



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 18TH JANUARY 2023

AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

MEMBERS: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), G. N. Denaro (Deputy Leader),
M. A. Sherrey, P.L. Thomas, M. Thompson 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 23rd November 2022 (Pages 1 - 10)

4. Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 21st November 2022 (Pages 11 - 20)

- (a) To receive and note the minutes
- (b) To consider any recommendations contained within the minutes

There were two recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 21st November 2022 in respect of the CCTV Digitalisation Upgrade Report.

All other recommendations contained within the attached set of minutes have been considered.

5. **Bromsgrove Centres Strategy** (Pages 21 - 64)
6. **Council Tax Base Report** (Pages 65 - 70)
7. **Council Tax Support Scheme** (Pages 71 - 100)
8. **Financial Outturn Report** (Pages 101 - 110)
9. **Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2025/26 - Update** (Pages 111 - 122)
10. **Quarterly Risk Monitoring Update Report** (Pages 123 - 130)
11. **Worcestershire Regulatory Services Budget Recommendations** (Pages 131 - 152)
12. **To consider any urgent business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property 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

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

10th January 2023

If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
Jo Gresham

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Notes:

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

23RD NOVEMBER 2022, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillor C. A. Hotham and Councillor R. J. Hunter

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr P. Carpenter, Ms M. Howell,
Ms. D. Poole, Ms J. Willis, Mr. K. Hirons, Mrs B. Talbot,
Mr M. Rowan and Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill

45/22 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor M. Sherrey.

46/22 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

47/22 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE CABINET HELD ON 26TH OCTOBER 2022**

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 26th October 2022 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 26th October 2022 be approved as a true and correct record.

48/22 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
BOARD HELD ON 24TH OCTOBER 2022**

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Councillor C. Hotham, presented the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 24th October 2022.

Cabinet was informed that during the meeting, Members had received an update on the Levelling Up Project. Concerns had been raised about the impact of inflation on the building costs required for work on the project. A further update on the subject had been requested by the Board for consideration in 2023.

The Board had also received an update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund settlement for Bromsgrove District at this meeting. Members had learned that there were limited timescales available in which the funding could be spent in the District.

At the meeting, the Board had pre-scrutinised the Council's Carbon Reduction Implementation Plan, which had been presented by the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Climate Change. The Board had agreed a number of recommendations on this subject which had been considered at the previous meeting of Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 24th October 2022 be noted.

49/22

FUEL POVERTY TASK GROUP REPORT (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY)

The Chairman of the Fuel Poverty Task Group, Councillor R. Hunter, presented the group's final report.

Cabinet was informed that at the start of the review there had already been 5,000 households living in fuel poverty in Bromsgrove and, based on reports from Act on Energy of recent increases in requests for help and support, it was likely that this number was growing. The Fuel Poverty Task Group had obtained evidence from a range of expert witnesses representing both the Council and external organisations and the group's recommendations were based on the evidence that had been gathered. These recommendations were ready to be implemented and this action would be timely.

During consideration of this item, Members noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Board had considered the Fuel Poverty Task Group's report at a meeting held on 21st November 2022. The Board had endorsed the recommendations subject to a minor change to recommendation 6, to require that the Cabinet should actively explore all *external* funding options available to the Council to support Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups.

Reference was also made to recommendation 2, which proposed that a poster or booklet should be produced containing a simple guide to the support that was available in the community. Members commented that a leaflet on this subject had already been introduced and it contained useful information for the benefit of local residents.

In considering the report, Cabinet concluded by thanking the Members who had served on the Fuel Poverty Task Group. Expert witnesses, including the Head of Community and Housing Services, were also thanked for attending meetings and submitting evidence.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The Council ensures its webpages are up to date and takes a proactive approach in promoting the various areas of support (including an up to date list of Warm Hubs/Spaces and support provided by local libraries in the District) available through as many different mediums as possible. For example, through its social

- media account and by learning from the best practice approaches used by other Councils;
- 2) A poster or booklet is created which includes a simple straight forward guide to all the various areas of support – this should be accessible in local buildings such as the libraries and Councillors provided with copies to hand out to residents or distribute for display on noticeboards;
 - 3) Councillors are provided with the contact details of Act on Energy and encouraged to proactively liaise with the outreach workers to ensure access to support is readily available to residents within their Wards;
 - 4) The Bromsgrove Partnership, supported by the Council, takes a lead role in the collection of high quality intelligence/data to ensure that the Council's partners can target their interventions where support is most needed;
 - 5) the Bromsgrove Partnership (with input from all District Councillors and/or relevant Parish Councils) take a lead role in co-ordinating appropriate support, to ensure it is readily available for residents throughout the whole district, for example this could mean the provision of a Warm Hub/Space and the facilities offered by the local libraries; and
 - 6) the Cabinet actively explores all external funding options (for example the UK Shared Prosperity Fund) available to the Council in order to ensure that, if needed, it is able to provide financial support to VCS organisations throughout the district in providing the support detailed in recommendation 5 above.

50/22

SHERWOOD ROAD FOOTBRIDGE, ASTON FIELDS - PERMANENT CLOSURE OF FOOTBRIDGE, REMOVAL OF BRIDGE DECK AND TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP TO SEVERN TRENT WATER LTD

The Environmental Services Manager presented a report on the subject of the Sherwood Road footbridge in Aston Fields.

Cabinet was informed that the footbridge was located between Sherwood Road and some offices on an industrial estate. The bridge was owned by Bromsgrove District Council and provided structural support to a sewer that ran under the bridge. Severn Trent Water had been contacted about the bridge and had indicated that they would be willing to maintain the bridge but not to maintain a footpath over the bridge. Officers were proposing remedial works to close the footpath and remove the existing bridge deck before transferring ownership to Severn Trent Water.

Members were advised that the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety had visited the footbridge with officers to view the bridge and footpath. The footbridge had been in a poor state of disrepair and the footpath had been overgrown, with no signs of usage in recent years. Based on the condition of the footbridge, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety had reported that she would be supportive of the closure of the footbridge.

Consideration was given to the proposals and Members questioned whether, after the closure of the footpath and removal of the decking, there would be any further financial implications relating to the footbridge for the Council. Officers confirmed that there would be no further financial implications to the Council beyond that which had been detailed within the report.

During consideration of this item, questions were raised about whether the footpath was a designated public right of way. Members commented that there were lengthy and complicated processes that needed to be followed when closing public rights of way, including a requirement for a diversion order. Officers explained that it was understood that the footpath could be closed. It was acknowledged that public consultation had not yet been undertaken with respect to the closure of the footbridge but the overgrown state of the footpath indicated that there was limited awareness or use made of the footpath.

RESOLVED that

Subject to receiving confirmation that the footpath on Sherwood Road Footbridge in Aston Fields is not a designated public right of way

- 1) The existing pedestrian footbridge in Sherwood Road be permanently closed, due to its current structural condition;
- 2) After removal of the bridge deck, the remaining structure be declared surplus to Council requirements, and disposed of to Severn Trent Water Ltd at nil cost; and

RECOMMENDED that

- 3) A budget of £10k be added to the 2022/2023 Capital Programme to be funded from internal resources.

51/22

**HR AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT / PEOPLE /
WORKFORCE STRATEGY**

The HR and Organisational Development Manager presented the Workforce Strategy for Members' consideration.

Members were informed that the Workforce Strategy detailed the Council's vision and aspirations for the authority's workforce both at the present time and moving into the future. The Council recognised that staff were the authority's most valuable asset and the importance of employees having a chance to commit time to their personal development.

There were three key themes in the strategy:

- Workforce planning and development.
- Staff engagement.

- The health, safety and wellbeing of staff.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the content of the strategy and in doing so questioned how the strategy would be promoted to staff. Cabinet was informed that the strategy would be available for staff to access on the Council's intranet. In addition, the content of the strategy would be embedded into all working practices and other policies and procedures would link back to the content of the strategy.

Consideration was also given to how the Council could promote the authority's approach to people management at a challenging time for recruiting staff into the public sector, but particularly local government. Officers clarified that opportunities would be offered to staff to develop their skills whilst working for the Council as well as opportunities for promotion internally.

RESOLVED that the approach taken by the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, to address the Workforce Strategy be endorsed.

52/22

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24 TO 2025/26 - UPDATE

The Interim Section 151 Officer presented an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2023/24 to 2025/26.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) had announced that the local government settlement would not be confirmed until the week commencing 19th December 2022. This would be the latest in the year that the settlement had been confirmed and in recognition of this, DLUHC had advised that some information would be made available to Councils in the next few weeks.

In the Chancellor's autumn statement, it had been confirmed that district Councils would be able to increase Council Tax by 3 per cent, rather than the 2 per cent that had previously been anticipated. Should Bromsgrove District Council choose to increase Council Tax at this level, the increase would result in an additional £92,000 income for the authority. The Chancellor had also announced that Councils would no longer have to pay increases to National Insurance contributions, which would potentially result in £139,000 savings, although the Government had also indicated that funding would subsequently be removed from grants to Councils as a consequence of this, so the level of savings could reduce. It had also been announced that there would be an extension to the Household Support Grant and the Government was consulting with local authorities on the appropriate approach to implementing this scheme.

Officers had been working hard to secure savings in order to achieve a balanced budget in 2023/24. To date, £1.5 million savings had been achieved. In addition, as part of the monitoring report, the unallocated savings that had been included in the MTFP that had been agreed in

February 2022 had now been allocated. These savings were detailed in the list of proposed savings in tranche 1 of the budget setting process. A pay award for staff of £1,925 per pay point for 2022/23 had been agreed and, as this was a higher figure than anticipated, this would add to pressures in the budget. The budget gap remained large, primarily due to the anticipated increase in costs arising due to the impact of inflation and increases in utilities costs. Therefore, further savings would need to be agreed in tranche 2 of the budget setting process.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the proposals and noted that Officers were requesting funding for an additional Climate Change Officer post. Questions were raised about the extent to which this post was needed, given the Council already employed a Climate Change Officer, another officer who supported the Climate Change Officer and two lead Heads of Service for climate change. Officers explained that all new proposed posts were reviewed by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) to ensure that they were needed. Heads of Service had responsibility for overseeing the delivery of a wide range of services and were not specialists in respect of climate change. The Officer who had been supporting the Climate Change Officer was shortly due to return to working primarily in her substantive post on environmental waste issues and therefore the new Climate Change Officer would help to support the Council's work to address climate change, in line with a key priority of the authority to reduce carbon emissions.

Consideration was given to the types of action that could be taken in tranche 2 of the budget setting process in order to reduce costs and secure further savings. Members were advised that Officers would be exploring all possible actions that could be taken to reduce costs, increase income and secure savings. This would include potentially reducing back-office functions and increasing automation of services.

Questions were raised about the extent to which the Council was likely to need to meet further pressures in relation to staff pension costs moving forward. Officers clarified that the information provided in the report was based on figures provided by the Council's pension actuaries in September 2022. The actuaries had reported that pensions were performing relatively well and the figures detailed in the report would apply for the following three year period.

RESOLVED that

Officers continue to work on additional options, as outlined in the Strategy section of the Tranche 1 Report for presentation to Cabinet in February as Tranche 2 of the Budget.

RECOMMENDED that

the Tranche 1 savings proposals, Fees and Charges increases including updated WRS charges, and the single Growth item in respect of the

Climate Change Officer are approved for implementation to ensure maximum benefit as at 1st April 2023.

53/22

FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 2

The Head of Financial and Customer Services presented the Financial and Performance Monitoring report for quarter 2 of the 2022/23 financial year.

Cabinet was advised that at the end of quarter 2, Officers were projecting an overspend of £342,000 in the Council's general fund budget. This overspend was anticipated after the Council had addressed the unallocated savings that had been included in the MTFP for the 2022/23 financial year. A number of service variances had been identified, particularly in relation to housing support which was likely to be overspent by the end of the financial year due to significant growth in demand. The leisure sector continued to recover, following the Covid-19 pandemic, and Officers were suggesting that it would be prudent to forecast a pressure in income from the leisure services provider in the District, SLM as existing contractual income levels were still not deliverable.

There remained a number of factors that would potentially impact further on the budget position which included:

- The cost of living crisis, which was already impacting on demand for services, particularly housing support and homelessness services.
- The impact of inflation on costs, such as in relation to contracted services.
- The pay award of £1,925 extra per staff member, which would create an extra pressure on the budget. The payments would include back pay and would be provided in December 2022 to staff. This would need to be covered from reserves and the figures would be included in the financial and performance monitoring report for quarter 3 of the financial year.

In terms of capital expenditure, there had been £4.8 million expenditure allocated to the Burcot Lane project. Some of this expenditure would need to be carried forward to 2023/24.

The report also provided an update on the Council's performance in relation to the strategic purposes in the Council Plan. Data provided in relation to measures had been included in the report. This data would be important to help inform difficult decisions in respect of tranche 2 of the budget.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the content and in so doing commented on the use of funding from business rates. Concerns were raised that, as no increases had been announced to business rates in the Chancellor's autumn statement, this income might

not be a reliable source moving forward. However, Officers explained that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had recently announced that he was not aiming to reset business rates and Officers were anticipating that this fund would remain available for several years.

Concerns were raised about the financial pressures that had arisen in relation to housing support and the implications for the Council. Officers explained that the Council had spent the authority's allocated housing support grant (DHP) by August 2022. This situation was unusual, as usually some funding remained available until later into the financial year and this helped to demonstrate the level of demand at the present time. Members were advised that other Councils were in a similar position, with Redditch Borough Council also having spent its full grant for housing support.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The current financial position in relation to Revenue and Capital Budgets for the period July to September 2022 be noted; and
- 2) The Q2 Performance data for the Period July to September 2022 be noted.
- 3) That £150,000 is allocated from the Financial Services Reserve to fund cross council improvements in HR and ICT.

54/22

SECTION 24 REPORT

The Interim Section 151 Officer presented a report on the subject of the Section 24 Notice that had been issued by the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, to the Council.

In 2021, the Council had experienced a number of issues that had resulted in the non-submission of the authority's accounts for 2020-21. The Council had been working hard to address these issues, starting with work on the Financial Recovery Plan and various reports and monitoring updates had been presented for Members' consideration on this subject at meetings of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, Cabinet and the Finance and Budget Working Group. A lot of progress had been achieved, including through the introduction of combined financial and performance monitoring reports, which were prepared and presented on a quarterly basis, and the provision of regular risk monitoring reports to the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee and Cabinet.

There had been a number of key issues that had impacted on the non-submission of the 2020-21 accounts including:

- Problems with the new finance Tech1 system, particularly with the cash receipting part of the system.

- High turnover of staff from the Financial Services department.
- The Covid-19 pandemic.

The external auditors were aware that the Council had made a lot of progress but had concluded that a Section 24 Notice needed to be issued to the authority in relation to the non-submission of the accounts. The Council had resolved the issues with the cash receipting part of the Tech1 system by the date of the Cabinet meeting and it was anticipated that the authority would be in a position to submit the 2020-21 accounts prior to the Council meeting on 7th December 2022.

Members subsequently discussed the report in detail and commented on the discussions that had occurred when the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee had considered the report at a meeting on 9th November 2022. It was noted that some Members of the Committee had voted against the Section 24 Notice and questions were raised about whether this was a viable course of action and what the repercussions could be for this action. Officers explained that the key point was to ensure that the 2020-21 accounts were submitted as soon as possible. Once this occurred, all of the recommendations detailed in both the Section 24 Notice and the Interim External Auditor's Annual Report 2020-21 would have been resolved.

Reference was made to the wording of the recommendation detailed in the report and Members noted that whilst all Councillors might be minded to approve the Section 24 Notice, some might not feel comfortable supporting the management responses. In this context, it was suggested that it might have been more appropriate for there to have been two recommendations on this subject made by the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee. However, whilst it was acknowledged that Members could consider proposing this in two parts at the Council meeting, it was important to ensure that the Cabinet considered the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee's recommendation and that there was consistency in the arrangements for reporting on to Council.

RESOLVED to note the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee's recommendation that the Section 24 Statutory Recommendation is accepted and that Council review the recommendation, endorse the actions included in the management responses which form the rectification process required as per legislation.

55/22

INTERIM EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

The Interim Section 151 Officer presented the Interim External Auditor's Annual Report 2020-21 for Cabinet's consideration.

Members were informed that the report focused on the period up to 31st March 2022. The external auditors had acknowledged that the Council had already undertaken a lot of work to address issues that had arisen in 2021. However, five key recommendations, focusing on financial

reporting and monitoring arrangements in 2021/22, had been included in the report. In addition, a number of improvement recommendations had also been included in the report.

The action that had already been taken to address the recommendations in the report included:

- Providing an open and transparent assessment of the issues and proposing plans to address these issues in the Financial Recovery Plan.
- Combining financial and performance monitoring reports for the first time. These reports had already been prepared for quarters 1 and 2 of the 2022/23 financial year.
- Updating the Council's risk management arrangements and presenting risk monitoring reports for Members' consideration.
- Delivering savings in the MTFP 2023/24 to 2025/26 in two tranches.

The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee would monitor the Council's progress over time in terms of addressing the recommendations detailed in this report.

RESOLVED to note the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee's recommendations that

- 1) They agree the 5 Key Recommendations and 13 Improvement Recommendations within this report.
- 2) They agree the Management Actions contained within this report will rectify these issues.

56/22

FEES AND CHARGES UPDATE

The Interim Section 151 Officer presented an update to the fees and charges 2023/24 for Members' consideration.

Cabinet was reminded that the majority of fees and charges had been approved by Council in November 2022. However, fees for services for which the Council was in direct competition with private sector organisations had not been detailed in that report and these were therefore being reported for Members' consideration at this stage. The majority of fees and charges had increased by 10 per cent and the proposals in the update were consistent with this approach.

RECOMMENDED the approval of all exempt fees and charges.

The meeting closed at 7.04 p.m.

Chairman

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

21ST NOVEMBER 2022, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors C.A. Hotham (Chairman), J. Till (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter, A. J. B. Beaumont, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, R. J. Hunter, H. J. Jones, P. J. Whittaker (as substitute) and C. J. Spencer

Observers: Councillor S. A. Webb and Councillor G. N. Denaro (on Microsoft Teams).

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. P. Carpenter (on Microsoft Teams), Mrs. D. Poole (on Microsoft Teams), Ms. J. Willis (on Microsoft Teams), Mrs. R. Nicholls (on Microsoft Teams), and Mr. M. Sliwinski.

45/2022

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Kriss and P. McDonald with Councillor P. Whittaker attending as a named substitute for Councillor A. Kriss.

Apologies were also submitted on behalf of the Leader of the Council, Councillor K. May, and the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety, Councillor M. Sherrey, who were invited to participate at the meeting in the capacity of observers.

46/2022

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest nor whipping arrangements on this occasion.

47/2022

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 11TH AND 24TH OCTOBER 2022

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings held on 11th October and 24th October 2022 were considered.

The Board took a short adjournment to allow for further inspection of the minutes of 24th October 2022 which were published in a supplementary agenda.

Councillor Spencer advised of a typographical error in the minutes of the meeting of 24th October 2022, whereby Councillor Spencer had not been recorded as present at the meeting when she had been in attendance. The Democratic Services Officer in attendance undertook to correct this error.

RESOLVED that subject to the amendment detailed in the preamble above, the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 11th October and 24th October 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

48/2022

CCTV DIGITALISATION UPGRADE

The Head of Community and Housing Services presented a report on CCTV digitalisation upgrade. It was reported that since the last update on the CCTV scheme in April 2022 a further six camera locations in the District had been upgraded to digital and all cameras within the scope of the CCTV scheme had been replaced.

It was noted that although most transmission lines were now digital and many analogue links had been replaced, three camera locations in the District remained on analogue transmission. It was underlined that these analogue transmission cameras still provided day and night surveillance capability. Members were informed that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had provided funding to the Council's CCTV project for the last five years and Officers recommended that decision on upgrading the remaining analogue cameras to digital be paused pending the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) grant funding becoming available.

Following the presentation, Members discussed the report in detail and commented on the viability of either funding the upgrades to the remaining analogue cameras from the capital budget or holding discussions with the PCC regarding provision of funding for this purpose. Officers responded that it was unlikely that the PCC would be in a position to provide funding for this in the next few years and that the Council would be prudent to be mindful of any additional capital and revenue costs given the current pressures. Most Members present expressed their preference for prioritising the upgrades of the remaining analogue cameras to digital and considered it pertinent that the PCC be approached on the issue of possible funding for these upgrade works. Members also felt that both the capital costs of these works and the annual revenue costs to maintain the new digital cameras were affordable for the Council and therefore it should be recommended to Cabinet that these upgrade works be carried out. Following the discussion, Members voted on the matter, and it was:

RECOMMENDED

- 1) that £48,600 be included in the Capital Programme and £6,030 per annum in the revenue budget as part of the review of the

Medium Term Financial Plan for the upgrade of CCTV cameras at Brook Road (Rubery), Wythall and Alverchurch, and;

- 2) that all options for obtaining external funding for CCTV system upgrades be pursued.

49/2022

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Consideration of this item was deferred to a future meeting of the Board.

50/2022

UPDATE ON THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

The Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy presented an update on the development of the Corporate Performance Dashboard and in doing so reported that the dashboard was in the final stages of development and would soon be available to view by Members and the public via the Council's website.

It was noted that the public view of the dashboard would not incur licence costs that would otherwise need to be paid when issuing individual licences and this option also provided greater flexibility for Members in that the publicly available dashboard could be accessed from any PC that had an internet connection. It was highlighted that due to licensing policy for the Power BI suite, it would not be possible to provide access to the dashboard on a generic machine as licences were allocated to each named user.

The Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy reported that it was anticipated the ongoing cost of the dashboard would not exceed £3,000 in licence costs per year. In addition, the staff time needed to populate the system would be less than the time taken to populate the current alternative, which was less efficient. It was highlighted that this was on the assumption that Members agreed to using the dashboard in this format, that was by having access through the publicly available version of the dashboard.

It was highlighted that the use of automated processes to generate quarterly reports, for example, which was envisioned in the future would further reduce staff time costs. Members were informed that new measures would be added to the dashboard on an ongoing basis following the live release.

Following the presentation of the update, the following comments and answers were made:

- Officers clarified that the dashboard measures would be populated and updated on a regular basis to ensure the performance measures provided up-to-date performance status. It was noted that different measures were reported on a different time basis as data was collected monthly, quarterly or annually depending on the measure in question.

- Members expressed disappointment that the corporate performance dashboard had not yet been launched despite this matter being discussed in meetings for a number of years. In response, Officers reported that the project to replace the old system began in November 2020 and the performance dashboard would be available to view within the next two weeks.
- It was highlighted that in addition to the dashboard Members now receive a quarterly performance update report from Officers.
- It was explained that in the public view of the dashboard that would be available to Members there was an ability to filter data to allow for detailed analysis. The licensed users would have more functionality including the ability to input data and slightly more advanced filtering settings.
- It was noted that discussion would be held between the Leader of the Council and Officers on whether there was a need for Power BI licences to be obtained for Cabinet Members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

51/2022

FUEL POVERTY TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The Chairman of the Fuel Poverty Task Group, Councillor R. Hunter, presented the group's final report.

The Board was informed that at the start of the review there had already been 5,000 households living in fuel poverty in Bromsgrove and, based on reports from Act on Energy of recent increases in requests for help and support, it was likely that this number was growing. The Fuel Poverty Task Group had obtained evidence from a range of expert witnesses representing both the Council and external organisations and the group's recommendations were based on the evidence that had been gathered. These recommendations were ready to be implemented and this action would be timely.

The Chairman of the Fuel Poverty Task Group took the opportunity to thank all the Task Group Members, witnesses and Officers for their contributions. He further commented that some of the actions outlined in the recommendations were already being undertaken, for example a leaflet on fuel poverty had already been introduced which contained useful information for the benefit of local residents. In addition, there was information already available on the Council webpages and links redirecting to the resources available on the Act of Energy website.

Following the presentation, Members discussed the work of the Task Group and the following responses were provided to questions asked:

- The Council and Act on Energy did a lot of work around publicity, to encourage people to come forward if they were struggling with energy costs or were in fuel poverty, and in addition sought to engage with those residents who were eligible but did not come forward.

- Some Members had also been distributing energy advice leaflets in their Wards, encouraging residents to seek support with energy and heating costs. The leaflets provided a list of all support services available locally.
- The Council also worked through Bromsgrove Partnership to coordinate the response across the District including the rural parts and encourage people to approach the Council without stigma.
- It was noted that Act on Energy had been receiving an unprecedented number of calls and they were hearing from many people who did not access their services before.
- Members discussed the support that was available through Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) including information about support with opening a bank account for people with poor credit rating and other financial tips through money advice section on the CAB's website.
- It was requested by Members that residents be signposted to Citizen Advice Bromsgrove (CAB) information on cost of living and fuel poverty through a full-page feature in the local newspapers and a feature in the local rural magazine.

During the discussion, Members expressed satisfaction with the report and the recommendations as proposed in the Fuel Poverty Task Group, subject to a minor change to recommendation 6, to require that the Cabinet should actively explore all external funding options available to the Council to support Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups.

On being put to the vote the Fuel Poverty Task Group report recommendations, subject to a minor change to recommendation 6, were endorsed to be recommended to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:

- 1) The Council ensures its webpages are up to date and takes a proactive approach in promoting the various areas of support (including an up to date list of Warm Hubs/Spaces and support provided by local libraries in the District) available through as many different mediums as possible. For example, through its social media account and by learning from the best practice approaches used by other Councils;
- 2) A poster or booklet is created which includes a simple straight forward guide to all the various areas of support – this should be accessible in local buildings such as the libraries and Councillors provided with copies to hand out to residents or distribute for display on noticeboards;
- 3) Councillors are provided with the contact details of Act on Energy and encouraged to proactively liaise with the outreach workers to ensure access to support is readily available to residents within their Wards;

- 4) The Bromsgrove Partnership, supported by the Council, takes a lead role in the collection of high quality intelligence/data to ensure that the Council's partners can target their interventions where support is most needed;
- 5) The Bromsgrove Partnership (with input from all District Councillors and/or relevant Parish Councils) take a lead role in co-ordinating appropriate support, to ensure it is readily available for residents throughout the whole district, for example this could mean the provision of a Warm Hub/Space and the facilities offered by the local libraries;
- 6) The Cabinet actively explores all external funding options (for example the UK Shared Prosperity Fund) available to the Council in order to ensure that, if needed, it is able to provide financial support to VCS organisations throughout the district in providing the support detailed in recommendation 5 above.

52/2022

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman advised that there had been a meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group on 17th November 2022, with the following items discussed at that meeting:

- update on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2023/24 to 2025/26;
- the Notice of Motion that was referred for consideration by the Finance and Budget Working Group at the meeting of Full Council held on 3rd November 2021;
- Finance and Performance Monitoring Report Q2 2022/23; and,
- An update on Fees and Charges 2023/24.

The Chairman reported that following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, it was announced that councils would be allowed to raise Council Tax by up to 2.99 per cent for the next financial year. It was also noted with respect to MTFP that the provisional local government financial settlement for 2023/24 was now expected to be announced in the week commencing 19th December 2022.

With respect to the Motion referred by the Full Council for consideration of the Finance and Budget Working Group, it was stated that it related to a proposal for the business case to be produced for providing free short term car parking for Blue Badge holders in all Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) owned car parks and subsequently considered as part of the budget setting process. The Chairman reported that although most Members considered the provision of this was considered prohibitively expensive for the Council at the current time, the Working Group asked Officers to first investigate if more up-to-date data could be provided from available sources, such as parking ticket machines, to determine the demand for Blue Badge parking spaces in Bromsgrove.

With regards to the Finance and Performance Monitoring Report for Q2, the Chairman reported that the Working Group was informed that the Council was forecasting a revenue overspend in the region of £342,000 for the 2022/23 financial year as of end of Q2. It was brought to the attention of Members that the staff pay award for 2022/23 had now been agreed, which presented an additional revenue cost of approximately £676,000 and which would need to be accounted for in the 2022/23 financial year.

With regards to Fees and Charges, the Chairman reported that at its 17th November meeting the Working Group considered those fees and charges that were for discretionary services provided by the Council and for which the Council was in direct competition with private sector organisations.

The Chairman announced that Councillor J. King had submitted a request to join the Finance and Budget Working Group for the remainder of this municipal year. During the discussion that followed, some Members argued in favour of holding a vote on the matter at this meeting. The majority of Members, however, put forward a proposal to defer making the decision on the matter to a future meeting to enable Officers to prepare a report detailing the constitutional implications of a Councillor who was not currently a Overview and Scrutiny Board Member joining the Finance and Budget Working Group.

This proposal was put to the vote and it was:

RESOLVED that a decision on the matter detailed in the pre-amble above be deferred to the next scheduled meeting of the Board when an Officer report is presented on the implications of a non- Overview and Scrutiny Board Councillor joining the Finance and Budget Working Group.

53/2022

TASK GROUP UPDATES

The Board received a final report on the Fuel Poverty Task Group earlier in the meeting under Minute No. 51/2022 (Fuel Poverty Task Group – Final Report). There were no other ongoing task groups to report before the Board.

54/2022

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor S. Baxter, the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), reported that she submitted her apologies from the last meeting of that Committee. She reported that a considerable number of items had been added to the Worcestershire HOSC Work Programme.

RESOLVED that the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update be noted.

55/2022

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Cabinet Work Programme be noted.

56/2022

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

Members were advised that an additional meeting of the Board would need to be scheduled in early February 2023 to consider the annual report of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership. The Democratic Services Officer would be in contact to agree on the exact date in due course.

Councillor Colella requested that data on the 'Exit Interviews' carried out with the Corporate Finance department staff who had left during 2020 until the end of 2021 be added to the Board's Work Programme for the February meeting, subject to any redactions necessary for protection of personal information.

The Chairman announced that items on the Levelling Up Fund projects (Windsor Street and Old Market Hall sites) and on climate change update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder had also been added to the work programme for the January meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED that, subject to the preamble above, the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.14 p.m.

Chairman

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Item 4 – Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 21st November 2022 - CCTV Digitalisation Upgrade

The Overview and Scrutiny Board considered a CCTV Digitalisation Upgrade report at the meeting held on 21st November 2022. At this meeting, Members agreed the following:

RECOMMENDATIONS to Cabinet

- 1) that £48,600 be included in the Capital Programme and £6,030 per annum in the revenue budget as part of the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan for the upgrade of CCTV cameras at Brook Road (Rubery), Wythall and Alvechurch, and;
- 2) that all options for obtaining external funding for CCTV system upgrades be pursued.

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Bromsgrove Centres Strategy

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services
Report Author	Job Title: Bromsgrove Centres Manager Contact email: Lyndsey.berry@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881221
Wards Affected	Bromsgrove Central, Sanders Park, Hagley West, Hagley East, Rubery North, Rubery South, Barnt Green, Alvechurch Village, Drakes Cross, Catshill North, Catshill South, Aston Fields
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	n/a
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	
Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet RESOLVE that:-

The Bromsgrove Centres Strategy & Action Plan 2023-2026 attached at Appendix 1 be approved.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Bromsgrove District Council has recognised the need for a centres management function since 2017 when the Centres Manager role was established and hosted through a shared service. Unfortunately, buoyancy in the job market has led to issues with recruitment and retention to the role resulting in some initiatives in the previous centre's strategy not being implemented. The Council have since taken the positive decision to reevaluate the Centres Manager role and bring back in house with a successful appointment to the post in February 2022. The key focus of this role is to develop and implement centre strategies and town centre management initiatives that aim to improve the vitality and viability of the various towns, to identify and co-ordinate opportunities, to inject a new vibrancy and energy into Bromsgrove centres, strengthen communication and support local businesses.

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- 2.2 This strategy is based upon eight centres across the district working to those boundary's outlined within the Bromsgrove Local Plan. The strategy will cover a three-year period with an action plan which will be reviewed annually.

The eight Bromsgrove centres managed as part of this strategy are:

- Bromsgrove town centre
- Rubery Village
- Barnt Green Village
- Hagley Village
- Catshill
- Wythall
- Alvechurch Village
- Aston Fields

This strategy will also complement and support the work of the Parish Councils, Business and Trader Associations and other key stakeholders in each of the centres with a focus on developing shared ambitions and actions.

- 2.3 A key focus of the Bromsgrove Centres Manager during this first year is to revisit existing plans & strategies and ascertain operational challenges/works to be completed. To date these have included:

Public Realm Improvements

- Repair/replacement of high street uplighters/cabling work - lights are now on timers and can be adjusted to light up different sections of the relevant buildings.
- Repainting of main street furniture on the high street complete
- Liaison with WCC to ensure replacement of tarmac areas to be completed by WCC by end of the year.
- Cleansing of high street commissioned and completed once tarmac works are finished.

Markets

- Attending regular meetings with traders and markets manager
- Action plan agreed with trader representative for improvement areas

Traffic

- Reduced number of vehicles on high street after work on enforcing existing TRO and liaising with businesses.
- Work ongoing with businesses to assess delivery needs and aligning hours of TRO with markets if deemed appropriate.

Funding

- Welcome Back Fund completed

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- Projects submitted for UKSPF

Engagement

- Traders' meetings
- Forming TC database for regular updates to high street businesses
- Supporting new Town Centre Steering group
- Setting up agents' group

- 2.4 The Bromsgrove District Centres Strategy offers a new impetus and focus to deliver targeted projects/initiatives and details actions needed to be taken to develop a robust and thriving economy in each of the centres. Partnership and joined up working are critical to achieving to the vision and project objectives.

2.5 **Vision**

“Our towns and villages are at the heart of the community and as such their vitality and economic future should be supported, promoted and enabled”

Over the next three years we will work together to make all Bromsgrove centres a place that attract more businesses, shoppers, workers, residents, and visitors who can enjoy a varied and eclectic mix of outlets and venues.

2.6 **Outcomes**

Outcomes are the result of outputs (i.e. they are longer term measures). The value of any project cannot be measured without defining success. Outcomes are specific, measurable, and meaningful. The outcomes in this plan form key thematic under which projects and initiatives will be delivered and how we measure success and impact.

- Accessibility
- Safety and Security
- Marketing and Promotion
- Markets
- Business Support
- Public Realm
- Historic Environment and Heritage
- The Future

- 2.7 These outcomes have been adopted for all centres and the strategy features a section focussing on each of the centres.

2.8 **Thematics and key projects**

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Outlined below are the key thematics of the strategy and some example projects. Please note the list is not exhaustive. The contents of the strategy follow the order as set out below.

Key Regeneration Proposals and Development Sites

Summary of key development sites in Bromsgrove town centre

Accessibility

Bromsgrove town centre car parks, access and servicing overview

Signage and waymarking

Cycling Routes & Public transport

Review of relevant Traffic Orders

Safety and Security

Bromsgrove Town Centre Management Task Group

Licensing Savi Scheme

Bromsgrove Town Centre Pubwatch Scheme

Bromsgrove Radio Link Scheme

Marketing and Branding

Co-ordinated marketing and branding strategy

Better Bromsgrove brand

Tourism

Events

Website

Social media training

Markets

Love Your Market campaign

Artisan/Street Food Markets

Christmas Themed Events

Business Support

Signposting to funding and business support programmes

Public Realm

Bromsgrove Town Centre Public Realm audit and enhancements

Enforcement

Historic Environment and Heritage

A voice in planning

Support for Local historical societies and community groups

Interactive Heritage Trail

Future

Business Improvement District (Bromsgrove Town Centre)

External Funding opportunities

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2.9 Projects for outlying centres

Wythall

Better Bromsgrove Together marketing
Business Support

Catshill

Marketing and Promotion
Events including Christmas and In Bloom
Public Realm improvements

Alvechurch Village

Marketing and Promotion
Events
Public Realm Improvements
Business Support

Hagley Village

Marketing and Promotion
Events
Communication
Public Realm Improvements
Business Support

Barnt Green Village

Marketing and Promotion
Events
Public Realm Improvements
Business Support

Rubery Village

Public Realm Improvements
Radio Link & DISC Scheme
Business Support
Rubery Village Business Association support
Events
Rubery in Bloom support

Please note that these lists are not exhaustive and may change as dialogue progresses with both ward members/parish councils and community groups. The Centres manager will amend as necessary to support the vibrancy of the centres whilst ensuring the communication remains key throughout.

2.8 Monitoring Arrangements

The Bromsgrove Centres Strategy 2023-2026 sets out Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to monitor and evaluate the

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effectiveness and success of the strategy. Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy will be undertaken in partnership with Council colleagues, West Mercia Police, businesses and key stakeholders. Data is being compiled to ensure the Bromsgrove Centres Strategy has a baseline position to monitor and evaluate projects and initiatives. This will also allow us to see how they are benefitting the economic viability of each centre and measures of success.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Implementation of the action plan is supported by the Bromsgrove Centres Manager budget. Larger and more significant projects are incorporated into existing revenue and capital budgets, such as the Public Realm Phase 2 programme included within the Levelling Up Fund Programme.
- 3.2 The Bromsgrove Centres Manager is also responsible for attracting external funding to support the aims and objectives of the action plan. Further funding will be explored from external sources to deliver future objectives.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no legal implications arising out of the report.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The Bromsgrove Centres Action Plan 2023-2026 is aligned with the Strategic Purpose 'Run and grow a successful business: strengthen the vibrancy & viability of our towns & district centres'.
- 5.2 The action plan will also complement and support the work of the Parish Councils, Business and Trader Associations and other key stakeholders in each of the centres with a focus on developing shared ambitions.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.3 The strategy and action plan will seek to address climate change across several initiatives such as EV charging points and taxis where appropriate, Shop Local and Shop Green.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

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Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The Bromsgrove Centres Manager will consider the impact of changes that might arise because of implementing the action plan on those with protected equality characteristics where there is likely to be an impact on residents or service users from any changes of existing services.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 The Bromsgrove Centres Action Plan 2023-26 sets out Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and success of the plan. Monitoring and evaluation of the plan will be undertaken in partnership with Council colleagues, businesses, and key stakeholders.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Risks associated with the delivery of individual projects and activities will be overseen by the Bromsgrove Centres Manager and will also be monitored and managed by the Head of Service.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A – Bromsgrove Centres Strategy 2023-2026

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Karen May	28/11/22
Lead Director / Head of Service	Ruth Bamford – Head of Planning & Regeneration	30/11/22
Financial Services	Claire Felton	30/11/22
Legal Services	Pete Carpenter	30/11/22
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	Alex Pearson 0 Net Zero Project Manager working with BDC Climate Change Officers	September 2022



Bromsgrove Centres Strategy 2023 - 2026



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Introduction

The habits and preferences of how communities use their town and local centres has been changing over many years now. These changes have accelerated during and following the Covid pandemic, particularly the lockdowns. With the added pressure of the current economic climate it's vital that like centres across the country Bromsgrove establishes ways to reinvigorate its centres to create vibrant, sustainable, diverse, and welcoming environments for residents, workers, and visitors.

Bromsgrove District Council has recognised the need for a centres management function since 2017. The key focus of this role is to develop and implement centre strategies and Town Centre management initiatives that aim to improve the vitality and viability of the various towns, to identify and co-ordinate opportunities, to inject a new vibrancy and energy into Bromsgrove centres, strengthen communication and support local businesses.

This strategy is based upon eight centres across the district working to those boundary's outlined within the Bromsgrove Local Plan. The strategy will cover a three-year period with an action plan which will be reviewed annually.

The eight Bromsgrove centres managed as part of this strategy are:

- Bromsgrove Town Centre
- Rubery Village
- Barnt Green Village
- Hagley Village
- Catshill
- Wythall
- Alvechurch Village
- Aston Fields

This strategy will also complement and support the work of the Parish Councils, Business and Trader Associations and other key stakeholders in each of the centres with a focus on developing shared ambitions and actions. On the back of considerable investment made across the Bromsgrove centres the Bromsgrove Centres Strategy 2023-2026 sets out the vision and aspirations for the eight centres over the next three years. This strategy is flexible enough to adapt to the changing landscape of the district and surrounding developments whilst positively promoting Bromsgrove as a place to visit, work and live. This strategy is a roadmap; bringing together existing proposals and latest ideas to provide a clear, inspirational document supported by businesses and partners.

Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is to:

- Understand the baseline performance of the Town Centre and local centres and the opportunities for change.
- Outline a vision for the Town Centre that is supported by key objectives.
- Identify the priorities for improvement and regeneration in the Town Centre and local centres in line with the key objectives.
- Develop an action plan that outlines the priorities needed and the mechanisms for delivery, including a co-ordinated Town Centre partnership approach that identifies the responsibilities of the District Council alongside other public sector partners, local Town Centre businesses and the local community; and
- Establish how performance will be managed and monitored.

Setting the Context

The British high street is set against an unfavourable economic backdrop which requires new, innovative solutions. Supply chain issues, skills and recruitment, energy and public health crisis resulting from Covid, and climate change are all challenges that are contributing too high inflation, a steep drop in living standards and reduced household spending. This position is not unique to Bromsgrove and the role of Councils in providing strategic place-based leadership is widely endorsed. The Government and the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities has recently set out how the government wants every local Council to have a long-term vision in 'a ten, or twenty-year plan' for their Town Centres and that High Streets are an area 'which local Councils can, are and must lead.' The Town Centre had already experienced challenging market conditions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the difficult trading conditions being further exacerbated by the current economic conditions and the wider impact of Ukraine conflict.

The Council has been responding to High Street challenges for several years with business support, provision of the outdoor retail market, events, and larger projects such as the new public realm in the High Street completed in 2014, Townscape Heritage Initiative closed in 2019 and partial redevelopment of the Market Hall Site known as the Birdbox completed in 2020. These interventions have functioned as a platform to secure further funding for Town Centre regeneration through the Levelling Up Fund, detailed later in the Town Centre Section.

The main five area of focus for the strategy going forward are:

1. Breathing new life into empty buildings
2. Supporting high street businesses
3. Improving the public realm
4. Creating safe and clean spaces
5. Celebrating pride in local communities

This strategy will be implemented over the next three years through the role of the Centres Manager whilst collaborating with stakeholders, elected members and internal service areas. The role places a real emphasis on co-ordination and communication and too manage expectations so businesses are clear about how and when the Council can support them for e.g. a business may be struggling with high rents which if in private ownership the council would be unable to reduce however as part of the centres management function there would be open dialogue with landlords and letting agents to look at comparable rental rates and signpost businesses to any assistance available.

Consultation

The following engagements have been undertaken:

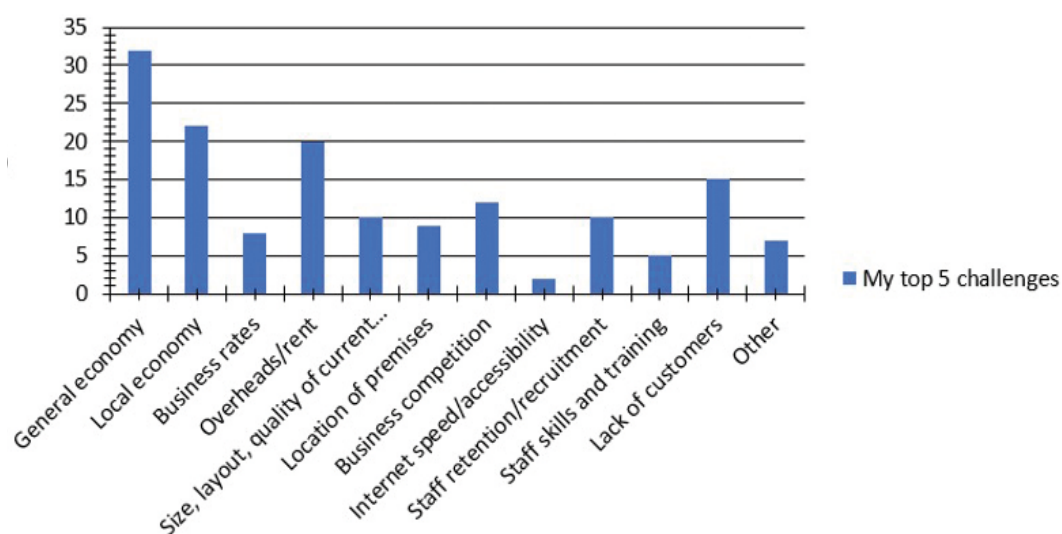
- BDC Council 'Business Consultation Survey (October 2022)
- Feedback from high street businesses (July 2022 – ongoing)
- Internal officer/service evidence gathering (Sept 2022 – ongoing).

Business Consultation Survey (October 2022)

The survey conducted in October included operational questions about the businesses themselves, challenges they face moving forward and their opinions on the centre in which they are located. The feedback from this was to ensure the priorities of the Council align with the businesses where possible and how we can drive footfall and vibrancy of the centres over the next 3 years. The positive from the results received are they support the actions put forward by the Centres Manager and projects proposed for external funding such as the shop front improvements programme and addressing empty properties.

Results Headlines

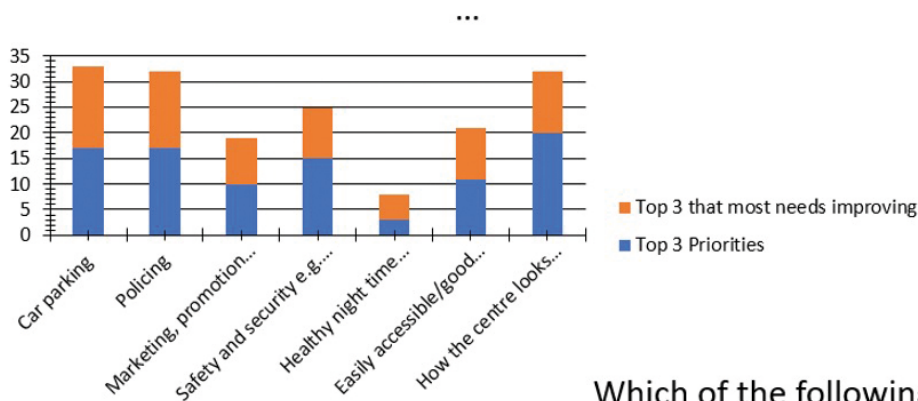
What are the top 5 challenges your business is currently facing? Please select up to 5 options only from the following list and please leave the rest blank.



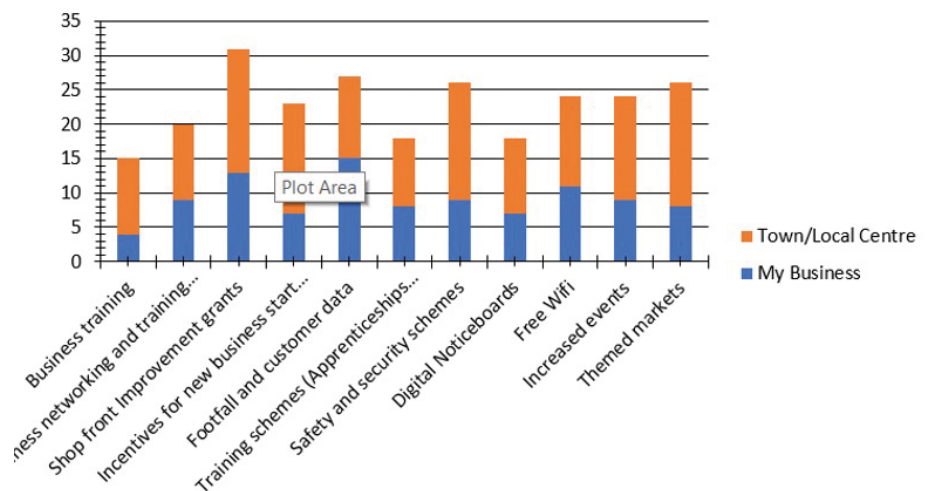
Centres Enhancement

Thinking generally about the Town/Local Centre, which of the following would you consider to be a top priority and which most need improving?

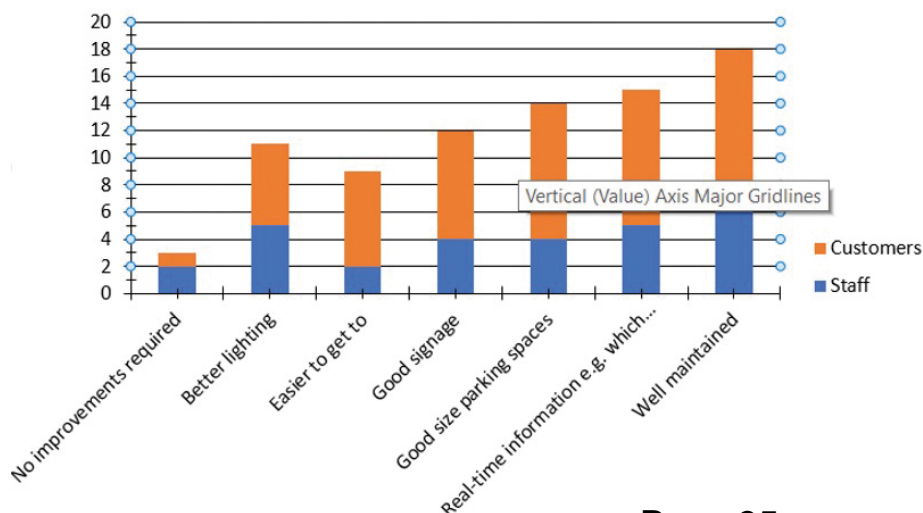
Please select up to 3 options only from each column.



Which of the following improvements do you think would benefit your business and/or the Town/Local Centre? Please tick all that apply



What, if anything, could be done to improve car parking in Bromsgrove Town Centre for both your staff and customers? Please tick all that apply



Business feedback through the Centres Manager and survey has shown that whilst businesses are generally supportive of the large regeneration projects and improvements, operational issues on the ground such as street cleansing and addressing empty shops/derelict buildings rank highly. The High Street particularly needs to have a 'positive feel' where both businesses and customer feel safe, secure and the high street is an inviting place to spend time.

"Digital noticeboards sounds like a progressive idea, however I feel that addressing the safety and security within the town first would be of benefit. It would be very disheartening to see money spent on ideas like this to then see them being damaged or vandalised."

"The high street is a mess - no cleaners, not enough bins and same businesses always get invited to things but no other businesses."

Business felt that the centres were generally a safe place during business hours however moving into the early evening/late night where there was an evening economy this changed with issues of antisocial behaviour, noise issues and parking problems.

Impact of the Multi story closing, car parks being filled with businesses/staff with no availability for customers and rates were raised through the survey and businesses through the centre management.

Communication and Networking

This was key for all centres with lack of information and events being advertised last minute as key areas for improvement.

"People stay at event and don't come down to us! And events planned down Worcester Road are always cancelled or permission is last minute so no planning or advertising can happen."

"More needs to be done with the business owners and shop managers so we are all working together and not against each other - regular meetings should take place to discuss issues and find out what plans are being discussed for the Town Centre."

"Communication would help support businesses in Bromsgrove and talking with Bromsgrove businesses as a group on a quarterly basis would also help."

This is not a fixed piece of work and will need constant review and evolution through regular communication and consultation processes with Ward Councillors, Parish Councils and local business and community representatives. Business and Customer Surveys will be conducted annually and reviewed as part of the action plan.

Vision and Strategic Objectives

Over the next three years we will work together to make all Bromsgrove centres a place that attract more businesses, shoppers, workers, residents, and visitors who can enjoy a varied and eclectic mix of outlets and venues. Our streets will be attractive, clean, and well connected in style and quality. Together we will deliver a strategic and operational plan of economic development initiatives, public realm improvements, events, and marketing promotions. Bromsgrove centres will be well prepared to respond to market challenges and fully capitalise on investment. The Bromsgrove Centres Strategy will be delivered through a network of action plans that interlink all the centres, respond to data from the Bromsgrove District Council Town Centre Healthcheck, share best practise and bring a new connectivity between Bromsgrove District town and villages, without losing their individual and unique characteristics.

Our towns and villages are at the heart of the community and as such their vitality and economic future should be supported, promoted, and enabled.

Outcomes

Accessibility

That Bromsgrove Centres are easily accessible by all sectors of the community.

Safety and Security

All Bromsgrove District Centres are a safe place for everyone to visit, live and work.

Marketing and Promotion

All centres have a clear branding, coherent marketing strategy and events calendar.

Markets

In addition to developing the Bromsgrove Town Centre outdoor market host one-off, seasonal and specialist markets throughout the year.

Business Support

Businesses have a clear and efficient pathway to business and grant support.

Public Realm

All our centres are clean and attractive with a high-quality environment and clearly defined gateways.

Historic Environment and Heritage

High quality and innovative urban design that protects the integrity of our centre's heritage assets and historical environment.

Climate Change

Aim towards reducing our Carbon footprint within the centres.

The Future

Secure external funding to support the plans of all centres.

Progress a Business Improvement District proposal for Bromsgrove Town Centre.

Bromsgrove Town Centre

Bromsgrove Town Centre is a key location within the Bromsgrove District providing a focus for retail, tourism, leisure, community and cultural activities. It is an important economic driver providing employment, business and development opportunities. Bromsgrove has extremely good road links and benefits from its central location and excellent connectivity to adjacent economies and markets.



Bromsgrove is a traditional market town and for the most part is an attractive and vibrant place to visit and work in. The main High Street is the prime retail area of the Town Centre and there is a good mix of national and independent retailers. The town also boasts unique and diverse secondary shopping areas in particular The Strand and Worcester Road.

A rich concentration of independent retailers and considerable investment the National Lottery Townscape Heritage Initiative has changed the dynamic and image of these areas and offers strong promotional opportunities that will encourage visitors to explore areas of the town otherwise sometimes overlooked.

Despite considerable investment made on the High Street previously Bromsgrove Town Centre will benefit from further regeneration and enhancement. This includes diversifying the overall mix of uses within the centre, including the provision of new homes, entertainment and leisure venues and strengthening the retail offer in the prime area whilst protecting and maintaining the diversity of secondary retail.

Arriving at and moving around the Town Centre easily and efficiently is also key to the town's success. Enhancements to public transport, cycling and walking links, pedestrian accessibility and improved connectivity to Bromsgrove railway station would help its legibility - making sure the Town Centre is easy and convenient to access.

A strong and confident approach to reshaping structures with fresh ideas and approaches to the management of Bromsgrove Town Centre will send out the message that the town is in a good position to move forward and capitalise on the regeneration taking place in around the centre.

This strategy will align with the Bromsgrove Town Centre 2040 Vision to boost the delivery of high-quality housing, provide new flexible and multifunctional workspaces for creative industries, upgrade recreational spaces to increase visitor 'dwell' time, and enhance existing public realm and green infrastructure.

Regeneration

In March 2021, the government launched the Levelling Up Fund to support high value local investment priorities, including local transport schemes, urban regeneration projects and cultural assets. The amount of funding that each area receives was 'determined on a competitive basis to ensure value for money' and in November 2021, the government approved a £14,492,000 grant for Bromsgrove. The grant will support the redevelopment of the former Market Hall site and pre-development works (demolition and remediation) on the Windsor Street site to enable a future site redevelopment.

Former Market Hall Site

The redevelopment proposals for the site will deliver a landmark building offering flexible office space, business co-working spaces as well as a food and beverage at ground level. The project will also provide a facility for hosting exhibitions and cultural community events.

The design phase for the project has already commenced with planning submission expected in Spring 2023, works on site are programmed to commence in Oct 2023 with an anticipated duration of one year.

Windsor Street Site Redevelopment

This key abandoned brownfield site has been vacant for six years, the Levelling Up Fund element will remove derelict buildings and ensure the site is remediated by March 2024 to make way for future development.

Public Realm

The two development projects will also deliver associated public realm improvements on the High Street South and Chapel Street, helping to improve accessibility and connectivity between the sites and within the Town Centre.

The projects complement each other and represent a coherent set of interventions, as part of a holistic approach by addressing the following common objectives:

- Regeneration and repurposing of two prime Town Centre sites by introducing new uses (commercial, residential and leisure) other than retail.
- Increase Town Centre footfall by bringing more people to work, live and spend time in the centre.
- Improve Town Centre accessibility for pedestrians through public realm improvements and better connectivity between the former Market Hall site, Windsor Street site and the High Street.

School Drive Site (Former Dolphin Centre)

The Dolphin Centre site has been identified as the prime location for residential development, with potential office, workspace and a small scale F&B provision. The Site development options propose a high-quality, green, sustainable and pedestrian-friendly residential neighbourhood on School Drive and improved public realm addressing the needs of the future residents and users.

Access

Bromsgrove Town Centre is relatively compact with little change in levels and is interconnected with streets of defined character and history. The bus station is located within the Town Centre and easily accessible along with car parks predominantly Bromsgrove District Council owned. A key challenge for Bromsgrove Town Centre is to help people easily find their way around. Pedestrian and traffic barriers and poor “waymarking” does not encourage the visitor to “explore” the Town Centre.

Access is crucial to retaining the vitality of the Town Centre and the challenge is to maintain a balance between provision of quality public transport links and facilities, good car, including taxis and business delivery access along with well maintained pedestrian and cycle routes, access for those with limited mobility and children. The challenge now and in the next few years is dealing with increased road use, the impact of major development and highways work and promoting more sustainable methods of travel.

The High Street has benefited from significant investment with £2m of funding spend on new public realm. However, the quality of public realm as identified in other areas is poor in places. The experience of moving around the Town Centre is not attractive or interesting as it could be. Bromsgrove Railway station, whilst operationally delivering passengers close to the Town Centre the links on how to access the Town Centre and the approaching environment requires improvement, creating a true and attractive gateway.

Parking provision is an important part of the overall offer of the Town Centre. It must be high quality, safe and convenient for people arriving in Bromsgrove Town Centre. During 2022 works to improve and modernise parking services have increased payment options with a Cashless Payment System.

Outputs

- **Access and Parking**

We will continue to monitor parking and access for both business and customers throughout centres and reviews carried out as required.

- **Signage and Waymarking**

As part of the “declutter” and public realm works we will develop a clear strategy for signage, including digital signage and waymarking in the town to make it easy for people to get where they want to be.

- **Cycling Routes**

We will consider where cycle routes can be created and existing ones promoted to encourage cycling into the Town Centre, adopting a healthy lifestyle and reducing the number of cars accessing the Town Centre.

- **Public Transport**

Receive data from public transport providers and partnerships to monitor services and accessibility to the Town Centre to support customers and businesses.

- **Access For All Strategy**

We will work with and consult all sectors of the community including the Engagement and Equalities Partnership (Bromsgrove) to ensure all developments and improvements promote and provide access for all.

**Making it easier for everyone to move around
and explore Bromsgrove Town Centre**

Safety and Security

Historically Bromsgrove Town Centres night time economy has not enjoyed a positive reputation and attracted negative press. A key priority of the Bromsgrove Centres Strategy is to support and enhance the night time economy offer.

The Bromsgrove town night time economy comprises of restaurants, bistro, bars, pubs which bring life and vitality to the Town Centre during the evening and into the night.

It is important that the strategy sets out ways in which the evening and night time economy can be strengthened and extends its appeal to a broad range of customers.

The relationship between the night-time and retail economy will be strengthened by improved communication and initiatives that provide all businesses with the confidence and assurance that it is safe and economically viable to do business in Bromsgrove Town Centre.

Through intelligent and pro-active interventions we can ensure that the Town Centre can move from the day-time to the night-time economy in a seamless transition to encourage visitors to stay in the town.

Outputs

- **Bromsgrove Town Centre Management Task Group**

This partnership brings together key decision makers including West Mercia Police, Worcestershire Regulatory Services, CCTV, Licensing and Community Safety to implement initiatives to tackle crime and positively promote the Town Centre.

- **Licensing SAVI Award**

Licensing Security and Vulnerability Initiative - Licensing SAVI is a self-assessment tool designed to help the owners and operators of licensed premises provide a safe and secure environment for their managers, staff, customers and local communities and promoting its four Licensing Objectives:

- The Prevention of Crime and Disorder
- Public Safety
- The Prevention of Public Nuisance
- The Protection of Children from Harm

- **Bromsgrove Town Centre Pubwatch Scheme**

Continued support for the Pubwatch scheme to promote a safe and vibrant night-time economy using the DISC platform.

- **Bromsgrove Radio Link Scheme**

Town Centre radio link scheme will be upgraded to a digital system to improve and strengthen the sharing of intelligence and reporting crime to the Police with support from CCTV.

- **Taxi Review**

Review the taxi provision in the Town Centre to make sure our visitors can get home quickly and safely.

- **Taxi Marshal**

Introduction of a Taxi Marshal scheme to assist in the safe and swift dispersal of customers and visitors on a Friday and Saturday night.

- **Tackling Crime and Anti-social Behaviour**

Partnership approach to new and bespoke initiatives to deal with existing and emerging issues around crime and anti-social behaviour.

- **Bromsgrove Street Pastors Scheme**

Support the Street Pastors scheme as an integral part of the towns commitment to customers care and welfare in the Town Centre on a Friday and Saturday night.

- **Business Training**

Provide access to training for businesses including conflict management and cyber crime.

**Everyone has a safe, happy evening time visit
and experience in our venues**

Markets and Festivals



Good quality and vibrant markets provide competition and choice for consumers. A busy and well-used on street market can be a good indicator of the vitality of the Town Centre. The market should provide platform for local enterprises to start, blossom and grow, adding to the sustainable mix of shops and services in Bromsgrove Town Centre.

The operation of Bromsgrove Town Centre Outdoor Market was brought back 'in-house' in 2018 and is now managed directly through the council. Since 2018 the market has undergone infrastructure improvements and the introduction of new policies and procedures.



The market has successfully returned to Bromsgrove High Street and survived the Covid pandemic where other local and national markets closed, this has resulted in the increase in demand for market stalls in Bromsgrove.

To complement the outdoor market and provide a new diversity to the Town Centre themed markets, food festivals and niche markets will be piloted to inject energy and colour into the Town Centre.

We have the opportunity to build on our cultural mix in Bromsgrove to build a unique offer and tap into the potential for the local community to become involved in shaping and delivering themed markets and festivals.

Outputs

- **Love Your Market**

The Love Your Market campaign run by NABMA is a two week campaign.

- **Outdoor Market**

Continue to grow the existing market to offer a mix of goods and food.

- **Themed Markets**

Provided one off themed market throughout the year.

- **Bromsgrove Christmas Festival**

Annual Christmas themed market and entertainment.

Mixing traditional with the new will create vibrant and exciting markets



Business Support

Bromsgrove Town Centre has many advantages as a place to start up and grow a business. With its excellent location and demographics Bromsgrove District is one of the highest areas in the country for attracting new independent entrepreneur's business start ups.

It is important that the Town Centre plan recognises the need for young thriving businesses to receive a wide menu of business support including marketing and promotion, grants and where to easily access information and help. Mentoring and support can be critical, especially for start-ups and young businesses. The provision of practical and accessible support, advice and guidance in specific areas has proved to be of huge benefit.

North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) look after and support businesses of all ages and stages across North Worcestershire with everything from grants to finding premises. Bromsgrove District Council is also founding member of the Local Economic Partnerships for both Birmingham & Solihull and for Worcestershire.

The strong partnership between NWEDR, Bromsgrove District Council and the Bromsgrove Centres Manager has established a clear route by which businesses can access information promptly to support the ongoing success of their business. Partners will also work closely with local organisations and groups to develop a menu of business support for centres businesses including affordable bespoke training packages.

Outputs

- **Menu Of Provision**

Promote and sign post businesses to training and grant opportunities.

**Independent businesses are the trend setters
and creative entrepreneurs of our centres**

Public Realm

The public realm comprises of the gateways, streets, walkways and open spaces within the Town Centre. The public realm can be the first impression a visitor experiences and influences the enjoyment of the visitor experience. It creates a sense of place and identity and offers an attractive setting for a variety of activities whether it is sitting in the sunshine enjoying a coffee, attending events and markets or simply passing through.

Tourism, culture and the arts can make a significant contribution to the Town Centre and are key components of the economic prosperity of Bromsgrove. The involvement of artists and the creative sector from the outset of the design of any proposal, in the creation of both place and space, can transform the identity and quality of the design, broker new community engagement initiatives and support the importance of the creative industries.

Heritage and arts trails for example can be used to interpret the heritage of Bromsgrove Town Centre including notable buildings. We cannot underestimate the importance of our public realm in creating a character and positive image for Bromsgrove Town Centre.

Outputs

- **Public Realm Plan**
Achieve enhanced connectivity with the regeneration sites through a public realm improvement scheme.
- **Declutter**
Adopt a co-ordinated approach to the design of the public realm in Bromsgrove Town Centre to address the mix of materials, street furniture and planting schemes.
- **Design Quality**
Adopt a unified palette of street furniture and design to create a welcoming first impression.
- **Gateways**
To be improved to create attractive, defined and welcoming approaches to the Town Centre.
- **Biodiversity**
Will be a priority where practicable and achievable to maintain and restore the character of the Town Centre. Creation and protection of environmental assets.

- **Empty Properties and Shopfront Improvements**

Develop a strategy and grant programme to address the visual and economic impact of derelict properties and eyesores, pop up shops, art projects and promotion of new business opportunities

- **Enforcement**

Use the appropriate enforcement action to tackle long standing issues and offences which detract from the attractiveness and cleanliness of the Town Centre including derelict buildings.

- **Business Waste Management and Recycling**

Monitor and review business waste management arrangements in the Town Centre.

We will create a simple, unfussy, yet creative and colourful public realm to strengthen the identity of each centre



Historic Environment and Town Centre Heritage

The protection of the town's heritage is a key component of the plan and statutory protection is afforded to listed buildings and Conservation Areas within the Town Centre.



The established street pattern of many parts of the Town Centre contribute significantly to the character and identity of Bromsgrove which in turn enhances the attractiveness of the Town Centre for visitors, tourists, existing residents and workers.

In order to protect heritage and conservation interests the Town Centre management structure will support the refurbishment and reuse of listed buildings and enhancement to the public realm to make the most of our strong historical features. Bromsgrove Town Centre also boasts unique areas that are connected to the main High Street, in particular Worcester Road. We will seek to create a strong identity and brand through improved signage and public realm improvements that will draw visitors to the areas of strong historical and heritage interest.

An example of improvements already made and having a massive impact is the Bromsgrove Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). Set up in 2012 with a budget of £1.6 million, it is jointly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Worcestershire County Council and Bromsgrove District Council. 6 grant projects in the THI area have been completed, with 3 under construction and a further 10 in the application process.

We intend to build on this success and investment to protect and enhance our historical assets and celebrate this medieval market town.

Outputs

- **Planning**

Support the development of partnerships with local businesses to share information and consult on planning applications so that they share the town's vision and Bromsgrove District Council Local Plan for the protection of historical assets.

- **Interpretation**

As part of the public realm improvements and marketing of the area consider the installation of historical interpretation in paved areas and as mobile apps to celebrate the town's rich history and heritage.

- **Local Historical Societies and Community Groups**

Supported and involved in the promotion of the history and heritage of the Town Centre.

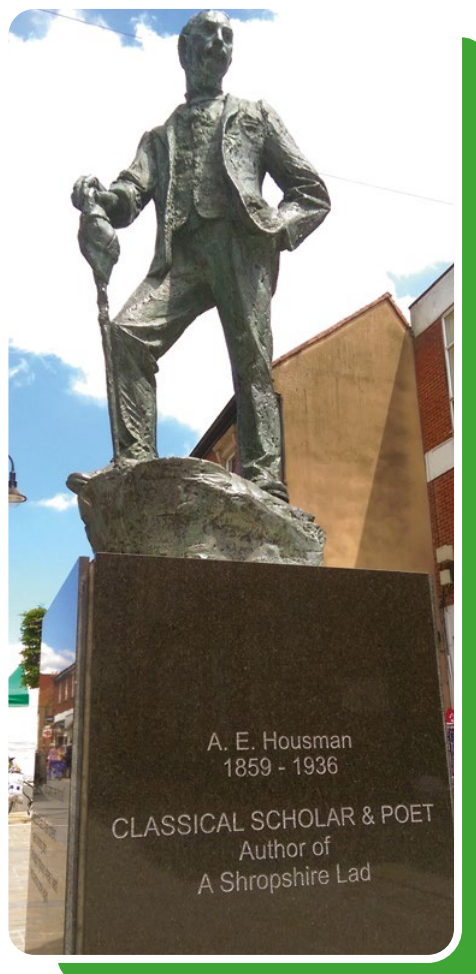
- **Events**

That celebrates our rich historical assets and key anniversaries.

- **Interactive Heritage Trail**

Inclusion of an interactive heritage trail using traditional signage, information and new technologies to bring history "alive".

Protect and celebrate our heritage assets and history whilst delivering high quality urban design



Local Centres

Rubery

Rubery is split between the Bromsgrove District of Worcestershire and Birmingham itself. The main arterial route to the South West the A38 leads from Birmingham city centre through Rubery, Bromsgrove and Worcester.

Rubery Village is a traditional local centre which has the presence of key national retailers alongside a strong and diverse mix of independent businesses.

The challenges for Rubery Village is the lack of large scale floorspace to attract national retailers or mixed use, the Longbridge development and Great Park which has a strong leisure offer.

The public realm in Rubery Village is poor and as most business frontages are privately owned difficult to manage. Previous audits have been carried out in association with the County Council however this does need revisiting with short-, medium- and long-term solutions for public realm enhancements.



Outputs

- **Rubery Village Public Realm**
- **Car Parking Review**
Review the car parking arrangements in Rubery Village.
- **Rubery Business Watch Scheme**
Implementation of the above scheme using the DISC platform.
- **Business Support**
Businesses have a clear and efficient pathway to business and grant support.
- **Communication**
- **Rubery Village Business Association**
Support the RVBA to widen their remit and membership to strengthen business communication. Improve communication with BDC through the Centres Manager. Regular network events.
- **Events**
In partnership with the RVBA, local community groups and businesses develop the events offer.

Catshill

With nearby access to the M5 and M42 motorways, Catshill is within commuting distance by car to both Worcester and Birmingham and as a result the population of the village has grown in recent years.

The local community is served by Catshill Centre, a parade of shops and services nestled in the community with a very local offer. Nationals such as Spar and Co-op have a presence, however the parade is predominantly independents and mainly fast food outlets, produce, a chemist and tattoo parlour.



There are no vacant premises within the parade of shops and businesses appear to be well established. However, the public realm in and around the parade is poor with no apparent planting theme, overgrown and dense vegetation, weeded paved areas and a lack of colour.

Many of the shop frontages are privately owned and offer an opportunity to engage the businesses in a public realm plan to improve the overall appearance of the Centre. The Village Hall sits opposite the shops and is widely used by the local community and voluntary groups. Again this offers an opportunity for businesses to develop new events and establish a relationship with venues.

With its rich history and heritage and local appeal Catshill Centre is well placed to strengthen its appeal and appearance to ensure the long-term sustainability of the area.

Outputs

- **Marketing and Promotion**

Develop a marketing and promotion plan for Catshill under the Better Bromsgrove branding for a co-ordinated and coherent approach

- **Events**

In partnership with the Parish Council, local community groups and businesses develop the events offer.

- **Public Realm**

We will develop a public realm plan to further improve the overall appearance of the Catshill centre including the opportunities to improve shop frontages.

Wythall

Wythall is situated in the north east corner of Worcestershire within the District of Bromsgrove and the County of Worcestershire. The village shares borders with Solihull and Birmingham with a population of over 12,000.

Wythall Parish Council produces a twice-yearly newsletter which is informative and promotes a wide range of community initiatives and achievements indicating a strong local pride and community spirit.

Wythall has a small centre of shops with a very local offer. The Bromsgrove Centres Manager provides a point of contact for businesses and Wythall Parish Council for advice and support.



Outputs

- **Bromsgrove Centres Manager**
To be a point of contact for businesses and Wythall Parish Council.
- **Business Support**
Businesses have a clear and efficient pathway to business and grant support.

Action Plan and Responsibilities 2023/24

Bromsgrove Town Centre					
Objective	Output	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/ Milestone	Funding	Performance Indicator
Bromsgrove Town Centre Management Group	Meets regularly to pro-actively determine priorities, address issues and works closely with Bromsgrove Pubwatch. Reports to Safer Bromsgrove.	BDC Centres Manager	Every 6 weeks	n/a	Regular attendance at meetings
Bromsgrove Pubwatch	Licensing SAVI Initiative.	Pubwatch WRS BDC Centre Manager	Every 8 weeks	TC Budget	Regular attendance at meetings Increase of venues joining Implementation of scheme
Radio Link Scheme	New radio scheme in conjunction with Redditch.	BDC Centres Manager BDC CCTV	TBC	External Funding	Implementation of scheme No of users actively using radios
Street Pastors	Continues to support and help the night-time economy. Regular catch-up meetings and an integral part of the Pubwatch forum.	Street Pastors Team BDC Centres Manager	Attendance at Pubwatch and receipt of weekly reports	n/a	Regular attendance at meetings
Taxi Marshal Scheme	Provide Taxi Marshalling service for night-time economy on key dates throughout the year - to be agreed by TC Management Group.	BDC Centres Manager	Yearly as required	TC Budget	Feedback from businesses/street pastors
Bromsgrove Town Centre Steering Group	Support newly formed steering group, attend meetings and widen communication.	BDC Centres Manager	Every 6 weeks	n/a	Regular attendance at meetings

Bromsgrove Town Centre

Objective	Output	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/ Milestone	Funding	Performance Indicator
Digital High Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate WiFi and other digital opportunities to implement on the High Street. Digital signage would be a good way of providing vital information to the community as well as generating advertising income for Bromsgrove District Council. 	BDC Centres Manager	2023/2024/ alignment with Public Realm Phase 2	External Funding	Business Case compiled
Public Realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 2 Public Realm concept designs. PR audit. Street furniture. 	BDC Centres Manager NWEDR BDC Env. Services WCC	Throughout 2023-2025	LUF External Funding	Update provided to members yearly. Improved perception through customer and business surveys.
Traffic Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the need and apply if applicable for a revised TRO on the High Street. Explore alternative barrier solutions. 	BDC Centres Manager WCC	Implement by end of financial year	TC Budget	Reduced number of vehicles accessing the High Street. Feedback from businesses/ Monitoring Centre.
Shop Local and Independent Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small Business Saturday. Great British High Street. Love Your Market. 	BDC Centres Manager TC Steering Group Pubwatch BDC Leisure	Throughout the year	TC Budget	Calendar of events and marketing strategy. Increased footfall on event days.
Business Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shopfront Improvement Grant. Empty Shops Assist Grant. Growth support. Start up support. F&B Sector support. 	BDC Centre Manager BDC Business Advisor NWEDR Growth Manager	Throughout the year	External Funding	No of businesses in receipt of financial and non-financial business support.

Bromsgrove Town Centre

Objective	Output	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/ Milestone	Funding	Performance Indicator
Town Centre Events Programme	<p>Collaborate with Market/ Leisure teams and external stakeholders to create an attractive and engaging cultural and events programme. Events could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food, drink and music festivals/events. • Outdoor cinema/screenings. • Bromsgrove Festival events. • Street Theatre performances. • Halloween event. • Christmas Lights Switch On. • Christmas Market (& events). 	<p>BDC Centres Manager</p> <p>BDC Comms</p> <p>BDC Leisure</p> <p>TC Steering Group</p>	Throughout the year	External Funding & Revenue Budgets	<p>Production of online calendar</p> <p>Increased footfall on event days.</p>
Communication & Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up TC database of contacts. • Quarterly networking events. • Possible newsletter. 	<p>BDC Centres Manager</p> <p>BDC Comms</p>	Ongoing	TC Budget	<p>Increase communication with businesses.</p> <p>No of businesses attending network events.</p> <p>Increased responses to business surveys.</p>
Landlords Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of landlords/ agents. • Update emails. 	BDC Centres Manager	Ongoing	n/a	No of agents active.

Rubery Village

Objective	Output	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/ Milestone	Funding	Performance Indicator
Public Realm	Audit of existing public realm & future improvements.	BDC Centres Manager WCC	Ongoing	External Funding	Improved perception through customer and business surveys.
Communication & Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build up TC database of contacts. Quarterly networking events. Possible newsletter. 	BDC Centres Manager	Ongoing	TC Budget	Increase communication with businesses. No of businesses attending network events.
Rubery Business Watch	Implementation of scheme using Disc platform.	BDC Centres Manager RBVA	Ongoing	TC Budget	No of businesses actively using the Disc Platform.
Events	Develop events offer for 2023.	BDC Centres Manager RBVA	Ongoing	TC Budget	Increased footfall on event days.

Barnt Green Village

Objective	Output	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/ Milestone	Funding	Performance Indicator
Public Realm	Audit of existing public realm & potential future improvements.	BDC Centres Manager WCC	Ongoing	External Funding	Improved perception through customer and business surveys.
Communication & Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build up database of contacts. Regular communication with PC and Traders. 	BDC Centres Manager	Ongoing	TC Budget	Increase communication with businesses. No of businesses attending network events/ actively engaging.
Events & Promotion	Establish event support and promotional ideas.	BDC Centres Manager BGPC	Ongoing	TC Budget	Increased footfall on event days.

Alvechurch Village

Objective	Output	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/ Milestone	Funding	Performance Indicator
Public Realm	Audit of existing public realm.	BDC Centres Manager WCC	Ongoing	External Funding	Improved perception through customer and business surveys.
Communication & Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build up database of contacts. Regular communication with PC and Traders. 	BDC Centres Manager	Ongoing	TC Budget	Increase communication with businesses. No of businesses attending network events/ actively engaging.
Events & Promotion	Establish event support and promotional ideas.	BDC Centres Manager APC		TC Budget	Increased footfall on event days.

Hagley Village

Objective	Output	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/ Milestone	Funding	Performance Indicator
Public Realm	Audit of existing public realm & potential for future improvements.	BDC Centres Manager WCC	Ongoing	External Funding	Improved perception through customer and business surveys.
Communication & Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build up database of contacts. Regular communication with PC and Traders. 	BDC Centres Manager	Ongoing	TC Budget	Increase communication with businesses. No of businesses attending network events/ actively engaging.
Events & Promotion	Establish event support and promotional ideas.	BDC Centres Manager HPC	Ongoing	TC Budget	Increased footfall on event days.

Catshill

Objective	Output	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/ Milestone	Funding	Performance Indicator
Public Realm	Audit of existing public realm.	BDC Centres Manager WCC	Ongoing	External Funding	Improved perception through customer and business surveys.
Communication & Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up database of contacts. • Regular communication with PC and Traders. 	BDC Centres Manager	Ongoing	TC Budget	Increase communication with businesses. No of businesses attending network events/actively engaging.
Events	Establish event support.	BDC Centres Manager CPC	Ongoing	External Funding	Increased footfall on event days.

Wythall

Objective	Output	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/ Milestone	Funding	Performance Indicator
Public Realm	Audit of existing public realm & potential for future improvements.	BDC Centres Manager WCC	Ongoing	External Funding	Improved perception through customer and business surveys.
Communication & Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up database of contacts. • Regular communication with PC and Traders. 	BDC Centres Manager	Ongoing	TC Budget	Increase communication with businesses. No of businesses actively engaging.

Aston Fields

Objective	Output	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/ Milestone	Funding	Performance Indicator
Public Realm	Audit of existing public realm & potential for future improvements.	BDC Centres Manager WCC	Ongoing	External Funding	Improved perception through customer and business surveys.
Communication & Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build up database of contacts. Regular communication with Love Aston Fields Community Group and traders. 	BDC Centres Manager	Ongoing	TC Budget	Increase communication with businesses. No of businesses actively engaging.
Pubwatch and Radio Link scheme	Determine infrastructure requirements.	BDC Centres Manager BDC CCTV	TBC	TBC	No of active users on DISC
Marketing & Events	Establish event support and promotional ideas.	BDC Centres Manager	Ongoing	TC Budget	Increased footfall on event days.

KPI	Frequency	Responsibility
Hotspots Using the Geolytix system monitor centres hotspots/footfall.	As Required	Bromsgrove Centres Manager
Vacant and Derelict Properties and Sites Visual survey will be made of all the vacant properties and derelict sites in each of the centres. The survey will include data on the length of time the property/site has been vacant. Properties and sites will be categorised by their class to determine any areas with greatest issues or challenges to occupation.	Quarterly	Bromsgrove Centres Manager Commercial Agents
Rental Values Review the rental value of properties in each of the centres. This can demonstrate the demand for property in the centres.	Annually	Bromsgrove Centres Manager Commercial Agents
Car Park use and Revenue Income The use and revenue yield of off-street paid Bromsgrove District Council owned car parks.	Quarterly	Bromsgrove District Council
Crime Data Collection and analysis of crime and anti-social behaviour statistics for each of the centres. It is important to consider the changing ways in which the Police Authority record actual crime when making comparisons year-on-year.	Quarterly	West Mercia Police Safer Bromsgrove Partnership
Leisure, Culture and Tourism Ticket sales, visitor numbers, events held etc. for Bromsgrove District Council owned venues and facilities.	Quarterly	Bromsgrove District Council
Visual Appearance Built into customer surveys.	Annually	Bromsgrove Centres Manager
Visual surveys with Bromsgrove District Council Place Team and Bromsgrove Centres Manager.	Bi-monthly	BDC Place Team Bromsgrove Centres Manager
Visitor Numbers and Events Visual estimate of visitor numbers including a sample survey of businesses regarding performance and takings.	At each event	Event Organiser
Social Media Likes, follows and shares on social media sites.	Quarterly	Bromsgrove & Redditch Comms Team
Business/Customer Survey Business and Customer survey of all centres.	Annually	Bromsgrove Centres Manager Bromsgrove BDC Parish Council
Bromsgrove Town Centre Database Categorised by class to determine sector representation and gaps in retail offer.	Quarterly	Bromsgrove Centres Manager
Bromsgrove Markets Occupancy rates, quality, offer and management of markets provision.	Quarterly	Bromsgrove Market Team
Business Support Number of new business start-ups. Number of businesses accessing business support - advice and grants. Number of SMEs accessing rate relief schemes. Number of businesses participating in network groups and accessing peer learning opportunities.	Quarterly	Bromsgrove Centres Manager Bromsgrove Business Advisor NWEDR Growth Manager

Contact:
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Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT

Cabinet

18th January 2023

COUNCIL TAX BASE CALCULATION 2023/24

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Michelle Howell, Head of Finance and Customer Services
Report Author Peter Carpenter	Job Title: Interim S151 Officer Contact email: peter.carpenter@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel:
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Aspiration, work and financial independence
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report sets out details of the calculation of the District's tax base for Council Tax setting purposes. The calculation of the Council Tax base is required as part of the determination of the level of Council Tax for 2023/24.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet are asked to RESOLVE that:

The amount calculated by Bromsgrove District Council as the Council Tax Base for the whole area for 2023/24 is approved at 37,919.44 as detailed at Appendix 1 to include the individual parish elements.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The calculation of the Council Tax base forms the basis of the calculation of Council Tax for the new financial year. The Council Tax Base is calculated using a prescribed formula to generate the equivalent number of Band D properties in a District and also takes into account the number of Council Tax Support claimants within the area.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 The Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 require a billing authority to notify its major precepting bodies (and its Parishes, if required) of the Tax Base, for the whole or part of the area for the following financial year. The precepting bodies - Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner and Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Authority - need this information in order to calculate and notify the District Council of their precept requirements for 2023/24. This will enable tax setting resolutions to be finalised and bills to be produced early in March 2023.
- 3.3 The legislation also requires a billing authority to calculate the tax base for any "special areas" within its boundary. There are no such areas in the Bromsgrove District Council.
- 3.4 It is necessary to outline the method by which these calculations have been carried out so that the Council can formally adopt them for the purposes of the 1992 Regulations.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.3 In October 2022, form CTB1 was submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government. This analyses the draft Valuation List of properties into the various bands and then provides further details of those properties which are subject to the full charge, those entitled to discounts and those which are exempt.
- 3.4 This report is a summary of that return updated to include any known changes since November. It also makes provision for anticipated changes which could arise for a variety of reasons such as appeals, new properties or properties falling off the list. An allowance of 1.00% has been made for non-collection of the tax.
- 3.5 The Council is required to set a Council Tax Base each year, this forms part of the process of setting the following year budget. Failure to do so will result in the Council not being a Well Managed Organisation.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.6 The Tax Base for 2023/24 has been calculated to be **37,919.44**. Once this has been agreed, the County Council, Police & Crime Commissioner and Fire Authority will be notified and the figures will be used in the setting of the Council Tax to be presented to the Cabinet and approved by the Council in February 2023.

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4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 There are no risk management issues.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The Council Tax Support all Council initiatives.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 Not applicable.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Council Tax Base Calculation for 2023/24 and 2022/23

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Council Tax Base Calculation Report 2022/23](#)

[Council Tax Base Calculation Report 2021/22](#)

[Council Tax Base Calculation report 2020/21](#)

APPENDIX 1

Schedule of Council Tax Base by Parish Areas 2023/24

Council Taxbase Calculation 2023-24				
The Council Taxbase for each parish is detailed below (Band D Equivalents)				
	Parish Name		Gross	Net
	Whole Area		38,302.47	37,919.44
101/107	Unparished		14,219.53	14,077.34
111	Alvechurch		2,392.71	2,368.78
102	Barnt Green		1,062.59	1,051.97
116	Belbroughton		1,252.61	1,240.09
118	Bentley Paucefoot		205.23	203.18
119	Beoley		475.16	470.41
103	Bourneheath		221.13	218.92
104	Catshill and North Marlbrook		2,370.99	2,347.28
120	Clent		573.41	567.67
121	Cofton Hackett		1,195.80	1,183.85
122	Dodford with Grafton		414.40	410.26
105	Finstall		317.59	314.41
123	Frankley		49.71	49.21
124	Hagley		3,253.76	3,221.22
106	Lickey and Blackwell		2,163.76	2,142.12
125	Hunnington		246.06	243.60
126	Romsley		680.73	673.92
127/131	Parish of Stoke		1,936.35	1,916.99
129	Tutnall and Cobley		383.56	379.73
130	Wythall		4,887.37	4,838.49
			38,302.47	37,919.44

Schedule of Council Tax Base by Parish Areas 2022/23

Unparished	13,929.73
Alvechurch	2,328.59
Barnt Green	1,027.52
Belbroughton	1,213.49
Bentley Pauncefoot	202.24
Beoley	456.93
Bourneheath	221.48
Catshill and North Marlbrook	2,340.85
Clent	545.75
Cofton Hackett	1,158.74
Dodford with Grafton	405.19
Finstall	318.66
Frankley	46.84
Hagley	3,211.78
Lickey and Blackwell	2,129.67
Hunington	242.53
Romsley	667.48
Parish of Stoke	1,891.93
Tutnall and Cobley	366.39
Wythall	4,805.26
Total for whole area	37,511.05

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Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Michelle Howell, Head of Finance and Customer Services
Report Author Peter Carpenter	Job Title: Interim S151 Officer Contact email: peter.carpenter@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel:
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Aspiration, work and financial independence
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND that

- 1.1 The Council approve the introduction of a revised and more supportive Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1st April 2023, in line with 1.2 below.**

Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE to note that

- 1.2 The scheme is designed to assist the lowest income households and to allow the Council to operate the scheme more flexibly by:**
- (a) Increasing the maximum level of support for working age applicants in certain income bands and to increase the income levels within the 'income - grid' scheme. Both of these changes are designed to provide more support to low income households;**
 - (b) Disregarding certain child care charges where an applicant (and their partner if they have one) is working more than 16 hours per week;**
 - (c) To disregard certain payments paid to taxpayers under special schemes (Local Welfare Provision); and**
 - (d) Where the Government makes emergency increases to national welfare benefits to assist in a crisis, the scheme will give the Council the discretion to disregard those increases if they would have a negative effect of Council Tax Reduction.**

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1.3 All other parts of the existing scheme will remain unchanged.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend the implementation of a revised scheme following feedback from the consultation with the public and the major precepting authorities in respect of proposed changes to the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme which would take effect from 1st April 2023.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced from 1st April 2013, when it replaced the Central Government funded Council Tax Benefit. From the inception of CTR, the funding available to the Council from Government has reduced year on year.
- 2.4 The Council made significant changes to the CTR scheme, which took effect from 1st April 2021. The changes increased the maximum level of support and replaced the existing Council Tax Benefit based scheme with a banded income scheme intended to reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by universal credit. As with the majority of authorities within England, the District Council needs to review the scheme for working age claimants to ensure it remains relevant and provides appropriate levels of support to the lowest income households.
- 2.5 It should be noted that the Council can only make changes to the working age Council Tax Reduction scheme as the scheme for pension age applicants is determined by Central Government by the Prescribed Requirement Regulations.
- 2.6 If the recommendations are accepted by Cabinet, then the new scheme will be submitted to Full Council for resolution (as required by the legislation) by no later than 11th March 2023.

The current scheme

- 2.7 The current scheme for working age applicants (Table 1) provides the following discounts and is based on the weekly net income of the applicant plus any partner (if they have one).
- 2.8 The existing scheme determines eligibility by placing claimants into income bands and a percentage reduction is then applied to their Council

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Tax based on the relevant income band. There is no proposal to adjust the method for calculating CTR, however, there is a need to review and increase the income bands to adjust for the effects of inflation.

2.9 The Council has taken advice from ACS Consultancy who gives specialist advice in this area across a number of Councils and the current experience is that

- Councils are not looking to reduce the level of support to applicants and in fact authorities are either looking to maintain the maximum level of support or increase it. For 2023/24 a large number of authorities will be providing additional support;
- In all cases where changes are being made, authorities are looking to target support to low income households and to allow additional flexibilities especially where Government creates grant schemes to assist households with the cost of living crisis and avoid inadvertent effects on Council Tax Reduction;

2.10 In addition the vast majority of authorities are looking to simplify their working age scheme in a similar way to that being adopted by the Council.

2.11 The objective of the Council's CTR scheme will continue to be to maintain additional support to those households on the very lowest incomes, especially given the present cost of living crisis. There is no intention to reduce the level of support available to other households

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 - £98.00	£0 - £155.00	£0 - £217.00	£0-£144.00	£0 -£201.00	£0 - £263.00
Band 2	75%	£98.01 - £119.00	£155.01 - £186.00	£217.01 - £247.00	£144.01 - £165.00	£201.01 - £232.00	£263.01 - £294.00
Band 3	50%	£119.01 - £139.00	£186.01 - £217.00	£247.01 – £278.00	£165.01 - £186.00	£232.01 – £263.00	£294.01 - £325.00
Band 4	25%	£135.01 - £160.00	£217.01 - £247.00	£278.01 – £309.00	£186.01 £206.00	£263.01 - £294.00	£325.01 - £356.00

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	0%	Over £160.00	Over £247.00	Over £309.00	Over £206.00	Over £294.00	Over £356.00
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2.12 If the applicant or partner is in receipt of Income Support; Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Related Employment & Support Allowance they will receive the maximum level of support.

2.13 Whilst the current scheme works well, it is considered that it does not:

- (a) Provide sufficient support for the households;
- (b) Allow for child care charges to be taken into account; nor
- (c) Have sufficient flexibilities to allow the scheme to disregard any grants or awards made by Central Government to assist household with the cost of living crisis

2.14 The present number of recipients of Council Tax Reduction are as follows:

- Pension Age - 1893
- Working Age - 2397

The proposed scheme

2.15 The proposed scheme is shown below in Table 2

Table 2

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 - £115.00	£0 - £180.00	£0 - £245.00	£0- £165.00	£0 -£230.00	£0 - £295.00
Band 2	80%	£115.01 - £140.00	£180.01 - £215.00	£245.01 - £280.00	£165.01 - £190.00	£230.01 - £265.00	£295.01 - £330.00
Band 3	55%	£140.01 - £165.00	£215.01 - £250.00	£280.01- £315.00	£190.01 - £215.00	£265.01 – £300.00	330.01 - £365.00
Band 4	30%	£165.01 - £190.00	£250.01 - £285.00	£315.01 – £350.00	£215.01 £240.00	£300.01 - £335.00	£365.01 - £400.00

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	0%	Over £190.00	Over £285.00	Over £350.00	Over £240.00	Over £335.00	Over £400.00
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- 2.16 As with the current scheme, if the applicant or partner is in receipt of Income Support; Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Related Employment & Support Allowance they will receive the maximum level of support
- 2.17 The proposed scheme however increases the width of each income band and allows for certain child care charges to be disregarded where an applicant (and their partner if they have one) is working more than 16 hours per week. This incentivises returning to work.
- 2.18 The proposal is also to increasing support to households in income bands 2 to 4 to 80%, 55% and 30%. This ensures that more support is provided throughout the income ranges.
- 2.19 All other aspects of the scheme remain the same as at present.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The current CTR scheme was first implemented in the 2021/22 financial year and currently costs £4.698m. This cost 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 13%
 - Worcestershire County Council 70%
 - West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner 12%
 - Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service 5%
- 3.2 By implementing the proposed scheme, the overall costs of the scheme would increase by £131,000. This amount would be allocated to precepting authorities as per the percentages in paragraph 3.1 with the Bromsgrove's allocation 13%.
- 3.3 Whilst the expected costs of the scheme for 2023/24 are slightly higher, the overall level of Council Tax Reduction as a proportion to Council Tax Base has reduced year on year since 2013 as shown below until the 2020/21 tax year when support increased due to the discretionary one off support provided due to the C-19 pandemic.
- 3.4 The overall proposed costs level for 2023/24 is considerably lower in terms of the percentage of the tax-base than when Council Tax Reduction was introduced in 2013. The costs of the scheme, based on

2022/23 council tax charges, will increase to an estimated £4.954m from £4.659m with the proposed recommendation.

Tax Year	Maximum % reduction	Gross Council Tax £000s	Total CTR awarded £000s	CTR as % of gross CT
2013/14	100	56,465	4,564	8.08
2014/15	100	58,095	4,440	7.64
2015/16	80	59,655	3,897	6.53
2016/17	80	62,362	3,876	6.22
2017/18	80	64,557	3,804	5.89
2018/19	80	68,091	3,823	5.61
2019/20	85	71,818	4,028	5.60
2020/21	85	74,866	4,877	6.51
2021/22	100	77,498	4,699	6.06
2022/23	100	80,889	4,659	5.76

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 A full consultation process was undertaken in line with the legislative requirements with the following:
 - Worcestershire County Council
 - West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
 - Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service; and
 - The public
- 4.2 Both the major preceptors and the public (including other stakeholders) were asked to provide their views on the changes.
- 4.3 The responses from the major preceptor, the County Council, is shown in Appendix A and an analysis of responses from both public and other stakeholders is shown within Appendix B.
- 4.4 The County Council's view is that *"Whilst we would support in principle the ambition for many of the changes to your Council Tax Reduction Schemes, the net council tax income would reduce and that would mean the impact, however small, would ultimately be felt on the overall resources available across other district areas outside of Bromsgrove"*

District Council and Redditch Borough Council. We would not encourage any cross subsidy and would ask that its impact is minimised or avoided if possible”.

- 4.5 The Council accepts this point but would highlight that non-payment will go up due to the present “cost of living” crisis. This will result in higher levels of default which in turn impacts the precepting authorities with lower levels of income and the requirement to make right in the following financial year through the collection fund. Although we do not have definitive figures, this change is substituting a degree of this risk but giving discounts to enable more of these low income families to be able to pay reduced amounts. This should be a benefit to the precepting authorities.
- 4.6 The public consultation ended on 16th December 2022 and the Council received 87 responses to the proposed changes. In summary the responses were overwhelmingly in favour of the changes as follows:

Question	Yes %	No %	Don't know %
Do you agree with revising the income-based banded discount scheme?	65.12	9.30	25.58
Disregarding certain child care charges where the applicant (and partner if they have one) worked for at least 16 hours per week	72.50	7.50	20.00
The scheme will disregard certain crisis payments paid to taxpayers (Local Welfare Provision)	80.00	2.50	17.50
Disregarding emergency increases in national welfare benefits	76.32	5.26	18.42

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Schedule 1A (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, states:
Before making a scheme, the authority must:
- consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it;
 - publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit; and
 - consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

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

5. SERVICE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council Tax Reduction 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.

- 5.2 Since that time, funding for the CTR 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.

- 5.3 The current CTR 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.

- 5.4 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.

- 5.5 When CTR 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%.

- 5.6 Since that time, other slight changes have been made to bring the scheme into line with Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

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6 OTHER OPTIONS

- 6.1 The alternative to introducing a revised scheme for CTR is to maintain the existing scheme; this would result in the income bands ceasing to be relevant and the withdrawal of support from the lowest income households and 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 District Council's area.

7. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 7.1 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme provides targeted support to the Councils most vulnerable residents.

Climate Change Implications

- 7.2 The delivery of additional support to our most vulnerable residents via a reduction in their Council Tax will have a neutral effect on the climate.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 8.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of this process and is attached at Appendix C

Operational Implications

- 8.2 The changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme can be accommodated within existing teams and computer software.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 A full risk assessment has been undertaken and the changes are assessed as low given that they are minor changes to the existing scheme.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Responses from Major Preceptors

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Appendix B – Public consultation analysis
Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		
Lead Director / Head of Service		
Financial Services		
Legal Services		
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)		

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APPENDIX A – MAJOR PRECEPTOR RESPONSES

With regard to your consultations on possible changes to your Council Tax Reduction Schemes in Bromsgrove and Redditch in 2023/24, I welcome the opportunity to comment on behalf of Worcestershire County Council. As the major preceptor in your area the majority of costs fall on the County Council and a main priority would be to ensure that these costs do not increase any further.

Whilst we would support in principle the ambition for many of the changes to your Council Tax Reduction Schemes, the net council tax income would reduce and that would mean the impact, however small, would ultimately be felt on the overall resources available across other district areas outside of Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council. We would not encourage any cross subsidy and would ask that its impact is minimised or avoided if possible.

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APPENDIX B – ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION




Bromsgrove District Council - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023/24

Consultation

1. Background to the Consultation

1. I have read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme: This question must be answered before you can continue.				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		96.55%	84
2	No		3.45%	3
			answered	87
			skipped	0

2. Part 1 – Increasing the level of support within the Income Grid scheme for applicants of working age

2. Do you agree with revising the income-based banded discount scheme?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		65.12%	28
2	No		9.30%	4
3	Don't Know		25.58%	11
			answered	43
			skipped	44




3. If you disagree with revising the income-banded scheme please explain why and what alternative would you propose?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	6
1	This appears to exclude universal credit * marked .			
2	Leave as is, they are subsidised enough as it is			
3	Increase the support but change the banding system. It might be easy to understand but if your income is just a penny more than the band you lose a whole chunk of support, the worst falling into the 0 support band.			

3. If you disagree with revising the income-banded scheme please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

4	please explain what the £ amounts quoted are. Are they council tax paid per period or are they net income, or gross income per week or per month, much more details is needed to understand this grid		
5	<p>It is completely unclear to me as to why you continue to provide support for those on lower income, or income support (Which I 100% agree with), yet increase rates for the regular working class who are likely not much better off in real terms than the aforementioned.</p> <p>Those who miss the discount by being bringing in slightly higher income should not have rates increased to the point they become worse off than those claiming a discount. Some deeper level of thought should be seriously considered here for those who are self sufficient but living hand to mouth.</p>		
6	ryhryrhyr		
		answered	6
		skipped	81

3. Part 2 - Disregarding certain child care charges where the applicant (and partner if they have one) worked for at least 16 hours per week

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

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		72.50%	29
2	No		7.50%	3
3	Don't Know		20.00%	8
			answered	40
			skipped	47

5. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	4
1	No change, keeps the status quo			
2	I agree a disregard should be applied, although I do not feel a disregard of £175 per week is appropriate and feel this amount should be reduced to reflect the individual choices said parent makes.			
3	thftrhfthfthftr			

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5. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4 | People have to pay childcare in order to work and they should not be penalised for this - many can ill afford these costs - we want to make it easier for people to go to work |
|---|--|

answered	4
skipped	83

4. Part 3 - The scheme will disregard certain crisis payments paid to taxpayers (Local Welfare Provision)

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

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	<div></div>	80.00%	32
2	No	<div></div>	2.50%	1
3	Don't Know	<div></div>	17.50%	7
			answered	40
			skipped	47

7. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	2
	1	Keep as is & all income should be assessed		
	2	ftghfrhfhf		
			answered	2
			skipped	85

5. Part 4 - Disregarding emergency increases in national welfare benefits




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

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
----------------	--	--	------------------	----------------

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

1	Yes		76.32%	29
2	No		5.26%	2
3	Don't Know		18.42%	7
			answered	38
			skipped	49

9. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	1
1	If they get more income they should get less benefit, fairer for all tax payers		
		answered	1
		skipped	86

6. Alternatives to changing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

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

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	8
1	The council needs to ensure the applicants are genuine		
2	I'm blinking back tears. This is amazing. I know it looks like only small amounts but I live this and they make a massive massive difference.		
3	If you are awarded Universal Credit of £334 pcm for a single person, and you are awarded £600 pcm for housing costs to pay your £600 a month social housing rent, the awarded £600 pcm housing costs should be disregarded as the single persons income. Only the £334 pcm Universal Credit allowance should be considered as the person's income.		
4	As stated, please consider the working class and those who are on the fringe of your proposals, and/or those who fall just outside of the thresholds for support. Rates and rate increases should be tiered based on income beyond those working minimal hours. Many are already struggling despite their drive to work, and should not be penalised for this, in order make make up the shortfall created by your scheme.		
5	I think there should be support more than 25% . I earn £13,400 a year with a child and have to pay £150 a month . Bromsgrove council tax is too much for those single families and no services or good shopping centre anymore ?		

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| 6 | I think this should also benefit all households due to the cost of living crisis. 100% of my wage goes on my mortgage and childcare so I rely heavily on my partner for all other costs. With the increase in house prices we can't even downsize to make things affordable. Please help all of the community. |
| 7 | N/A |
| 8 | I am lucky and do not apply for any benefits and really worry for low income families that are struggling to heat their homes this year. Im glad the council are considering these changes to help them. I do get a reduction in council tax as I'm the only person living in my home. |

answered	8
skipped	79

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

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	5
1	The scheme seems to count universal credit the same as employed income . And also discriminate against people who have children but don't use /pay for childcare ie part time		
2	See my comment on question 1 the banding system is really harsh for those who income falls just slightly above the relevant band meaning in some cases household A earn 1p more than household B gets no support at all.		
3	Only more gradations - so it's not such a leap. 25% chunks are a hit.		
4	Please see above.		
5	N/A		

answered	5
skipped	82

12. 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.

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	3
1	The Council should propose the introduction of a universal basic income and the increase of the national minimum wage to allow people to live comfortably on the wage they earn.		
2	Please see above.		
3	N/A		

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12. 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.

answered	3
skipped	84

7. About You

13. Are you completing this form on behalf of an organisation or group?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	0.00%	0
2	No	100.00%	37
		answered	37
		skipped	50



If yes, please tell us the name of the organisation/group and add any other comments you wish to make.


Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	0.00%	0
No answers found.			
		answered	0
		skipped	87



8. Questions for Individuals


14. Do you live in the Bromsgrove District Council area?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	100.00%	37
2	No	0.00%	0
		answered	37
		skipped	50




15. Are you currently receiving Council Tax Reduction?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		29.73%	11
2	No		70.27%	26
			answered	37
			skipped	50

16. Are you or your partner in work or self-employed?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		72.97%	27
2	No		27.03%	10
			answered	37
			skipped	50








17. Are you liable to pay Council Tax?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		97.30%	36
2	No		2.70%	1
			answered	37
			skipped	50

18. Are you currently serving in the Armed Forces?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		0.00%	0
2	No		100.00%	37
			answered	37
			skipped	50



19. What is your gender?



Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Male		18.92%	7
2	Female		67.57%	25
3	Non-Binary		0.00%	0
4	Prefer not to say		13.51%	5
			answered	37
			skipped	50




20. What is your age?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	18-24		0.00%	0
2	25-34		10.81%	4
3	35-44		16.22%	6
4	45-54		32.43%	12
5	55-64		29.73%	11
6	65-74		2.70%	1
7	75-84		2.70%	1
8	85+		0.00%	0
9	Prefer not to say		5.41%	2
			answered	37
			skipped	50

21. 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?


Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		13.51%	5
2	No		81.08%	30

21. 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?				
3	Don't know		2.70%	1
4	Prefer not to say		2.70%	1
			answered	37
			skipped	50

22. Ethnic Origin: What is your ethnic group?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Prefer not to say		11.11%	4
2	White British		83.33%	30
3	White Irish		0.00%	0
4	White Gypsy or Irish Traveller		0.00%	0
5	Any other White background		2.78%	1
6	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Black African		0.00%	0
7	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Black Caribbean		0.00%	0
8	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Asian		0.00%	0
9	Any other multi mixed background		0.00%	0
10	Asian or Asian British Pakistani		0.00%	0
11	Asian or Asian British Indian		0.00%	0
12	Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi		0.00%	0
13	Asian or Asian British Chinese		0.00%	0
14	Any other Asian background		0.00%	0
15	Black African		0.00%	0
16	British Caribbean		0.00%	0

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22. Ethnic Origin: What is your ethnic group?				
17	Black British		2.78%	1
18	Any other Black background		0.00%	0
			answered	36
			skipped	51

23. Other ethnic group?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		0.00%	0
No answers found.				
			answered	0
			skipped	87

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APPENDIX C – EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT



Equality Assessment Record

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Title of Service, Policy, Procedure, Spending Review being Proposed	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023/24
Name of Service Area	Revenues and Benefits
Name of Officer completing this assessment	Lisa Devey & David Riley
Date Assessment Started	
Name of Decision Maker (in relation to the change)	
Date Decision Made	

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?

The policy revises the Council's working age Council Tax Reduction Scheme by:

1. Increasing the maximum level of support for working age applicants in certain income bands and to increase the income levels within the 'income - grid' scheme. Both of these changes are designed to provide more support to low income households;
2. Disregarding certain child care charges where an applicant (and their partner if they have one) is working more than 16 hours per week;
3. To disregard certain payments paid to taxpayers under special schemes (Local Welfare Provision); and

4. Where the Government makes emergency increases to national welfare benefits to assist in a crisis, the scheme will give the Council the discretion to disregard those increases if they would have a negative effect of Council Tax Reduction

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 2023. 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 revised scheme has been undertaken throughout and will continue to be undertaken until such time as the 2023/24 scheme is approved.

The **current modelling data** is shown below:

	Existing Scheme			New Scheme			
	Numbers	Expenditure	Average Weekly Amount	Numbers	Expenditure	Average Weekly Amount	Average Weekly Gain / (Loss)
Single Person							
Couple no children							
Single person with one child							
Single person two or more children							
Couple with one child							
Couple with two or more children							
Applicant Gender – Male							

Applicant Gender - Female							

- 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 improve the support to those households in the lower discount bands
- 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 also allow for child care charges where the applicant works for 16 hours per week or more; and
- The scheme will not have unintentional consequences when the applicant is in receipt of Government crisis awards; and
No applicant will be detrimentally affected by the changes.

Engagement and Consultation

Consultation has taken place with the Major Preceptors (Fire and Rescue, Police and the County Council). Details of their responses are shown within Appendix A of the report.

A full public consultation has been undertaken until 16th December 2022 and the results of which are shown within Appendix B of the report

It can be seen that the consultation has received an overall positive response.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality Duty Aims	Evidence
<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation</p> <p>How does the proposal/service ensure that there is no barrier or disproportionate impact for anyone with a particular protected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The revised scheme has been designed to support all low-income taxpayers and has been created strictly in accordance with the legislative requirements. • The revised 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.

characteristic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The authority's Exceptional Hardship Scheme will continue to assist any applicant who feels that they require additional support.
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).	<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 allows easier access to support; maximisation of assistance whilst at the same time maintaining the protections from the current scheme; No applicant will receive less support.
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?	<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 2023 /24 to ensure that its objectives are met.

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

Action Required	By Whom	By When	Completion Date
Recommended – It is recommended that the revised Council Tax Reduction scheme be implemented from 1 st April 2023			

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.

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Revenue Outturn 2020/21 – Updated Position following Draft Accounts Submission

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr. Geoff Denaro,
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Michelle Howell
Report Author	Job Title: Head of Finance & Customer Services email:michelle.howell@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel:
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	n/a
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	n/a
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. Purpose and summary

The purpose of this report is to update members on the Councils 2020/21 Outturn position which was presented to Members in draft form November 2021 following the issuing of the draft 2020/21 Accounts to Audit, Governance & Standards Committee on the 14th December 2022. This report updates that draft position.

2. Recommendations

The Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE

- 2.1 That the revenue outturn position, which was reported as an overspend of £228,736 is corrected to a position of an Underspend of £50,005
- 2.2 That the final C-19 Grant position is £766k
- 2.3 That the final level of General Fund and Earmarked Reserves is £4.502m and £13,289m respectively.
- 2.4 That the final capital position for the year is an underspend of £1.616m.

3. Revenue Position

- 3.1 The November 2021 Outturn Report set out the following outturn position by Service area compared to budget:

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Service	2020/21 Original Budget	2020/21 Revised Budget	2020/21 Revised Actuals	2020/21 Variance
	£	£	£	£
Regulatory Client	207,208	194,818	210,946	16,128
Business Transformation & Organisational Development	1,707,974	1,562,447	1,486,244	-76,202
Chief Executive	1,585,088	1,844,322	1,928,958	84,636
Community & Housing GF Services	1,076,023	805,300	705,052	-100,248
Corporate Financing	-11,812,000	-11,261,625	-11,514,569	-252,944
Environmental Services	2,780,695	2,734,139	3,423,943	689,804
Financial & Customer Services	1,340,726	1,253,385	1,214,559	-38,826
Legal, Dem' & Property Services	1,458,600	1,493,003	1,378,214	-114,788
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	1,655,685	1,374,208	1,395,385	21,176
Grand Total	0	0	228,736	228,736

- 3.2 The revised outturn position, following the submission of the 2020/21 Accounts to Audit Governance & Standards Committee is set out in the following table:
- 3.3 The revised Position is an underspend of £50,003, a positive change of £278k. The comparison between tables shows that the significant change is in corporate financing which has changed by over £250k. Service Area commentaries are set out below but are very similar to those from November 2021:

	Original Budget £	Revised Budget £	Outturn £	Variance £
Business Transformation and Organisational Development	1,707,974	1,562,447	1,486,245	(76,202)
Community and Housing GF Services	1,076,024	805,301	751,170	(54,131)
Corporate Services	1,585,088	1,078,083	1,183,712	105,629
Environmental Services	2,780,695	2,734,139	3,423,944	689,805
Financial and Customer Services	1,340,726	1,253,385	1,214,731	(38,654)
Legal, Democratic and Property Services	1,458,600	1,493,004	1,377,080	(115,924)
Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services	1,655,685	1,349,209	1,395,386	46,177
Regulatory Client	207,208	194,818	210,947	16,128
Worcester Regulatory Services	-	-	(0)	(0)
Corporate Financing	(11,812,000)	(10,470,386)	(11,093,217)	(622,831)
Total	0	-	(50,003)	(50,003)

Business Transformation & Organisational Development (A Position of a £76k underspend against an original position of an underspend of £76k)

- 3.4 £75k underspend on training and organisational development. Training and organisational development have underspent on the corporate training budget due to COVID-19 having had a direct impact on the ability to deliver training. There is currently a review being undertaken on how training will be provided moving forwards, including opportunities for moving towards higher levels of remote training as appropriate.

Chief Executive (A Position of £105k overspend against an original position of an overspend of £84k)

- 3.5 £62k overspend on corporate services due to higher than originally budgeted for pension costs which resulted from budgets not accurately reflecting actuarial updates. These issues have now been resolved within future budgets.

Community & Housing GF Services (A Position of an underspend of £54k against an original position of an underspend of £100k)

- 3.6 £40k underspend on lifeline due to salary savings. A number of minor underspends spread across a range of budget areas including savings on reallocating demand for temporary accommodation from the Burcot Lane Hostel to BDHT. Covid-19 (and the associated funded programmes) has also led to a reduction in financial pressure / demand associated with homelessness cases.

Corporate Financing (A Position of an underspend £622k against an original position of an underspend of £252k)

- 3.7 It is clear that budget and budgetary performance for the 2020/21 financial year was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 distorted many expenditure budgets – as demonstrated above – typically through reducing income levels significantly (eg car parking), increasing Leisure costs, and reducing some costs areas which were operationally restricted as a result of Covid

In recognition of this negative impact on the Council's resources (and particularly for district councils reduced income levels achievable for car parks and Leisure), the council was awarded £1.255 million General Covid-19 Grant in 2020/21 (and £0.411 million in 2021/22). This income was not budgeted for when the Council set its budget back in February 2020. Strict control was maintained over the accounting for these monies.

In total £476k of expenditure was applied from this General Covid-19 Grant in the 20/21 year, £356k of which was paid to the Council's outsourced provider of the Bromsgrove Sports and Leisure Centre. This was in recognition of the impact of Covid-19 on the ability of the provider to operate in accordance with the (pre- Covid) agreed contract.

Environmental Services (An overspend of £690k against an original position of an overspend of £690k)

- 3.8 £339k overspend on waste management. This was due to some additional commercial Waste Disposal Costs. A Business case has been put forward to address this going forwards in the budget. There are also increased costs from Severn Trent on disposal of septic waste and overspends on additional overtime due to out of Hours Callout costs (which is being reviewed corporately). This has now been addressed and amended in the budget for the new financial year.

£101k underspend on tree management. This was due to vacant posts. It should be noted that this area is currently going through a service review.

£512k loss of carparking income against budget due to the impact of Covid-19 (noting that these losses are after accounting for some additional support from Government in relation to the sales, fees and charges support scheme.

Financial & Customer Services (A Position of an underspend of £38k against an original position of an underspend of £38k)

- 3.9 £41k underspend in accounts and financial management due to significant vacancies. It should be noted that plans are in place to strengthen the Finance Team and recruit to these vacant posts.

Legal, Democratic & Property Services (A Position of an underspend of £115k against an original position of an underspend of £114k)

- 3.10 £39k saving in members and democratic support due to vacancies in the team. £70k saving in business development due to a combination of salary savings (due to vacancies) and the successful recovery of previous year overcharges on water costs.

Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services (An overspend of £46k against an original position of an overspend of £21k)

- 3.11 Development control had an overspend of £270k. This was primarily driven by a £200k charge due to losing a planning appeal to a developer. This was offset by a number of underspends within planning budgets, due particularly to vacancies (linked to difficulties in recruitment caused by a national scarcity of this skillset) and increased numbers of planning application income (linked to Covid-19).

It should be noted that Leisure budgets would have been significantly overspend in year had it not been for the General Covid-19 Grant provided to the Council, which allowed these pressures to be offset as explained below.

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RBC Regulatory Client (A position of an overspend of £16k against an original position of an overspend of £16k)

- There were no material variances

Covid grant

3.12 The council received significant un-ringfenced covid grant during the year to support service delivery and mitigate the impact of covid. The November 2021 report set out that it had been applied in the following way:

General Covid-19 Grant Funding	£
Amount Received (four initial tranches)	1,254,853
Amount spent 19/20	12,059
Amount spent 20/21	476,465
Remaining balance at 31/3/21 (pre balancing outturn)	766,329
Planned use of grant to balance outturn position	228,736
Remaining balance at 31/3/21 (post balancing outturn)	537,593
Fifth tranche of grant (21/22)	411,102
Total remaining covid grant (prior to 21/22 pressures)	948,695

3.13 It is important to note that of the £863k applied in 20/21 year, £356k was paid over to SLM to support them due to the reduction in leisure income as covid forced the closure of leisure facilities. A further £120k was applied as part of the closure process.

Revenue Reserves

3.14 The final Earmarked Reserves position for the Council is shown in Appendix A.

The Underspend position has resulted in the Councils General Fund position increasing from an opening position of £4.452m by the underspend position of £50k to a closing position of £4.502m.

Earmarked Reserves have increased from an opening position of £6.269m to a closing position of £13.289m. Main changes are

- £1.299m increase in Financial Reserves – mainly for revaluation appeals

- £0.766m in general C-19 Grants
- £4,641 of Collection Fund C-19 Grant – to offset 2020/21 non collection in future years

Grants

- 3.15 The Council received £15.355m of Grant Income during the year, up from £13.221 the previous year. The significant changes were:
MHCLG C-19 Emergency Grant - £1.242m
MHCLG C-19 Sales Fees and Charges Grant - £1.517m.

The largest grant continues to be the Housing Benefit Subsidy Grant at £11.679m. The full Grants listing is shown in Appendix B

Capital Outturn

- 3.16 The management accounts reported the following capital outturn: The outturn report sets out that expenditure was £3.361m against Capital budgets of £4.977m approved for the year. This is an £1.616m underspend. The MTFP already requested £6.219 be slipped to future years. This total was increased in February 2022 to £8.574m as part of the draft Outturn Report.

4. Treasury and Cash Management

- 4.1 As at 31st March 2020, the Council had £4.75m of short term borrowing, no long term borrowing, and had placed £2m in investment accounts to generate an income for the Council.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

No legal implications have been identified.

6. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 6.1 This relates most closely to the strategic purpose: 'Provide Good things for me to see, do and visit'.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.2 No climate change implications were identified.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

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Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 7.1 No equalities and diversity implications were identified.

Operational Implications

- 7.2 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.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 The financial monitoring is included in the corporate risk register for the authority.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name:

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Appendix A – Earmarked Reserves

	Balance as at 1 April 2019	Transfers In 2019/20	Transfers Out 2019/20	Balance as at 31 March 2020	Transfers In 2020/21	Transfers Out 2020/21	Balance as at 31 March 2021
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
General Fund:							
Building Control Other	7	0	0	7	0	0	7
Building Control Partnerships	62	29	(22)	69	34	(21)	82
Business Transformation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commercialism	34	0	(24)	10	0	(10)	0
Community Safety	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Services	31	41	(31)	41	251	(21)	271
Economic Regeneration	476	1,152	(285)	1,343	157	(152)	1,348
Election Services	87	24	(15)	96	5	(50)	51
Environmental Services	8	0	(6)	2	47	0	49
Financial Services	3,619	1,970	(2,443)	3,146	1,299	0	4,445
Housing Schemes	512	145	(181)	476	157	(145)	488
ICT/Systems	164	55	(15)	204	0	(7)	197
Leisure/Community Safety	266	180	(155)	291	160	(121)	330
Litigation Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local Development Framework	30	0	(30)	0	0	0	0
Local Neighbourhood Partnerships	16	0	0	16	0	0	16
Other	86	35	(6)	115	0	(7)	108
Planning & Regeneration	30	115	(37)	108	25	0	133
Regulatory Services (Partner Share)	38	3	(7)	34	12	0	46
Replacement Reserve (Inc. Recycling)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shared Services (Severance Costs)	311	0	0	311	0	0	311
Covid-19 (General Covid Grant)	0	0	0	0	766	0	766
Covid-19 (Collection Fund)	0	0	0	0	4,641	0	4,641
Total General Fund	5,777	3,749	(3,257)	6,269	7,554	(534)	13,289

Appendix B – Grants

The Authority credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in 2019/20 and 2020/21.		
	2020/21	2019/20
Credited to Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	£000	£000
Revenue Support Grant	0	0
New Homes Bonus	(1,776)	(1,589)
Section 31	0	0
Capital Grants	(596)	(1,617)
Non ring-fenced Grant	(9)	(106)
Total	(2,381)	(3,312)
	2020/21	2019/20
Credited to Services	£000	£000
MHCLG Local Council Tax Support Admin Subsidy	0	(70)
MHCLG New Burdens	0	(20)
MHCLG NNDR Cost of Collection	(127)	(126)
MHCLG Homelessness Grants	(147)	(101)
MHCLG Planning Enforcement Grants	0	(50)
MHCLG COVID 19	0	(12)
Other MHCLG Grant Income	0	(32)
DWP Admin Grant	0	(148)
DWP Discretionary Housing	(51)	(55)
DWP Housing Benefit Subsidy	(11,679)	(12,503)
Other DWP Grant Income	0	(63)
Cabinet Office Grants	0	(31)
WCC Rough Sleepers	0	0
Other WCC Grants	0	(2)
Apprenticeship Levy	0	(8)
Heating Feasibility Study	(228)	0
MHCLG Covid-19 Emergency Grant	(1,242)	0
MHCLG Covid-19 Sales, Fees and Charges Grant	(1,517)	0
WCC Food and Essential Supplies	(61)	0
Other grants	(283)	
Total	(15,335)	(13,221)
The following grants have been removed from income and expenditure on the CIES; the Council acts as an agent for the purpose of distributing these grants. Given the Covid-19 pandemic the Council was required by Central Government to distribute the grants below in line with their criteria and funding levels.		
	2020/21	2019/20
	£000	£000
Covid-19 Business Support Grants (Tranche 1)	(20,874)	0
Covid-19 Business Support Grants (Tranche 2)	(8,174)	0
Covid-19 Test and Trace Support Payments - Self Isolation Payments	(80)	0
Total	(29,128)	0
The Authority has received a number of grants, contributions and donations that have yet to be recognised as income as they have conditions attached to them that will require the monies or property to be returned to the giver if the conditions are not met. The balances at year-end are as follows:		
Current Liabilities		
Grants Received in Advance (Revenue)	2020/21	2019/20
	£000	£000
DEFRA	(6)	(6)
Improvement and Development Agency - Productivity Expert	(6)	(6)
Other Grants	(5)	(5)
MHCLG S31 grant business rates reliefs	(6,180)	0
Total	(6,197)	(17)
Long-term Liabilities		
Grants Received in Advance (Capital)	2020/21	2019/20
	£000	£000
Disabled Facilities Grants	(869)	(552)
Section 106	(860)	(890)
Total	(1,729)	(1,442)

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MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro, Finance and Enabling Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Michelle Howell
Report Author	Job Title: Head of Finance & Customer Services email:michelle.howell@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 0152764252
Wards Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Council will set its budget in two Tranches this year. The initial Tranche was published on the 17th October this contained £1.6m of savings against a carried forward deficit of £1.6m. The Tranche 1 MTFP was approved by Council on the 7th December. More data was required on the Chancellors Statement and following the Provisional Local Government Settlement on the 19th December this detail is included in this report. Also included are the additional pressures which leaves the “real gap” to be closed.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are asked to Resolve that:

- 1 That Officers continue to work on additional options now the “real gap” for the 2023/24 budget is known, as outlined in the Strategy section of the Tranche 1 Report for presentation to Executive in February as Tranche 2 of the Budget.

3. Background

Introduction

- 3.1 The Council sets a 3-year Medium Term Financial Plan every year, with the final Council Tax Resolution being approved by Council in February. This year’s process, as set out in the Tranche 1 documentation (attached as Background Papers) has been more difficult due to the following factors and

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as such has been split into two Tranches to ensure maximisation of delivery in the 2023/24 financial year:

- Starting the process with an initial deficit amount from the 2022/23 MTFP.
- This being the first year that the Government starts to pay for the C-19.
- The present cost of living crisis.
- A change of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- Limited Reserves and balances.

Tranche 1 Proposals

- 3.2 The Tranche 1 Report was discussed on the 26th October and approved for implementation by the Cabinet and then Council on the 7th December. In that report, the Interim Director of Finance noted in his draft robustness statement set out that the MTFP highlights that the current financial position is untenable without some form of intervention. We now know, following the Provisional Local Government Settlement that following the work undertaken in Tranche 1 that a £1.6m gap still remains in 2023/24 to be mitigated.
- 3.3 It is important, for planning purposes that those initial savings proposals are approved by Council as soon as possible in order to achieve the maximum benefit in the 2023/24 financial year. As per the Q2 Monitoring Report, which is also being presented to Cabinet today, prior years “unallocated savings” have now been fully allocated to service budgets.
- 3.4 The table below sets out the position at the end of Tranche 1. As per previous discussions the largest issues are the inflationary increases that are impacting all Local Authorities.
- .

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Bromsgrove Position Statement				
		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
		£000	£000	£000
Base Budget Position 22/23 MTFP				
	Expenditure	11,948	12,077	12,347
	Funding	-10,360	-10,864	-10,724
	Net	1,588	1,213	1,623
Revised Gap		1,588	1,213	1,623
Pressures				
	50% Funding for Climate Change Officer	30	30	30
Savings Options				
	Environmental Services Partnership	0	-25	-50
	Service Reviews	-140	-330	-405
	Town Hall	-70	-70	-70
	Finance Vacancies	-100	-100	-100
	MRP	-100	-100	-100
	Pension Fund	-663	-663	-663
	Engage Capacity Grid (One Off)	-200	-200	0
	10% Increase in Fees and Charges	-382	-389	-390
	Total Savings	-1,625	-1,847	-1,748
Revised Position		-37	-634	-125
Pressures				
	Pay Pressure Year 1	718	718	718
	Pay Pressure Future Years (1%)	0	0	155
	Transport Pressure	32	33	34
	Contracts Pressures	150	155	160
	Core Pressures	900	906	1,067
Updated Position		863	272	942
	Utilities Inflation	702	702	702
Final Draft Position		1,565	974	1,644

Table 1 – Tranche 1 Position

- 3.5 The Council's Capital Programme must prioritise the spending of Levelling up and UK Shared Prosperity Grant Funding – both of which have to be delivered by April 2025. Therefore, the new rationale is for any scheme not yet started (unless grant or S106 funded) is that they must rebid for funds as part of the 2023/24 budget process.

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Provisional Local Government Settlement

- 3.7 The Provisional Local Statement was announced on the 19 December. This announcement confirmed the following funding sources for the Council:
- The Provisional Local Government Settlement has the following effect
 - New Homes Bonus - £127k
 - Services Grant - £68k
 - Funding Guarantee - £1,027k
 - Reduction in Council Tax Base 24k pressure
 - Additional savings on Pensions (now have final figures) – the projected contributions over the next 3 years is £5,693m – which is £1,897k a year. In tranche 1 we reduced the base budget to £2,253k – this is an additional £356k savings.

There is the also now the opportunity to increase Council Tax by an additional 1% to 2.99%.

Service Options will need to be assessed now in terms of funding pressures

- Place and Strategic Routes – 10% £197k 6.5 staff – across both
- Waste 10% - £179k, 6 staff – across both
- Allocation of Grants like DFG

- 3.8 This has the impact of reducing the funding gap identified in Tranche 1 from a £1.565m deficit to a surplus of £0.340m. However, this is before additional pressures as set out in section 3.16 below.

- 3.9 The Provisional Local Government Settlement is only for 1 year. For planning purposes, the Council must take a medium-term view over three years. The net Government funding of £1,198k is in line with previous years equivalent grants. **Therefore, for planning purposes an assumption has been made that Grant levels will remain at the net level of £1.0m for the 2nd and 3rd years of the 3 year plan.** This will be adjusted once there is clarity on future years Settlement details.

- 3.10 The Provisional Local Government settlement has now taken place on the 19th December. Therefore, the overall timetable changes slightly:

- Provisional Local Government Settlement – 19th December
- Final Local Government Settlement – 12th January
- Tranche 2 options ready for Cabinet – 17th January
- Tranche 2 options presented to Cabinet – 15th February
- Full Budget approved by Council – 22nd February

Timescales are estimated – however the issue is that the timescales are challenging for the delivery of either Tranche1 or Tranche 2.

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The Council's Base Assumptions including Inflation and Grants (Revisited)

- 3.11 Following the Provisional Local Government Statement, it was important that the Council's base assumptions were revised.
- 3.12 Tax Base underlying assumptions are as follows
- Council Tax – Figures assume the full 1.99% increase. As per the Chancellors Statement, this can now increase, subject to approval, by another 1%.
 - We have reduced the Council Tax base by £24k
 - Business Rates Increases – Base assumptions no increases over the medium term, being reviewed in light of post C-19 Environment. – More work is required here.
- 3.13 Grant support assumptions are as follows (Revenue and Capital). It should be noted that these are budgeted figures and final grant figures will not be confirmed until the time of the final Local Government Settlement.
- The main Revenue Grants are
 - S-31 Grant (for Business Rate reductions) - £1.126m
 - Housing Benefit - £14.7m
 - Housing Benefit Administration - £0.148m
 - Cost of Revenues Collection Grant - £0.119m
 - The Council has £14.492m of Levelling Up Grant to be spent by April 2026 which is match funded by £1.610m of Council funding.
 - The Council has £2.681m of UK Shared Prosperity Fund to spend by April 2025. This is both revenue (£2.068m) and capital (£0.613m) in nature
- 3.14 Inflationary increases are significant due to factors already identified in previous sections. The following are the current base assumptions although given the present “cost of living” crisis and the change of Government in September it is likely these will need to be updated in Tranche 2.
- The Employers agreed a 2022/23 pay award of £1,925 per pay point plus on costs. We have a pressure of £718k in Tranche1. The actual pay award was implemented to employees in the December payroll and the actual value is in line with this amount.
 - An assumption of General inflation increases of 10% was made in Tranche1 in relation to transport and contract budgets. Its impact on 2023/24 was transport budgets £32k and base contracts £150k. (it is assumed that 2024/25 will move back to normal levels of 2%). This remains the base assumptions.
 - Tranche 1 set out utility increase of 200% amounting to £720k. Our existing Utility contracts requiring renewal by the end of this financial year

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and we have seen increases in some areas of up to 400%. We still think this is a valid assumption. We will keep a 100% increase in the base budget but will move the other 100% to be funded from a new Earmarked Reserve.

Tranche 2 Pressures

3.15 There are also other pressures that have now been quantified. We do know that there are changes in Government legislation which have yet to be received. Key items include:

- The future waste operating model,
- Possible commercial opportunities to maximise income.
- Climate Change
- Review of the Councils Leisure contract.

3.16 Other service-based pressures identified for inclusion in the Tranche 2. Include

- Refurbishment of the fleet, which extends life for 5 years and lets the Council buy replacements in 2028 when supply will be more stable. Refurbishment costs circa £70k, a new diesel vehicle is £200k, and electric Vehicle is £400k. The Council will refurbish 30 vehicles across both Councils over the next 2 years. Total cost is £2.1m Capital split across both Councils. Present interest rate is 4.59%.
- Leisure Contract is a £500k net payment to the Council but is only delivering a £100k surplus – this is needed to be assessed but would project with investment a £200 surplus should be achievable with a net £300k pressure based on present budgets.
- Artrix – One Public Estate is looking for Public Health space in Bromsgrove (might also link to Spa as Hydrotherapy)
- Pressures for Local plan outside the levels of the reserves
- Enforcement pressure due to the WRS initiative being so successful
- Real cost of rolling out Abacus and further automation
- Housing – Cost mitigation – especially TA
- Cross gates redevelopment (and associated with all depots – need the £40k business case) - £20k each Council.
- Resources required to deliver HAD Damp/Mildew inspections – Private Rented Sector
- A fund for apprentices across the Council assume £20K a position, so we can take advantage of apprenticeship levies. Overall amount – circa £100k across both Councils (split across both Councils £50k each).
- We will need to fund a data analyst – if we move forward with all the work on automation, robotics, etc, to take the Council forward. £25k each council.

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- The increased costs of Worcestershire Regulatory Services due to the pay award and other inflationary increases.
- Additional election costs
- Redundancy payments – if we restructure the workforce – also cost of voluntary redundancies.
- Cost of Inflation and Pay award over and above our ongoing assumptions (need to test) to be 2%. This is an additional £140k

3.17 The Local Government Provisional Settlement Updates along with the pressures set out in this section result in a resultant identified gap for the Council of £0.393m which is set out in the following table.

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Bromsgrove Position Statement			
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Pressures			
50% Funding for Climate Change Officer	30	30	30
Savings Options			
Environmental Services Partnership	0	-25	-50
Service Reviews	-140	-330	-405
Town Hall	-70	-70	-70
Finance Vacancies	-100	-100	-100
MRP	-100	-100	-100
Pension Fund	-663	-663	-663
Engage Capacity Grid (One Off)	-200	-200	0
10% Increase in Fees and Charges	-382	-389	-390
Total Savings	-1,625	-1,847	-1,748
Revised Position	-37	-634	-125
Pressures			
Pay Pressure Year 1	718	718	718
Pay Pressure Future Years (1%)	0	0	155
Transport Pressure	32	33	34
Contracts Pressures	150	155	160
Core Pressures	900	906	1,067
Updated Position	863	272	942
Utilities Inflation	702	702	702
Tranche 1 Final Draft Position	1,565	974	1,644
Draft Local Government Financial Settlement			
New Homes Bonus	-127		
Services Grant	-68		
Funding Guarantee	-1027		
C Tax Base Reduction	24		
Business Rates - TBC			
Future Years Settlements - assumption		-1000	-1000
Settlement Draft Amounts	-1198	-1000	-1000
Additional Pensions Savings	-356	-356	-356
Conversion of 50% of Utilities to a Reserve	-351	-351	-351
Revised Deficit	-340	-733	-63
New Pressures (Known/Ongoing)			
Fleet Refurbishment	129	258	258
SLM Contract Rebasing	350	350	350
Apprenticeship Scheme	50	50	50
Data Analyst	25	25	25
WRS Increase	39	50	61
Increased pay award - so 2%	140	140	0
Total	733	873	744
Revised Draft Position	393	140	681

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Strategic Approach

- 3.18 The Council came into the 2023/24 budget process with a number of conflicting issues. These included:
- An ongoing budget deficit position from the 2022/23 MTFS of £1.6m which has now been resolved.
 - Significant inflationary increase due to the “cost of living” crisis.
 - Limited reserves to call on to reduce any deficit, which is still the case due to inflationary pressures. Earmarked reserves stand at just over £13m, and the General Fund at £4.5m.
 - Increases in Council Tax are limited at 3%, which is significantly lower than the present rates of inflation.
- 3.19 The Council must move to financial sustainability as soon as is practically possible due to the present inherent risks but must be minded of Government support that will be announced in the settlement.
- 3.20 As set out in the Tranche 1 report, the strategy must be to move the Council to financial sustainability by the 2024/25 financial year. To get to this position there will be the need for investment and possibly the requirement to fund redundancy (both from reserves). Both these requirements will be outputs from the Council having to implement changes to the way it operates to continue to become a viable entity going forward and this will take 18 months to implement fully.
- 3.21 As set out later in the Robustness Statement, in compiling Tranche1 of the budget, assumptions have been made based on the best information held now. Issues the Council is facing are not unique, they are being faced by almost all Councils. Tranche 2 of the budget will adjust for any funding that the Government will provide and also look at other options to close any deficit should the Government settlement not bridge any resultant gap. Initiatives that will be assessed in Tranche 2 (as more time is required to analyse these individual options) include:
- We now have clarity on the Local Government Settlement which is worth £1.2m
 - Ensuring Grants are maximised.
 - Ensuring Agency work reflects the income provided for its delivery.
 - Minimisation of Bed and Breakfast Temporary Accommodation costs
 - Reviewing the effectiveness of the Council’s largest Contracts.
 - Maximising the effectiveness of our refuse fleet
 - Reviewing the location and effectiveness of our Depot
 - Assessing the Council’s leisure and cultural strategy in terms of affordability
 - Reviewing recharging mechanisms between the Councils for appropriateness
 - Rationalisation of Back Office services as we embrace technology.

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- 3.22 Many of these initiatives will require investment, for which the only present source of funding is reserves (General Fund and Earmarked Reserves). Key areas of investment will be:
- Documentation of Processes
 - Investment in automation and robotic processes
 - Possible redundancy – through restructures

- 3.23 However, in any situation, the Council must move to sustainability by the 2024/25 financial year.

Impact on Reserves

- 3.24 As per the Tranche 1 Report these will be fully updated in the final Tranche 2 position but are set out in 3.18 above.

Capital Programme

- 3.25 The final position, based on scheme slippage to date in 2022/23 and the availability of resources, will be reassessed as part final Tranche 2 position. The Council will need to concentrate on the delivery of Levelling Up and UK Shared Prosperity Fund capital initiatives over this period as funding must be spent by the 1st April 2026 and the 1st April 2025 respectively.

Robustness Statement

- 3.26 For Tranche 1, the opinion of the Interim Director of Finance is that the 2023/24 budget estimates contain considerable risk due to the level of uncertainty in the Councils operating environment, making it problematic to develop meaningful assumptions.
- 3.27 The revenue budget and capital programme have been formulated having regard to several factors including:
- Funding Available.
 - Inflation.
 - Risks and Uncertainties.
 - Priorities.
 - Service Pressures.
 - Commercial Opportunities.
 - Operating in a Post C-19 environment.

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3.28 The MTFP highlights that the current financial position is untenable without some form of intervention, which the one year settlement has given, but this needs to be longer term to enable the Council to properly plan service delivery for its residents and stakeholders. A balanced budget for 2022/23 was approved with the use of reserves in February 2022, the Council is currently forecasting a £0.393m overspend in 2023/24 due to the additional demands placed on it due to the present rates of inflation, which in turn is utilising the remaining available reserves balances to fund these pressures.

3.29 Given all the uncertainty which encapsulates this MTFP, the assumptions have been based on the best available information to the Council at this time. Work will continue in validating all assumptions, robustly challenging estimates, ensuring the delivery of existing saving plans. Updates will be included in Tranche 2 of the MTFS and balanced budget setting process

4. **IMPLICATIONS**

Financial Implications

4.1 Financial implications are set out in section 3.

Legal Implications

4.2 A number of statutes governing the provision of services covered by this report contain express powers or duties to charge for services. Where an express power to charge does not exist the Council has the power under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to charge where the activity is incidental or conducive to or calculated to facilitate the Council's statutory function.

Service / Operational Implications

4.3 Service implications of savings proposals are set out in the Savings Proposal Document in the background papers.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

4.4 There are none of these in Tranche 1, although it is expected there will be impacts in Tranche 2 where further savings will be required.

5. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

5.1 There is a risk that if fees and charges are increased that income levels will not be achieved, and the cost of services will increase. This is mitigated by managers reviewing their fees and charges annually. The final report to Cabinet in February will have an updated section on Risk (updated from the Tranche 1 MTFP that was presented to Cabinet on the 26th October 2022).

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6. **APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Background Papers

Tranche 1 MTFP – Cabinet 26th October 2023: [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 26/10/2022 18:00 \(bromsgrove.gov.uk\)](#)

MTFP 2022/23 – Approved February 2022: [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Council, 23/02/2022 18:00 \(bromsgrove.gov.uk\)](#)

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Quarterly Risk Update

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Michelle Howell, Head of Finance and Customer Services
Report Author Peter Carpenter	Job Title: Interim S151 Officer Contact peter.carpenter@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk email: Contact Tel:
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Aspiration, work and financial independence
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. **SUMMARY**

This report sets out Council activity to identify, monitor and mitigate risk.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to consider:

- The present list of Corporate and Departmental Risks and request any additional risks to be considered.

3. **KEY ISSUES**

Background

- 3.1 In 2018/19, an audit of Risk Management provided an assurance level of limited assurance due to weaknesses in the design and inconsistent application of controls. As a result of the audit, a review was commissioned and undertaken by Zurich Municipal to consider the Council's risk management arrangements and to advise of any recommendations. In response to the Zurich review a Risk Management Strategy was produced for both Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council.
- 3.2 A follow-up review was carried out by Internal Audit in March 2021 (Final Report June 2021) with the purpose of identifying what progress had been made against the Risk Management Strategies. At that time there was a lack of evidence that the actions within the Risk Management Strategies had been fully completed and embedded within the Councils and therefore no assurance could be given.

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- 3.3 CMT, on the 16th March 2022, acknowledged that there is a risk management system in place, and there are areas of good practice however this was not uniform across the Councils. The embedding of effective risk management needed to be driven and led by senior management and cascaded down throughout the Councils. It recommended that:
- An initial Officer Risk Board to take place on in the first week of April 2022. This happened on the 8th April. Three further rounds of the Officer Board have now taken place on the 22nd June, the 21st September, and the 21st December to embed processes.
 - Each department nominate a representative to a Risk Board. These representatives meet on a quarterly basis and report back to management teams.
 - Each department to complete an updated Risk Register by Wednesday 6th April. This Report is the third update of the Risk Register following that initial re-baselining on the 6th April.
 - That the Audit Committee, which met in the week commencing the 11th April, be verbally updated on Progress. The Audit Committee reviewed Risk Registers in July and October and this Report is the third round of updates being reported to embed that process. These reports have also been presented to Cabinet.
 - CMT be updated at their meeting on 13th April on progress and ongoing on progress. CMT were presented with an initial draft Corporate Risk Register for approval, and further updates were presented to Cabinet at the end of June, the end of September, and the end of December to embed the overall process.
 - That updated reports are prepared for next cycle of Audit, Governance and Standards Committee. This cycle is in January 2023 and is the third series of updates.
 - That the Officer Group update the Risk Register and formally report for CMT on a quarterly basis. These quarterly updates happened on the 29th June, 28th September, and 21st December.

The Definition of a Corporate Risk

- 3.4 The Council has existing Corporate and Departmental Risks. Members of the Risk Board were not sure of the link on how Risks on system had become Corporate in nature.
- 3.5 The following definition of a of how Risks move from being “departmental” to being “corporate” in nature was recommended by the Risk Group and approved by CMT.
- “For a **Risk** to move from being **Departmental** in nature to being **Corporate** in nature that it ***must have significant impact on Councils finances, be cross departmental in nature and/or result in Serious reputational damage.*** The Officer Risk Board will vet departmental risks using this definition to move then to Corporate Risks at their quarterly meetings.”
- 3.6 At the June Officer Risk Board it was agreed that “Green” Departmental Risks should be taken off this list if they have been to two consecutive meetings and mitigating actions have been fully put into place for them. This report takes account of this requirement being 2 meetings since the original baseline was reported.

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The 4Risk System

- 3.6 The Council have reviewed the use of the 4Risk system to manage its risks. It was the view of the Officer Risk Board, and endorsed by CMT, that this was fit for purpose but like any system it needed to be properly completed and updated. The Officer Risk Board reviews this on a quarterly basis.

The baseline Departmental Risks are included in the following table – this was prior to any Risk Board meetings in April which started to actively challenge, mitigate and remove/add where relevant Risks.

The baseline risks are included in the following table – this is prior to any Risk Board meetings.

Service Area	Red	Amber	Green	Total
Customer Access and Financial Support	12	20	13	45
Finance	0	0	4	4
Environmental Services	0	2	11	13
Leisure & Cultural Services	0	3	3	6
Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services	0	0	7	7
ICT	2	4	5	11
Planning Services	0	1	1	2
Housing	0	4	5	9
Community Services	1	1	5	7
HR	0	0	1	1
Total	15	35	55	105

After the Risk Board on the 22nd June, the following changes have been made which saw the number of risks reduce as follows to 82 Risks

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Service Area	Red	Amber	Green	Total
Customer Access and Financial Support	0	6	12	18
Finance	0	2	2	4
Environmental Services	0	2	11	13
Leisure & Cultural Services	0	3	3	6
Legal, Equalities, Democratic Services & Property	0	3	9	12
ICT	2	6	2	10
Planning Services	0	2	1	3
Housing	0	3	4	7
Community Services	0	2	6	8
HR	0	0	1	1
Total	2	29	51	82

The two departmental red risks are:

- ICT 7 - Failure to identify, maintain and test adequate disaster recovery arrangements
- ICT 11 - System functionality to manage records

As at the 21st December, Risks and their categorizations have fallen to the levels in the following table with just 55 risks in total.

3.10 December, being the third cycle following the baselining exercise has seen a complete review of all departmental risks. Twenty-seven risks have been removed and a number of others have been re-categorised. This review process has been done in two stages

- All items have been reviewed by Risk Champions and respective DMT's in each Service Area. Service representatives continue to challenge individual items, which is on the data in the following Tabs underneath each Risk, to ensure that all controls and assurances are properly monitored.
- The Risk Board on the 14th December also went through all open risks to assess their validity, to ensure that assessment practices were consistent across service areas. This took account of the view that "Green" Departmental Risks should be taken off this list if they have been to two consecutive meetings and mitigating actions have been fully put into place. This was tested in the case of all remaining Green Risks

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Service Area	Red	Amber	Green	Total
Customer Access and Financial Support	1	5	10	16
Finance	0	2	2	4
Environmental Services	0	5	3	8
Leisure & Cultural Services	0	1	0	1
Legal, Equalities, Democratic Services & Property	1	1	5	7
ICT	0	2	2	4
Planning Services	0	1	0	1
Housing	0	3	4	7
Community Services	0	1	5	6
HR	0	0	1	1
Total	2	21	32	55

Red Risks – 2 in total

REV7 - Revenues - Performance Indicator data is not robust

LED13 - Legal – Bromsgrove Leisure Contracts

The previous two ICT Risks and Housing Risk have been mitigated

- 3.11 A new risk will be added in Housing for the various implications of the Damp and Mould issues (which include rectification and also what the Council needs to undertake to ensure that Private Landlords comply with the regulations
- 3.12 Green risks, which have come off this report are and how they are getting mitigated.

Corporate Risks

- 3.8 The Officer Risk Board reviewed the risks in the above table at their meetings on the 8th April, 22nd June, 21st September and the 21st December using the new definition of “Corporate Risks”. The table below sets out the updated Corporate Risk Register that the Risk Board took to CMT and gained their approval.

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Risk Ref	Risk Title	Risk Status
 COR 9	Non Compliance with Health and Safety Legislation	Open View
 COR 10	Decisions made to address financial pressures and implement new projects that are not informed by robust data and evidence	Open View
 COR 14	Non adherence with Statutory Inspection Policy	Open View
 COR 15	Impact from Changes to Partner Funding Arrangements	Open View
 COR 16	Management of Contracts	Open View
 COR 17	Resolution of the Approved Budget Position	Open View
 COR 18	Protection from Cyber Attack	Open View
 COR 19	Adequate Workforce Planning	Open View
 COR 20	Financial Precision Rectification	Open View
 COR 21	BROMSGROVE DC Being placed into special measures due to quality of planning application decisions	Open View

There is no change to the existing Corporate Risks. However, an Overarching Corporate Risk relating to the “cost of living” crisis will need to be added as this impacts numerous services and is specific in nature.

The Risk Management Framework

- 3.9 Risk Management Training. Given the active management of risks by service departments, we have seen numbers of departmental risks reduced by almost 50% although Corporate Risks have increased by 20%. At this time it is felt that a series of Risk Management Training is not required as processes seem to be being embedded in the organisations.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 No Legal implications have been identified.

5. **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The Council spend significant sums insuring itself and must also hold Reserves to mitigate the costs of risks should they happen. A comprehensive Risk Management approach ensures risk and its consequences, including financial ones, are minimised.

6. Strategic Purpose Implications

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 6.1 A comprehensive Risk Management approach ensures **Risk and its Consequences** is minimised for the Council.

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Climate Change Implications

- 6.2 The green thread runs through the Council plan. This includes risks linked to activities and actions that link to our climate.

7. Other Implications

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 7.1 If risks are not mitigated it can lead to events that have Customer/Equalities and Diversity implications for the Council.

Operational Implications

- 7.2 Risks are inherent in almost all the Councils operational activities and therefore significant risks need to be identified, monitored and mitigated.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 This report is about Risk Management.

9. APPENDENCES

None

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGET INCREASES

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr. Phillip Thomas
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Michelle Howell
Report Author	Job Title: Head of Finance & Customer Services email:michelle.howell@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel:
Wards Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Following its meeting on the 17th November, the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Board approved budget increases for all constituent Members for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial year. This report sets out those increases for their inclusion in the Councils 2022/23 Monitoring reports and 2023/24 budget.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are asked to Recommend to Council that:

- 1 WRS contributions are increased by £167,843 in 2022/23 due to the national pay award of £1,925 per pay point and increases in hosting costs due to the “cost of living” crisis.
- 2 WRS Budget contributions are increased to £510,000 in 2023/24 to take account of pay awards and the impact of the “cost of living crisis.”

3. Background

Introduction

2022/23

- 3.1 The WRS Budgets for 2022/23 were set as part of the 2022/23 MTFP process. At the WRS Board meeting on the 17th November it was reported that at the end of September the overall position was a projected outturn 2022/23 resulting in a £1k refund to partners against the agreed budget. This overspend was set against the assumptions in the MTFP of a 2% pay award,

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Pest Control overspends being allocated based on actual work undertaken for partners, and Bereavement costs being charged on an “as and when” basis.

- 3.2 WRS budgeted for a 2% pay award in 2022-23. The current proposed pay award of £1,925 per annum on all pay points (pro rata for part time work) has now been accepted by employers and unions, the additional pressure on WRS salaries will be £115,757. WRS are unable to cover this increase, therefore an increase to partner funding will be required of:-

Council	2022/23
	£
Bromsgrove District Council	16,843
Malvern Hills District Council	15,083
Redditch Borough Council	20,292
Worcester City Council	19,146
Wychavon District Council	26,902
Wyre Forest District Council	17,491
Total	115,757

- 3.3 When hosting charges was set in November 2021 it was impossible to anticipate the level of cost increases faced by local authorities in terms of pay award, utility costs and the wider impact of high inflation. In order to avoid placing a significant burden on hosting authorities in year, members are asked to agree to the following increases in hosting charges below:

Council	2022/23 Increase in Rent £	2022/23 Increase in ICT Hosting £	2022/23 Increase in Support Hosting £
Bromsgrove District Council	811	434	728
Malvern Hills District Council	725	388	651
Redditch Borough Council	977	522	877
Worcester City Council	921	493	827
Wychavon District Council	1,294	692	1,162
Wyre Forest District Council	842	450	756
Total	5,570	2,980	5,000

2023/24

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- 3.4 The WRS Board also considered the 2023/24 budget at the meeting on the 17th November. In the budget presentation the following assumptions were agreed as being valid for constructing the budget:
- The base budget has been adjusted to include the increase of £116k created by the higher-than-expected pay award in 2022-23 and also the increase in hosting and support charges of £13.5k
 - 2% pay award across all staff for 2023/24 – 2025/26. This will be subject to the National Pay Negotiations that are ongoing and therefore the final position will reflect any formally agreed increases, the budget also includes any employee entitled to an incremental increase.
 - Increase in Rent of £7.7k
 - Increase in ICT Hosting of £7.5k
 - Increase in Support Hosting of £8.6k in 2023-24 and a further 2% in 2024-25 and 2025-26
 - No inflationary increases in supplies and services or transport.
 - Pension back-funding will be paid by all partners.
- 3.5 The unavoidable salary pressures are not able to be met by WRS making additional income, therefore, an increase to partner funding will be required of:

Council	2023/24	2024/25 - Cumulative	2025/26 - Cumulative
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Bromsgrove District Council	12	23	34
Malvern Hills District Council	11	21	31
Redditch Borough Council	14	28	41
Worcester City Council	14	27	40
Wychavon District Council	19	37	54
Wyre Forest District Council	12	24	35
Total	82	160	235

- 3.7 In the Autumn of 2021, when the Officer members of the Board reached agreement on the increase in hosting charges for Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove for 2022/23, no one could have anticipated the extent of the inflationary pressures currently being experienced by all councils. Inflation being in double figures was not yet talked about. The scale of the sharp increases in energy costs had not yet become apparent and a national pay settlement for 2022/3 that adds around 7% on average was well beyond what was anticipated. Whilst the pay award clearly impacts directly on staff

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employed for WRS purposes, it also impacts those staff based in the host authorities that provide supporting roles. These impacts, along with the anticipated impacts that will hit us in 2023/4, need to be reflected realistically in setting the budget for hosting next year.

- 3.8 IT suppliers are also experiencing increased financial pressures that many are passing these on to users. Software license charges are increasing significantly, which means a significant impact on our modern, digitally enabled services. All officers in local authorities are reliant on IT kit and software for their flexible work patterns and the cost of these provisions are increasing and will increase further looking forward. Utilities costs continue to rise and must be factored into the accommodation charges that the hosting provider faces. These pressures are not able to be met by WRS, therefore, an increase to partner funding will be required of:

Council	2023/24 Increase in Rent	2023/24 Increase in ICT Hosting	2023/24 Increase in Support Hosting
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Bromsgrove District Council	1	1	1
Malvern Hills District Council	1	1	1
Redditch Borough Council	2	1	2
Worcester City Council	1	1	1
Wychavon District Council	2	1	2
Wyre Forest District Council	1	1	1
Total	8	7	8

- 3.10 In addition to the base budget there are three additional technical officers working on income generation, animal activity and gull control. We are unable to include these officers into the base budget as the income generation officer is an additional post on the establishment to bring in additional income agreed by partner councils and the animal activity and gull control officer recharge percentage basis is different to the agreed partner recharge allocations.

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Council	Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	7	
Malvern Hills District Council	5	13	
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	
Worcester City Council	6	3	65
Wychavon District Council	8	11	
Wyre Forest District Council	6	5	
Total	36	41	65

3.11 The Pension back-funding figures to be paid by partners are as follows:

Council	Pension Back Funding 2023-24 £000	Pension Back Funding 2024-25 £000	Pension Back Funding 2025-26 £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	5	5
Malvern Hills District Council	5	5	5
Redditch Borough Council	6	6	6
Worcester City Council	6	6	6
Wychavon District Council	8	8	8
Wyre Forest District Council	6	6	6
Total	36	36	36

3.12 The Approved revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 23/24 onwards agreed at the Board on the 17th November are

Council	£'000	Revised %
Bromsgrove District Council	510	14.52
Malvern Hills District Council	457	13.00
Redditch Borough Council	615	17.49
Worcester City Council	580	16.72
Wychavon District	815	23.19

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Wyre Forest District Council	530	15.08
Total	3,507	

4. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 4.1 Financial implications are set out in section 3.

Legal Implications

- 4.2 A number of statutes governing the provision of services covered by this report contain express powers or duties to charge for services. Where an express power to charge does not exist the Council has the power under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to charge where the activity is incidental or conducive to or calculated to facilitate the Council's statutory function.

Service / Operational Implications

- 4.3 Monitoring will be undertaken to ensure that income targets are achieved in 2023/24. This is via the quarterly WRS Board Meetings.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 4.4 The implementation of the revised fees and charges will be notified in advance to the customer to ensure that all users are aware of the new charges and any concessions available to them.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 There is a risk that if fees and charges are not increased that income levels will not be achieved, and the cost of services will increase. This is mitigated by managers reviewing their fees and charges annually.

6. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Minutes of the WRS Board meeting held on 17th November 2022

CABINET

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Background Papers

WRS Updated Fees and Charges 2023/24 – Council 7th December 2022:
[Agenda for Council, 07/12/2022 18:00 \(bromsgrove.gov.uk\)](#)

WRS Board Papers 17th November 2022: [Agenda for Worcestershire
Regulatory Services Board, 17/11/2022 16:30 \(bromsgrove.gov.uk\)](#)

Tranche 1 MTFP – Cabinet 26th October 2022: [Agenda for Cabinet,
26/10/2022 18:00 \(bromsgrove.gov.uk\)](#)

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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER 2022, AT 4.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors: T. Rowley (Chairman), S. Cronin (Vice-Chairman, during Minute No's 24/22 to 27/22), H. J. Jones, P.L. Thomas, S. Khan, L. Harrison (substituting for Councillor N. Nazir), J. Raine, B. Nielsen, C. Mitchell, D. Morris and N. Martin

Officers: Mr. S. Wilkes, Mr. P. Carpenter, Mr. R. Keyte, Mr. D. Mellors, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr. M. Cox and Mrs. P. Ross

Partner Officers: Mr. L. Griffiths, Worcester City Council, Mr. I. Miller, Wyre Forest District Council, Mr. I. Edwards, Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils (all via Microsoft Teams)

19/22 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N. Nazir, Redditch Borough Council, with Councillor L. Harrison in attendance as the substitute Member; and Councillor L. Whitehouse, Wyre Forest District Council.

20/22 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

21/22 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 23rd June and 6th October 2022, were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meetings held on 23rd June and 6th October 2022, be approved as correct records.

22/22 **WRS BOARD AGENDA PAPERS FROM 6TH OCTOBER 2022**

The Head of Regulatory Services reminded the Board that the meeting of the Board on Thursday 6th October 2022 was not quorate due to unforeseen circumstances impacting on one Board Member, which had resulted in one partner authority not being represented at the meeting.

Having discussed all options with the Council's Legal Advisor and Head of Regulatory Services, the Chairman determined that the meeting would go ahead in order to avoid wasted journeys; having noted that no papers on the agenda required a formal vote for decision, they were all simply for noting. Members who were in attendance were then able to ask questions of the officer's present on the reports presented and a broad ranging discussion of the issues raised took place.

However, in order to address what was effectively outstanding business, this report introduced those previously scheduled papers as background papers; in order for them to be formally noted by the Board and to agree the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23rd June 2022.

The reports that were presented to Board Members on 6th October 2022, were included as background papers, with the agenda distributed for 17th November 2022.

Thus, enabling those Board Members who were not in attendance to address their contents and to ask any questions during today's meeting.

RESOLVED that the Board papers report for 6th October 2022 be noted, and that the relevant recommendations in each of the reports as detailed in the background papers as provided, be noted.

23/22

WRS REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - SEPT 2022

The Interim S151 officer, Finance, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendations as detailed on pages 27 to 29 of the main agenda report.

The Interim S151 officer, confirmed that the report covered the period April to September 2022.

Members were informed that the detailed revenue report, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report; showed a projected outturn 2022/23 of £1k refund to partners. It was appreciated that this was an estimation to the year-end based on the following assumptions: -

- A 2% pay award had been added to the April to September Actual and projected outturn figures.
- Agency staff costs were being incurred due to backfilling of staff working on grant funded work and other contractual work e.g., food recovery programme, contaminated land.
- If April to September 2022 spend on pest control continued on the same trend for the rest of year, there would be an overspend on this service of £14k. WRS officers would continue to monitor and

analyse this spend and advise of any changes in the projected outturn figure at quarter 3. The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners was, as follows: -

Redditch Borough Council	£6k
Wychavon District Council	£7k
Worcester City Council	£1k

- The following was the actual bereavements costs April to September 2022 to be funded by partners. These costs were charged on an as and when basis. Due to the nature of the charge, it was not possible to project a final outturn figure: -

Bromsgrove District Council	£8k
Malvern Hills District Council	£4k
Redditch Borough Council	£2k
Worcester City Council	£6k

- Appendix 2 to the report, detailed the income achieved by WRS for April to September 2022.
- Any grant funded expenditure was shown separate to the core service costs as this was not funded by the participating Councils.

WRS had budgeted for a 2% pay award in 2022-23. The current proposed pay award was £1,925 per annum on all pay points (pro rata for part time work,) had now been accepted by employers and unions; the additional pressure on WRS would be £115,757. WRS were unable to cover this increase, therefore an increase to partner funding would be required as follows: -

Council	2022/23
	£
Bromsgrove District Council	16,843
Malvern Hills District Council	15,083
Redditch Borough Council	20,292
Worcester City Council	19,146
Wychavon District Council	26,902
Wyre Forest District Council	17,491
Total	115,757

RESOLVED that the Board notes the final financial position for the period April – Sept 2022, and that

- 1.1 partner councils be informed of their liabilities for 2022-23 in relation to Pest Control, as follows:-

Council	Projected Outturn for Pest Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	6
Wychavon District Council	7
Worcester City Council	1
Total	14

- 1.2 partner councils be informed of their liabilities for 2022-23 in relation to Bereavements, as follows:-

Council	Apr–Sept 22 Actual for Bereavements £000
Bromsgrove District Council	8
Malvern Hills District Council	4
Redditch Borough Council	2
Worcester City Council	6
Total	20

- 1.3 partner councils be informed of their liabilities for 2022-23 in relation to three additional Technical Officers; as follows:-

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2022/23 Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2022/23 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2022/23 Gull Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	
Malvern Hills District	4	7	

Agenda Item 11

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board
17th November 2022

Council			
Worcester City Council	5	2	70
Bromsgrove District Council	5	8	
Wychavon District Council	8	13	
Wyre Forest District Council	5	8	
Total	33	40	70

- 1.4 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2022/23 in relation to the additional increase in pay award and recommend the increase to individual partner councils, as follows:-

Council	£000
Bromsgrove District Council	17
Malvern Hills District Council	15
Redditch Borough Council	20
Worcester City Council	19
Wychavon District Council	27
Wyre Forest District Council	18
Total	116

- 1.5 Approve additional partner liabilities for 2022/23 in relation to the additional increase in hosting cost in Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove District Councils relating to ICT, accommodation and support staffing costs and recommend the increase to individual partner councils; as follows: -

Council	2022/23 Increase in Rent £000	2022/23 Increase in ICT Hosting £000	2022/23 Increase in Support Hosting £000
Bromsgrove District Council	0.8	0.4	0.7
Malvern Hills	0.7	0.4	0.6

District Council			
Redditch Borough Council	1.0	0.5	0.9
Worcester City Council	0.9	0.5	0.8
Wychavon District Council	1.3	0.7	1.2
Wyre Forest District Council	.8	0.5	0.8
Total	5.5	3.0	5.0

24/22

WRS BUDGETS 2023/24 - 2025/26

The Interim S151 officer, Finance, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced the report and in doing highlighted that no one could have anticipated the extent of the inflationary pressures and economic conditions currently being experienced by all councils; with the sharp increases in energy costs and utilities.

IT suppliers were also experiencing increased financial pressures with many passing these on to users. WRS had therefore incurred increased costs with licensing and Uniform costs. However, some costs were offset against a decrease in transport costs now that the essential car user allowance could no longer be claimed.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to questions regarding the non-Partner Council revenue side; and in doing so briefly explained that the Service were doing an excellent job working with Worcestershire County Council on areas like Safety at Sportsgrounds and petroleum licensing, with the Technical Services Manager's Team were doing an excellent job on delivering this alongside the vapour recovery work of Environmental Health, both of which had generated an additional income. Officers would continue to look more broadly at other public authorities to work with as the legislative framework made this more straight forward than dealing with the private sector; although no one would know the medium term financial situation for some time. If WRS were struggling with the budget, then partner officers would look at how services could be delivered differently if necessary.

WRS was relatively unique, there were no other district council partnership models delivering services on the scale of WRS. The shared services model on which WRS is based was a tried and tested model and officers had been successful in bringing in additional income and had built a strong team to achieve this. The work of WRS was nationally

recognised by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA); and WRS was very well known to the Local Government Association (LGA). The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, chaired the Primary Authority group and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) was visiting WRS in the near future to look at the service's use of intelligence, with a view to using this in part of the amendments to its Code of Practice.

Officers would continue to scope other areas of expertise and also build on more Primary Authority work.

With regard to promoting WRS, the Head of Regulatory Services commented that most of the business was generated by peer to peer contact, by word of mouth. Officers had looked at trying to market services. However, he would also ask Senior Officers and Members to champion WRS when / whenever possible at relevant forums.

The Chairman thanked officers and stated that we all had a role to play in promoting WRS.

RECOMMENDED that partner authorities approve the following for 2023/24 – 2025/26: -:

- 1.1 Approve the 2023/24 gross expenditure budget of £4,288k as shown at Appendix 1 to the report,
- 1.2 Approve the 2023/24 income budget of £781k as shown at Appendix 1, to the report;
- 1.3 Approve the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 2023/24 as follows: -

Council	£'000	Revised %
Bromsgrove District Council	510	14.52
Malvern Hills District Council	457	13.00
Redditch Borough Council	615	17.49
Worcester City Council	580	16.72
Wychavon District	815	23.19
Wyre Forest District Council	530	15.08
Total	3,507	

1.4 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2023/24 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure, as follows: -.

Council	£'000
Bromsgrove District Council	12
Malvern Hills District Council	11
Redditch Borough Council	14
Worcester City Council	14
Wychavon District Council	19
Wyre Forest District Council	12
Total	82

1.5 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2023/24 in relation to increase in hosting costs, as follows: -

Council	Increase in Rent £000	Increase in ICT Hosting £000	Increase in Support Hosting £000
Bromsgrove District Council	1	1	1
Malvern Hills District Council	1	1	1
Redditch Borough Council	2	1	2
Worcester City Council	1	1	1
Wychavon District Council	2	1	2
Wyre Forest District Council	1	1	1
Total	8	7	8

1.6 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2023/24 in relation to three Technical Officers, as follows: -

Council	Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	7	
Malvern Hills	5	13	

District Council			
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	
Worcester City Council	6	3	65
Wychavon District Council	8	11	
Wyre Forest District Council	6	5	
Total	36	41	65

25/22

ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE DATA QUARTER 2 - 2022/2023

The Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarter 2, 2022/2023 and in doing so highlighted the following key points: -

ACTIVITY DATA

The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date was a reduction of 28% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 18% compared to 2020-21. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety cases were enquiries such as requests for business advice or export health certificates.

Of the interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 39 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2) with most of these ratings issued to takeaways, restaurants and small retailers.

Approximately 71% of recorded cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as from dog barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) being the most prominent sources. A further 11% of recorded cases related to smoke nuisances and issues such as the burning of domestic or commercial waste.

PERFORMANCE

At the end of last year, officers saw an increase in the number of defective vehicles reported, driven mainly by higher numbers in one of the six fleets. There was a similar picture at the end of quarter 2 this year, with 37 vehicles being suspended in the period but with 25 being in that same fleet area. Even with this number, only 2.37% of the fleet county-wide were recorded as potentially problematic. Members' attention was drawn to the table detailed at Appendix B to the report. Officers hoped that they could work with the operators to reduce this figure, but members of the trade needed to be aware that they must

always keep their vehicles up to standard and that the regular tests undertaken, were not there to be used to assess what maintenance may be required on their vehicles.

The rate of noise complaints against population was 0.91. This was slightly lower than the figure at quarter 2 last year (1.08,) but like the figures in the previous 2 years (0.94 and 0.85 respectively.) Members may be aware that this measure had been significantly higher at this point in previous years with 1.7 in 2018/19 and 2.1 in 2017/18. Hopefully, the current figure again was indicative of a return to normal levels.

Income brought in during the first half of 2022/23 was £232,520, which was significantly up on last year at this point (£163, 583,) and the previous year (£131,901). Using the historic budget figure for 2016/17 (£3,017,000) to maintain the comparison with previous years, this comes out at 7.7%. Hopefully, this showed that WRS were starting to see more normality returned in the areas that generated our income streams. Officers had not included additional income for work on issues like supporting Ukrainian refugees as this was work done on behalf of the six partners and officers tried to use this measure to look at the work that WRS carried out for others.

Officers responded to questions from the Chairman and Members of the Board, with regard to the information as detailed at Appendix 2, on page 59 of the main agenda report; with regard to defective vehicles and why Redditch Borough Council appeared to be out of kilter compared to other partner authorities.

It was suggested as mentioned above that some drivers may be using the taxi checks at the depot, as a way of seeing what work was required on their vehicles in order to keep them operating within policy and safe. Members were reassured that the Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS was looking into this. Licensing officers needed to ensure that drivers were carrying out safety checks and that regular maintenance on their vehicles was taking place.

Officers further responded to questions regarding the use of domestic log burners. Members were briefly informed that new powers under the Environment Act 2021 could allow local authorities to issue Penalty Notices for illegal smoke emissions, however, officers needed a better understanding on how log burners were being used incorrectly before they could do this as there were a number of reasons that could result in an illegal emission, particularly if the wrong fuel was used, and most log burners on the market were tested to standards that made them suitable for use in smokeless zones. The Head of Regulatory Services reminded

members that the service's enforcement policy would require that officers take a proportionate approach, making members of the public aware of what to / what not to buy, what can / can't be used as fuel with log burners; and that officers had to have the tools to deal with any concerns / issues raised in this area before any kind of formal action would be instituted.

The Chairman expressed his sincere thanks to officers for an informative report.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2, for 2022/2023, be noted and that Members use the contents of the activity data in their own reporting back to fellow Members of their partner authorities.

26/22

UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF THE AUTOMATION PROJECT

The Licensing and Support Services Manager introduced a further update report on the Automation progress, as agreed.

Members were informed that progress on making a final decision on a system had progressed. WRS had found two suppliers who seemed most positive about working with WRS and being able to deliver within our proposed timescales. The specification was being finalised and discussions were taking place with procurement colleagues this would enable WRS to make a direct award to the one that best fits the needs of WRS.

In the coming few weeks WRS will be working with the Procurement solicitor at Bromsgrove District Council to ensure that the necessary procurement processes were followed, whilst utilising one of the two Government portals available for direct award.

In parallel to the wider automation project officers had also been discussing the implementation of electronic ID Cards in the taxi trades for both safeguarding and enforcement measures. Since there was only one supplier on the market for this technology the procurement process was not as burdensome so officers would continue to work with the supplier to ensure that all of the needs would be met on implementation.

RESOLVED that the update on progress of the automation project be noted.

27/22

INFORMATION REPORT - FLEXIBLE WRS WORKFORCE

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, introduced the report and in doing so informed the Board that as detailed in the report that, during the last three years, WRS had provided reports or updates to Members on the various COVID-19 related workstreams. At the peak of demand, we

had teams working to support businesses and the public in a variety of ways throughout the pandemic. This led to a massive recruitment drive to fill the 80 plus temporary posts created.

The pandemic had created a unique situation which WRS was able to use to its benefit, in giving lots of talented, conscientious, and highly skilled individuals a chance to work alongside Environmental Health and Licensing staff to get a taste of our world. Whilst much of that work has come to an end during 2022 many of the staff previously employed in COVID-19 workstreams had been able and willing to be redeployed in regulatory and public health related matters utilising the skills developed and supporting the WRS budget.

The Head of Regulatory reiterated this and commented that the Technical Services Manager had provided a good summary for Members. They had employed some very talented people during Covid-19.

Planning Enforcement

WRS had been utilising the knowledge and skills we have in this area to support our partner authorities. During the spring we trained former contact tracing staff where required (as some had considerable experience in enforcement previously) to deliver planning enforcement work on behalf of four of the Worcestershire District Councils. Whilst the work for Wychavon and Malvern Hills Districts ceased in June, WRS continued to work alongside Planning colleagues in Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils.

Members' attention was drawn to the table, as detailed on page 96 of the main agenda report.

Homes for Ukrainians

Much of the work of the COVID Advisors during the pandemic was to support businesses and members of the public with a variety of issues, concerns, and worries. The Advisors were selected for their communication skills and drive to help people. This has served well in supporting housing colleagues at Bromsgrove District, Malvern Hills District, Redditch Borough, and Wychavon District Council's in delivering the work of supporting Ukrainians who had arrived in the county.

In July two more COVID Advisors started to assist but this time in Wychavon District and Malvern Hills District Council areas to carry out property checks to ensure that the properties were suitable for the Ukrainian guests.

COVID Advisors were always happy to take on any new challenges and were flexible in their approach to the regular changing guidelines during

COVID and now the regular change in workplace. They adapted well in these important roles using their previous experiences dealing with a range of different people (the general public, business owners, colleagues and management across the county in the six districts, county public health and councillors) and transferable skills such as their caring, empathic approach from visiting the clinically extremely vulnerable during lockdown, helping on vaccine centres to now carrying out Safeguarding checks for the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

In the last few months there had been some complex and sensitive cases, as one would envisage in a scheme where hosts offered to open their homes to strangers who had had to leave their homes and, in many cases, suffered terribly from the conflict.

Benefit to Partners

As well as supporting our colleagues in the District Councils, we have retained staff with valuable skills and knowledge. In terms of WRS' income generation from these work strands, we have only covered costs, but it had enabled us to utilise the associated opportunities in developing and enhancing our baseline workforce with managerial experience, a variety of work and an opportunity to provide value to our society; whilst being flexible and adaptable to our partners and residents in managing and delivering services for the benefit of all.

Further detailed discussion followed on the role of the flexible workforce in dealing with planning enforcement. Officers reassured Members that the flexible workforce had the crucial skills in adhering to enforcement policies and in enabling successful prosecutions. All enforcement goes through the planning department who direct WRS. Key communication with planning officers takes place and officers ensure that each of the partner authorities' policies are followed. It's about a flexible workforce having the abilities to undertake investigation without falling foul of legislation, the law and regulations; and assisting with quite onerous cases that could take between 1 and 2 years.

Further discussion took place on other enforcement work that WRS might take on. The Head of Regulatory Services directed Members to those areas mentioned in the WRS 3-year business plan as options that partners could consider, although he added that the view expressed by some members about wanting to retain services locally was understandable and reasonable.

RESOLVED that the Information Report – Flexible Worcestershire Regulatory Services workforce, be noted.

Agenda Item 11

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board
17th November 2022

The meeting closed at 5.30 p.m.

Chairman