.10 The allocation of funding will support the provision of projects within local communities and do not impact on the operational services provided by the Council.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.11 The scheme allows all communities that are affected by growth to apply for a grant.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 The annual scheme based on the additional funding received from NHB for each financial year mitigates the impact on the Medium Term

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Financial Plan and ensures that should NHB be revised in the future there is no future commitment from the Council.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Summary of NHB Grants Panel Recommendations

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NHB Grants Scheme and FQAs

7. KEY

None

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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Applicant	Name of Project	Application Made for 2020/21	Amount Awarded
Higher			
Barnt Green PC	Barnt Green Pollinator Initiative	4000.00	3,000
Catshill Village Hall	Installation of Thermal Insulation	8000.00	5,000
Catshill and District Working Men's Club Ltd	Replace the central heating system	23500.00	12,000
First Bromsgrove Otter Scouts	Enhancing opportunities for adventure and skills for life development to local young people through Scouting	6877.00	6,000
Bromsgrove Rugby Club	Extension and Refurbishment of changing rooms	28880.00	20,000
Bromsgrove District Councillors	Air Quality Signage	15500.00	2,350
New Starts	Breaking Bread Building Communities	28000.00	28,000
Bentley Village Hall	Project Warmth	15250.00	10,000
Hello Burcott	Community Seating Area	15000.00	10,000
Hagley Ramblers Scout Group	New Side Stores to the Scout Premises	16650.00	7,000
Alvechurch Parish Council	Fit for Today, Fitter for Tomorrow	12215.00	6,100
Bromsgrove Youth and Community Hub	Bromsgrove Youth and Community Hub	28800.00	20,000
St Michael's Church PCC Stoke Prior	Restoration of the Lych Gate on the John Corbett Way	15000.00	5,000
Total of Higher Bids to be paid			134,450

Lower			
Clent Parish Council	Youth Council Football Pitch Improvement Project	2880.00	2,880
Bromsgrove Minibus Project	After Coronavirus - the next 35 years of Bromsgrove Minibus Appeal	2750.00	2,000
Rubery Festival	Live Concert for Covid	775.00	0
Rubery Festival	Rubery Festival 2020	350.00	0
Challenge Stroke Group (Rubery)	Challenge Stroke Group Day Out	300.00	0
Rubery Community and Leisure Centre	Walkway Refurbishment	800.00	800
Cllr Colella	Tree planting Hagley West Ward	2880.00	500
Catshill and North Malbrook Parish Council	Youth Club Start Up	1248.00	1,248
6th Bromsgrove Scout Group	Hut Security	2797.00	2,000
Total Lower Bids to be Paid			<u>9,428</u>
TOTAL FUNDING TO BE PAID OUT			143,878