



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 12TH OCTOBER 2022

AT 5.00 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

As a mark of respect following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the meeting of the Cabinet that had been scheduled to take place on 14th September 2022 was postponed. Please note that the items due for consideration in this agenda include most of the items in the previous agenda for the postponed meeting

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 27th July 2022 (Pages 1 - 4)**

4. **Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 5th July 2022 (Pages 5 - 12)**

(a) To receive and note the minutes

(b) To consider any recommendations contained within the minutes

There is a recommendation from the Board for consideration at this meeting.

5. **Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Sector) (England & Wales) Regulations 2015 (Pages 13 - 22)**

6. **First Homes (Pages 23 - 42)**

7. **Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** (Pages 43 - 96)
8. **Draft Council Tax Support Scheme** (Pages 97 - 110)
9. **Finance Improvement Recovery Plan** (Pages 111 - 120)
10. **Budget Framework Finance and Performance Quarter 1 Monitoring Report** (Pages 121 - 160)
11. **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

27th September 2022

If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
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GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

At the current time, seating at the meeting will be placed in such a way as to achieve as much space as possible for social distancing to help protect meeting participants.

Please note that this is a public meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers, please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

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Notes:

Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when Council might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded.



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- Meeting Agendas
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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

27TH JULY 2022, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr P. Carpenter, Mrs. R. Bamford, Ms. C. Flanagan, Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill and Mr G. Day

17/22 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

18/22 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

19/22 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 6TH JULY 2022**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6th July 2022 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6th July 2022 be approved as a true and correct record.

20/22 **UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND**

The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services presented a report on the subject of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Cabinet was informed that Bromsgrove had been allocated £2.8 million in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund by the Government. The Council needed to submit an Investment Plan to the Government by 1st August 2022, detailing how this funding would be spent.

The Government had identified three pillars that Councils needed to address through the expenditure of the funding. These pillars included:

- Communities and Place
- Supporting Local Business
- People and Skills

In addition, there were 41 interventions that had been identified by the Government for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund scheme. Local authorities needed to demonstrate in the Investment Plan which of these interventions would be addressed through the expenditure of the funding

Agenda Item 3

Cabinet
27th July 2022

at the local level. Officers were suggesting links to particular interventions, based on local knowledge and information about projects that had already been submitted for consideration.

Councils were required to explain in the investment plan how the funding would be allocated in relation to the Government's three key pillars for the scheme. In Bromsgrove, Officers were suggesting that 40 per cent of the funding should be allocated to Communities and Place and 30 per cent allocated each to Supporting Local Business and People and Skills respectively. The Government had clarified that Councils would have the flexibility to vary these allocations by up to 30 per cent.

The UK Shared Prosperity Funding would be available for a three-year period, from 2022/23 to 2024/25. The level of funding available in each year was due to increase from £340,499 in 2022/23 to £1.784 million in 2024/25. The funding allocated to year three of the programme was particularly high because this would be the only year in which funding would be available for the People and Skills pillar. Prior to this date, EU funding would continue to be used to address the skills agenda. Underspends could be carried over from one year to the next, however, the Council would need to be able to demonstrate to the Government that there were credible plans in place to ensure that both this funding and those funds allocated for that year would be spent within the year.

Under the terms of the scheme, Councils were able to allocate a portion of the funding for use for administrative purposes. Due to the capacity constraints impacting on local government, Officers were proposing that 4 per cent of the funding should be allocated to administration of the scheme.

Members welcomed the proposals detailed in the report and the allocation of £2.8 million UK Shared Prosperity Funding to Bromsgrove District. In discussing the funding, Members questioned the potential to alter the interventions that had been identified for inclusion in the scheme at this stage and the suggestion was made that E10 (funding for local sports facilities, tournaments, teams and leagues; to bring people together) should be added to the list of interventions for the District. The suggestion was also made that E41 (funding to support local digital skills) could be added to the list, as this would help to support people in the community, particularly elderly residents, to develop the skills needed to work in a digital manner. Officers explained that changes could be made to the list of interventions and there would be some work required to amend the planned allocation of funding between the various interventions.

Consideration was given to the timescales in which the funding would need to be spent. Cabinet was advised that there were some concerns about the relatively tight timescales available and the need for the Council to be able to justify any underspends to the Government in order not to lose any of the funding.

Reference was made to the process that would be followed, following approval of the investment plan, when considering and approving proposed projects. Officers clarified that the investment plan would provide the criteria against which projects would be assessed. Officers were requesting delegated authority, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Strategic Partnerships, to develop projects and to deliver the outcomes. In a context in which decisions would need to be taken and the funding spent in extremely tight timescales, Members agreed that this proposal should be amended to also grant authority to agree the projects.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The Investment Plan is approved for submission to the UK Government;
- 2) Authority to finalise the Investment plan be delegated to the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Strategic Partnerships and in light of advice from the Bromsgrove Partnership;
- 3) Authority to develop and agree projects to deliver the outcomes contained in the investment plan be delegated to the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Strategic Partnerships and in light of advice from the Bromsgrove Partnership; and

RECOMMENDED that

- 4) The Medium Term Financial Strategy is amended to include the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Allocation when next reviewed.

21/22

QUARTERLY RISK UPDATE BROMSGROVE- JULY 2022

The Interim Section 151 Officer presented the Quarterly Risk Update for Cabinet's consideration.

Members were advised that in 2018/19 there had been an audit of risk management arrangements in place at the Council. As a result of this audit, Zurich Municipal was commissioned to consider the Council's risk management arrangements and the suggestions made in this review led to the Council adopting a Risk Management Strategy. The Internal Audit team subsequently reviewed risk management arrangements in place at the Council and unfortunately this had concluded that there was a lack of evidence that the requirements detailed in the Risk Management Strategy were being fully complied with. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) had subsequently reviewed arrangements and, whilst finding some compliance, had concluded that this was not consistent across the authority. A Risk Management Board had subsequently been introduced and all departments were required to nominate a risk champion who attended meetings of the board.

The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee was the responsible body for considering the Council's management of corporate risks. However, as no report had been presented for Members' consideration on the subject of risk management for three years, a decision had been taken to also report to Cabinet on the arrangements.

The Council used the 4Risk system to manage both corporate and departmental risks. This system had been reviewed and had been found to be fit for purpose as long as correct information was logged on the system. However, the Council was not prescriptive about how the system should be used.

Members discussed the content of the report and in doing so made reference to the two departmental risks categorised as "red risks", both in relation to the ICT department. These related to failure to identify, maintain and test disaster recovery arrangements and system functionality to manage records. Officers explained that the ICT department had been very strict in reviewing their departmental risks and a lot of action was in the process of being taken to try to address these risks, including in relation to cyber security, which was considered to be a corporate risk.

Reference was made to the Risk Management Handbook which referred to the Leader as the lead Councillor for risk management. Officers confirmed that this would be updated in the handbook and Members were advised that in fact the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee was the lead for risk management.

Cabinet discussed the definition that had been provided in the report for a corporate risk, which needed to have significant impact on the Council's finances, be cross departmental and / or result in serious reputational damage. Questions were raised about what was considered likely to fall within this definition and the potential for departmental risks to also be considered corporate risks. Officers clarified that corporate risks tended to be cross cutting across various departments. The only corporate risk that was specific to one department related to the Planning process.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the definition of a Corporate Risk be approved;
- 2) the present list of Corporate Risks be approved;
- 3) the use of the Risk Management Framework devised by Zurich be approved; and
- 4) the progress made on the Action Plan approved by CMT on the 16th March 2022 be approved.

The meeting closed at 6.33 p.m.

Chairman

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

5TH JULY 2022, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillor P. L. Thomas and Councillor S. A. Webb (via Microsoft Teams)

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr. M. Bough, Mr S Shammon, Mrs. P. Ross and Ms. A. Scarce (via Microsoft Teams)

15/2022

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S. Baxter, with Councillor S. Douglas attending as named substitute, Councillor R. Hunter, with Councillor S. Robinson attending as named substitute, Councillor H. Jones and Councillor C. Spencer, with Councillor M. Glass attending as named substitute.

16/2022

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

Councillors J. Till, C. Hotham (as private landlords) and A. Kriss (an HMO property owner) declared an interest in Minute No. 19/2022 Housing Enforcement Powers in the Private Rented Sector. It was agreed that these were not pecuniary interests as the Overview and Scrutiny Board was not a decision-making body.

17/2022

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 30TH MAY 2022

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 30th May 2022 were considered.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 30th May 2022 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

18/2022

AIR QUALITY ANNUAL UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Richard Williams, Principal Officer (Planning & Pollution Control) from Worcestershire Regulatory Services and thanked him for providing the detailed presentation, which had been

Agenda Item 4

Overview and Scrutiny Board
5th July 2022

included within the agenda pack. Mr. Williams advised that he had taken on board some of the areas which had been discussed at his last update and provided a more detailed overview of the current position. The presentation covered the following areas:-

- DEFRA Annual Status Report 2022 –various data had been included in the presentation, which Mr. Williams explained in detail.
- Actions Update – AQAP improvements and how these were Highways Department/Transport related and how they linked to the Local Transport Plan 4.
- Legislative Changes – Mr. Williams provided a detailed update in respect of a number of changes to legislation, including changes to Air Quality Duties and Obligations under the Environment Act 2021 and new air quality standards being introduced from October 2022. Mr. Williams also discussed the broadening of the statutory responsibility for delivering air quality improvements, and the obligation of the County Council to co-operate with the District Council in delivering improvements through joint action plans.
- Air Quality Standards – Mr. Williams provided a detailed explanation of air quality standards, with particular reference to those impacting on Bromsgrove District. He also discussed, and provided data, in respect of the concerns that had previously been raised regarding air quality around schools and the impact of short-term exposure to poor air quality.
- Trends in Monitoring – a detailed update was provided in respect of the progress made into the monitoring equipment and being able to access real time data. The cost of the equipment was also discussed.
- Next Steps – Mr. Williams suggested that the Board might wish to think about whether it would consider the use of the new monitoring equipment and its cost effectiveness.

Following the presentation Members made a number of observations, discussed a number of areas in detail and Mr. Williams responded to questions, including the following:

- The importance of having clean air and the impact of air pollution, not just on people, but the wider impact on other services such as the NHS.
- NO₂ as a pollutant and where it came from and the use of fossil fuels. Mr. Williams also discussed the use of diesel vehicles and the initial view that these were originally considered to be less harmful.
- The impact from other countries and the importance of such things as the weather forecast being accurate in predicting problems such as the sand in the atmosphere which has occurred on a number of occasions recently.

Agenda Item 4

Overview and Scrutiny Board
5th July 2022

- Mr. Williams provided more detail around the new technology being used in monitoring and the ability to download real time data through an app on a phone. This was provided by DEFRA and very much reliant on the specific areas having the monitoring in place. Currently there were none of the new Electro Chemical Devices being used for monitoring in the County. It was suggested that this might be something the Board would want to consider putting forwards as a recommendation.
- Members discussed the need for enhanced monitoring and the positive impact that real time data could have on the District.
- The discharge from a local chimney was highlighted, together with the use of extractor fans from food outlets and Mr. Williams provided information on these areas and particles created by the burning of fossil fuels. He also confirmed that biomass systems were regulated by the Clean Air Act 1993.
- Mr. Williams had made reference to the Office for Environmental Protection being located at Worcestershire County Hall and Members asked whether this relocation had taken place and how many staff were involved. Mr. Williams said he was unaware of the detail, but that there was a new website available for this newly created team.
- The collection of data and how it was used was discussed and the overall impact across the County. Mr. Williams confirmed that there had been an overall improvement of 11% in Worcestershire.
- Mr. Williams provided background information in respect of previous funding which had been available at Worcestershire County Council level, this had not been applied for as there had been a need for match funding.
- Minimal investment had been made in areas where an Air Quality Management Area had been declared previously. It was also confirmed that an enhanced bid for Worcester City, as part of the Public Transport Funds had unfortunately not been successful.
- Members asked what could be done for those areas with higher levels of poor air quality and Mr. Williams explained that the use of the new Electro Chemical monitoring devices, would be most useful in these areas as there was the ability to gather real time data and to move these around to appropriate areas. The data could then be used to feedback to the relevant authorities in order to support either funding or relevant work needing to be carried out.

Members discussed the importance of monitoring and the benefits of real time data, although it was accepted that there was a cost implication, and it was agreed that a recommendation should be made to Cabinet in respect of the information received at this meeting.

RECOMMENDED that

Cabinet invites Richard Williams, Principal Officer (Planning & Pollution Control), Worcestershire Regulatory Services, to a meeting to present information on Electro Chemical Devices, which provide real time

information on air pollution. With a view to Cabinet looking at the cost implications, advantages, and viability of installing an Electro Chemical Device in a pilot scheme in the district to assess the advantages of using such equipment.

19/2022

HOUSING ENFORCEMENT POWERS IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

The Chairman welcomed Mr. S. Shammon, Private Sector Housing Team Leader and Mr. M. Bough, Housing Development and Enabling Manager, together with Councillor S. Webb, as Portfolio Holder for Housing Strategy.

Mr. Shammon gave an overview of the briefing paper, which had been included in the agenda, which included details of the legislation that covers the Private Rented Sector. He advised that there was limited data available on the range of enforcement which were undertaken both informally and formally.

The following areas were then discussed in detail:

- Whether smoke alarms and CO₂ alarms were battery or hardwired. Mr. Shammon confirmed that this was not specific, and they could be either for the private rented sector. However, for Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) they were required to be hardwired, dependant on the layout and escape routes within the property.
- Energy efficiency rating of E which had been changed in recent legislation and the impact on private rented properties. It was confirmed that properties with an F and G rating could not be let, although there were exemptions for example listed buildings. The EPC assessment process was discussed and how it had improved in recent years.
- Park homes were also discussed, and it was noted that there were specific manufacturing standards which related to them.
- It was noted that the definition of a landlord was anyone who took money to provide accommodation. In respect of park homes, these were usually on a lease basis, with the owner being responsible for the home and renting the plot it was on. It would be difficult to apply EPC ratings for such properties.
- Members questioned how often this was all monitored and Mr. Shammon advised that the resources were not available to do pro-active assessment, but the team would respond to complaints or concerns about properties. It was questioned whether people were too frightened to complain about where they lived, as it was easy for the landlords to evict people. Mr. Shammon advised that tenants had the right to complain, and once the team were aware of an issue, they would support them as much as they could and that there was a degree of protection for them, and the landlord could not simply evict them. He went on to explain how the team made people aware of their legal

Agenda Item 4

Overview and Scrutiny Board
5th July 2022

rights and how the team could help them and to encourage them to come forwards and ask for support.

- Mr. Shammon explained that there was clear legislation in place and wherever possible the team tried to resolve tenants' problems without the need to go to Court, as often it was difficult to get sufficient evidence to get things through the courts. However, there had been occasions where landlords had been prosecuted, although it was a protracted process.
- Often landlords were unaware of the legislation and standards they needed to meet, so once officers had become involved and explained this, and the landlord became aware of what was required, they would comply.
- Details of people's legal rights and a great deal of information was available on the website and officers would help and support them when needed. There was also information about how to contact the Tenancy Association.
- It was noted that information was promoted through the Council Tax leaflets, but often people did not take note of this until they needed help, the team also worked closely with the Citizens Advice Bureau, who was often the first port of call.
- Members asked how many HMOs there were in the district and what issues there had been in the past with them. Mr. Shammon confirmed that it was difficult to know how many there were, as this was ever changing, landlords often changed from single lets to meet the demands and what was profitable. There was no legislation which covered the need for landlords to advise the local authority of any changes. The current estimate in Bromsgrove was around 65 based on those officers were aware of.

The Chairman thanked officers for attending and responding to questions. Councillor Webb encouraged Members to speak to officers with any concerns raised in their wards as they were only too happy to help.

20/2022

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman confirmed that there had not been a meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group since his last update.

21/2022

TASK GROUP UPDATES

As Councillor R. Hunter, Chairman of the Fuel Poverty Task Group was not present, the Chairman confirmed that he understood that the Group had held an initial meeting and that Councillor Hunter would provide a more detailed update at the next meeting.

22/2022

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

As Councillor S. Baxter, the representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee was not in attendance, the Chairman confirmed that the next meeting was due to take place on 8th July and that Councillor Baxter would circulate the minutes from that meeting in due course.

23/2022

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman drew Members attention to the supplementary agenda, which contain the most recently published version of the Cabinet Work Programme. He confirmed that the Levelling Up Fund for the Market Hall site item, which the Board was due to consider had been removed from the Work Programme and then asked Members if there were any other items which they wished to pre-scrutinise.

The Vice Chairman suggested that the Worcestershire Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Recommissioning of the County Single Homeless and Childless Couples Services should be added to the Board's work programme.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Cabinet Work Programme be noted; and
- b) the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be updated in line with the pre-amble above.

24/2022

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

It was confirmed that the Work Programme would be updated to reflect the discussion in respect of the Cabinet Work Programme items and the Chairman also confirmed that there was no longer need for an additional meeting in respect of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund item. He explained that following discussion with officers, there would be significant flexibility around the use of these funds and the initial applications would only be for outline plans, with no great detail included. As these would be provided at a later date, there would be an opportunity for the Board to look at them in more detail at a future meeting. It was further confirmed that this item was a Cabinet decision and would not be considered at full Council.

In light of earlier discussions around enforcement, Councillor A. Kriss requested that an item be included which covered the effectiveness of enforcement across the Council, as he raised concerns that the officers were not able to get out and about across the wider district. It was envisaged that this would include such areas as litter picking, fly tipping

Agenda Item 4

Overview and Scrutiny Board
5th July 2022

and planning enforcement. This was an area which the Board had previously considered, and it was agreed that officers would check when the last report had been prepared and schedule in an update accordingly.

RESOLVED that subject to the pre-amble above the Overview & Scrutiny Board Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.48 p.m.

Chairman

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Cabinet
2022

12th October

Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England & Wales) Regulations 2015

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Shirley Webb
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis
Report Author	Job Title: Private Sector Housing Manager Contact email: steve.shammon@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Affordable & Sustainable Homes Living Independent, active & healthy lives
Key Decision / Non-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:-

- 1) The Council adopt the enforcement powers under the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property)(England & Wales) Regulations 2015; and**
- 2) The implementation of these powers are delegated to the Head of Community & Housing Services.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 From 1st of April 2020 the Minimum Energy Efficiency requirement became applicable to all relevant tenancies where there is a legal requirement to hold a valid current Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property. The property must meet the minimum E rating to comply with the Regulations, unless an exemption is available and is claimed by being registered in the Public Exemptions Register
- 2.2 The PRS Exemptions Register is for properties that are legally required to have an EPC, are let under a relevant tenancy but cannot be improved to meet the minimum standard of EPC band E for one of the following reasons.
 - High Cost Exemption – No improvements can be made for less than £3500

- All Improvements Made Exemption - But property remains below EPC 'E' rating
 - Wall Insulation Exemption - Cavity wall, external wall and internal wall insulation systems should not be installed due to adverse impact on the structure .
 - Consent Exemption- Where a third party consent is required but is being refused.
 - Devaluation Exemption – A RICS registered valuers report states the installation of specific energy efficiency measures would reduce the market value of the property by more than 5%.
 - New Landlord Exemption – A 6 month temporary exemption for unintended landlords.
- 2.3 These Regulations have been introduced to make it mandatory for relevant private rented properties to meet a minimum energy efficiency standard to ensure occupants benefit from homes that are both warm and affordable to heat in addition to the wider Government aim of meeting carbon reduction targets.
- 2.4 Since 01 April 2018 it has been unlawful for a landlord to grant a new letting of a non-compliant or substandard domestic property that has an EPC rating of F or G. As of 01/04/2020 this was extended so that landlords also cannot continue to let such domestic property.
- 2.5 Where a landlord has failed to take steps to comply, or has submitted misleading information to gain an exemption, a financial penalty under the regulations will be considered appropriate.
- 2.6 The Local Authority has discretion to decide the amount of penalty subject to the maximums prescribed by the Regulations for each type of breach. The prescribed maximums for letting a substandard property for are
- a) Less than 3 months - £2000
 - b) 3 months or more - £4000
 - c) Registering false information on the PRS Exemptions register - £1000
 - d) Failure to comply with a compliance notice - £2000
- 2.7 In determining an appropriate level of financial penalty officers will use the Financial Penalty Matrix prescribed at Appendix A which takes account of influencing factors.

- 2.8 It is a requirement that all aggravating or mitigating circumstances are taken into consideration and that any penalty is proportionate and defensible on appeal.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 This work will be continued within the existing service resources. Any financial penalty from the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property)(England & Wales) Regulations 2015 received by the Council will be applied to the costs of the enforcement functions in relation to the Private Rented Sector.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A Local housing authority has a legal duty to enforce the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property)(England & Wales) Regulations 2015. There is an appeal process to the Residential Property Tribunal. The private rented sector plays an important role in meeting the diverse housing needs that exist in the Borough. It is therefore important that the accommodation is regulated effectively to ensure it is energy efficient to benefit the occupants and environment. Whilst the majority of landlords carry out their legal duties and obligations, the small minority of landlords may disregard their legal obligations if there is no deterrent.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Affordable & Sustainable Homes **Living independent, active & healthy lives**

- 5.1 A home that is warm is an integral part of maintaining health and the ability to maintain a warm home at minimal costs in terms of energy consumption and finances is crucial. With energy costs increasing rapidly it is essential that the private rental sector meets the standards required , being a sector most likely to include vulnerable persons and those on lower incomes where a higher percentage of income is spent on energy costs..

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 Thermally efficient homes will reduce energy consumed for heating and therefore contribute to lowering of emissions and overall carbon footprint across the District.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The application of these regulations will have a positive impact on many family households living in private rented sector accommodation from improvements in thermal efficiency and reduced energy consumption.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 There are no staffing implications, envisaged at this stage. Initial stages of enforcement are to be undertaken through a Joint Project with Wyre Forest District Council using funding awarded for a successful bid which included for staffing and other resources. Formal enforcement will be undertaken by existing staff in the course of general Private Sector Housing duties. No health and safety implications have been identified to staff by the introduction of new regulations.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There is a risk of legal challenge if the process is not followed correctly, which could result in Residential Property Tribunal over-turning Notices and penalty fines imposed by the Council. A Private Sector tenant could apply to the Housing Ombudsman if they feel the council has failed to act in a case of non-compliance.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 - Financial Penalty Matrix.

[Legislation](#)

Cabinet
2022

12th October

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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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Appendix 1

Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Properties) (England & Wales) Regulations 2015

Financial Penalty Matrix

	Low Culpability	High Culpability	Notes
Low Harm	25%	50%	% = Proportion of Maximum Penalty
High Harm	50%	100%	

Notes

If two or more Penalty Notices apply, the combined maximum per property per breach will be £5,000.

Officers may wish to adjust the penalty from that determined in the matrix if there are particular aggravating or mitigating factors. These may come to light during the investigation and will need to be included in the Penalty Notice.

Also, factors may be provided in representations from a landlord in his request to review after the Penalty Notice has been served. Officers will have regard to these factors and may adjust the penalty to increase or reduce as they feel appropriate.

Landlords will be provided with a minimum of one month and normally 6 weeks to request a review, presenting any information they wish considered as part of that review. The landlord will be served a notice after the review with an explanation of any adjustment made.

Any representations received will be considered in a case review by the manager of the investigating officer and subject to legal advice prior to determination of whether to confirm, vary, withdraw the financial penalty or allow more time for payment to be made.

The proceeds of any financial penalty received under these regulations will be applied to the costs of the enforcement functions in relation to the private rented sector.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

If a local authority confirms that a property is (or has been) let in breach of the Regulations, they may serve a financial penalty up to 18 months after the breach and/or publish details of the breach for at least 12 months.

Factors affecting the culpability

Low - Landlords first offence under these regulations

No previous history of non-compliance with housing related regulatory requirements

Non-compliance due to complex issues partially out of the landlord's control

High - Landlord has a previous history of non-compliance with housing related regulatory requirements and/or landlord has failed to comply with repeated requests to comply.

Landlord has knowingly or recklessly provided incorrect information in relation to exemptions to these regulations

Factors affecting harm

High - A very low EPC rating

Vulnerable tenants occupying the property for an extended period of time since non-compliance

Low - No vulnerable tenants

Higher EPC score, close to the minimum EPC rating (E)

Tables below show the penalty matrix for each type of offence

a) Breach is less than 3 months: Maximum fine £2,000			
	Low culpability	High culpability	Notes
Low harm	£500	£1000	% = Proportion of maximum penalty
High harm	£1000	£2000	

b) Breach is more than 3 months: Maximum fine £4,000			
	Low culpability	High culpability	Notes
Low harm	£1000	£2000	% = Proportion of maximum penalty
High harm	£2000	£4000	

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

c) Providing false or misleading information: Maximum fine £1,000			
	Low culpability	High culpability	Notes
Low harm	£250	£500	% = Proportion of maximum penalty
High harm	£500	£1000	

d) Failing to comply with a Compliance Notice: Maximum fine £2,000			
	Low culpability	High culpability	Notes
Low harm	£500	£1000	% = Proportion of maximum penalty
High harm	£1000	£2000	

Principles the council will take into account when applying a civil penalty:

1. **Harm to the tenant.** The greater the harm or potential harm to the tenant, the higher the penalty should be.
2. **Offender’s history of failing to comply with their obligations.**
Landlords are expected to be aware of their legal obligations and responsibilities. This could be when actions are seen as deliberate or they should have known they were in breach of their legal duties.
3. **Punishment of the offender.** The civil penalty route should not be seen as an easy option compared to prosecution. Whilst the penalty should follow the matrix, it is important that it is set at a high enough level to help ensure that it has a real economic impact on the offender and has demonstrated that there are consequences for not complying with their responsibilities.
4. **Prevent further offences.** The level of the penalty should be set high enough, so it is likely to deter the offender from repeating the same offence again, or any other offence.
5. **Deter others from committing similar offences.** Although it is not made known to the public when someone is served a civil penalty, it is possible landlords may find out as in their local area landlords become aware through informal channels. By setting a high enough penalty it should both punish the offender and deter other landlords from doing the same.
6. **Remove financial benefit.** The offender may have obtained a financial benefit as a result of committing the offence, so it is crucial to ensure they have not benefited as a result of the offence. It should not be cheaper to offend than to ensure a property is well maintained and

properly managed.

Culpability - Responsibility for a fault or wrong. Being culpable, is a measure of the degree to which a person, can be held morally or legally responsible for action and inaction.

Harm - The damage to something which is caused by a particular course of action.

**Cabinet
2022**

12th October

First Homes Local Connection Criteria

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Shirley Webb
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis Head of Community and Housing Services
Report Author	Job Title: Amanda Delahunty Strategic Housing and Enabling Manager Contact email: a.delahunty@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881269
Wards Affected	No specific ward relevance
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Not Applicable
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Affordable and Sustainable Homes
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:-

- 1) The Council adopts the First Homes Policy (Appendix 1) and delegate authority to the Head of Community Services in consultation with the Housing Portfolio holder to make an amendments to the Policy to reflect any future Government Guidance.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Government has introduced a new affordable housing product known as First Homes. First Homes are discounted market sale units with the criteria to be classed as First Homes set through legislation. They:
 - a) must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the open market value;
 - b) are sold to a person or persons meeting the First Homes eligibility criteria;
 - c) on their first sale, will have a restriction registered on the title at HM Land Registry to ensure this discount (as a percentage of

Cabinet 2022

12th October

current market value) and certain other restrictions are passed on at each subsequent title transfer; and,

d) after the discount has been applied, the first sale must be at a price no higher than £250,000 (or £420,000 in Greater London).

- 2.2 The vendor will need to provide a market value undertaken by a Valuer who is qualified by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.
- 2.3 There is a requirement that developments providing affordable housing will have a minimum of 25% of affordable homes as First Homes. The Government has given local authorities flexibility to include a local connection criteria where they consider this to be appropriate.
- 2.4 In August 2021 the Government invited housebuilders to take part in a First Homes Pilot to deliver 1,500 homes by 2023 and provided templates for Section 106's, application packs and conveyancer packs to facilitate this on the 4th March 2022 (updated on the 12th May 2022). Whilst the Council is not required to have a First Homes Policy, the results of the HEDNA suggested sufficient need for First Homes in order for a local connection criteria to be introduced.

First Homes Local Connection

- 2.5 It is proposed to include a local connection criteria for First Homes applicants due to the numbers of applicants unable to access the open market in the district due to high house prices that are inaccessible to those with lower quartile and median incomes. The local connection criteria used is similar to that used in the Council's housing allocations policy and lasts for three months from the date of when the property is first marketed.
- a) Where the local connection arises due to residency the applicant(s) must have lived in the district (by choice) for a minimum period of two years.
- b) Where the local connection arises due to employment and the applicant(s) have been in permanent, paid employment for a minimum period of six months, within the district, immediately prior to the application (please see further information below).
- c) Where the applicant(s) has a close (immediate) family member living in the district and has done so for a minimum period of five years, immediately prior to the application (please see further information below).

Cabinet 2022

12th October

- d) Where the applicant has resided in the district for three out of the last five years at the point of application
- 2.6 In determining permanent employment we will consider the Local Government Association guidelines which state that this is employment other than that of a casual nature.
- 2.7 In determining close family member we mean mother, father, sister, brother or adult child (aged 18 and over).

Armed Forces Personnel

- 2.8 Where the applicant is a member of the armed forces there are special arrangements. Members of the UK armed forces stationed abroad will be considered as living in the United Kingdom for the purposes of applying for First Homes.
- 2.9 In line with the Council's allocations policy, the First Homes policy will not disadvantage armed forces personnel and apply the same exemptions to the local connection criteria for the following:
 - a) persons who are serving in the regular forces or have done so in the five years preceding their application;
 - b) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where their spouse or partner's death is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service and the bereaved spouse or civil partner's entitlement to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation then ceases;
 - c) seriously injured, ill or disabled reservists (or former reservists) whose injury, illness or disability is attributable wholly or partly to their service.
- 2.10 The local connection criteria exemption will also include divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Council will be bringing forward a fees and charges report in October 2022 to implement a charge of £150.00 per First Homes application to cover the costs of processing. Officers are not expecting this to provide anything other than a small amount of income as there are unlikely to many First Homes provided in the next few years

**Cabinet
2022**

12th October

because the major sites have already been approved without this requirement. Therefore, it is anticipated that this work can be carried out within existing resources.

- 3.2 Should numbers start to increase the Council will need to review the additional administrative and legal burden and whether there is a need to increase capacity. There may also be opportunities for additional technology to support processing of applications.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The national guidance for First Homes is set out in the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) published on the 24th May 2021.
- 4.2 From the 28th June 2021 local authorities are required to deliver First Homes as a proportion (25%) of their usual Affordable Housing delivery through their local plan policies. The NPPG sets out transitional arrangements for current applications. First Homes are not required from any applications determined before 28th December 2021 or 28th March 2022 where there have been substantive preapplication discussions relating to the proposed Affordable Housing contribution.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES – IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 This policy supports the Affordable and Sustainable Homes strategic purpose by giving affordable housing priority to those with a local connection.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 There are no climate change implications.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The Governments equalities impact assessment on First Homes is provided through the following link
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975121/EQIA_First_Homes.pdf

**Cabinet
2022**

12th October

Operational Implications

- 6.2 The introduction of First Homes will place a greater burden on local authorities in terms of processing and agreeing applications from prospective purchasers. The introduction of a local connection criteria will add to this burden. This function will be provided by the Strategic Housing Team and the Legal Property Team.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 If a local connection is not implemented the First Homes product may be sold to a significant proportion of First Time Buyers who do not have a local connection to the district.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Bromsgrove First Homes Policy

**Cabinet
2022**

12th October

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Shirley Webb Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Well Being	9 th August 2022
Lead Director / Head of Service	Judith Willis Head of Community and Housing Services	11 th August 2022
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter Interim Deputy Section 151 Officer	11 th August 2022
Legal Services	Clare Flanagan Principal Solicitor	5 th August 2022
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	The Government has conducted it's own Equalities Impact Assessment	
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	Not Applicable	



Bromsgrove District Council

First Homes

Policy

September 2022

Introduction

This policy sets out the Council's approach to delivering First Homes in accordance with national guidance and in compliance with the Council's adopted Local Plan policies on the delivery of Affordable Housing. In due course, a new Local Plan will be adopted, containing the Council's refreshed Affordable Housing policies, which will include provisions for the delivery of First Homes.

First Homes are a specific type of discounted sale homes which meet the definition of Affordable Housing for planning purposes.

This guidance includes guidance on the development of First Homes Exception Sites.

Background

The national guidance is set out in the Written Ministerial Statement and the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG), which were both published on 24 May 2021.

From the 28 June 2021 local authorities are required to deliver First Homes as a proportion (25%) of their usual Affordable Housing delivery through their local plan policies. The NPPG sets out transitional arrangements for current applications. First Homes will not be required from any applications determined before 28 December 2021 or 28 March 2022 where there have been substantive preapplication discussions relating to the proposed Affordable Housing contribution.

The Council will be flexible in considering revised proposals to include First Homes in applications which will be granted permission before the above dates.

The main criteria of First Homes, as set out in national guidance, are:

- a. First Home must be discounted by minimum of 30% against the market value;
- b. after the discount has been applied, the first sale must be at a price no higher than £250,000. This does not apply to subsequent sales, and
- c. the discount is passed on to future purchasers, secured through a section 106 agreement.
- d. The home is sold to a person who meets the First Homes eligibility criteria.

The First Homes eligibility criteria require the purchaser (or all purchasers if a joint purchase):

- a. To be a first-time buyer, as defined by paragraph 6 of Schedule 6ZA of the Finance Act 2003.
- b. To have a household annual income of no more than £80,000, and
- c. Should have a mortgage or home purchase plan to fund a minimum of 50% of the discounted purchase price.

Subsequent sales must also be to a person or persons who meet the First Homes eligibility criteria.

The developer/owner will be expected to enter into a s106 agreement to secure the above provisions.

The discount

The minimum discount will be 30% of the open market value. A developer may choose to offer a higher discount if for example a 4 bedroom unit is being provided to ensure that the required £250,000 cap is adhered to.

The discount percentage will be applied to all future sales and will be secured in perpetuity through a s106 agreement as a planning obligation.

Any review of the First Homes policy and affordability may lead to the introduction of a higher discount as appropriate.

The vendor will need to provide a market value undertaken by a Valuer who is qualified by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

The price cap

The cost of a First Homes dwelling to the first-time buyer shall be no more than £250,000 after the discount has been applied. The price cap applies to only the first sale and may be exceeded by future house price rises on subsequent sales.

Exemptions to First Homes

Some categories of Affordable Housing are exempt from the requirement to deliver a proportion as First Homes, including specialist housing, such as housing for older people, supported housing, developments which are Affordable Housing only, self-build and custom-built housing, and Build to Rent. See also paragraph 65 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Rural Exception Sites are not specifically exempted from the requirement to provide First Homes, except where all the homes are Affordable Housing (see section on First Homes Exception sites).

Current Local Plan policy

The council expects First Homes, as included within the definition of Affordable Housing, to comply with the requirements BDP8 of the Bromsgrove District Plan Adopted-BDP-January-2017.pdf (bromsgrove.gov.uk)

The Council will expect proposals for major developments, i.e. BDP8.1 Contributions will not be sought from developments of 10 units or less, and which have a maximum combined gross floorspace of no more than 1000 sq m. Where there is a net increase of 11 or more dwellings affordable housing provision will be expected on-site and will be calculated against the net number of new dwellings as follows:

- Up to 40% affordable housing (or a higher % if proposed) on greenfield sites or any site accommodating 200 or more dwellings.
- Up to 30% affordable housing (or a higher % if proposed) on brownfield sites accommodating less than 200 dwellings.

Affordable Housing contribution

As stated above, the Affordable Housing contribution required by policy between 30% and 40% of all dwellings on major residential developments. The preferred tenure split is:

- Social Rent two third
- Affordable Home Ownership one third.

Developments required to provide First Homes should deliver 25% of the Affordable Housing quantum (See below for worked example)

Paragraph 65 NPPF requires at least 10% of all dwellings on major housing developments, subject to the exemptions listed, to be available as Affordable Home Ownership, which includes First Homes. There is, therefore, a shortfall of Affordable Home Ownership dwellings to make up the 33.33% Affordable Home Ownership.

The Council's preferred tenure to make up this shortfall of Affordable Home Ownership is Shared Ownership. The Council will consider other forms of Affordable Home Ownership, including First Homes.

Example at 40%

A residential development of 200 dwellings is liable for a minimum 40% Affordable Housing contribution.

Affordable Housing (AH) units	$200 \times 40\% = 80$
First Homes units	$80 \times 25\% = 20$
One third Affordable Home Ownership (AHO) units	$200 \times 30\%/3 = 27$
Shortfall of AHO	$27 - 20 = 7$
Remainder of AH as Social Rent	$80 - (20 + 7) = 53$

Table ① Affordable Housing tenure split

AH tenure	No. AH units	% total units (200)	% Affordable Housing
First Homes	20	10%	25
Other AHO*	7	3.5%	8.75
Social Rent	53	26.5%	66.25
Total	80	40%	100

*The other Affordable Home Ownership units may be additional First Homes or Shared Ownership.

In those cases where a reduced Affordable Housing contribution has been agreed due to viability considerations, 25% of that contribution will be First Homes. The remaining Affordable Housing tenures will prioritise Social Rent and ensure that 10% of all dwellings on site are Affordable Home Ownership.

Financial contribution

All Affordable Housing, including First Homes, is expected to be delivered on-site, unless it can be robustly justified as inappropriate, in which case a financial contribution in lieu, of equivalent value to what would have been provided on-site, may be acceptable. Any financial contribution made in lieu of affordable housing will be used towards the funding of additional affordable housing.

Marketing/Disposal/Monitoring

See Appendix 2: Application Process

The First Homes will be marketed and sold by the Developer. The developer will need to ensure First Homes are advertised with all relevant information to ensure eligibility criteria can be met.

The developer will be responsible for paying for all advertising and processing of potential purchasers' applications to the Council. The developer selects the potential purchaser(s) and only one purchaser per plot/home is passed through at any one time to the Council for the eligibility check and authorisation processes. A prior declaration will need to be completed to confirm the potential purchaser is eligible. Fees will be introduced for the eligibility checks and authorisation processes per sale, as well as for monitoring the purchase and sales activities through initial and subsequent sales.

Any local eligibility criteria (local connection) will apply for a maximum of three months from when a home is first marketed. If a suitable buyer has not reserved a home after three months, the eligibility criteria will revert to the national criteria set out above, to widen the consumer base.

If, following six months of marketing and having taken all reasonable steps to sell the property (including, where appropriate, reducing the asking price) the property fails to sell it should be expected that the seller (either the developer or a future First Homeowner) compensates the Council for the loss of the affordable housing unit with a financial contribution.

This financial contribution should be the value of the discount the First Home was to be sold for, as a percentage of the final sale price (or, as much as possible of that value once the value of all lending against the property has been cleared) and net of any additional Stamp Duty liability incurred.

Re-sales of First Homes will be subject to the same discount and eligibility criteria and will need to accord with the same marketing and compensation (in the event of no sale) processes as required on the initial sale by the developer.

The above provisions and related terms for implementation will be secured through a Section 106 agreement.

Local connection requirement

In addition to the national eligibility criteria for First Homes owner occupiers, the Council will require all applicants and purchasers of First Homes to have a local connection to Bromsgrove District Council, as set out the Council's Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy.

Local Connection

The Council will apply a local connection criteria for First Homes applicants as there are affordability issues in the District due to high house prices that are inaccessible to those with lower quartile and median incomes (see appendix 1). The local connection criteria is extracted from the Council's housing allocations policy which was consulted upon prior to implementation.

- Where the local connection arises due to residency the applicant(s) must have lived in the partnership area (by choice) for a minimum period of two years.
- Where the local connection arises due to employment and the applicant(s) have been in permanent, paid employment for a minimum period of six months, within the District, immediately prior to the application (please see further information below).
- Where the applicant(s) has a close (immediate) family member living in the District and has done so for a minimum period of five years, immediately prior to the application (please see further information below).
- Where the applicant has resided in the District for three out of the last five years at the point of application

In determining permanent employment, we will give consideration to the Local Government Association guidelines which state that this is employment other than that of a casual nature.

In determining close family member, we mean mother, father, sister, brother or adult child (aged 18 and over).

Agenda Item 6

Where the applicant is a member of the armed forces there are special arrangements.

Members of the UK armed forces stationed abroad will be considered as living in the United Kingdom for the purposes of applying for First Homes.

The Localism Act 2011 amends the Housing Act 1996 to give local housing authorities in England the power to decide what classes of persons are or are not qualifying persons under section 160ZA(7) of the Housing Act 1996, for an allocation of social housing accommodation and we would like to extend this to apply for First Homes applications.

The Secretary of State has the power to prescribe in Regulations criteria that may not be used by local housing authorities in deciding what classes of persons are not qualifying persons (section 160ZA(8)(b)). These Regulations require that local housing authorities do not use local connection (within the meaning of section 199 of the Housing Act 1996) as a criterion in deciding whether the following are not qualifying persons:

- a. persons who are serving in the regular forces or have done so in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of housing accommodation;
- b. bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where their spouse or partner's death is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service and the bereaved spouse or civil partner's entitlement to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation then ceases;
- c. seriously injured, ill or disabled reservists (or former reservists) whose injury, illness or disability is attributable wholly or partly to their service.

The local connection criteria extends the provision above, to include divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.

This local connection requirement is subject to the time limit of three months from when the home is first marketed, after which it will revert to national eligibility criteria, as set out in paragraph 008 NPPG: First Homes.

First Homes Exception sites

Entry level exception sites (paragraph 72 National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF)), allow for the development of affordable housing on sites under one hectare in size not already allocated for housing and adjacent to existing settlements, excluding Green Belt areas or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It was intended that they would be suitable for first time buyers.

Entry level exception sites are being replaced by First Homes exception sites, which will be consistent with the provisions applying to entry level schemes, as above, and as set out in the Written Ministerial Statement. Although primarily for the development of First Homes, other types of Affordable Housing can be considered where there is evidence of a significant local need. A small proportion of market housing may be included where it is needed to enable a scheme to proceed, as explained in the First Homes NPPG.

The Council will support proposals for First Homes exception sites, where it can be demonstrated that the need for such homes is not being met elsewhere in Bromsgrove District.

Rural Exception Sites are not specifically exempted from the requirement to provide First Homes, except where all the homes are Affordable Housing. Where a small proportion of market housing is included to ensure the economic viability of the development, 25% of the Affordable Housing units should be provided as First Homes where evidence of a local need can be demonstrated.

Transitional arrangements

The national guidance came into effect on 28 June 2021, with transitional arrangements for sites with planning permission already granted or determined before 28 December 2021, which will not be required to provide First Homes (see paragraphs 020 – 022 NPPG: First Homes)

Applications where significant pre-application discussions on the Affordable Housing contribution have taken place and which are determined before 28 March 2022 will not be required to provide First Homes although the council will consider proposals to amend the tenure mix to include First Homes.

See Appendix 3: Transitional arrangements.

Appendix 1 First Homes HEDNA Tables

<i>Bedrooms</i>	<i>Newbuild prices</i>	<i>Newbuild prices with a 30% discount</i>	<i>Entry-level owner-occupation (second-hand property as set out in figure 3.2)</i>
One bedroom	£127,500	£89,250	£94,575
Two bedrooms	£190,000	£133,000	£156,000
Three bedrooms	£265,000	£185,500	£238,875
Four bedrooms	£395,000	£276,500	£385,125

Source: Online survey of property prices April 2021

The table below shows the size of First Homes that would be required to house some households that would otherwise reside in the private rented sector. The residual private rented requirement, once the potential demand from households for this alternative product has been deducted, is also set out in the table. The model indicates that in Bromsgrove District, 31.5% of the First Homes should have two bedrooms, 28.9% one bedroom, 21.7% three bedrooms and 17.9% four or more bedrooms.

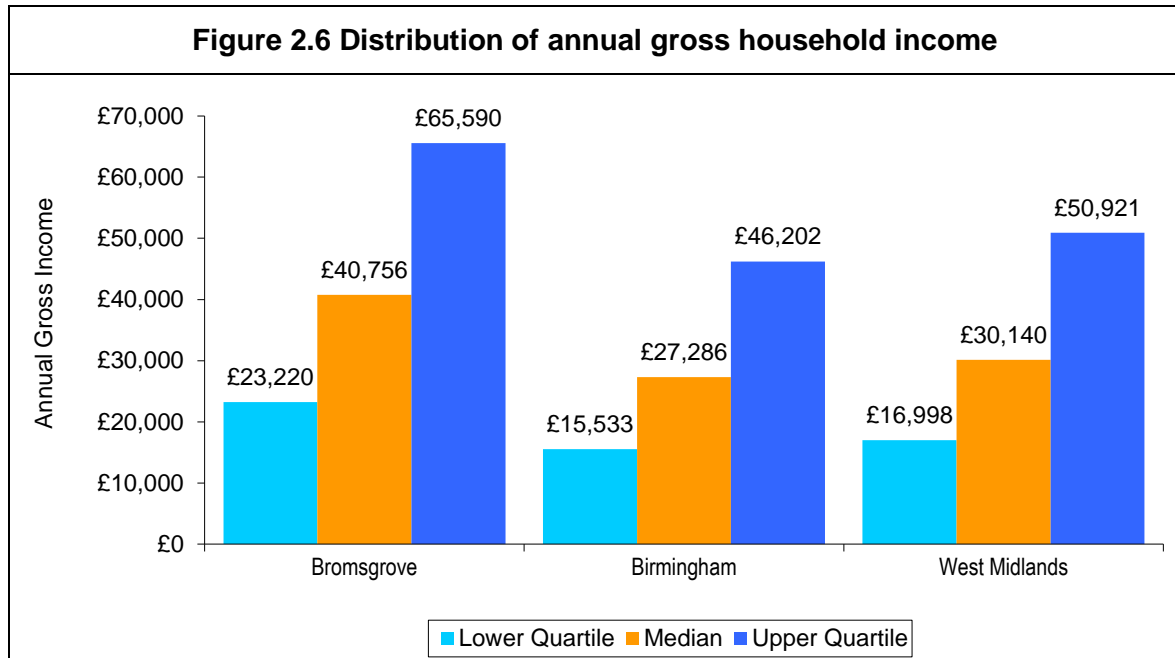
<i>Size of home</i>	<i>First Homes</i>		<i>Residual private rented homes</i>	
	<i>Number required</i>	<i>Proportion required</i>	<i>Number required</i>	<i>Proportion required</i>
One bedroom	90	28.9%	98	20.1%
Two bedrooms	98	31.5%	102	20.9%
Three bedrooms	67	21.7%	162	33.2%
Four or more bedrooms	55	17.9%	126	25.7%
Tota	310	100.0%	488	100.0%

2.1 CACI Paycheck¹ estimates that the mean gross annual household income in Bromsgrove District is £48,545, which is 45.5% above the equivalent for the West Midlands (£37,870), it is also notably higher than the figure for Birmingham City (£34,527).

Agenda Item 6







¹ CACI is a commercial company that provides households income data

The figure below shows household income at various points on the income distribution for the district alongside the Birmingham and regional equivalents. The data indicates that households in Bromsgrove District are significantly more affluent than households in Birmingham and the West Midlands at all points on the income distribution.



Source: CACI Paycheck, 2021

Appendix 2 Application Process

	Pre-sale set-up	Customer reservation	Authority to Proceed and Authority to Exchange	Exchange and completion	
 Customer		Customer enquires and chooses to buy specific First Home Conveyancer selected	Completes application pack, including supporting evidence Pays reservation	Submits mortgage application Completes legal declarations with conveyancer	Customer pays deposit Customer moves in
 Local authority	Local eligibility criteria set s.106 agreements		Local authority receives completed application pack, checks criteria are met and issues Authority to Proceed and conveyancer pack	Local authority receives conveyancer's legal undertaking that the transaction is compliant and issues Authority to Exchange	Receives confirmation of completion and updates record
 Development	Homes identified Pre-sale valuations Marketing s. 106 agreements		Assists in completion of application pack and submits to local authority		
 Mortgage adviser		Assurance that customer can borrow (potentially with DIP)	Assists in completion of application pack		
 Mortgage lender				Mortgage application Lender values for mortgage offer and conveyancer confirms transaction at MV less the discount	Lender provides mortgage funds for legal completion
 Conveyancer		Lender provides mortgage funds for legal completion		Conveyancer follows standard instruction pack Submits full legal declarations and undertaking to the local authority	Exchange of contracts Final legal confirmations Registers restriction at HMLR Informs local authority

Appendix 3 Transitional arrangements

Determinations before key dates

	28 June 2021	28 December 2021	28 March 2022
No FH			
No FH			
FH required			
Pre-28/3/22 with significant pre-app engagement on AH – no FH required			

Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Shirley Webb
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis Head of Community and Housing
Report Author	Amanda Delahunty Job Title: Strategic Housing and Enabling Manager Contact email:a.delahunty@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881269
Wards Affected	No specific ward relevance
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and Financial Independence • Living independent, active and healthy lives • Affordable and sustainable homes • Communities with are safe, well maintained and green
Non Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Cabinet is requested to RECOMMEND to COUNCIL that: -

- 1) the draft Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-25 and action plan at Appendix 1 be approved for public consultation.
- 2) delegated authority be given to the Head of Community and Housing Services in consultation the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to agree any changes that may be required following the consultation process.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all housing authorities to have a homelessness strategy in place which is based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district. The current Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy comes to an end on the 31st December 2022.

- 2.2 This new Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (Appendix 1) sets out how the Worcestershire local housing authorities and Worcestershire County Council will work together to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- 2.3 It is intended that this Strategy will sit under the existing Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Plan.
- 2.4 In developing this Strategy a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of homelessness across the County was carried out by analysing homelessness data and taking account of the views of customers and partner organisations
- 2.5 A consultation event was held on 14th June 2022 chaired by Homelessness Link to consider housing from both a strategic and client-based perspective. This event included partners from a variety of statutory and voluntary organisations as well as delegates with lived homelessness experience.
- 2.6 Service users were also consulted and supported to complete a questionnaire to feedback on their experiences.
- 2.7 There continues to be a high demand for social and affordable housing that outstrips supply and the cost-of-living crisis will undoubtedly impact on an already challenging private sector market making access to private rented housing more difficult. It is also anticipated that there will be increasing demand from those fleeing wars creating a further impact on suitable housing options. This strategy sets out how we will continue to deliver services and respond to the changes that lie ahead.
- 2.8 The top four reasons for homelessness are:
end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST); family and friends no longer willing to accommodate; other and relationship breakdown (non-violent). This is comparable throughout the county.

	Prevention %			Relief %		
	18/19	19/20	20/21	18/19	19/20	20/21
End of AST	33.6	33.2	23.1	10.2	13.8	6.8
Family/Friends no longer willing to accommodate	26.6	27.1	31.9	21.1	27.8	27.9
Other	15.7	15.7	15.7	16.9	17.1	18.6
Relationship Breakdown (non-violent)	7.2	9	12	16.1	14.5	15.6

- 2.9 This draft strategy is based around 3 priorities: Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery. This approach aligns with the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy.
1. Prevention: timely support before someone becomes homeless.
 2. Intervention: targeted support to get people off the streets.
 3. Recovery: the need for accommodation and support.
- 2.10 Across all the strategy themes it is a priority to ensure that the safeguarding of all adults including those who sleep rough is explicitly stated and addressed within service aims, learning from the Worcestershire Rough Sleeper Thematic Review and embedding the recommendations throughout the strategy and service delivery.
- 2.11 The action plan has been divided to reflect the three priorities of the strategy.
- 2.11 The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and this will include the review of current actions and identification of any new actions required for years two and three.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council has a duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to conduct a review of the nature and extent of homelessness in its District every 5 years and to develop a strategy setting out how services will be delivered in the future to tackle homelessness and the available resources to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- 4.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in April 2018, and places new legal duties on local housing authorities so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to early meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status, so long as they are eligible for assistance.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The Strategy provides a framework for a range of services which support the following Council's strategic purposes:
- Work and Financial Independence

- Living independent, active and healthy lives
- Affordable and sustainable homes
- Communities with are safe, well maintained and green

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 There are no direct climate change implications from the strategy itself but individual actions/services may have an impact.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The strategy seeks to deliver a range of services for homeless households and draws on ways to improve the work of the Council in developing services and preparing links, pathways and referrals between services to prevent homelessness in the first place or minimise its impact when it happens. The design of services which tackle the root causes of homelessness such as poverty, health inequalities and adversity in childhood will include ensuring that providers have appropriate policies in place to make sure that there is no adverse impact on equalities groups.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 The delivery of the Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy actions will be overseen by the Strategic Housing Team.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 If the Strategy is not approved the Council will not be legally compliant. Furthermore, it is likely that more households who are threatened with homelessness, or who are in housing need, will have limited options for support to sustain their accommodation or find alternative suitable accommodation that meets their needs. If they have to make a homeless approach this could lead to the following negative outcomes:

- Increased B&B costs
- Increased rough sleeping in the District
- Impacts on physical and mental health, educational achievement, ability to work and similar through increased homelessness

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Cabinet

12th October 2022

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Shirley Williams	9 th August 2022
Lead Director / Head of Service	Judith Willis	10 th August 2022
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter	10 th August 2022
Legal Services	Clare Flanagan Principal Solicitor	5 August 2022
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Not applicable	
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	Not applicable	

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**Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
2022 – 2025**

Contents

Foreword by the Chair of Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership	4
Introduction	5
Executive Summary	6
Why prevention, intervention, and recovery?	6
1. Prevention.....	6
2. Intervention	7
3. Recovery	7
Update from previous strategy	9
National and Local Context	10
Welfare Benefits.....	10
Declining social housing supply and housing affordability	10
Incomes and the cost of living.....	11
Provision for rough sleepers	11
Survivors of Domestic Abuse	11
Domestic Act 2021 Part IV	12
Prison leavers	12
Health context	12
Health and Wellbeing Strategy.....	13
Worcestershire Housing Strategy	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Analysis	14
Households affected by homelessness	16
Single People.....	16
Context	16
Data Collection	16
Achievements to date	16
Complex needs and Rough Sleepers	18
Context	18
Data Collection	18
Achievements to date	19
Families with children.....	22
Context	22
Data Collection	22
Achievements to date	22
Survivors of Domestic Abuse	24

Agenda Item 7

Context	24
Data Collection	24
Achievements to date	24
Young People	27
Households in temporary accommodation and permanent housing.....	29
Temporary Accommodation	29
Permanent housing.....	30
Governance arrangements.....	31
Oversight and delivery	31
Monitoring.....	31
Funding the strategy.....	31
Action Plan	33
Appendix One – Legislation	34
Appendix Two – Action Plan	38
Appendix Three – Communication Plan	46

Foreword by the Chair of Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership

I am very pleased to introduce Worcestershire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This is Worcestershire's fourth homelessness strategy and as I reflect back over the life of the previous strategy I could not have predicted that we would have had to respond to a global pandemic, an economic crisis and the displacement of so many people through war. So it is with some trepidation that we look to the future to present this, our fourth strategy.

We anticipate that the cost of living crisis will be a huge challenge for those on lower incomes and that loss of accommodation, increases in relationship breakdown and domestic abuse and impact on peoples mental and physical health will be significant.

We saw at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic that a government injection of funding dramatically reduced rough sleeping, and we have developed more effective collaborations with partners such as health and social care to ensure that those who are threatened with homelessness or actually experience homelessness receive the support they need. We want to build on these new partnerships so that we can respond effectively and efficiently to the challenges ahead.

With the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act we have created specialisms within our teams to respond effectively to victims and survivors of domestic abuse to ensure they have safe supported accommodation when they are in crisis.

These statutory enhancements to our service do put additional pressures on local authorities and come at a time when the demand for housing across all tenures is outstripping supply and housing costs are increasing. However, we are always looking for innovative solutions to meet needs and increase options available.

The Homelessness Reduction Act has supported us in our aspiration to tackle homelessness in all its forms, from rough sleeping and sofa surfing to those who experience abuse and harm at home or are living in unaffordable or unsatisfactory housing. Anyone can be affected by homelessness and the effects for families and individuals can be devastating and can impact on health and wellbeing, employment, education, and crime.

We want to support people to be able to access good quality accommodation and lead dignified, fulfilling and rewarding lives that have purpose.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the organisations and individuals who worked with us during the pandemic to help others. I would like to also thank those who have contributed towards the development of this strategy. It sits at strategic partnership level within the umbrella of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership - recognising that tackling homelessness not only benefits the individual but also benefits the economy, the health of our population, reduces crime and disorder, and reduces costs to the taxpayer.

This strategy will govern our approach for three years. However, given our experiences over the last two years, it is vital that it remains responsive and as such it will be kept under constant review.

Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive of Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils and Chair of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership

Introduction

The Homelessness Reduction Act provided a catalyst for a change in our approach to homelessness and a framework to formalise and normalise upstream working in partnership with other services. In particular, the Duty to Refer has enabled a step change in early notifications of those threatened with homelessness and whilst there is more that can be done, we now have the structure within which to deliver on this approach. Our work with partners such as health, social care, department of work and pensions (DWP) and criminal justice has improved and become much more collaborative. Our pathways for key client groups have, or are being, strengthened.

We are also working to upskill officers working in homelessness to recognise how each individual or household experience of homelessness is different and will often require a bespoke solution. In particular officers need to understand how adversity in childhood may impact on a person's resilience and provide a trauma informed approach. In doing so we are recognising that more people who approach the service have more complex needs and in response to this we are investing more in support services to help people to get back on track.

We have made significant progress in tackling rough sleeping on the back of the Everyone In initiative and intensive housing support through Housing First and Housing Led initiatives are supporting entrenched clients to sustain accommodation and move away from a street lifestyle.

We continue to see a high demand for social and affordable housing that outstrips supply and we anticipate the cost of living crisis will exacerbate an already challenging private sector market making access to private rented housing more difficult.

We are also anticipating increasing demand from those fleeing wars and are gearing up to look for innovative solutions in response to these households.

This strategy sets out how we will continue to deliver services and respond to the changes that lie ahead.

Executive Summary

This strategy is the result of a collaboration between the local housing authorities, voluntary and community sector and statutory partners.

Why prevention, intervention, and recovery?

Worcestershire's strategy for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping is based around 3 priorities: prevention, intervention, and recovery.

This approach aligns with the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy, published in 2018 which is also based around the 3 principles of:

1. Prevention: timely support before someone becomes homeless.
2. Intervention: targeted support to get people off the streets.
3. Recovery: the need for accommodation and support.

Across all of the strategy themes it will be a priority to ensure that the safeguarding of all adults including those who sleep rough is explicitly stated and addressed within service aims, learning from the Worcestershire Rough Sleeper Thematic Review and embedding the recommendations throughout strategy and service delivery.

1. Prevention

The effects of homelessness for families and individuals can be devastating and can have significant negative impacts on health and wellbeing, employment, education, and crime. It can also have significant costs to communities, local authorities, and public services.

Preventing homelessness is much more cost effective than dealing with its consequences. A range of studies have been completed including by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government whose 2012 figures estimated that the average annual cost of homelessness was between £24,000 and £30,000 per person. More importantly, we also know that preventing homelessness and dealing with the root causes delivers far better outcomes for individuals and communities.

That is why we are so committed to preventing homelessness at the earliest possible opportunity and targeting support at those groups who are more vulnerable to becoming homeless. The large proportion of preventative actions within the strategy reflects this commitment.

Through this strategy we will undertake range of preventative actions, including:

- raising awareness around homelessness and rough sleeping to support earlier intervention, particularly through the development and delivery of a communication plan
- explore opportunities to reduce homelessness due to domestic abuse e.g. Sanctuary scheme, powers to remove perpetrators
- Explore further opportunities to co-locate housing staff with other organisations
- Develop, review and refresh protocols including 16 & 17 year olds, prison leavers, care leavers

- Improve intelligence to shape and inform commissioning of services
- Engage regularly with service users to enhance learning from lived experience
- Promote and encourage sign up to the Duty or Commitment to Refer.
- Review issues within the private rented sector following the rent reform legislation and end of the s21 notices to ensure homelessness from the PRS is reduced.
- Work with partners to explore opportunities for further outreach provision from their services e.g. GP drop ins, joint home visits, mental health outreach

2. Intervention

There will always be some people who find themselves homeless or threatened with homeless however good our homelessness prevention response is. We want to ensure that any homelessness is rare, fleeting and non-recurring.

Therefore, we must put in place comprehensive and rapid interventions to help those in crisis, and offer a range of accommodation and support choices to meet specific needs and complexities

We will strengthen our approach to tenancy sustainment across tenures by developing and embedding support services across the county through a community-based approach and ensuring that support is flexible to meet individual support needs.

In particular, we will explore opportunities to fund a specialist mental health role to work specifically with homeless households.

3. Recovery

We want to increase the supply of, and access to, affordable and supported housing, so that people can recover successfully from homelessness. Alongside this we will enable support for those who have multiple and complex needs to try to ensure that homelessness does not reoccur, and longer-term housing solutions are maintained.

Affordable and supported housing supply in Worcestershire is an on-going problem locally, as it is nationally. Demand far outstrips the supply. During the pandemic, government intervened in unprecedented fashion to ensure stability for millions of residents by effectively making it impossible to undertake evictions or repossessions in this country. As a result of this intervention activity levels around homelessness remained relatively stable nationally and locally new, creative ways of working across health services and housing services have developed around, for example, the needs of rough sleepers. However, we are now starting to see an increase in homelessness approaches as these interventions have ended.

This is also compounded by the fact that an overwhelming number of individuals presenting as homeless have multiple and complex needs resulting in exclusion from social rented tenancies and whilst accommodation in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) can be sourced, it has limited levels or no support and is difficult to sustain.

Through this strategy we will

- explore opportunities for a greater range of supported and step-down accommodation, including accommodation for rough sleepers and safe accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse
- review the provision of accommodation and support for young people to ensure no young person will be placed in emergency bed and breakfast with shared facilities, other than in exceptional circumstances
- engage with landlords from the private rented sector to enable access to accommodation across the districts
- work with partners to link households into meaningful activity and services, increase the take up of education and training, and review peer mentoring services
- upscale our response to digital safety

Update from previous strategy

The previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2019 – 2022 was developed during the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the publication of the national Rough Sleeper Strategy in 2018. The primary focus was around increasing prevention services and the supply of accommodation and mirrored the national strategy by addressing prevention, intervention and recovery. During the strategy lifetime the Corona virus pandemic struck and the way services were delivered to homeless households and rough sleepers across the county changed profoundly, particularly in response to Everyone In. As a consequence, the strategy was given a refresh in 2021 and the action plan was revised.

This section outlines the principal aims and achievements of the strategy, including the revised actions from 2021.

1	Increased prevention services through developing toolkits and providing advice and assistance to over 4k households	6	Learn from those with lived experience to improve services- 24 service users interviewed as part of the RSI2022-25 and review process in North Worcestershire
2	Encouraged partners to use the Alert system and sign up to and use the Duty or Commitment to Refer through training sessions, local homelessness forums and county events.	7	Enhanced services to Rough Sleepers including a single service offer, motivational interviewing, Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) services, meaningful activities and Housing First
3	Greater information available to customers through social media posts, refreshed websites, face to face and written materials	8	Explored information sharing through protocols, panels and IT systems – rough sleeper, prevention and domestic abuse panels established
4	Raised awareness of homelessness through schools and GP (social prescribers) to support early intervention	9	Investigated joint funding opportunities with regards to Mental Health services for Homeless households and Rough Sleepers
5	Enhanced partnership working through drop-in sessions, regular joint events and meetings	10	Made better use of statistical data to inform service development in relation to Rough Sleepers

Unfortunately, the pandemic did prevent the delivery of some objectives including hosting annual partnership events and establishing a service user group. An unsuccessful funding bid, due to high levels of competition from other councils, meant mental health services specifically for homeless households have not been developed.

National and Local Context

The Homelessness Review includes a more detailed consideration of the national and local context but there are some specific issues that are highlighted below as they are significant pieces of legislation or due to their impact on homelessness.

Welfare Benefits

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 made changes to the rules concerning a number of welfare benefits including the introduction of Universal Credit which replaced a combined six benefits for working age people who have a low household income – Employment and Support Allowance, Income -based Job Seekers Allowance and Income Support, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit.

It also introduced an ‘underoccupancy penalty’ which reduced the amount of benefit paid to claimants in social housing if they are deemed to have more bedrooms than their household size required and limited the total amount of money available to benefit claimants and the total benefits paid to a single person may not now exceed £350pw, the maximum available to families is £500pw including housing costs. This created a number of challenges to existing tenants underoccupying social housing in making up the rent shortfall and for those with larger families to afford their rent. In the Spending Review 2021 the Government announced an adjustment to the taper rate of Universal Credit and the increase in the work allowance to support recovery from the pandemic and to help mitigate some of the impact of ending the Universal Credit uplift.

There were some mitigations including the Household Support Fund and one off Homelessness Prevention Grant to support vulnerable private renters which targeted those unable to work or facing additional financial pressures.

Declining social housing supply and housing affordability

Across the county there is very high demand for social housing with nearly 12,000 households on the housing registers. High employment levels and economic growth bring major opportunities for Worcestershire but also present significant challenges, including high housing costs and a shortage of accommodation which is affordable to local people especially those with low incomes.

There was a sharp reduction during 2021/22 in social housing lettings across the county due to pandemic down to 700 from a high of 1478 in 2018/19¹. There is also a mismatch between the social housing available for letting. For example approximately 50% of vacancies in Wyre Forest are for older people, and yet less than 10% of the households on the housing register are over 65. Part of the issue is the overall decline of social housing numbers as a consequence of the right to buy and right to acquire, for example in 2018/19 113 homes were sold across the county through the Right To Buy or the Right to Acquire.

In many parts of the county the supply of private rented properties at or close to local housing allowance levels is very restricted. In addition. most new social housing

¹ Worcester letting data not included

properties are at “affordable” rather than “social” rent trapping households into benefit dependency.

Incomes and the cost of living

Across the county there is a difference in household income. The average gross salary varies from £28.6k in Wyre Forest to £33.5k in Redditch but is well below the UK average of £38.1k. Affordability of housing is also an issue in parts of the county with only Wyre Forest and Worcester city median house price to median salary ratio lower than the England and Wales average of 7.69. The unemployment rate across the county is lower than the national average ranging from 3.5% in Wychavon to 4.7% in Redditch.

The impact of Covid-19, Brexit and the war in Ukraine has affected the cost of living (particularly food and fuel) and inflation is at it's highest since the 1970s. This will have an impact on household disposable income and is likely to lead to many more people experiencing economic hardship, including some of those who have previously been relatively well off. It will also exacerbate existing poverty and those who have no credit history or savings to fall back on are likely to be particularly affected.

In terms of protected characteristics, evidence from the Cabinet Office identifies that Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people are more likely than non-BAME people to experience housing issues in relation to quality of housing, cost of renting as a proportion of income and overcrowding. In Worcestershire female employees earn less than their male counterparts in every area.

During the pandemic the lockdowns led to a reduction in income for many households and a consequent increase in rent arrears in both the social housing and private rented sector. Additional funding was given to local authorities in 2022 to support those in rent arrears and those generally experiencing hardship through the Household Support Fund and Vulnerable Renters funding. The use of food banks (distribution of food parcels) nearly doubled between 2019/20 and 2021/22.

Provision for rough sleepers

The “Everyone In” initiative commenced in March 2020 during Covid restrictions to provide accommodation to everyone in need including those not normally entitled to assistance under homelessness legislation. This scheme enabled councils to work with clients who had previously not engaged with housing and support services. We have learnt lessons along the way, and this has resulted in different working practices, being more person focused with a greater understanding of the complexities behind rough sleeping and the cycle of repeat homelessness. In 2020/21 the county made a successful bid for Rough Sleeper Initiative funding. This was extended in 2021/22 and a further bid has been made for 2022-25. This has enabled the councils to enhance localised provision and housing supply for rough sleepers.

Survivors of Domestic Abuse

The Local Housing Authorities and County Council have well established partnership working including a recently established Domestic Abuse Partnership Board which is a successor to the longstanding Domestic Abuse Forum. The councils have

previously jointly commissioned services for survivors and there is partnership working with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and other partners around commissioning of “Drive” Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and training.

Domestic Act 2021 Part IV

This legislation has given local authorities (LAs) further duties in relation to homelessness, undertaking a needs assessment, providing appropriate accommodation (with a new accommodation standard) and the provision of Domestic Abuse support. It also imposes a duty on LAs to have a Local Partnership Board and to work in partnership with Local Housing Authorities (LHA) in areas where there are two tiers of local government.

The legislation states that local authority housing duties include offering ‘Safe Accommodation’ and this includes the offer of support from a local expert support service. ‘Safe Accommodation’ consists of self-contained supported accommodation or traditional refuge accommodation. Therefore ‘Bed and Breakfast’ is not considered to be Safe Accommodation.

The legislation also refers to assessing what other duties are owed to the survivor presenting as homeless, under other homeless legislation. Survivors should always be considered as homeless where there is a significant risk of harm should they remain in their property, and appropriate support should be offered.

The recent Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has enhanced the commissioning work with the County Council and they now also fund specialist Domestic Abuse housing staff within the Housing Advice teams and indirectly support the provision of safe houses.

Prison leavers

In Worcestershire the lack of suitable accommodation undermines the ability of individual involved in the Criminal Justice system to settle and increases the future likelihood of their reoffending. The Worcestershire local authorities are in the process of conducting a review of the Criminal Justice Housing Pathway in partnership with Campbell Tickell.

Partners are committed to the development of a new model utilising existing services, assets, and capacity and to modify approaches as necessary to provide a more joined up pathway.

Our ambition for Worcestershire is that the Criminal Justice Housing and Support Pathway will bring together the full range of partners to provide a bespoke response to individuals that will enable rehabilitation and prevent or tackle homelessness.

Health context

The development of Primary Care Networks (PCN) has led to closer working relationships between GPs and District Councils including through the formation of Collaboratives.

The Health and Wellbeing Board acts as a forum in which key leaders from the local health and care system work together to improve the health and wellbeing of their local population. In Worcestershire the Board also has representation from District

Council members and the Chief Executive of Redditch and Bromsgrove (in his role as Chair of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership). The Board are currently overseeing the review and development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy which was out for consultation in early 2022.

The population of Worcestershire is ageing, with 23% over 65 compared to 18.6% in England and Wales and this does put additional pressure on health services.

Average life expectancy in Worcestershire for males is 80.1 years and 83.8 for females. These levels are above England's worst life expectancy areas but not as good as it's best areas.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy "Being Well in Worcestershire" has been out for consultation and a final version is anticipated in November 2022. This strategy has a particular focus on good mental health and wellbeing. Under this main priority are three sub-priorities of healthy living at all ages and stages of life; safe, thriving and healthy homes; communities and places and quality local jobs and opportunities. The second of these three sub-priorities is particularly relevant to this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, with its focus on tackling health inequalities.

Analysis

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) (2017) in 2018 led to a peak in applications in 2018/19 with the new duties owed. Please see Appendix One for more information about the statutory framework. However, this is not a trend that has continued and there has been a decrease in most Districts over the 4 year period. Redditch and Bromsgrove saw a small peak during 2019/20. The level of homeless applications in all districts remained lower in 2020/21 than in 2018/19 (except in Redditch).

Duties have been owed to over 95% of those approaching as homeless in 2018/19 increasing to over 98% in the subsequent years. More duties are owed to those already homeless, under the relief category. The total number of approaches under the relief category reached a peak of 54% in 2020/21 which is attributable to the Covid 19 pandemic and the “Everyone In” scheme.

Countywide the top four reasons for homelessness are end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST), family and friends no longer willing to accommodate, other and relationship breakdown (non-violent). This is comparable throughout the county. More work needs to be done to identify the reasons for homelessness for those in the “other” category.

Table One: Reasons for homelessness at prevention and relief stage

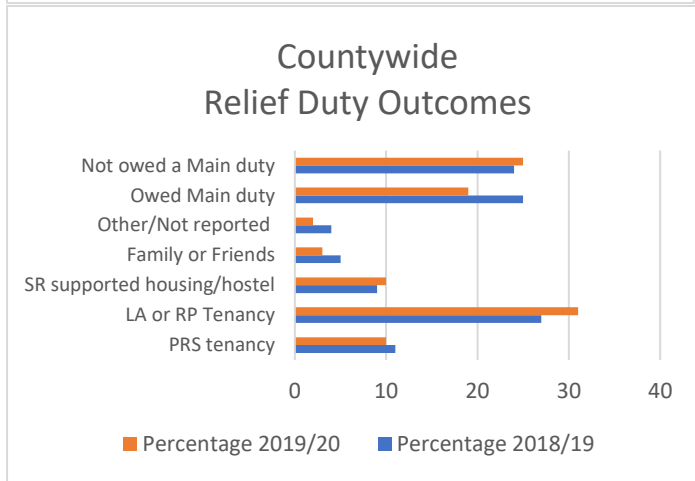
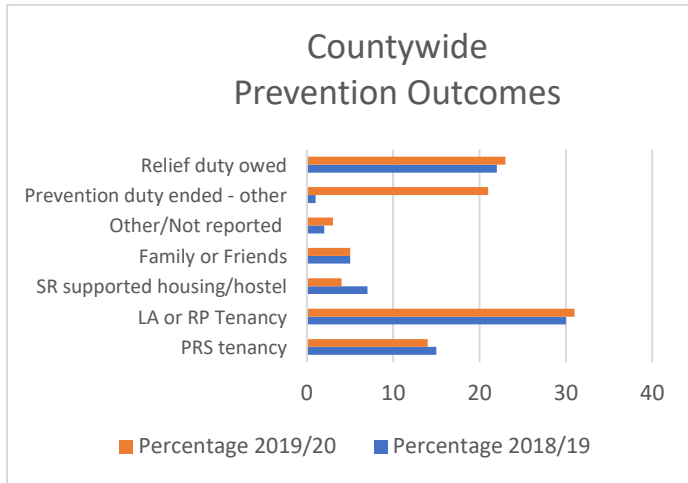
	Prevention %			Relief %		
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
End of AST	33.6	33.2	23.1	10.2	13.8	6.8
Family/Friends no longer willing to accommodate	26.6	27.1	31.9	21.1	27.8	27.9
Other	15.7	15.7	15.7	16.9	17.1	18.6
Relationship Breakdown (non-violent)	7.2	9	12	16.1	14.5	15.6

The pandemic saw more time spent with family and friends due to lockdown restrictions. Statistics countywide evidence the stress this had on relationships with the increase in homelessness due to family and friends no longer willing to accommodate and non-violent relationship breakdowns. More notably, the number of homeless presentations due to domestic abuse saw an 8-9% increase between 2018/19 and 2020/21, prior to the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Table Two: Homeless presentations due to Domestic Abuse

	Prevention %	Relief %	Total %
2018/19	4.5	12.7	17.2
2019/20	4.2	11.9	16.1
2020/21	8.2	17	25.2

In 2018-2020 55-60% of those who had a prevention duty owed and 56% owed a relief duty secured accommodation throughout the County.



Households affected by homelessness

This section considers some specific groups within the homeless cohort affected by homelessness. These are the groups that make up the majority of households that approach us and are often the most vulnerable to becoming homeless. The strategy will cover the context and data relating to the various groups and then illustrate what currently happens with an overview of current prevention, intervention and recovery elements of service delivery.

Single People

Context

Single people are often most exposed to changes to welfare benefits and cost of living rises. Affordability issues are likely to be an issue in this cohort. Reflecting this, single homeless people make up a large proportion of applicants on the districts housing registers with the highest age range of between 18 – 34.

Whilst services for single homeless people across the county may differ slightly to reflect the needs and demands specific to each district, the core objectives remain consistent.

Data Collection

In 2020/21 just over 50% of all homeless approaches across the county were from single people. The two most common causes of homelessness in Worcestershire are the loss of private rented accommodation and family or friends being no longer willing to accommodate. The support needs of this group vary but most common support needs across the homeless cohort include mental illness or disability, physical illness or disability and domestic abuse.

Achievements to date

Prevention

The districts are working directly with the private rented sector to prevent tenancies failing and support those in the private sector. This is being achieved by support officers working directly with both the resident and the landlord including through the establishment of Prevention Panels in some local authority areas. These panels meet regularly at a local level and work to find housing and rent arrears solutions as well as coordinated working and information sharing. As part of the role of the panels moving forward, councils will be clear about who is the lead professional for each case.

The Countywide Single Person and Childless Couples Homeless Prevention Support Service is currently provided by Caring for Communities and People (CCP) and is jointly funded by the six LHAs and the County Council. This service's remit is to help councils meet their obligations in providing the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEPE) provision, as well as providing a support service via drop-in sessions and home visits to individuals who are unlikely to be found in priority need.

Districts have various options to overcome any financial barriers including Rent Bond Schemes, Welfare Assistance applications, Discretionary Housing payments, Help to Stay, tenancy training, financial inclusion and CAB work and food bank referrals.

Early intervention is less easy to achieve when homelessness is predominantly caused by sudden personal crisis, going forward further work is required to engage private sector landlords, to embed approaches such as the 'Help to Stay' scheme and to promote the support and services we can offer.

Intervention

Where homelessness cannot be prevented, we work to act quickly to intervene by developing clear pathways for specific client groups. Where temporary accommodation is required, we have support officers in place who work with clients individually to develop a housing pathway into sustainable accommodation. Support will include help to identify and undertake meaningful activity, reconnections with friends and family or where this isn't an option then to connect to the People Like Us project (Plus) that helps tackle social isolation and loneliness across the county for 18+.

Recovery

The use of Private Sector Leasing Schemes is being developed across the county to ensure a supply of affordable housing which meets current standards and increases the options open to people. Applicants are also supported as part of this work to ensure a smooth transition into a sustainable tenancy.

Complex needs and Rough Sleepers

Context

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy was launched in August 2018. The Government is committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and announced in December 2019 a commitment to ending rough sleeping by 2024

Rough sleeping can be a dangerous and isolating experience. People who sleep rough are more likely to be victims of crime and violence. The longer a person remains on the streets or actively engages in street life culture the more likely it will have significant implications on their physical and mental health.

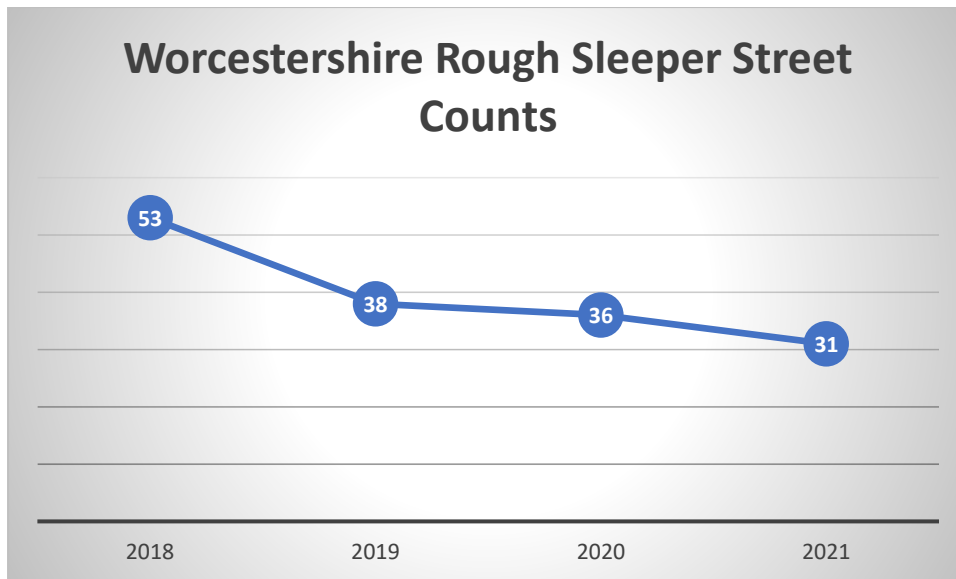
Safeguarding issues are particularly relevant to this group and certain actions in relation to safeguarding have been identified by the Thematic Review of Rough Sleepers, undertaken by the Adult Safeguarding Board in 2020. Those pertinent to the six LHAs are included in the action plan.

One of the positive outcomes of "Everyone In" was to embed the regular rough sleeper meetings. Having regular rough sleeper/prevention meetings at a local level enables the co-ordination of services and information sharing to develop partnerships with all organisations and individuals committed to ending rough sleeping and homelessness. This includes a consideration of any safeguarding issues that need to be flagged with partners or referred to the Adult Safeguarding Team.

Of the homeless population with complex needs or an offending background, there is limited availability of supported accommodation which can be accessed rapidly resulting in households only option of off the street or long term supported housing being outside of the county. Although Supported Housing providers in Worcestershire work within a trauma informed, person centred approach clients with substance misuse, serious mental health conditions and/or a history of arson may find themselves waiting for a suitable placement due to stringent criteria.

Data Collection

Worcestershire official street count held each year has seen a decrease in rough sleepers since 2018 (please see table below).



Rough sleeper data is collated each week improving our local intelligence of the flow, return, stock of households and the reason behind their homelessness.

In terms of “Everyone In”, across the county over 150 people were assisted in response to the first lockdown.

Data we collect is reviewed to identify trends and possible gaps in service delivery including in accommodation options for complex needs clients via the Supportive Housing Needs Assessment being led by Worcestershire County Council.

Achievements to date

Prevention

In each Local Authority a Rough Sleepers meeting has been established and attended by statutory organisations, voluntary sector, and local charities. This meeting shares information and agrees actions to reduce rough sleeping.

The Rough Sleeper Initiative funding has enabled the creation of localised provisions of No First Night Out (NFNO) /No Second Night Out (NSNO) settings offering “Off the Street” accommodation at an earlier opportunity, resulting in households new to the street or at high risk of rough sleeping being accommodated with a structured support package and move on options. It has also funded assertive outreach focusing on street-based responses both directly from the Housing Authorities but also in partnership with a local homeless charity, Maggs Day Centre who provide the Maggs Outreach and Assessment Team (MOAT)s and the commissioned Navigator services.

There are targeted prevention services including officers who focus on early intervention and prevention through regular meetings with social, private sector landlords and other services who encounter people who are at risk of homelessness. Homeless Support/Prevention Officers are working with clients at risk of rough sleeping through a person centred, strengths-based approach to maintain their accommodation. There are also tenancy sustainment services and those focused on the private rented sector, such as “Help to stay” in Wyre Forest and BDHT 360

Support in Bromsgrove which is aimed at private sector landlords who are considering ending tenancies. This helps to reduce homelessness caused by the ending of tenancies by providing tenants support and signposting to be able to stay.

We are working with people with lived experience of homelessness to provide a more personalised, inclusive approach to the overall quality of the services provided and more information on this is included in the Homeless Review.

As part of the development of the Rough Sleeper Action Plans we have identified a specific, long term challenge with female rough sleepers, who have spells in unsuitable and short term accommodation, in some areas and there are no specific specialist services to meet this need.

Intervention

For people already rough sleeping there are services such as the Navigation Support Service who are working with our more complex rough sleepers from rough sleeping into accommodation/housing pathway plan. This is assisted by the MOATs floating support service working with rough sleepers who are disengaged with local services/housing options teams. For those rough sleepers who do engage with councils there are Homeless Support/Prevention officers working with former rough sleepers in accommodation or those vulnerable to rough sleeping onto an accommodation/housing pathway using a person centred, strength-based approach

To support rough sleepers during the colder months we have localised, countywide delivery of the Severe Winter Emergency Provision (SWEP). During Covid this moved from communal provision to self-contained rooms which led to greater levels of usage in some districts.

In parts of the County there are supported Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) accommodation used as a housing option for households who may require tenancy ready skills/support prior to accessing independent accommodation.

Worcester, Wychavon and more recently Wyre Forest have all been successful in Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) bids to support people coming off the streets and receiving accommodation and tailored packages of support. In Wyre Forest this will provide a women only specialist service for women at risk of or who are rough sleeping who might also be at risk of exploitation, domestic violence, prostitution etc and who have had unsettled periods of accommodation for a number of years.

Recovery

The Rough Sleeper Initiative and Business Rates Retention Scheme funding has enabled Housing Authorities to implement Housing First (delivered in partnership with St Pauls Hostel) and Housing Led projects throughout Worcestershire. This has taken the most entrenched rough sleeper cohort, some of whom have been on the streets for more than ten years, to maintain social housing tenancies with intensive support.

In addition, there are a range of other accommodation schemes including Private Sector Leasing Schemes increasing options to access affordable, high standard

Agenda Item 7

housing, rent deposit schemes to help access the private rented sector and shared housing provision with individual support packages.

To support former rough sleepers in the longer term some councils have commissioned a Peer Mentor service, using those with lived life experiences working in conjunction with support workers to support rough sleepers.

A Worcestershire Communities of Practice has been established, facilitated by Homeless Link, that is attended by local authority housing options, homeless charities and voluntary sector partners with the focus on sharing good practices.

Finally, personalisation budgets have been set up enabling councils to fund specialist support packages such as access to counselling services and meaningful activities to reduce/break the cycle of homelessness.

Families with children

Context

Worcestershire is an attractive place to live and work, inevitably leading to high rents and house prices, from increasing demand. This means some families are unable to afford a home. The recent pandemic and changes to the benefits system together with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the number of people in low paid work has seen a rise in the number of families at risk of homelessness.

We want to prevent homelessness by identifying the key risk factors/triggers in families lives that can lead to a family being at risk of homelessness at the earliest possible stage.

Data Collection

Across Worcestershire there are currently 5518 families on the Housing register.

The data behind family homelessness in Worcestershire suggests that the immediate 'triggers' for family homelessness approaches are primarily relationship breakdown with partner (non-violent breakdown) which accounted for 16% of homeless approaches in 2018 to 15.6% in 2021; 12.7% of approaches were due to Domestic Abuse in 2018 raising to 17% in 2021; and the end of private rented tenancy (assured shorthold tenancy) which was 10.2% in 2018 and down to 6.8% in 2021, due to the eviction embargo during the pandemic.

Achievements to date

Prevention

Throughout the county there are online customer portals to encourage self-referrals at an early stage to obtain housing advice and access the housing register. Housing Authorities have also raised awareness of where to go for help through publishing of materials to promote services and support available and ensuring websites are regularly updated with local and national advice enabling customers to help themselves where possible.

The Duty to Refer (through ALERT) and Commitment to Refer has increased the referrals from a wider range of agencies for customers who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

There are different multi – agency groups established including prevention panels to provide meaningful advice, support and assistance to particular cases.

The Housing Authorities work with landlords in the private and social housing sector in developing and supporting pre-eviction protocols to ensure eviction is always the last resort and they have assisted with rent arrears payments to ensure evictions can be prevented where possible. This includes providing pre tenancy and tenancy sustainment training to support customers.

Housing teams are co-locating with some outside agencies such as the DWP for a proactive approach.

Families have been assisted to reduce rent and mortgage arrears through various funding streams including the Homeless Prevention Grant "Vulnerable Renters" fund. Across the county we received £365,612 to assist households remain in their current home.

Intervention

At the intervention stage the services aim to assist households into permanent housing as quickly as possible, whilst providing housing support and tenancy sustainment work if required, with targeted delivery in a family's temporary accommodation or homes. This is supported by changing to working practises to enable staff to work more agilely to enable greater access to services.

Homeless families are particularly hit by cost of living rises. Welfare assistance (including access to foodbanks and community kitchens) to meet basic household needs and financial inclusion measures such as budgeting advice, debt management, support and assistance with welfare claims are essential to help maintain temporary and permanent accommodation.

Recovery

We currently work in partnership with other agencies to provide additional support for families and the councils also directly provide floating and outreach services to provide support to families in their own localities. This has been enhanced throughout the Covid pandemic with housing teams having an increased presence in the community to provide comprehensive advice and support to areas where there is recognised deprivation and possible families at risk of evictions.

We recognise that there is an undersupply of accommodation, particularly for larger families and this may cause delays to households moving out of temporary and interim accommodation. Working closely with social and private sector landlords is critical to ensure households move through the rehousing pathway in an effective manner and enable those households to settle back into education and employment.

Survivors of Domestic Abuse

Context

Following the publication of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) the district authorities implemented a raft of changes and enhancements to services towards creating a more robust and responsive service for those fleeing abusive relationships.

Data Collection

With the Domestic Abuse Act providing a more focussed service for survivors of Domestic Abuse there has been an increase in the recognition of Domestic Abuse in homeless presentations and this has been recorded in the data collected.

In Worcestershire in 2020-21, there were a total of 12,887 domestic abuse incidents (reported crimes and non-crimes) reported to the police. In addition to those who have reported domestic abuse, there is thought to be a large unmet domestic abuse need in Worcestershire. Prevalence data suggests that 43% of incidents go unreported to the police.

Across the County the number of homeless approaches due to Domestic Abuse accounted for 12.7% in 2018/19, 11.9% in 2019/20 and 17% in 2020/21 of all homeless approaches.

According to data collected via a Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) project, which ran from September 2020 to March 2022, of 162² homelessness approaches due to Domestic Abuse, 148 of those were owed a duty. 14 households were owed the prevention duty and 121 were owed a relief duty. As part of the DLUHC project, Worcester Community Trust were funded to develop and train a team of Domestic Abuse Community Champions, who would be volunteers based in community settings, trained to advise and signpost survivors. A total of 59 champions were trained and supported to make onward referrals for 195 service users, who were referred to services that would reduce the risk of re-entering an abusive relationship.

A new role of Research and Intelligence Officer has been developed in order to support the gathering, analysis and dissemination of data for this client group. This role will support more accurate data collection and will help to inform future resourcing of services.

Achievements to date

Prevention

The Domestic Abuse and Housing Co-ordinator role was introduced to start working on establishing services across the County in preparation for the act. The county local authorities have been working with the co-ordinator to improve services available through the homelessness housing process, develop a Domestic Abuse Pathway and provide training and regular meetings in order to upskill staff in understanding and recognising Domestic Abuse and the need for risk assessments and safety planning

² some district data missing

Wyre Forest District Council piloted a joint working with West Mercia Womens Aid in establishing a Domestic Abuse Panel. This is a meeting between a representative from Womens Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Officer to create links between housing and support services. It is an opportunity to make sure all involved are doing what is needed to offer support and to share best practice and learning between agencies. These Panels are now considered good practice and are likely to be rolled out across the county local authorities.

When considering preventing Domestic Abuse the stakeholder engagement workshop suggested that more could be done in respect of educating children and young people and young people on healthy relationships.

The engagement workshop also suggested that local authority websites need to be improved to ensure a consistent and up to date list of services and information can be easily accessed by those fleeing an abusive relationship.

Intervention

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) requires that local authorities provide an offer of support to all victims of Domestic Abuse who are accessing 'Safe Accommodation' provision. In addition to the support service commissioned out to a local specialist domestic abuse service, the county local authorities have recruited specialist Domestic Abuse Housing Officers, to work with and support those fleeing Domestic Abuse. This officer oversees the housing process for victim/survivors creating a named contact who takes ownership of the case so that they don't have to keep re-telling their story and provides continuity in their journey. These officers will discuss the safest and most appropriate options, ensuring that any temporary accommodation is safe for them to occupy and will refer or signpost them for additional support.

Safe Accommodation, as referenced in the Domestic Abuse Act, covers any temporary accommodation that is made available by local authorities to those fleeing an abusive relationship. Local authorities have worked in partnership with the County Council and social landlords to make more accommodation available to this group that meets the definition of being 'safe' under legislation. Local authorities across the County have received grant funding to ensure these new units comply with these requirements..

A sanctuary scheme is a service designed to help keep survivors within their homes, if it is safe for them and they choose to do so. If the relationship has ended and the perpetrator is no longer residing at the permanent residence, then safety measures such as additional locks on doors and windows, security lights, and video doorbells are provided. More advanced measures may also be considered such as safe rooms built into the property. Work is being undertaken by the County Council to ensure that Sanctuary schemes are available and consistent in all areas..

Recovery

The Freedom Programme helps survivors of Domestic Abuse to make sense of and understand what has happened to them and is delivered by West Mercia Women's Aid across Worcestershire to assist in the recovery process.

Agenda Item 7

The newly commissioned Domestic Abuse Support Service (DASS), delivered by West Mercia Womens Aid, will support survivors in a number of different housing settings including refuges and safe houses to ensure they have access to advice and support to aid recovery. This service is commissioned by Worcestershire County Council in partnership with other commissioners including the District Councils and Police and Crime Commissioner.

Many victims/survivors of Domestic Abuse have never had the opportunity or freedom to take up a hobby or take part in an activity they enjoy due to their controlled and isolated environment. By investing in the right support that includes meaningful activities victims/survivors can be given the opportunity to improve their confidence and self esteem and achieve a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives.

Tackling perpetrator behaviour is also key and the Drive Project aims to reduce the number of child and adult victims of domestic abuse by deterring perpetrator behaviour. Liaising closely with local police and support agencies, caseworkers deploy a two-pronged approach of disruption through the criminal justice system and/or support for unresolved personal issues to stop domestic abuse. The Drive Project pilot focuses on priority (high-risk or serial) perpetrators, as this group carries the greatest risk of serious harm and engage poorly with available services.

Young People

Across Worcestershire's Local Authorities in 2020/21 there were 629 young people aged between 16-24 on the housing registers down from 697 in 2018/19. For young people the data indicates that most common causes of homelessness in Worcestershire are family or friends being no longer willing to accommodate, the loss of private rented accommodation and relationship breakdown with partner (non-violent breakdown).

The recent pandemic and changes to the benefits system together with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the number of people in low paid work has seen a rise in the number of young people at risk of homelessness.

Prevention-

Across the county we have raised awareness of homelessness and where to go for advice to encourage self-referrals at an early stage through improving customer portals, publishing materials to promote services and support available, keeping websites updated with local and national advice enabling households to help themselves where possible and the use of the Duty To Refer via ALERT for wider agencies to refer potentially homeless or homeless customers to us.

Many of the councils have well-established multi-agency working or prevention panels to develop meaningful support provision as required including the Care Leavers Panels.

The Councils work with social landlords to ensure a pre – eviction protocol is followed and that eviction is always the last resort and where possible provide assistance with rent arrears or additional outreach support. Partnerships with private sector landlords help to ensure an understanding of housing to aid a preventative approach

Some of the authorities and the Care Leavers service provide pre-tenancy sustainment training and in some parts of the county training is offered within schools to raise awareness of homelessness causes and tackle relationship breakdown.

Intervention -

If, despite all prevention interventions, young people become homeless the teams will continue to provide tenancy sustainment training, support and work with other services to ensure the homelessness is fleeting. Changes to the way officers work and the use of technology like video conferencing means the services are more agile and able to provide greater access to people. Support will include help with independent living and financial inclusion measures such as budgeting advice, debt management support and assistance with welfare benefit applications.

As both a prevention and intervention service, mediation is available to reduce relationship breakdowns and restore connections with family and friends where these have broken down.

Across the county currently there are jointly funded³ Young Persons Pathway Worker to ensure young people have support into accommodation and provide a person centred approach.

In the longer term we will work with young people and partners to overcome financial barriers to accessing accommodation through support into working programmes. Accommodation can be provided by both social and private sector landlords and many councils provide rent deposit schemes/ referral to vicars' relief to help young people to move into affordable, suitable accommodation.

Across the county the Councils have worked with Registered Providers (RPs) to provide suitable supported accommodation such as specialist young persons accommodation including Foyer or similar schemes, Nightstop, Crash pad emergency rooms and floating support from projects like Basement. In some cases this is in partnership with the County Council who provide funding for the specialist support services.

Recovery

Many young people will continue to have support needs beyond their homelessness and so part of the longer term recovery will be the ongoing development and embedding of support services across the county, in conjunction with the County Council (with Personal Advisors for example) and Voluntary and Community Sector.

The use of the Duty or the Commitment to Refer offers agencies who identify issues with households to refer into housing services through a clear signposting route. This is supported by having an easy to access, agile workforce in the community that can provide comprehensive advice and support to areas where there is recognised deprivation and possible young people at risk of evictions.

Young people often have the lowest incomes and are very vulnerable to cost of living rises so maintaining access to welfare assistance (including access to foodbanks and community kitchens) to meet basic household needs and financial inclusion measures such as budgeting advice, debt management, support and assistance with welfare claims are essential to help maintain permanent accommodation.

³ Local Housing Authorities and Worcestershire Childrens First

Households in temporary accommodation and permanent housing

Temporary Accommodation

Local Authorities (LAs) in England & Wales have duties to provide temporary accommodation under the following circumstances:

- Interim Duty

Provision of accommodation whilst homelessness enquiries are ongoing when the LA has reason to believe the applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need.

- Main Duty

The main housing duty is a duty to provide temporary accommodation until such time as the duty is ended, either by an offer of settled accommodation or by providing advice and assistance that is sufficient to secure accommodation. The main duty is owed when the LA is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, homeless, in priority need and not intentionally homeless.

Temporary accommodation (TA) provided under either duty must be suitable in terms of location, standards and cost. The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities states that while Bed & Breakfasts (B&Bs) may be used in an emergency, councils should avoid the use of B&Bs wherever possible and, in the case of families or pregnant women, should use B&Bs for a maximum of 6 weeks.

The availability of different types of TA across Worcestershire differs between districts. The councils have a range of types of accommodation available for their use; including B&B and self-contained, with some districts having formal arrangements with suppliers in place, some using TA on an ad-hoc basis, and some using a combination of the two arrangements.

The table below shows the number of TA units each Worcestershire LA has available to it, compared to the average number of households in TA at any one time (using the average number in TA at the end of each quarter in 2021/22).

Table three: TA units in Worcestershire

District	Average No. in TA at end of Qtr 21/22	Shared/ B&B	Self-contained	Gap/ Surplus
Bromsgrove	18	Ad hoc B&B	10 designated units	-8 units
Malvern Hills	8	Ad hoc B&B	4 designated units	-4 units
Redditch	49	Ad hoc B&B	25 designated units	-24 units
Worcester City	57	16 designated B&B rooms Plus ad hoc	26 designated units	-7 units

Agenda Item 7

		8 rooms at LA owned shared TA		
Wychavon	17	Ad hoc B&B	16 designated units	-1 units
Wyre Forest	26	3 designated B&B rooms 11 rooms at LA owned shared TA	7 designated units	-5 units

The above table shows that the average TA gap differs significantly across the districts and reflects the difference in demand for TA across the county.

Whilst the majority of the districts only use B&B accommodation on an ad-hoc basis, Worcester City, Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest have contracts with B&B providers in place to ensure the availability of this type of accommodation in order to fulfil their statutory duties to homeless households. Although contract arrangements mean that these units can be provided at a lower rate than ad hoc use, this type of accommodation is still significantly more expensive than other types of TA, particularly where arrangements exist to cap the rent at Local Housing Allowance levels. In addition, as the Code of Guidance states, B&B is not suitable for families and should be avoided for other households wherever possible. Studies have shown that moving home many times in early life affects child behaviour and mental health. Specifically:

- Homeless children are more likely to be in poor health than non-homeless children
- Children who have been in temporary accommodation for more than a year are over three times more likely to demonstrate mental health problems such as anxiety and depression than non-homeless children
- Living in temporary accommodation puts children at greater risk of infection and accidents

The Worcestershire councils have therefore committed to reducing the use of B&B and replacing it with alternative accommodation which is less expensive and of better quality. As this forms part of their 'business as usual' work it doesn't feature as a specific countywide action.

Permanent housing

In terms of permanent housing all the councils work with developers and registered providers to deliver market and affordable housing across the county. This work is underpinned by the council's Local Plans which identify a wide range of tenures and types of housing including low cost home ownership and social / affordable rent properties.

Local Plan numbers are informed by a combination of the standard methodology requirement, Housing Market Assessments and Housing Needs Surveys to

determine the required mix of housing. The councils also work with registered providers to ensure best use is made of existing stock including tackling underoccupation and low demand schemes.

Work with private sector landlords and letting agents also enable councils to meet some housing needs in parts of the county although local housing allowance rates do make this challenging. The councils have been innovative in attracting landlords to provide accommodation through landlord forums, the use of rent bonds and deposits, social letting agencies and private sector leasing schemes and this will continue during the lifetime of the strategy.

Governance arrangements

Oversight and delivery

Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership (WSHP) is responsible for ensuring that the commitments within the Housing Strategy are realised and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is a sub-strategy. The partnership is a multi-agency and cross sector partnership, ensuring delivery of the strategy is supported across relevant organisations.

Sitting under this group will be the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group, a public and voluntary sector partnership, who have a specific focus on strategy delivery. In addition, the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (WSHOG) will be responsible for the operational delivery of the councils elements of the strategy.

The Local Homelessness Forums, made up of local partners will also support the oversight and delivery of the strategy.

Monitoring

WSHOG will report progress against local strategy implementation plans to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group who will undertake a review of progress on an annual basis up to and including 2025.

Each council will also be responsible for reporting back on its local action plan on a quarterly basis to its Local Homelessness Forum.

Funding the strategy

Homelessness services are funded through a variety of funding streams including the individual councils general fund budgets as well as additional funding received from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) called the Homelessness Prevention Fund (HPF)

Homeless Prevention Fund

Homelessness Prevention Fund is ringfenced and should be utilised to::

- Fully embed the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness.
- Reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation by maximising family homelessness prevention.

Agenda Item 7

- Reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families and eliminate family B&B placements beyond the statutory six-week limit.

In 2022/23 it also includes an element for new burdens due to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The allocations in 2022/23 are as follows;

Housing Authority	Grant (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	163,348
Malvern Hills District Council	140,582
Redditch Borough Council	322,383
Worcester City Council	474,097
Wychavon District Council	362,524
Wyre Forest District Council	351,898

However, there is currently a consultation into how this funding is allocated across the country with some of the Worcestershire councils potentially losing out, which will put prevention services at risk.

Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022-25

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Worcestershire	£927,451	£1,079,229	£1,002,282

Domestic Abuse Act 2022/23

Housing Authority	Grant (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	32,859
Malvern Hills District Council	31,912
Redditch Borough Council	32,788
Worcester City Council	32,943
Wychavon District Council	32,015
Wyre Forest District Council	31,078

Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme 2021/22 - 2023/24

Local Authority	Grant			
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24
Worcester	Capital - £440,000		Revenue £147,667	
Wychavon & Malvern (18 units)	£28,330	£49,420	£50,420	N/A
Wyre Forest	N/A	£29,023	£30,622	N/A

Action Plan

Through the course of developing the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy we have worked with service users, stakeholders and our housing advice teams to identify gaps in service delivery or provision.

As part of developing the strategy we undertook a review of provision across the county, reviewed statistics from a variety of data sets, interviewed stakeholders and service users (in relation to rough sleeping) and held a stakeholder day in June 2022. This information helped identify gaps and future actions for the strategy. There were a number of suggestions from the stakeholder day that are business as usual and as such don't feature in the action plan but will still be delivered including the revision of protocols already in place, delivering on the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding proposals and co-location of officers with partners such as the DWP.

The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and this will include the review of current actions and identification of any new actions required for years two and three.

To summarise the key actions for the strategy, identified from gap analysis, are:

- Increasing the range of accommodation available to a number of client groups and ensure distribution throughout the county including for survivors of domestic abuse through provision of “safe accommodation” and development of a countywide sanctuary scheme, increasing access to the private rented sector, meeting young people’s needs for emergency accommodation beyond Bed and Breakfast etc
- Working with the Research and Intelligence Officer to improve data collection and quality
- Increase the level of homeless prevention through a variety of actions including:
 - Undertake joint working and training with Registered Providers, Mental Health teams, Criminal Justice, Substance Misuse etc
 - Raising awareness of homeless services to stakeholders and the public and the ability to refer cases in through the Duty to Refer or Commitment to Refer
 - Developing prevention panels across the county
- Work with those with lived experience to bring about service improvements where required

See the full action plan in Appendix Two

Appendix One – Legislation

Legal duties

The primary homelessness legislation – Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 – provides the statutory under-pinning for action to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to people threatened with or actually homeless.

In 2002, the Government amended the homelessness legislation through the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 to ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness and to strengthen the assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by extending the priority need categories.

In 2017 the Housing Act 1996 was amended by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. This brought in additional duties to all households, namely the prevention and relief duties which apply regardless of priority need or intentionality.

In making decisions local authorities must take into consideration the Public Sector Equality Act 2018 and give consideration to individuals protected characteristics.

Local authorities also need to consider section 11 of the Children's Act 1989 and the duty to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children when making decisions.

Homeless duties

Housing authorities have a legal duty to provide advice and assistance to anyone that is eligible and homeless or threatened with homelessness. If a housing authority has reason to believe that someone may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, they must investigate what duty they owe to them under the homelessness legislation.

A person will be eligible depending on their immigration status. This is a complex area of law, though generally, UK nationals with a right to reside, those with settled status, pre settled status and exercising their worker rights, or those with limited or indefinite leave to remain with recourse to public funds would be eligible.

To establish if the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness, the following needs to be established:

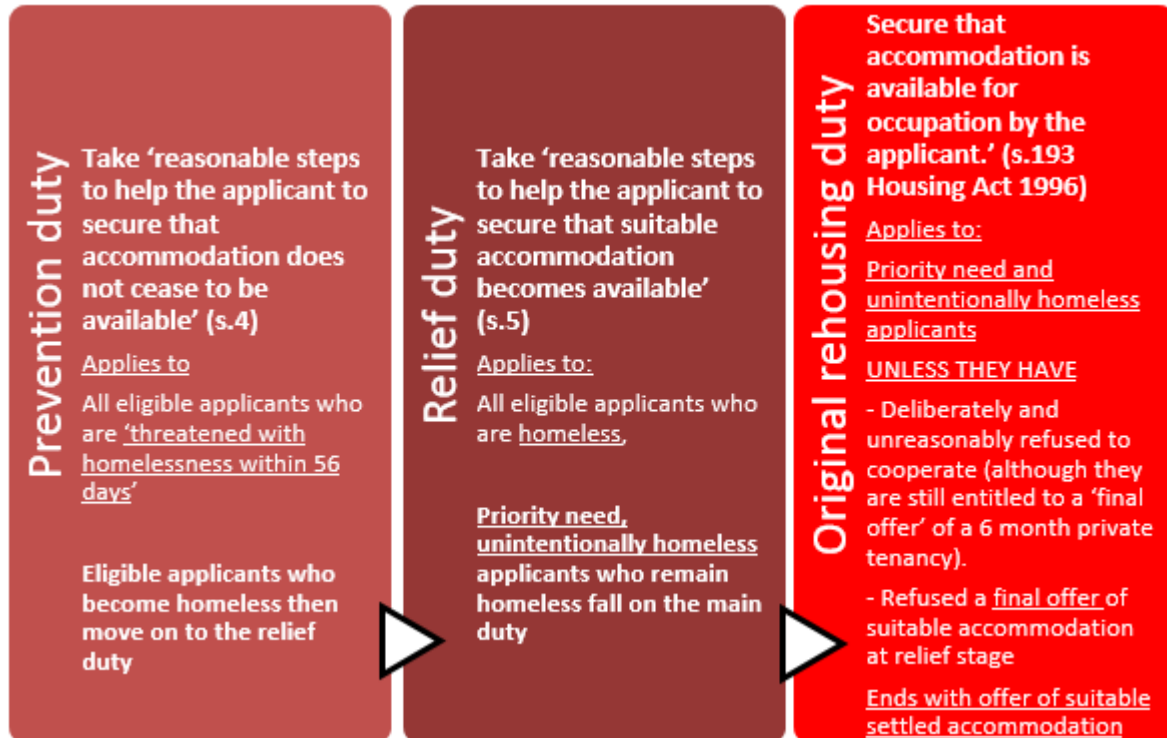
- Do they have the legal right to occupy accommodation that is available to them and their household for the next 56 days?
- Is the accommodation reasonable to occupy?

When assessing whether the accommodation is reasonable to occupy, the following should be considered:

- Is there a probability of violence? Violence has a broad definition here and includes emotional, financial, psychological abuse and controlling/coercive behaviour.
- Is there a probability of threats that are likely to be carried out?

- If the above are met the property is unsuitable, otherwise the local authority will need to consider all other matters in relation to the house to determine if suitable. The local authority will factor in the prevailing housing circumstances in the area when assessing whether a property is reasonable to occupy.

The duties are outlined below:-



If satisfied a household is homeless or threatened with homelessness, they have a duty to:-

- Assess their circumstances and how they became homeless
- What support they need to sustain accommodation
- What accommodation would best suit their needs
- Develop a personalised housing plan setting out reasonable actions for the authority and customer to undertake to address the housing situation

If a household is threatened with homelessness, they will be owed a prevention duty.

If a household is actually homeless they will be owed a relief duty.

These are collaborative duties and the authority should seek agreement from the client in regards to actions set.

These duties can end if:-

- A suitable offer of accommodation that is likely to last for 6 months is accepted
- A suitable offer of accommodation that is likely to last 6 months is refused, if the offer was a 6 month private tenancy or social tenancy the local authority would not need to consider if a main housing duty is owed

- If a prevention duty is owed, and someone becomes homeless, this will end the prevention duty and a relief duty will begin
- If a relief duty is owed and 56 days pass, this can end the relief duty and a main housing decision should be made
- If a household ceases to be eligible for assistance
- If someone deliberately refused to co-operate with their housing plan and the local authority has an approved policy on when duties should be ended in such instances. Worcestershire authorities are not currently ending duties due to deliberate refusals to co-operate with housing plans.

Main duty decisions

If the relief duty ends and the applicant has not been housed, and they have not refused a 6 month private or a social tenancy, the local authority will need to make a main housing duty decision.

A 'main homelessness duty' is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified 'priority need' group.

The 'priority need groups' include households with dependent children or a pregnant woman and people who are vulnerable in some way e.g. because of mental illness or physical disability. In 2021 this was expanded to include those fleeing from domestic abuse to have an automatic priority need for housing. In 2002 the priority need categories were extended to include applicants who are aged 16 or 17, care leavers aged 18-20, people who are vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, in HM Forces, in prison or custody, and those who are vulnerable as a result of having to flee their home because of non-domestic violence or the threat of violence. Guidance on factors local authorities should consider when looking at vulnerability can be found in the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities.

If someone does not fall within these categories or is not deemed vulnerable, they will not be owed a main duty due to not being in a priority need.

If someone is in a priority need the local authority will need to consider if they are intentionally homeless. A household is intentionally homeless if they have:-

- Deliberately done...
- ...an act or omission...
- ...in consequence of which...
- ...they cease to occupy accommodation...
- ...that was available and reasonable to occupy...
- And the act of omission was not done in good faith

All of these tests need to be satisfied for a household to be intentionally homeless. Acts or omissions should not be deliberate if the applicant was not capable of managing their affairs due to age, mental health or infirmity or due to a temporary

aberration of the mind, or if under duress or benefit delays beyond the applicants control.

If someone is intentionally homeless there will be a duty to provide accommodation for a reasonable period of time for the household to make their own arrangements.

Homelessness Households not owed the rehousing duty

Homeless people not owed the full rehousing duty are typically single people or childless couples who are not assessed as being in 'priority need' or those deemed to be intentionally homeless. These groups are only entitled to advice and assistance if homeless, not the "main housing duty". Some non-priority homeless people are offered access to Local Authority commissioned housing support services.

The local authority can utilise its discretion to assist certain households in exceptional circumstances.

Street Homelessness

DCLG defines street homelessness as: "People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes").

Appendix Two - Action Plan

Year One (Dec 2022 – November 2023)

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
PREVENTION					
Page 86	Reducing homeless approaches	Domestic Abuse	WCC	RBC&BDC (Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator)	March 2023
		All client groups	RBC&BDC	RBC & BDC	March 2023
		Domestic Abuse	RBC&BDC	RBC&BDC (Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator)	March 2023
Partnership working	Ensure health collaboratives have a housing rep or housing issues fed into the collaboratives	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2023
	Explore further opportunities to co-locate housing staff with other organisations e.g. DWP, Care leavers team	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2023
	WSHOG to discuss with WCF the issues around the transition from young people to adult services (where learning or physical disability or mental health need) so that a coherent and consistent pathway is in place that avoids homelessness occurring	Young people	WCF	WSHOG	March 2023
	Develop protocol with criminal justice and develop action plan following on from the independent report	Prison leavers	All Councils	Reducing Re-offending Group	March 2025
Customer Involvement	Engage regularly with service users using a variety of methods including face to face interviews and surveys to	All client groups	All Councils	WSHOG	March 2025

	enhance learning from lived experience and consider whether actions from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy are making a difference to households				
Raising awareness – customers and other organisations	Explore opportunities to work with Here2Help to have a community directory of homeless related services.	All client groups	All Councils & WCC	WSHOG and Nicki Breakwell	March 2023
	Deliver communication plan to raise awareness and have a consistent message around homelessness across the county (see separate plan appendix three)	All client groups	All councils	Worcestershire Strategic Partnership Officer	March 2025
Early Intervention	Explore the opportunity to establish prevention panels for domestic abuse across the county	All client groups	BDC, MHDC, RBC, WC & WDC	N/A	March 2023
	Work with Ukrainian hosts and guests, asylum seekers and refugees in partnership with other organisations to reduce homelessness	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG / WSHP	March 2023
	Promote and encourage sign up to the Duty or Commitment to Refer especially from the Police (DA), Voluntary and Community Sector and registered providers.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG to agree individual organisations	March 2023
	Work with the Early Help Partnership to ensure family homelessness is prevented at the earliest stage.	Families with children	All councils	Worcester City	March 2023
Commissioning	Work in partnership with the County Council, service providers, the Police and Crime Commissioner and other organisations to commission, deliver and review services to ensure they satisfy objectives	Domestic Abuse	All councils	WFDC	March 2023
Thematic review of rough sleepers (where actions not already)	Local Homeless Forums to consider the development of a set of principles for organisations providing services for the homeless.	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguarding Board and councils	WSHOG	March 2023
	Members of the local homeless forums to consider how the voluntary sector and other smaller organisations	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguardi	All councils	March 2023

picked up elsewhere in the action plan)	providing homeless services may be able to work collaboratively to deliver and access training		ng Board and councils		
	Consider outcomes of the supported housing joint strategic needs assessment and the Housing First UofW evaluation in identification of further types of accommodation for the rough sleeper client group	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguarding Board and councils	WSHOG	June 2023 tbc
	Monitoring of outcomes from the RSI2022-25 and the Rough Sleeper Action Plan to see how effective the interventions are into rough sleeping across the county	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguarding Board and councils	WSHOG	March 2025
	Consider local evidence of need which supports (including female rough sleepers) any specific actions.	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy oversight group	March 2023
Data and Intelligence	Monitor and gather intelligence around debt and other impacts from the cost of living including with voluntary sector working with the homeless and rough sleepers	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Local homeless forums	March 2023

INTERVENTION

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsibility	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
Tenancy sustainment	Ensure officers link to harm reduction service where client not fully engaged with drug and alcohol services, through joint working and training	All client groups	Cranstoun	WSHOG	March 2023
	Develop and embed support services across the county – community based led approach – to meet needs	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2023
	Ensure any available support provision is flexible to the clients needs as they progress along the pathway	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025
Training	Staff training in Psychological Informed Environment (PIE)	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG through WDC (training budget)	March 2023

	Awareness of the MCA and the CARM process within councils for those who have capacity but have complex needs to include circulating CARM resource pack to housing advice teams.	Complex needs / Mental Health	Adult Safeguarding Board	All councils	March 2023
RECOVERY					
High level action	Action	Client group	Responsibility	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities to link homeless households into meaningful activity and services to reduce social isolation and loneliness such as Plus (Onside Advocacy).	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators	March 2025
	Increase take-up of education, training and employment support available across the county	All client groups	All councils	Building Better Opportunities / WSHOG	March 2023
	Review the existing peer mentoring services and consider whether this should be widened out across Districts / Clients	Rough Sleepers	All councils	WDC, MHDC, BDC & RBC	March 2023
Early Intervention	Work with those in safe accommodation to ensure digital safety including around local settings, use of social media etc	Domestic Abuse	All councils	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator / Domestic Abuse Housing Officers	March 2023
SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION					
	Explore opportunities for a greater range of supported and step-down accommodation available, before settled accommodation, for those that need an interim step, following the supported housing needs assessment	All clients	All councils	ASC / PH / WSHOG	March 202
	Explore the housing demand for rough sleepers to identify whether any further supported accommodation is required and where that should be located e.g. Housing First, Direct access Hostel	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Research and Intelligence Officer	March 2023
	Develop / retain 35 units of safe accommodation across the County for victims/survivors of domestic abuse	Domestic Abuse	All councils	WFDC	March 2023

Page 9 of 9

Year Two (Dec 2023 – November 2024)

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
PREVENTION					
Reducing homeless approaches	Explore the funding opportunities available to employ a countywide Young People’s Co-ordinator (YPC)	Young People	All councils	WSHOG	March 2024
	Review issues within the private rented sector (PRS) following the rent reform legislation and end of the s21 notices to ensure homelessness from the PRS is reduced.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2024
Partnership working	Work with partners to explore opportunities for further outreach provision from their services e.g. GP drop ins, joint home visits, mental health outreach	All client groups	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	March 2024
	Work with partners to explore joint training and job shadowing to improve understanding of care act, homelessness and mental health assessments to support the prevention of homelessness	All client groups	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	March 2024
Customer Involvement	Explore opportunities to develop a youth homelessness snapshot survey with YPC	Young People	All councils	Young People Co-ordinator	March 2024
Raising awareness – customers and other organisations	Deliver communication plan to raise awareness and have a consistent message around homelessness across the county (see separate plan appendix three)	All client groups	All councils	Worcestershire Strategic Partnership Officer	March 2025
Early Intervention	Work with school/education settings to explore homelessness / healthy relationships targeting schools in areas where homelessness is more prevalent	Young People	All councils	Youn People Co-ordinator	March 2024
INTERVENTION					
High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation	Timescale

			Organisation	(if county action)	
Reducing rough sleeping	Review outcomes from Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022-25 funding / Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme ⁴ to reduce rough sleeping	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Rough Sleeper Coordinators	March 2024
Tenancy sustainment	Ensure any available support provision is flexible to the clients needs as they progress along the pathway	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025
RECOVERY					
High level action	Action	Client group	Responsibility	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
Raising awareness	Work with schools and education settings to ensure digital safety and healthy relationships is delivered	Young People	All councils	YPC	March 2024
Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities to link homeless households into meaningful activity and services to reduce social isolation and loneliness such as Plus (Onside Advocacy).	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025
SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION					
Increasing accommodation	Explore opportunities for a greater range of supported and step-down accommodation available, before settled accommodation, for those that need an interim step	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG / ASC	March 2024
	Explore opportunities presented by re-purposing older peoples accommodation surplus to requirements	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2024
	Review the provision of accommodation and support for young people to ensure no young person will be placed in emergency bed and breakfast with shared facilities unless no other accommodation available (to avoid rough sleeping) including working with RPs on new build and accessing existing stock and other specialist housing providers	Young People	All councils	YPC	March 2024
	Support the recommissioning of YP accommodation and support services to ensure it meets need	Young People	All councils	YPC	March 2024

⁴ In Wychavon, Worcester and Wyre Forest only

Year Three (Dec 2024 – November 2025)

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
PREVENTION					
Reducing homeless approaches	Explore opportunities for localised counselling services specifically for homeless households	Mental Health	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	March 2025
Partnership working	Explore Greater Manchester Combined Authority around co-ordinated bids across statutory and voluntary sector partners to address gaps	All client groups	All councils	Homelessness Link / WSHOG	March 2025
	Explore opportunities to engage PRS landlords through prevention panels to increase prevention in the PRS.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025
Raising awareness – customers and other organisations	Deliver communication plan to raise awareness and have a consistent message around homelessness across the county (see separate plan appendix three)	All client groups	All councils	Worcestershire Strategic Partnership Officer	March 2025
INTERVENTION					
High level action	Action	Client group	Responsibility	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities with the MH Trust around a specialist MH funded post to work with homeless households	Mental health	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	
RECOVERY					
High level action	Action	Client group	Responsibility	Lead organisation	Timescale

				(if county action)	
Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities to link homeless households into meaningful activity and services to reduce social isolation and loneliness such as Plus (Onside Advocacy).	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025
SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION					
PRS accommodation	Engage with landlords from the private rented sector to enable access to accommodation across the districts post rent reform act	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025

Appendix Three – Communication Plan

Homelessness is a complex issue. People find themselves without a home for many reasons. There has been a steady increase in the number of people seeking help and there are many factors contributing to this including public sector austerity, welfare reform, cost of living rises and an undersupply of suitable, affordable accommodation. We provide a number of services across the county to try to prevent homelessness from occurring and to provide assistance to those that become homeless. In 2020/21 the county had approaches from over 2214 households, that we owed a duty to. There are also a much smaller number of people who sleep rough every year and across the county there are tailored services to address these needs including No First and No Second Night Out accommodation, support via the HOPES commissioned service, Navigators and in-house support teams and bespoke accommodation schemes for move-on including Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) funded projects. The Voluntary and Community Sector also support people facing homelessness with food, clothing and advice etc. However, not all those on the streets are Rough Sleeping, some will also be begging or street drinking for example and this message should be highlighted as well.

This communications plan has been developed by the District Councils to raise awareness around homelessness (an action in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2022) and to deliver on the recommendations of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Thematic Rough Sleeping Review.

Objectives of the plan:

- To ensure that the public, organisations and people who are potentially homeless are aware of the help that is available
- To communicate how important it is for people to act early if they are having difficulties that may lead to homelessness
- To highlight the important work of the councils and their commissioned partners to raise awareness and reduce the misinformation circulated on social media
- Have some clear, jargon free key messages that highlight activity or actions for the councils, stakeholders and the public

Action	Outcome	Communication Channels	Target Audience	Responsible	Due date and frequency
To re-promote the Duty to Refer / Commitment to Refer message.	To increase the number of referrals to Homeless Teams through Duty to Refer from a wider range of agencies.	Existing joint meetings and publicity materials with public organisations.	Public organisations who may meet people who are potentially homeless.	District Councils	Dec-22

For organisations and agencies who have an interest in preventing homelessness to continue to meet on a regular basis to share information, develop best practices and current policy developments.	To have a cohesive and coordinated approach and response to homelessness.	Regular local homeless forums	Organisations and agencies who are involved in homelessness.	District Councils and voluntary/statutory agencies	Quarterly or Bi-annually depending on local arrangements
To continue to review information on housing and homelessness on the district council websites to make sure it is up to date and accessible including through obtaining views on the information from People With Lived Experience (PWLE) To include case studies or videos to make messages more impactful.	For the public, organisations and people who are homeless or may become homeless to have easily accessible online information.	District Councils' Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who are homeless or may potentially become homeless General Public 	District Councils	Sep-22 and a six monthly review
To promote the services available to rough sleepers including Streetlink, Cold/Hot Weather Emergency Provision, new services plus the existing services both statutory and voluntary.	For the public to have an increased awareness of the services available for people who are homeless. All organisations to promote a jargon free, cohesive message.	Regular media campaigns to include local newspapers, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who are homeless or may potentially become homeless General Public 	District Councils, WSHOG and Homeless organisations	Quarterly as a minimum

Channels to be used (subject to local arrangements)

- Local Homeless Forums
- Websites
- Social media (depending on local policies)
- Members and staff briefings
- Newsletters

Resources (subject to local arrangements)

- Website and media teams
- Relevant Housing Managers (Operational / Strategic)
- Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Officer
- Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (for annual review)

Draft Council Tax Support 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 RESOLVE that Option B is put out for Consultation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to request authorisation to undertake a 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.

- 2.5 This report requests permission to consult on changes required to the scheme and makes recommendation to Members for the 2023/24 scheme.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The current CTR scheme was implemented in the 2021/22 financial year and for that year cost £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 Every local authority has their own CTR scheme to help residents on low incomes pay their Council Tax bill. The amount that can be claimed will depend on household income, savings, entitlement for certain benefits and who lives within the property. If someone is eligible for CTR, the amount of support they are entitled to is used to reduce their overall Council Tax bill.

- 3.3 The Council introduced a new income banded / grid scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1st April 2021 to implement a modern, future proofed scheme and reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit. Details of the existing scheme are set out in 4.11 below.

- 3.4 As with the majority of authorities within England, the Council has changed its scheme each year for a number of reasons including:

- To adjust the level of support in line with the funding available from central Government;
- To amend income bands and income tapers to adjust for the impact of inflation; and
- To aid administration.

- 3.5 The existing scheme determines eligibility by placing claimants into income bands and a percentage reduction is then applied to their

council 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.

3.6 The scheme currently does not apply income disregards for childcare costs; this can be seen as a disincentive for people to return to the workplace. The options for amendments all propose the disregarding of childcare costs.

3.7 The objective of the 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 and based on current modelling, were either of the three new scheme options be put in place at the current time, the costs would be:

Option A

- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work

The existing scheme reduces the claimant's council tax by 100%, 75%, 50% or 25% dependant on the income of the household. As income increases the claimant will step through the income bands, and support will be reduced. If income thresholds are not uprated in line with inflation, then the value of the reduction will be reduced, the scheme will cease to be relevant, and appropriate support would no longer be provided to the lowest income households.

Option A proposes that the existing income bands are increased in line with inflation – which is currently anticipated to be 12% and introduces a disregard for childcare costs which will incentivise and better support parents returning to the workplace.

Implementation of option A would result in a £115,000 increase in the costs of CTR based on the current claim caseload and council tax amounts. This amount would be allocated to precepting authorities as per the percentages in paragraph 3.1 with the Bromsgrove's allocation 13%.

Option B

- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work

- Increasing support to households in income bands 2 to 4 to 80%, 55% and 30%.

The existing scheme provides the maximum percentage support, of 100%, to the lowest income households at income band 1. The level of support then decreases to 75%, 50% and 25% at bands 2 to 4.

Increasing the support at bands 2 to 4 to 80%, 55% and 30% would provide additional support to low-income households.

Option B proposes the uprating and widening of income band and the introduction of the childcare costs disregard – as at option A - and increases to the support provided at income bands 2 to 4. 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%.

Option C

- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work
- Increasing support to households in income bands 2 to 4 to 85%, 60% and 35%.

Option C mirrors the changes detailed in B, but proposes that that support at bands 2 to 4 would be 85%, 60% and 35%. The overall costs of the scheme would increase by £148,000. This amount would be allocated to precepting authorities as per the percentages in paragraph 3.1 with the Bromsgrove's allocation 13%.

More detail of all three schemes is set out section 4.14.

- 3.8 The Scheme operates for both pension credit age and working age applicants and in accordance with S13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 specifies the classes of person who are entitled to a reduction under the scheme and is effective from the 1st April 2023 for the period of one financial year.
- 3.9 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. 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 options.

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

3.10 The present number of recipients of Council Tax Support at the Council at the end of 2021/22 was

Pension Age - 1893
Working Age - 2397

3.11 The Council has now reviewed the existing scheme and assessed three possible different options, as set out in 3.7 above, and will now consult on the approved option to be included in the 2023/24 scheme.

Consultation and Communication

3.10 As required by the legislation, the Council will consult with both major preceptors and also the public on the 2023/24 scheme.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Schedule 1A (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, states: before making a scheme, the authority must: (a) consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it, (b)

publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and (c) consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

- 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.
- 4.3 The purpose of this report is to set out the process for the 2023/24 scheme to be implemented with effect from 1st April 2023.

Background/Service Implications

- 4.4 The CTR was introduced by Central Government in April 2013 as a replacement for the Council Tax Benefit scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the introduction, the Government:
- Placed the duty to create a local scheme for working age applicants with billing authorities;
 - Reduced initial funding by the equivalent of ten per cent from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to authorities under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme; and
 - Prescribed that persons of Pension age would be dealt with under regulations set by central Government and not the authorities' local scheme.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 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%.

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

The Scheme Introduced on 1st April 2021

- 4.10 In view of the problems being experienced with the pre 2021 scheme, an alternative approach was taken from 2021/22. The approach has been to redesign the scheme to address all current issues in particular;

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

- 4.11 This new income banded / grid scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1st April 2021 was to implement a modern, future proofed scheme and reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit. This scheme had several new features:

- More support is given to those households on the lowest of incomes than in the previous scheme;
- Changes can only be made to the working age schemes as the current schemes for pensioners is prescribed by central Government; and
- The existing means - tested schemes have been replaced by a simple income grid model as shown below:

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

4.12 Consultation took place during 2020 and the new scheme took effect from 1st April 2021.

Proposed Approach to the 2022/23 Scheme

4.13 The Council has taken advice from ACS Consultancy who gives specialist advice in this area across a number of Councils. In current experience is that

- They know of no Councils who are reducing the level of their schemes.
- Significant numbers of clients are increasing the scope of their schemes to give more benefits to those most in need due to the cost of living crisis.
- Most are now using banded schemes similar to that moved to by the Council in April 2021.

4.14 As such the Council is proposing three possible scheme alternatives to Members, who will need to approve one of those alternatives. All three alternatives are based on the existing scheme with small alterations, residents. These three changes are

Option A

- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work

Band	Discount	Single Person	Single Person + 1 child	Single person with 2 or	Couple	Couple with 1 child	Couple with 2 or

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet
2022

12th October

				more children			more children
Income Band 1	100%	£0 to £115	£0 to £180	£0 to £245	£0 to £165	£0 to £230	£0 to £295
Income Band 2	75%	£115.01 to £140	£180.01 to £215	£245.01 to £280	£165.01 to £190	£230.01 to £265.00	£295.01 to £330
Income Band 3	50%	£140.01 to £165	£215.01 to £250	£280.01 to £315	£190.01 to £215	£265.01 to £300	£330.01 to £365
Income Band 4	25%	£165.01 to £190	£250.01 to £285	£315.01 to £350	£215.01 to £240	£300.01 to £335	£365.01 to £400
Nil Award	0%	Over £190	Over £285	Over £350	Over £240	Over £335	Over £400

Taking the total 2022/23 Band D council tax charge of £2,002.41 and factoring single person discount of 25% where applicable therefore reducing the amount payable to £1,501.81, the local council tax support and the remaining council tax payable if this option were to be implemented, noting that the council tax for 2023/24 is yet to be determined, is detailed below:

Band	Council Tax Support Discount	Single Person		Fully occupied	
		Amount of Discount	Amount of Council Tax Payable	Amount of Discount	Amount of Council Tax Payable
Income Band 1	100%	£1,501.81	£0.00	£2,002.41	£0
Income Band 2	75%	£1,126.36	£375.45	£1,501.81	£500.60
Income Band 3	50%	£750.91	£750.90	£1,001.21	£1,001.20
Income Band 4	25%	£375.45	£1,126.36	£500.60	£1,501.81
Nil Award	0%	£0	£1,501.81	£0	£2,002.41

Option B

- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work
- Increasing support to households in income bands 2 to 4 to 80%, 55% and 30%.

Band	Discount	Single Person	Single Person + 1 child	Single person with 2 or more children	Couple	Couple with 1 child	Couple with 2 or more children

Income Band 1	100%	£0 to £115	£0 to £180	£0 to £245	£0 to £165	£0 to £230	£0 to £295
Income Band 2	80%	£115.01 to £140	£180.01 to £215	£245.01 to £280	£165.01 to £190	£230.01 to £265.00	£295.01 to £330
Income Band 3	55%	£140.01 to £165	£215.01 to £250	£280.01 to £315	£190.01 to £215	£265.01 to £300	£330.01 to £365
Income Band 4	30%	£165.01 to £190	£250.01 to £285	£315.01 to £350	£215.01 to £240	£300.01 to £335	£365.01 to £400
Nil Award	0%	Over £190	Over £285	Over £350	Over £240	Over £335	Over £400

Taking the total 2022/23 Band D council tax charge of £2,002.41 and factoring single person discount of 25% where applicable therefore reducing the amount payable to £1,501.81, the local council tax support and the remaining council tax payable if this option were to be implemented, noting that the council tax for 2023/24 is yet to be determined, is detailed below:

Band	Council Tax Support Discount	Single Person		Fully occupied	
		Amount of Discount	Amount of Council Tax Payable	Amount of Discount	Amount of Council Tax Payable
Income Band 1	100%	£1,501.81	£0.00	£2,002.41	£0.00
Income Band 2	80%	£1,201.45	£300.36	£1,601.93	£400.48
Income Band 3	55%	£826.00	£675.81	£1,101.33	£901.08
Income Band 4	30%	£450.54	£1,051.27	£600.72	£1,401.69
Nil Award	0%	£0.00	£1,501.81	£0.00	£2,002.41

Option C

- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work
- Increasing support to households in income bands 2 to 4 to 85%, 60% and 35%.

Band	Discount	Single Person	Single Person + 1 child	Single person with 2 or	Couple	Couple with 1 child	Couple with 2 or more children

				more children			
Income Band 1	100%	£0 to £115	£0 to £180	£0 to £245	£0 to £165	£0 to £230	£0 to £295
Income Band 2	85%	£115.01 to £140	£180.01 to £215	£245.01 to £280	£165.01 to £190	£230.01 to £265.00	£295.01 to £330
Income Band 3	60%	£140.01 to £165	£215.01 to £250	£280.01 to £315	£190.01 to £215	£265.01 to £300	£330.01 to £365
Income Band 4	35%	£165.01 to £190	£250.01 to £285	£315.01 to £350	£215.01 to £240	£300.01 to £335	£365.01 to £400
Nil Award	0%	Over £190	Over £285	Over £350	Over £240	Over £335	Over £400

Taking the total 2022/23 Band D council tax charge of £2,002.41 and factoring single person discount of 25% where applicable therefore reducing the amount payable to £1,501.81, the local council tax support and the remaining council tax payable if this option were to be implemented, noting that the council tax for 2023/24 is yet to be determined, is detailed below:

Band	Council Tax Support Discount	Single Person		Fully occupied	
		Amount of Discount	Amount of Council Tax Payable	Amount of Discount	Amount of Council Tax Payable
Income Band 1	100%	£1,501.81	£0.00	£2,002.41	£0.00
Income Band 2	85%	£1,276.54	£225.27	£1,702.05	£300.36
Income Band 3	60%	£901.09	£600.72	£1,201.45	£800.96
Income Band 4	35%	£525.64	£976.17	£700.84	£1,301.57
Nil Award	0%	£0.00	£1,501.81	£0.00	£2,002.41

- 4.15 Members will need to choose one of these alternatives to take out to consultation. Following consultation, the updated scheme will be implemented from the 1st April 2023.

Other Options

- 4.16 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.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The Council Tax Support Scheme provides targeted support to the Councils most vulnerable residents.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 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.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 A stage one Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of this process.

Operational Implications

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

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 A full risk assessment will be undertaken of the options going out for consultation.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date

Cabinet
2022

12th October

Portfolio Holder	Cllr Geoff Denaro	
Lead Director / Head of Service	Pete Carpenter Michelle Howell	
Financial Services	Michelle Howell	
Legal Services		
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)		

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet 12th October 2022

Financial Recovery Plan

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Peter Carpenter
Wards Affected	All Wards
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to set out the processes the Council has been following to rectify a deterioration in its financial position and processes due to the impact of the implementation of a new financial system in February 2021 during the C-19 pandemic period.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are asked to Resolve that:

- Progress made on the following 8 key tasks for financial recovery be noted:
 - Financial Strategies
 - Revenue and Capital Monitoring
 - Closure
 - Returns
 - Projects
 - Systems
 - Documentation and Training
 - Resources
- The work still required to move back to a best practice operation and the associated timetable for completion of this work, as detailed in Appendix A, be noted.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Position

- 3.1 The Council implemented a new financial system in February 2021. The existing financial system was at the end of its useful life and would not deliver process improvements required to move the Council forward. This implementation has not been smooth and has led to a deterioration of the Councils financial position. This has included:

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet 12th October 2022

- Non completion of the 2020/21 Accounts.
- Non delivery of monitoring information during the 2021/22 financial year.
- Non delivery of Government financial returns.
- Incomplete take-up of the new system by both Finance and Service Users.
- Loss of key financial staff.

- 3.2 These issues build on comments from the External Auditors relating to 2019/20 accounts, which were only approved in the fall of 2021 and where issues on working papers were highlighted as a significant issue. External Audit have not been able to start the Audit of the 2020/21 Accounts due to these issues and this has been reported to Audit Committee in July 2022.
- 3.3 Internal Audit reflect in their Annual Internal Audit Report for 2021/22 reported to Audit Committee in July 2022 that the implementation of a new financial system is a significant risk for the Council and that Audits of Accounts Payable and Monitoring have No assurance and that due to the problems in the implementation of the financial system that they were not able to undertake the Audit of the General Ledger.

Rectification Process

- 3.4 The Council has lost significant financial expertise with the exiting of staff leaving the department below a critical mass. External resource has been needed to rectify the solution in the short term. Part of this process has been to set out a rectification process which sets out the key issues to be resolved and a critical path for that resolution. This plan was bought to Corporate Management Team (CMT) at the start of March 2022.
- 3.5 The plan has a master timetable which sets out the key tasks to be completed. This master timetable is attached as Appendix A (as at the 22nd July). The timetable is subdivided into a number of sections. There are tasks to be completed in each of these sections:
- Financial Strategies
 - Revenue and Capital Monitoring
 - Closure
 - Returns
 - Projects
 - Systems
 - Documentation and Training
 - Resources
- 3.6 As with any plan, there is a critical path to delivery. With this plan, the critical path centres on the rectification of issues being encountered with the cash receipting system. With this resolved the Council will be able to close the 2020/21 accounts and cease the manual work rounds that are presently required. Items on the plan only turn to green when they have been rectified and there is proof that they are working.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet 12th October 2022

- 3.7 Progress on this plan has been reported to CMT on a two-weekly basis since March. With a reconfiguration of CMT from August, the Plan will now be reviewed monthly at the CMT meeting which addresses monitoring and compliance. Although there has not been formal reporting to Cabinet, reports on various aspects of the Recovery have gone to Cabinet and the Audit Committee. This report brings all aspects together.

Progress on the Plan

- 3.8 We will take the assessment on progress on the plan in critical order. The two most critical items are the rectification of staffing issues and resolution of the financial systems issues relating to Cash Receipting.

Resources - Staffing issues

- 3.9 The Council, just prior to and during the systems implementation process from late 2020 through to March 2022, have lost all its Corporate Finance team and a few of its Management Accountancy team. This also coincided with the C-19 Pandemic where most Council staff were working from home. It went through a recruitment process which only resulted in 2 staff being appointed in the fall of 2021, one of whom left in April 2022. However, a recruitment process run in March and April 2022 has been much more successful and will have led, by August, to finance staffing being back at an appropriate level. There are still some key establishment positions being covered by temporary staff, which include the Chief Accountant and the HRA Accountant. These, and other vacancies, will be reassessed following the completion of the rectification process.

The Council has run 2 sets of Recruitments in November 2021 and April 2022. Most Establishment roles are now filled (Agency where relevant):

- Strategic Director – P Carpenter – 1 year contract in order for the Council to recruit properly (33 years local Government Experience) and to ensure continuity in delivering the finance recovery plan and developing the new finance team.
- Head of Finance and Customer Services – Michelle Howell – LG Experience with Wolverhampton.
- Financial Services Manager - LG Experience with Wolverhampton.
- Technical Accountant – LG Experience with Worcestershire CC.
- Control Accountant – Experience in Prison Service and Banking.
- Reconciliation Assistants – New to Local Government.
- Management Accountant – LG Experience with Coventry.
- Management Accountant – New to Local Government.
- Accounts Assistant – Internal appointment.
- Chief Accountant – Agency 6-month contract, 15 yrs LG experience.
- Still Vacant Head of Management Accounts, Reconciliation Assistant, Management Accountant – pending 23/4 budget.
- AP/AR – 1.5 new staff in AP and 2 AR staff, both internal from Cashiers and Reconciliation teams.
- Other Temp staff presently in position:

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet 12th October 2022

- Management /Control Accountant – being handed over to new establishment staff by end of September
- Systems Accountant – to deal with Cash Receipting issues then will start to do handovers
- HRA Accountant – 3 days a week – specialist agency resource

Council now has range of staff and skills to deliver its financial remit.

- 3.10 Staffing issues have been discussed at Audit Committee, the latest being the July 2022 committee and in particular the Internal Audit reports. This being a joint service, there was a significant conversation over these issues at the Audit Committee at Redditch in April 2022. As this meeting our External Auditors also commented on the issues they were having in recruitment. It was also noted that this was a wider issue across most Worcestershire Councils.

Systems Issues

- 3.11 There had been issues with the implementation of the Tech1 system on 8th February 2021. A significant reason for these issues has been the fact that the Council has been the first adopter of Cash Receipting fully on Tech1. This is the most complicated part of the system and this along with opening balances are the two critical tasks that are holding up the production of the 2020/21 accounts.
- The Council has been in weekly conversations with Tech1 over cash receipting issues. The issues mean that if reconciliations are undertaken that significant numbers of transactions move into suspense and initiate a number of other transactions.
 - Because of this, reconciliations have not been completed as they cause more issues.
 - We are working with Tech1 on a solution to cash receipting and have meetings with them throughout the summer to resolve various aspects. A number of these meetings have been early in the morning or in the evening as the Council is talking to staff in Australia and New Zealand to rectify issues. Sessions were held on the 21st and 22nd to move to resolve the final issues and this is now being tested to move this into the live system. This is a significant issue and without resolution the Council cannot move forward and close its 20/21 accounts, but it is a core part of the recovery plan.
 - There was not full logging/reconciliation of standing and transient data takeover balances moving from the existing financial systems to Tech1 on and around the 8th February 2021.
 - The Council are now having to “back- engineer” these control amounts from the copy of the original system that was made.
 - Without resolution the Council cannot move forward and close its 20/21 accounts, but it is a core part of the recovery plan.
 - Part of the resolution also links to staff and the fact that almost all the staff who implemented the Tech1 system at the Council have left. Therefore, the filling of

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet 12th October 2022

vacancies and training starting in September as per the recovery plan are crucial in moving the Council forward.

- 3.12 **The systems issues have been highlighted at the Audit Committee in July 2022 and are key to the delivery of the overall rectification process.**

Financial Strategies

- 3.13 There was the requirement to ensure that the delivery of financial strategies was timetabled and delivered into both the business and the public environment. Significant movement has taken place in this area with
- The 2021/22 closure timetable for managers being circulated to Council senior and budget managers in March 2022 to ensure the “nuts and bolts” closure work could be undertaken in a timely manner. It is recognised that the 2020/21 accounts are not closed, but without this work being undertaken at the correct time even more difficulties would have been encountered.
 - Treasury Management Strategies, including Capital, MRP and Investment Strategies were presented to Cabinet in May 2022.
 - Risk Management has been identified in Audit Reports (and reported to Audit Committee in July 22 in the 21/22 Internal Audit Report) as being no assurance. An updated Risk Management Officer Board has been set up and two cycles of Risk Reports have been presented to CMT. The first Cycle of these Risk Reports have been presented to both Cabinet and Audit Committee in July 2022.

Revenue and Capital Monitoring

- 3.14 There was no revenue or capital monitoring for the majority of the 2021/22 financial year due to the staffing and systems issues. However:
- A Period 11 Monitoring 2021/22 was undertaken, and this was reported to Cabinet in May 2022.
 - A Period 1 Monitoring 2022/23 was reported to Cabinet in July 2022. Although there were no financial updates in this report it set out the process to be followed this year for monitoring (on system), the process being taken to rectify the Council’s budgetary position, and a number of financial indicators including collection rates for both Council Tax and Business Rates.
 - A Quarter 1 2022/23 combined Financial and Performance Monitoring will be presented to Cabinet on 14 September 2022.
 - The 2021/22 Outturn Report should have gone to Cabinet in July. This will not be possible until the issues with Cash Receipting have been resolved.

Closure

- 3.15 As set out in the above sections, we are not yet able to move into the formal “technical” closure processes for the 2020/21 processes due to the issues linked to Cash

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet 12th October 2022

Receipting. We are assuming that the 2020/21 closure process, as significant work has been done to date, will take up to 3 and a half months to complete. This timetable will start after 1 month of steady running of the Cash Receipting solution.

- 3.16 As part of the 2020/21 Closure process, the Council will liaise with its Internal and External Auditors on how it is manually correcting transactions prior to the “fix”. This is key to ensuring a full rectification and closure of the 2020/21 accounts.
- 3.17 As has been set out in 3.13 above, the guidance for 2021/22 closure has been circulated to budget managers. This is crucial to ensure issues with 2021/22 closure are minimised. “Technical” closure of the 2021/22 accounts will start as soon as the 2020/21 accounts have been closed and is expected to take 3 months.

Returns

- 3.18 The Council are required to report on a number of financial measures to the Government via a series of Returns. Due to the systems-based issues a number of these were not possible. Until the system-based issues are rectified Revenue and Capital Outturn Reports (CO/RO) cannot be completed and the Council are in communications with DLUHC on the issues causing the non-completion of these returns. However, the following returns have been made:
- Revenue Estimates 2021/22 and 2022/23 (RA).
 - PWLB Certainty Rate 2022/23 – sets out borrowing requirements.
 - Council Tax Requirement (CTR1) 2022-23.
 - Quarterly return of Council Tax and NNDR (Q4 2021/22 and Q1 2022/23).
 - C-19 Grant Assurance Returns for 2021/22.
 - Housing Benefit Subsidy Return 2021/22.
 - DHP Government Contribution Final Claim for 2021-22.
 - Test and Trace Payments 2021/22.
 - NNDR3 Return for Business Rates.

Projects

- 3.19 Throughout this time period, the finance team continue to cover on a number of important projects.

Documentation and Training

- 3.20 It is clear from the limited rollout of new financial systems processes in both the finance team and the wider Council that a significant retraining process will need to be undertaken. This had been timetabled initially for April/May but this has now been revised to September/October as we need resolution of the financial systems issues to properly take this forward. As part of this process there will be:
- Updated/simplified financial regulations
 - Updated/simplified Step by Step guides

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet 12th October 2022

The aim of the training is to ensure all can use the system properly and more easily leading to higher levels of compliance.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 No Legal implications have been identified.

5. Strategic Purpose Implications

Relevant Strategic Purpose

5.1 The Strategic purposes are included in the Council's corporate plan and guides the Council's approach to budget making ensuring we focus on the issues and what are most important for the district and our communities. Our Financial monitoring and strategies are integrated within all of our Strategic Purposes.

Climate Change Implications

5.2 The green thread runs through the Council plan. Every report has potential financial implications and these in term can have implications on climate change. These will be addressed and reviewed through individual reports when relevant by climate change officers will ensure the correct procedures have been followed to ensure any impacts on climate change are fully understood.

6. Other Implications

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.1 None as a direct result of this report.

Operational Implications

6.2 Managers meet with finance officers to consider the current financial position and to ensure actions are in place to mitigate any overspends.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The financial monitoring is included in the corporate risk register for the authority

5. APPENDENCES

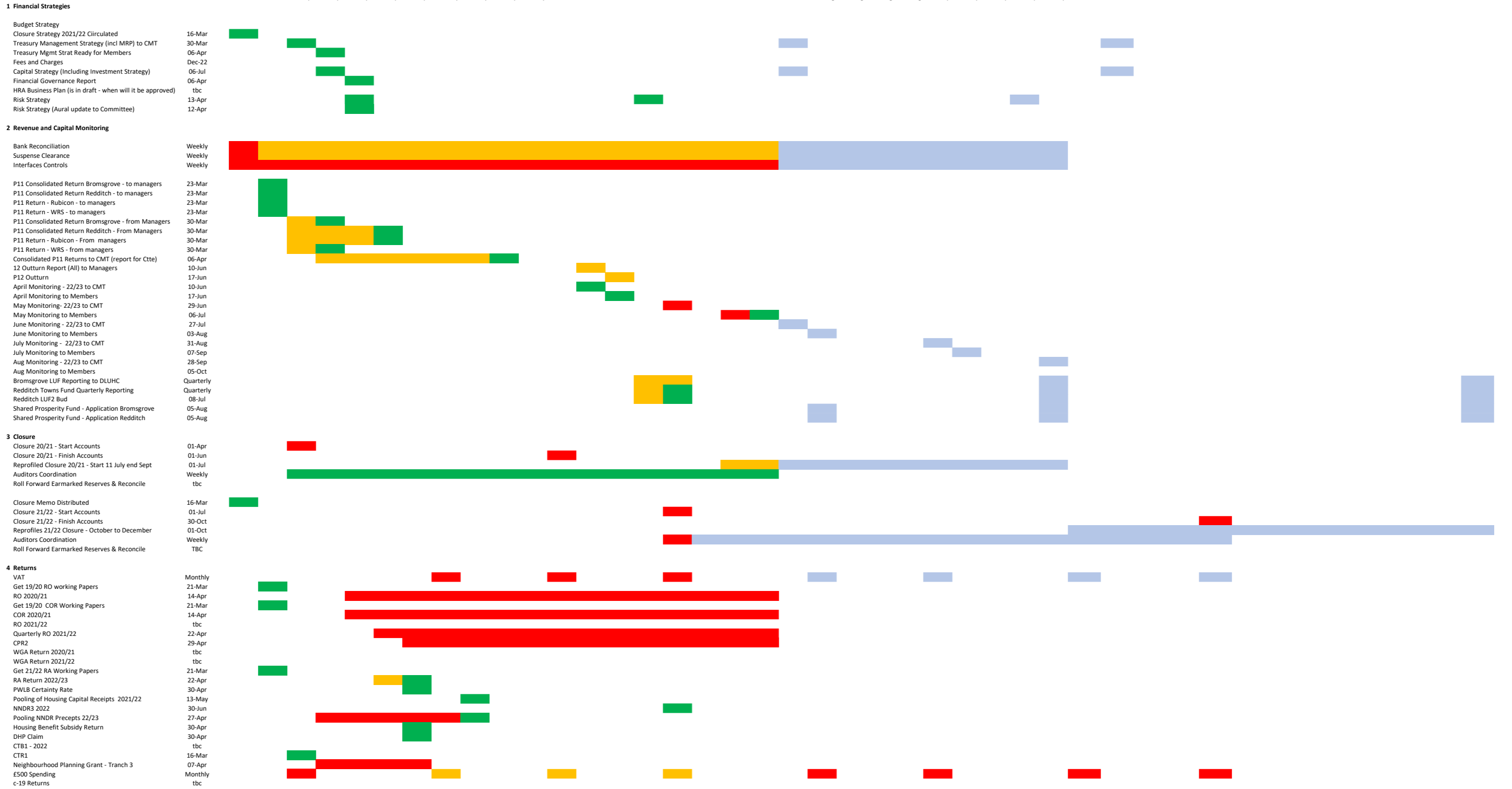
Appendix A – High Level Plan

AUTHOR OF REPORT

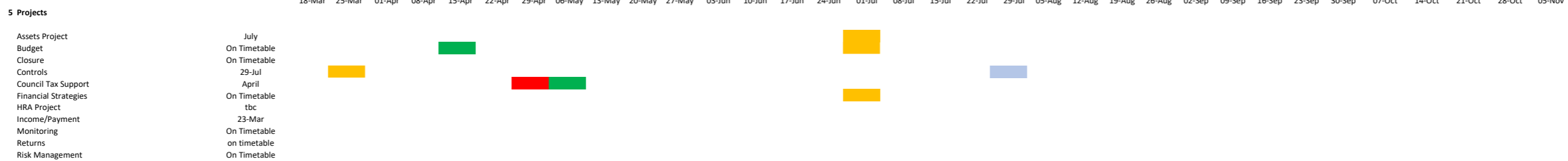
Name: Pete Carpenter– Interim Director of Finance (S151)
E Mail: Peter.Carpenter@bromsgroveandredditchbc.gov.uk

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Responsibility Listing



Responsibility Listing



Rubicon
 Suspense Clearance
 Tech1 Functionality
 Training
 Treasury
 VAT Analysis

21-Mar
 On Timetable
 On Timetable
 On Timetable
 21-Mar
 21-Mar

6 Systems

Meetings with Tech1 Lead (PC)
 Upgrade of CRIS21 - for Year end (NC)
 Cash Receipting Recovery key 5 tasks delivered (PC)
 Overall Documentation - link to Training Section below
 AP/AR Documentation (NP)
 GL/Reporting Documentation (SK)
 Cash Receipting Documentation (SS)
 Confirm Period End Process Queries (SK)
 Stores T1 configuration complete Testing (SK)
 Stores T1 configuration Go Live
 Implementation of Reporting/Forecasting Module
 System Upgrade - Start
 System Upgrade - Finish
 System Upgrade Reprofiles for Mid August start

Weekly
 30-Mar
 30-Mar
 19-Aug
 20-Aug
 21-Aug
 30-Mar
 30-Mar
 01-Apr
 04-May
 May
 June
 Aug/Sept

7 Documentation and Training

Finance Manual (1 page Guides) - owner PC
 Workshop (ap/AR/GL/Cash Receipting)
 1 Pages Guides Ready for Approval at CMT
 Finance Tech1 Overview Training - Scope
 Finance - Managers Training - Scope
 Finance Management Accounting Training
 Finance/Tech1 Training - Timetable
 Finance/Tech1 Training - Deliver

23-Mar
 31-Aug
 31-Aug
 31-Aug
 September
 September
 September

8 Budget

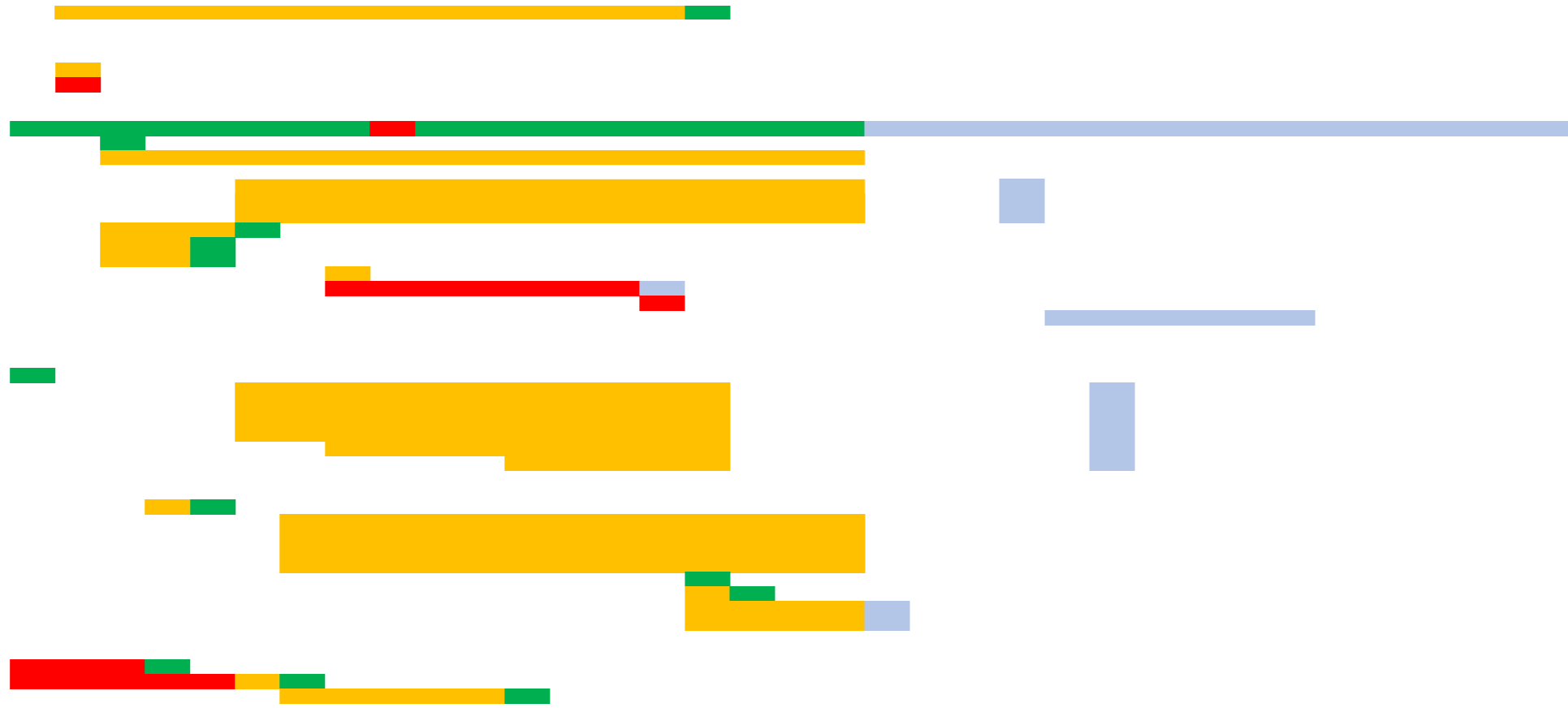
Clarification of 2022/23 Budgets to CMT
 2023/24 Budget Redditch - Begin meetings
 2023/24 Budget Bromsgrove - Begin Meetings
 2023/24 Budget Rubicon - Begin Meetings
 2023/24 Budget WRS - Begin Meetings
 Towns Fund (2 of 3 Items)
 LUF Phase 2 Proposal Redditch
 Shared Prosperity Fund Proposal - Bromsgrove
 Shared Prosperity Fund Proposal - Redditch

06-Apr
 April
 April
 April
 April
 30-Jun
 06-Jul
 30/6-1/8
 30/6-1/9

9 Resources

Engage 2 Reconciliation Assistants - 3 months
 Engage Chief Accountant - 6 Months
 Appoint to 6 Finance Posts - HOS,FM,CA, 3RA's

25-Mar
 25-Mar
 29-Apr



Quarter 1 2022-23 – Financial and Performance Report

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Denaro – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Michelle Howell Deborah Poole
Report Authors	Head of Finance and Customer Services michelle.howell@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy d.poole@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk	
Wards Affected		All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		All
Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:

- 1) **The current financial position in relation to Revenue and Capital Budgets for the period April to June 2022 be noted; And**
- 2) **The Q1 Performance data for the Period April to June 2022 be noted.**

The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND that:

- 3) **The Operational Bank Account limit is raised to £2m; and**
- 4) **The Asset Disposal Strategy is approved for implementation.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report presents at Quarter 1 (April – June) 2022/23
 - the Council's forecast outturn revenue monitoring position for 2022/23 based on data to Quarter 1
 - An update on progress on the 2023/24 budget process – which was first reported to committee as part of the Period 1 Monitoring Report.

- The organisations performance against the strategic priorities outlined in the Council Plan Addendum, including operational measures to demonstrate how the council is delivering its services to customers.

3. DETAILED PERFORMANCE

Financial Performance

- 3.1 As part of the monitoring process a detailed review has been undertaken to ensure that issues are considered, and significant savings and cost pressures are addressed. This report sets out, based on the position at period 3/quarter 1, the projected revenue outturn position for the 2022/23 financial year and explains key variances against budget
- 3.2 The £12.1m original revenue budget included in the table below is the budget that was approved by Council in March 2022. The projected outturn figure at Q1 is a £54k overspend. This includes “absorption” of the £477k of non-allocated savings and efficiency targets.

Department	2022/23 Full Year Budget	2022/23 Q1 Actuals	2022/23 Adjusted Forecast Outturn	Adjusted Forecast Outturn Variance (Under) / Over spend
Regulatory Client	228,063	47,650	228,063	0
Business Transformation & Organisational Development	1,857,867	122,569	1,700,896	(156,971)
Chief Executive	1,797,361	160,086	1,794,068	(3,293)
Community & Housing GF Services	1,093,315	(238,605)	1,013,142	(80,173)
Environmental Services	3,438,085	(2,182,290)	3,395,910	(42,175)
Financial & Customer Services	1,406,322	96,809	1,319,284	(87,038)
Legal, Democratic & Property Services	1,146,850	11,538	1,142,616	(4,235)
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	1,578,027	339,446	1,527,845	(50,182)
Cross cutting savings and efficiency targets	(477,890)	0	0	477,890
Net Expenditure before Corporate Financing	12,068,000	(1,642,797)	12,121,824	53,824

3.3 *Budget Variances*

The following paragraphs explain the forecast variances for each area against the 2022/23 revenue budgets (a more detailed analysis of which can be found at Appendix A). It is important to note that, at this stage in the financial year there are a number of instances where

annual expenditure or accruals may distort the profiling as reflected in the Q1 actual; this has been reflected in the forecast outturn for each service area.

Business Transformation & Organisational Development – £157k underspend

Within Business Transformation & Organisational Development there are underspends within two areas:

- Human Resources (£43k underspend) - the forecast underspend is predominantly due to vacancies. Following the installation of a new HR software package, recruitment is underway to recruit to vacant posts within the service.
- ICT (£114k underspend) - the forecast underspend is due to anticipated efficiencies across ICT expenditure budgets.

Chief Executive - £3k underspend

There is a small underspend forecast within the Chief Executive area.

Community and Housing General Fund Services - £80k underspend

Within Community and Housing General Fund Services there are two services in particular that have a significant forecast outturn variance against budget:

- Housing Strategy & Enabling (£45k underspend) – This is mainly as a result of vacancies within the team.
- Community Safety/CCTV (£35k underspend) – This is mainly as a result of vacancies within the team.

Environmental Services - £42k underspend

Within Environmental Services there are two service areas with forecast underspends against budget:

- Engineering & Design (£32k underspend) – the forecast underspend is mainly as a result of vacancies within the team.
- Place Teams (£10k underspend) – the forecast underspend is due to small budget efficiencies within the team.

Finance & Customer Services - £87k underspend

Within Finance & Customer Services the forecast underspend is as a result of vacancies across the service. This will continue to be reviewed in light of pressures within the service, with further updates provided during 2022/23.

Legal, Democratic and Property Services - £4k underspend

Within Legal, Democratic and Property Services the overall forecast underspend has arisen largely due to two service areas with forecast outturn variances against budget:

- Democratic Services & Member Support (£23k underspend) - the forecast underspend is mainly as a result of vacancies within the team at the start of the financial year, which have now been recruited to.
- Elections (£20k overspend) - the forecast cost of elections is slightly in excess of budget but is offset by the anticipated underspend as detailed above.

Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services - £50k underspend

There is a forecast underspend totalling £50k within this service which comprises of:

- An underspend totalling £36k within Development Services as a result of anticipated budget efficiencies. This will be kept under review throughout the financial year.
- An underspend totalling £14k within Parks, Open Spaces and Events mainly as a result of a vacancy, however this will be reviewed throughout the financial year.

Cross cutting savings and efficiency targets - £478k to be delivered

There is a forecast overspend due to organisational efficiency targets that have not been allocated to service areas and cross council savings and efficiency initiatives. It is important to note however that forecast underspends within other service areas, as detailed in this report, will help to achieve this target, however there is still an element to be delivered. This will be kept under review as we progress through the financial year.

Regulatory Client

A breakeven position on the Regulatory Client is currently forecast for the year.

- 3.4 Overall, the Council is currently forecasting a revenue overspend in the region of £54k for the 2022/23 financial year. This position will continue to be reviewed particularly given the impact of the increasing costs linked to inflation and further updates will be provided to Members throughout 2022/23.

Cash Management

- 3.5 The Council's 2022/23 Treasury Investment Strategy and associated MRP policy, was presented and approved by Cabinet on the 3rd May 2022.
- 3.6 Part of those policies approved included the following limit on Operational Bank Accounts.
- 3.7 Operational bank accounts: The Authority may incur operational exposures, for example through current accounts, collection accounts and merchant acquiring services, to any UK bank with credit ratings no lower than BBB- and with assets greater than £25 billion. These are not classed as investments but are still subject to the risk of a bank bail-in, and balances will therefore be kept below £500,000 per bank. The Bank of England has stated that in the event of failure, banks with assets greater than £25 billion are more likely to be bailed-in than made insolvent, increasing the chance of the Authority maintaining operational continuity.
- 3.8 Although the Treasury Investment Strategy was reviewed earlier this year and some limits changed, it has become apparent that this limit has been continually exceeded since the inception of C-19. This is due to a number of factors including significant receipt of grant funding support for C-19 and the passing of this through to the Business Community.
- 3.9 The Council will continue to keep this limit under review, but in the short term it is prudent to increase the limit to £2m for the remainder of this financial year, to be reviewed as part of the 2023/24 Treasury Investment Strategy.
- 3.10 As this is a Treasury Indicator, exceeding it, and associated change, must be reported through to full Council for approval.

Capital Monitoring

- 3.11 A capital programme of £2.4m was approved in the Budget for 2022/23 in March 2022.
- 3.12 However, in addition to this funding the Council also have the following Grant Funded Schemes which are being delivered in 2022/23:

- Levelling Up – Cabinet in June noted progress made to date on £1.8m of Levelling Up schemes for 2022/23 and delegated authority to proceed to spend the Levelling Up Fund allocation totalling £1.8m on the required demolition and remediation works at the Windsor Street site and to engage a design and build contractor on the Market Hall site.
 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund - £340k of grant spent (although a significant amount will be revenue based).
- 3.13 The spend at quarter 1 is £624k against the overall 2022/23 capital budget totalling £2.4m as detailed in Appendix B. In addition to this, there is spend at quarter 1 totalling £1.7m for Burcot Housing. This budget will be need to be reallocated from 2021/22 into 2022/23. This will be addressed in the 2021/22 Outturn reports to Cabinet.
- 3.14 Capital monitoring for 2021/22 was undertaken towards the end of the financial year (at period 11), and spending was only £2.7m which is substantially below the £15.6m programme. The main reason for this variance was the Burcot Housing project, where at the time of reporting only £1.1m of a £9.3m budget had been spent. As stated in the paragraph above, the Burcot Housing budget will need to be assessed for reallocation into 2022/23. This will be addressed in the outturn reports to Cabinet.
- 3.15 Both Existing Capital Programmes (21/22 and 22/23) are set out in the Appendix B.

Earmarked Reserves

- 3.16 The position as reported to Council in February 2022 as per the 2022/23 – 2024/25 Medium Term Financial Plan is shown in Appendix C.

Asset Disposal Strategy

- 3.17 The Council holds substantial Property and Equipment. The 2019/20 Statement of Accounts value these assets at £43m. The attached policy (Appendix D) sets out that for all assets there is a requirement that they remain compliant for use against present legislation. In addition, there is a requirement that Council buildings are raised to the top three Energy Efficient levels by 2026.
- 3.18 Overall, these requirements have cost implications. Over the next 2 years a series of Condition Surveys will need to be undertaken on all assets which will lead to:
- A revised Overall Property Holding Strategy.

And for Individual Properties and Land their:

- Operational necessity.
- Cost of ensuring the buildings remain compliant to legislation.
- Cost of ensuring buildings move to the top 3 Energy Effective ratings by 2026.
- Rent levels (and net costs for each building).
- Alternative service delivery options.

This will lead to a list of buildings/Land that are

- Surplus to requirements
- Not cost effective to be run (requiring alternative delivery options)

Groups of assets will be brought to Cabinet on a Quarterly basis for approval for disposal.

4. Update on Progress with the 2023/24 Budget

4.1 We reported the process that Officers are following to balance the 2022/23 (note the unallocated savings figure in the previous section) and future budgets. The main steps were:

- o Reviewing base budgets, historic places where over/underspend occur, and views of potential savings options.
- o Linkage to the 2021/22 Outturn position.
- o Engaging with our Treasury Consultants Arlingclose to review our Minimum Revenue Provision, use of debt and investment policies.
- o Assessing with Heads of Service present levels of service and associated requirements in the new post C-19 environment to identify where different delivery models will lead to further savings

4.2 We have met with Arlingclose who have requested data to complete their review of MRP, debt and investment policies.

4.3 We initially met with Heads of Service in July and have jointly compiled a long list of possible savings and efficiency to close the budget deficit position. Two more meetings have taken place during August with Heads of Service to further refine these options.

4.4 In parallel to this, work is also taking place on possible pressures, of which inflation, pay and contracts, will be a key input.

- 4.5 More officer led work will take place in September leading to a set of budget proposals coming to Cabinet in October.
- 4.6 Officers have engaged with the Budget Working Group and a series of meetings have been set up to scrutinise the budget.
- 5. Performance Report**
- 5.1 The performance report sets out to provide data and information that links all activity back to the Council's strategic priorities as set out in the Council Plan and Council Plan Addendum. Whilst the report focuses primarily on corporate, strategic measures there is a section that provides some operational measures data to provide a general overview of service delivery.
- 5.2 Whilst the Council has an approved Council Plan in place it was completed before the Covid-19 outbreak. Recently the Council reviewed this plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose. As a result of this review, the Council developed the Council Plan Addendum to take any change in focus brought about by the pandemic, into consideration. The addendum document will sit alongside the current Council Plan for the next twelve months. It is designed to provide an intermediary position ahead of a full review of the Council's long term priorities in 2023. Currently the Council's key strategic priorities are:
- Economic Development and Regeneration
 - Housing Growth
 - Work and Financial Independence
 - Improved Health and Wellbeing
 - Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Green Thread
 - Financial Stability
 - Organisational Sustainability
 - High Quality Services
- 5.3 The Q1 report is an introduction to the performance data used by the council, as such there is a large amount of data in this first report. It is recognised that effective performance management will enable the Council to use its limited resources in a more targeted manner, maximising the value of Council services and allowing the Council to be even more responsive to customers' needs. It is proposed that future reports will be more structured around particular strategic priorities in order to provide a more focused data set, consequently different priorities will be reported in each quarter.
- 5.4 Appendix E sets out the Strategic Priorities and Performance Measures in detail. For the 9 priorities there is data contained in the Appendix on:

- The Performance Measure being used.
- An update on how it is being used.
- Where relevant, contextual information.

The Strategic Performance Measures and their respective outputs are set out below. Full context is given in Appendix E:

- Economic Development and Regeneration
 - Supporting businesses to start to Grow
 - Measure – Take up of Grants – **Table in Appendix E shows by year**
 - Regenerating our Town and Local Centres
 - Measure – Procure a contractor for the former market hall site redevelopment – **soft market testing to 15/8/22**
 - Measure – Commencement of remediation works on the Windsor Street site – **phase 2 report produced**
 - Measure – Bromsgrove Centres Strategy agreed by March 2023 – **Aim to be presented to Cabinet in November 2022**
 - **Improved Integrated Transport**
 - Measure - Increased number of sustainable transport projects being progressed or implemented across the district – **Officers working to produce pipeline of sustainable schemes.**
- Housing Growth
 - Measure – Number of new Homes – total and affordable (Annual) - **118**
 - Measure – Affordable Homes Completed - **0**
 - Measure - Local housing affordability rate – **11.43**
 - Measure – Number of homeless approaches (Monthly) - **28**
 - Measure – Number of homeless applicants housed – **75% in social housing, 25% in private rented sector**
- Work and Financial Independence
 - Measure – Number of Financial Independence Team client contacts - **Chart in Appendix E sets out by month and year**
 - Measure – Number of clients assessing Starting Well Service - **TBC**
 - Measure – Number of young people with positive outcomes because of Enhanced Youth Support Intervention - **TBC**
 - Measure – Number of eligible children accessing nursery funding across the district – **71%**
 - Measure – Number of households provided with energy advice – **New contract June 2022**
 - Measure – Number of energy rebate payments – **24,365**
- Improved Health and Wellbeing

- Measure – Deliver improved outcomes from the actions in the Leisure Strategy – **Strategy will be going to Council later this year.**
- Measure – Number of Community Builders in post - **2**
- Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Measure – Number of young people engaged through Detached/Outreach youth work - **101**
 - Measure – Levels of crime – **chart in Appendix E sets out by type and year**
 - Measure – Number of crime risk surveys carried out - **1**
- Green Thread
 - Measure – Have an agreed and funded plan and capital replacement programme for the Council's fleet subject to any budget constraints – **EST reports to assist**
 - Measure – Have an agreed plan in place to deliver new requirements of national Resources and Waste Strategy and Environment Act – **WRAP funding for cross County feasibility study**
 - Measure - Introduce vegetable derived diesel into the Council's vehicles to reduce carbon emissions subject to any budget constraints – **Signed up to framework in order to purchase HVO**
 - Measure - Households supported by the Council's energy advice service – **New contract June 2022**
- Financial Stability
 - Measure - Financial Performance – actuals consistent with budget – **via Finance Report**
 - Levelling Up Fund Project delivered within budget – **via Finance Report**
- Organisational Sustainability
 - Measure – Number of corporate measures accessible through the dashboard - **29**
 - Measure - % of staff able to work in an agile way - **New**
- High Quality Services
 - Measure - % of employees who undertake management training – **tbc**
 - Measure – Staff turnover rates in relation to national rates – **16% (compared to 15%)**
 - Measure – Customer satisfaction with service delivery, measured through the Community Survey – **47.4%**

5.5 In addition, Appendix F sets out a Operational Service Measures. As with Appendix E, more context is given in the Appendix, these include:

- Sickness Absence Rates – **6.6 days**
- IT Satisfaction Rates – **98%**
- Average Telephone queue time – **14 minutes and 23 seconds**
- Average number of people waiting in Telephone queue – **1**

- Percentage of Household Waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting – Table by Month and year – **June 22 – 57.51%**
- NI 191 – Residual Waste per household (Kg) **June 22 – 37.28kg**
- Fly Tips – **June 22 – 119**
- Council Tax Collection Rate – **June 22 – 0.8% below target**
- Business Rates Collection Rate – **June 22 – on target**
- Benefits Change of Circumstances turnround – **9 Days**
- Benefits New Claims Turnround – **20 days**
- Customer Services calls by type – **Charts set out by department**

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The financial implications are detailed in the body of the report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising as a result of this report.

8. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 8.1 The Strategic purposes are included in the Council's corporate plan and guides the Council's approach to budget making ensuring we focus on the issues and what are most important for the district and our communities. Our Financial monitoring and strategies are integrated within all of our Strategic Purposes

Climate Change Implications

- 8.2 The green thread runs through the Council plan. The Financial monitoring report has implications on climate change and these will be addressed and reviewed when relevant by climate change officers to ensure the correct procedures have been followed to ensure any impacts on climate change are fully understood.

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising as a result of this report.

Operational Implications

9.2 Managers meet with finance officers to consider the current financial position and to ensure actions are in place to mitigate any overspends.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

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

11. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Appendix A – Revenue Monitoring
- Appendix B – Capital Monitoring
- Appendix C – Earmarked Reserves
- Appendix D – Asset Disposal Strategy
- Appendix E – Strategic Performance Measures
- Appendix F – Operational Performance Measures

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Geoff Denaro	
Lead Director / Head of Service	Pete Carpenter Michelle Howell	
Financial Services	Michelle Howell	
Legal Services	Claire Felton	
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)		

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

2022

12 October

APPENDIX A – 2022/23 Revenue Monitoring

Service area	2022/23 Working Budget	2022/23 Q1 Actuals	2022/23 Adjusted Forecast Outturn	Adjusted Forecast Outturn Variance (Under) / Over spend
Environmental Health / Protection / Enforcement	(5,039)	(10,569)	(5,039)	0
Licenses (all)	(185,300)	(41,614)	(185,300)	0
Regulatory Services client	418,402	99,833	418,402	0
Regulatory Client Total	228,063	47,650	228,063	0
Equalities & Diversity	45,686	2,084	45,686	0
Human Resources	235,772	7,451	193,155	(42,617)
ICT	1,237,313	78,665	1,122,959	(114,354)
Policy	66,917	11,832	66,917	0
Training & Organisational Development	141,907	0	141,907	0
Transformation, Business process re-engineering & Lean Systems	72,435	8,643	72,435	0
CMT - Business Transformation & Organisational Development	57,837	13,892	57,837	0
Business Transformation & Organisational Development Total	1,857,867	122,569	1,700,896	(156,971)
Corporate	1,164,031	114,748	1,164,031	0
SMT	220,494	39,517	220,494	0
Town Centre Development	50,000	0	50,000	0
Central Post	81,023	0	81,023	0
P A & Directorate Support	100,200	3,791	96,907	(3,293)
Communications & Printing	122,032	26,244	122,032	0
Partnerships	59,581	(24,214)	59,581	0
Chief Executive Total	1,797,361	160,086	1,794,068	(3,293)
Climate Change / Energy Efficiency	7,243	(1,801)	7,243	0
CMT - Community	40,988	0	40,988	0
Community Safety	366,136	3,337	331,034	(35,101)
Community Transport	31,674	(4,901)	31,674	0
Grants to voluntary bodies	0	0	0	0
Housing Options	435,689	(36,089)	435,689	0
Housing Strategy & Enabling	310,471	41,148	265,399	(45,072)
Lifeline	(98,886)	(252,466)	(98,886)	0
Starting Well	0	12,166	0	0
Community & Housing GF Services Total	1,093,315	(238,605)	1,013,142	(80,173)
Bereavement Services	13,582	10,773	13,582	0
Car Parks / Civil Parking Enforcement	(287,109)	(561,721)	(287,109)	0
Core Environmental Operations	157,921	25,782	157,921	0
Engineering & Design	291,940	41,267	260,255	(31,685)
Env Services Mgmt & Support	415,826	102,645	415,826	0
Place Teams	985,751	121,451	975,261	(10,490)
Stores & Depots	247,511	13,383	247,511	0
Tree Management inc TPO's	225,508	11,174	225,508	(0)
Waste Management	1,345,899	(1,946,960)	1,345,899	0
CMT - Environment	41,255	(83)	41,255	0
Environmental Services Total	3,438,085	(2,182,290)	3,395,910	(42,175)
Accounts & Financial Management	474,511	52,445	559,645	85,134
Benefits	474,878	16,850	446,590	(28,288)
Benefits Subsidy	(235,534)	0	(235,534)	0
Customer Services	297,221	214	200,114	(97,107)
Revenues	337,694	27,300	290,917	(46,776)
CMT - Finance	57,552	0	57,552	0
Financial & Customer Services Total	1,406,322	96,809	1,319,284	(87,038)
Business Development	201,273	(62,863)	201,273	0
Democratic Services & Member Support	397,181	69,251	374,085	(23,096)
Election & Electoral Services	181,530	48,604	201,612	20,082
Facilities Management	(45,706)	(91,145)	(45,706)	0
CMT - Legal	57,936	13,626	56,716	(1,220)
Legal Advice & Services	354,637	34,065	354,637	0
Legal, Democratic & Property Services Total	1,146,850	11,538	1,142,616	(4,235)
Development Services	210,191	21,881	174,191	(36,000)
Building Control	(82,497)	(15,761)	(82,497)	0
Development Control	209,450	144,681	209,450	0
Economic Development	167,254	0	167,254	0
Emergency Planning / Business Continuity	13,535	0	13,535	0
Parks, Open Spaces and Events	305,389	(35,170)	291,207	(14,182)
Planning Policy	596,793	102,622	596,793	0
Town Centre Development	99,138	121,195	99,138	0
CMT - Planning, Regeneration and Leisure	58,774	0	58,774	0
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services Total	1,578,027	339,446	1,527,845	(50,182)
Cross cutting savings and efficiency targets	(477,890)	0	0	477,890
Cross cutting savings and efficiency targets	(477,890)	0	0	477,890
Net Expenditure before Corporate Financing	12,068,000	(1,642,797)	12,121,824	53,824

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

2022

12 October

APPENDIX B – Capital Programme 2021/22 and 2022/23

2021/22 monitoring (as at period 11)

Cap Proj	Description	Approved budget date	Original approved Budget £	deration (years)	Department	Budget 21/22 £	reprofiling incl c/fwd £	Budget increase incl savings £	2021/22 Total £	Spent to Date	Slippage to be agreed
GC1064	Home Repairs Assistance	2018/19	50,000		Community & Housing GF Services	50,000	61,221		111,221	-4,522	115,743
GC1223	Energy Efficiency	2017/18			Community & Housing GF Services	0	5,000		5,000	2,510	2,490
GC1337	CCTV	2019/20	120,000		Community & Housing GF Services	0	67,376		67,376	23,315	44,061
GC1341	Energy Efficiency Installation	2018/19	110,000	2	Community & Housing GF Services	0	65,388		65,388	11,873	54,115
GC411	Funding for DFGo	2020/21	750,000		Community & Housing GF Services	750,000	503,101	163,000	1,416,101	608,233	807,862
GC896	OLEV ULEV Taxi infrastructure scheme	2019/20	300,000	1	Community & Housing GF Services	0	200,000		200,000	270,774	0
GC899	New Digital Service	2020/21	57,400	1	Community & Housing GF Services	33,668			33,668	0	33,668
NEW	BDC 7Kw electric vehicle charge points	21/22	120,000	1	Community & Housing GF Services	0		120,000	120,000	0	120,000
	Greener Homes	2020/21	180,000	1	Community & Housing GF Services	0		476,300	476,300	-283,780	760,600
GC894	Burcot Lane	2019/20	10,275,000		Financial & Customer Services	3,275,000			3,275,000	1,124,343	8,150,051
C1107	Bus Shelters	2020/21	18,000		Environmental Services	18,000	18,000		36,000	0	36,000
GC1265	Cemetery Extension infrastructure at North Bromsgrove Cemetery Phase Two	2017/18			Environmental Services	0	12,000		12,000	0	12,000
GC1283	Fleet Replacement	ongoing	ongoing		Environmental Services	0	481,000		481,000	380,290	100,710
GC1312	Wheeler Bin Purchase	2018/19	ongoing		Environmental Services	34,000		45,000	133,000	77,003	61,997
GC1345	Replacement lighting at the Depot	2017/18	23,000		Environmental Services	0	13,538		13,538	3,246	10,292
GC1355	Depot Site resurfacing phase 2	2018/19			Environmental Services	0	252,000		252,000	0	252,000
GC1359	Replacement Parking machines	2020/21	120,000		Environmental Services	0	108,000		108,000	136,331	0
GC900	Fleet Management Computer System	2020/21	17,000		Environmental Services	0	16,600		16,600	0	16,600
GC901	Environmental Services Computer System	2020/21	38,200		Environmental Services	0	157,000		157,000	0	157,000
GC897	Regeneration Fund	2019/20	10,000,000		Financial & Customer Services	0	2,000,000		2,000,000	0	2,000,000
GC895	Re-landscaping of Recreation Ground	2019/20	170,000		Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	0	211,000		211,000	194,221	16,779
GC902	Sanders Park Play Area - Replacement for Tripod Swing (Health and Safety)	2020/21	35,000		Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	35,000	35,000		70,000	35,000	35,000
GC905	Bittell road recreation ground	2020/21	62,000		Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	0	18,000		18,000	17,367	633
GC906	BDC Christmas lights	2020/21	13,000		Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	0			0	0	0
GC1339	Rubery Redevelopment Works				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	0	32,738		32,738	0	32,738
						10,255,668	4,263,562	804,300	15,324,130	2,662,816	12,820,419

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

12 October

2022

2022/23 monitoring (as at period 3)

Capital Project Name	2022/23 Approved Budget	2022/23 Q1 Actuals	2022/23 Budget Remaining
Disabled Facilities Grant	913,000	0	913,000
Discretionary Homes Repairs	50,000	0	50,000
Energy & Efficiency Installation	110,000	7,810	102,190
North Cemetery Expansion 0 Phase 2	6,500	15,576	(9,076)
New Finance Enterprise System	0	9,422	(9,422)
OLEV/ULEV Taxi Infrastructure	0	700	(700)
Vehicle Replacement Programme	600,000	0	600,000
Landscaping of Recreation Ground	0	3,120	(3,120)
Replacement Parking Machines	253,000	45,084	207,916
Wheelie Bin Purchase	144,000	0	144,000
New Digital Service	33,668	0	33,668
Bus Shelters	18,000	0	18,000
Salix Project	150,000	533,193	(383,193)
Bromsgrove sporting	0	8,989	(8,989)
Cisco Network Update	5,717	0	5,717
Server Replacement	83,250	0	83,250
Laptop Refresh	5,000	0	5,000
Play Area, POS and Sport improvements at Lickey End Recreation Ground	37,956	0	37,956
Total	2,410,091	623,894	1,786,197

APPENDIX C – Earmarked Reserves

Description	Balance b/fwd 1/4/2020	C/fwd 31/3/2020	Planned use for 2021/22 Budget	Estimated closing balance 2021/22	Proposed release/addition of reserves from RPP exercise	Planned use for 2022/23 Budget	Comment
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Building Control	(7)	(7)	0	(7)	7	0	To Fund the mobile working project
Building Control Partnership	(69)	(83)	0	(83)	0	0	Partnership income has to be reinvested back in to the service.
Commercialism	(10)	0	0	0	0	0	To help fund costs in relation to commercialism projects
Community Services	(43)	(274)	0	(274)	0	0	To help towards a district network feasibility study and unauthorised trespass prevention.
Economic Growth Development	(1,342)	(1,347)	350	(997)	75	0	To fund the Economic Development opportunities across the District. There is provision within this reserve to take into account the potential impact of Covid 19 on service delivery in particular Leisure Services.
Election Services	(96)	(51)	0	(51)	25	0	To support the delivery of individual electoral registration and to set aside a reserve for potential refunds to government
Environmental Services	0	(47)	0	(47)	0	0	To support the costs of the Environmental Services Vehicles
Financial Services	(479)	(1,422)	0	(1,422)	(50)	0	A number of reserves / grants have been set aside to support residents through the changes to welfare reform along with a reserve to support our Business continuity plans. This also includes funds to support the new enterprise system and the balance of the Covid general grant received in 20-21. The proposed addition is in recognition of the need to strengthen the finance team and short term capacity issue risk
Corporate Financing	(2,784)	(3,906)	100	(3,806)	100	100	The reserve has been created to offset the loss on Business rates collection and appeals in 2019/20.
Housing Schemes	(475)	(487)	142	(345)	0	0	To support the feasibility and implementation of housing schemes across the district
ICT/Systems	(87)	(80)	0	(80)	80	0	To provide replacement ICT and systems across the authority.
Leisure/Community Safety	(291)	(329)	0	(329)	0	0	Grant received and reserves set aside to support a number of leisure and well being schemes across the District
Local Neighbourhood Partnerships	(16)	(16)	0	(16)	0	0	Grant received in relation to liveability schemes
Other	(115)	(107)	44	(63)	(75)	0	General reserves including - support for apprentices, set up costs and Brexit reserve. Funds to create an Invest to save reserve to increase efficiencies within the organisation
Planning	(108)	(133)	0	(133)	20	0	Reserves in relation to a custom build grant to provide support to the council towards expenditure lawfully incurred in relation to the provision and maintenance of a self-build register, along with reserves to help towards future planning appeals.
Regulatory Services (Partner Share)	(35)	(47)	0	(47)	0	0	BDC Share of WRS grant related reserves
Shared Services Agenda	(311)	(311)	0	(311)	200	0	To fund potential redundancy and other shared costs
Grand Total	(6,268)	(8,648)	638	(8,011)	382	100	

APPENDIX D – ASSET DISPOSAL STRATEGY

The Council has a duty to ensure that its fixed assets are continually reviewed to ensure they are fit for their strategic purpose, comply to legislative and regulatory requirements, and do not lose value. A comprehensive affordable repairs and maintenance programme is required to fulfil this.

In the latest Statement of Accounts (2019/20), there were £42m of Fixed Assets. These were stratified as:

- £9m of Land
- £22m of Buildings
- £7m of Vehicles, Plant and Equipment
- £1m of Infrastructure Assets
- £1m of Community Assets
- £3m of Assets declared as Surplus

This stratification and associated valuation levels is being reviewed and updated for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 Statement of Accounts.

All Classes have a requirement to be continually reviewed. However, this should not be done in isolation.

New legislation will mean that by 2026 that all Council building assets (non HRA) will have to comply with Energy Efficiency legislation and be within the top three Energy Efficient levels. This has the potential of significant additional expenditure for the Council to ensure compliance as its stock, as with other Councils, is aging.

Therefore, the Council has commenced condition surveys on all its buildings to assess:

- The present state of those buildings and repairs required to remain compliant to present legislation.
- Repairs and maintenance required to extend the life of those buildings.
- Requirements to move those buildings to the top three Energy Efficiency levels by 2026.
- Assessments of rent levels compared to market rents.

This will lead to the Council reviewing over the next 2 years its asset portfolio in terms of:

- The Overall Property Holding Strategy.

And Individual Properties and Land in terms of:

- Operational necessity.
- Cost of ensuring the buildings remain to compliant to legislation.
- Cost of ensuring buildings move to the top 3 Energy Effective ratings by 2026.
- Rent levels (and net costs for each building).
- Alternative service delivery options.

This will lead to a list of buildings/Land that are

- Surplus to requirements
- Not cost effective to be run (requiring alternative delivery options)

These lists will be brought to Cabinet on a Quarterly basis for approval for disposal. Any disposal, as per the present MRP policy goes into an overall “pot” which can then be used to fund capital programme requirements, including possible acquisitions.

Appendix E Strategic Priorities and Performance Measures

1. Economic Development and Regeneration

Supporting Businesses to Start and Grow

Opportunities in the digital technology sector and green industries will be key to the future of Bromsgrove. Local businesses demonstrated their resilience and flexibility during the Covid-19 pandemic. The council is now looking to support the businesses started during the pandemic and existing businesses, that have identified growth opportunities. This will be achieved via existing business support packages, including sectoral support, as well as helping businesses access new business grants where available.

Performance measure:

- Take-up of start-up business grants and creativity grants programme.

Update

Detailed below are the grants which have been awarded, and the total value. No grants have been paid so far, this financial year.

Period	Number of Grants	Value of Grants
2020/21	15	£15,104.15
2021/22	8	£16,862.57

Regenerating our Town and Local Centres

The pandemic has emphasised both the economic and wellbeing importance of local centres to our residents. Funding has been secured to support the development of sites in Bromsgrove town centre and a strategy will be prepared to ensure all of the centres in Bromsgrove District will be as vibrant and viable as possible.

Performance Measure:

- Procure a contractor for the former market hall site redevelopment

Update

Following advice from specialist procurement consultants, soft market testing has commenced via Procure Partnership Framework for the old market hall site. The procurement will be a two-stage design and build contract to enable early engagement from the contractor on buildability of the project and cost control. The soft market testing is due to be completed by 15th August 2022, the programme date to issue the Invitation to Tender (ITT) documentation is 1st September 2022.

Performance measure:

- Commencement of remediation works on the Windsor Street site.

Update

The site was acquired by BDC in March 2022, since then ground investigations have been ongoing, a phase two report has been produced which is under review by North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) and the Environment Agency (EA). The next steps onsite are to carry out a detailed quantitative risk assessment, for which a model parameter guide has been produced also to be reviewed by the EA in July 2022. The programme manager is Naznin Choudhury Naznin.Choudhury@nwedr.org.uk

Performance Measure:

- Bromsgrove Centres Strategy agreed by March 2023

Update

Background work with internal officers/local centres and stakeholders has begun to update the Centres Strategy ready to be presented to Cabinet in November 2022.

Improved Integrated Transport (Bromsgrove)

New innovations can help provide new and more sustainable methods of getting around. Improved transport can help to increase user satisfaction and increase efficiency whilst also helping to reduce the impact on the environment. Working with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and other partners will enable new, better integrated and more sustainable modes of transport across the district.

Performance measure:

- Increased number of sustainable transport projects being progressed or implemented across the district.

Update

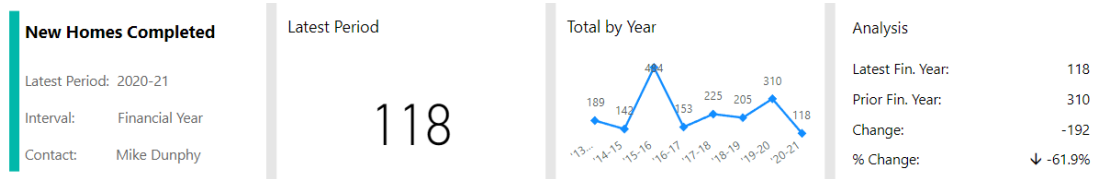
Officers are working with Worcestershire County Council to establish a full pipeline of sustainable schemes.

2. Housing Growth

During 2022/23 we will accelerate the pace of affordable housing development, wherever possible. We will work to enable the building of market value housing and the creation of additional income for the Council.

Performance measure:

- Number of new homes built - total and affordable.

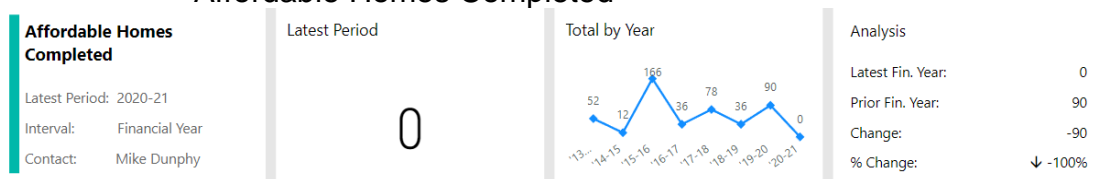


Update 2020-21

The completions by number of bedrooms for 2020/21 has decreased since the previous year. This reflects the smaller number of strategic sites that were in the process of constructing new dwellings.

Performance measure:

- Affordable Homes Completed



Update 2020-21

The graph above shows affordable housing completions in Bromsgrove District. No affordable units were built in the 2020/21 monitoring year. This reflects the lower total completions across the district, and the smaller number of large strategic sites that are currently under construction. There are 270 affordable housing commitments as of 1st April 2021.

Performance measure:

- Local housing affordability rate.

Update

The data in the table below has been extracted from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) house price statistics for small areas, annual survey of hours, and earnings.

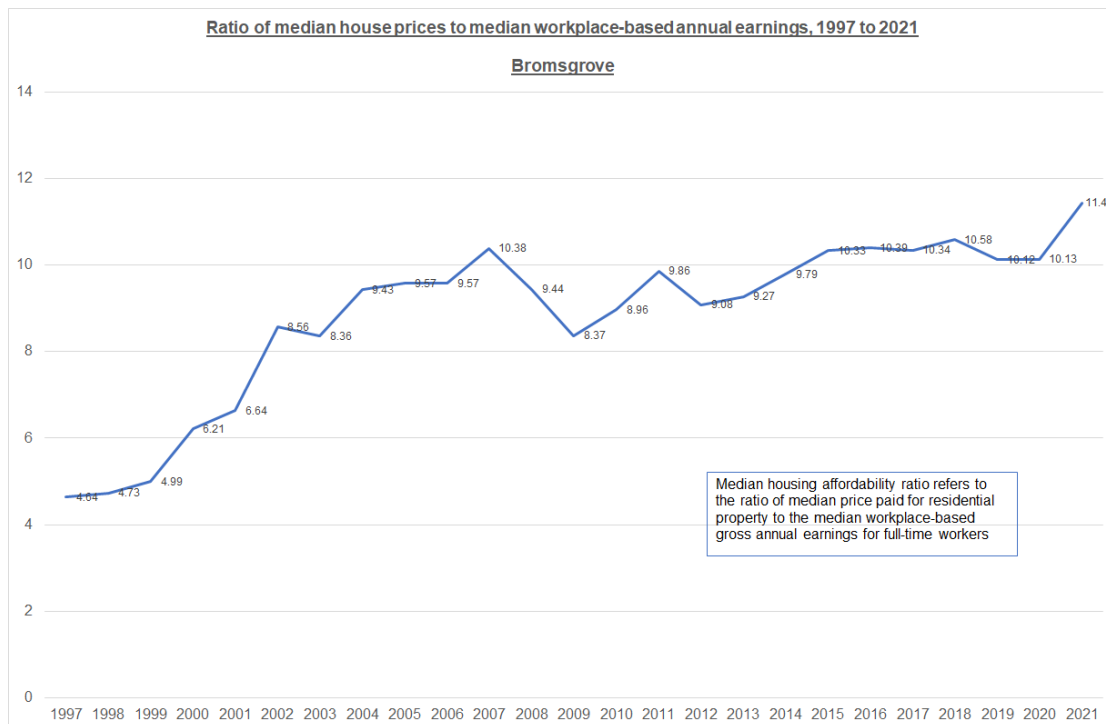
The affordability measure, using this data, indicated that the ratio in England is currently 9.05. The affordability ratio relates to workplace-based income which uses the median earnings of those employed in Bromsgrove. When looking at the data

Bromsgrove has a work based median at £28,103. The median house price in Bromsgrove is relatively high at £321,250. This causes a significant difference in the affordability ratio in Bromsgrove.

House prices over the last year have also risen well above the normal expected rate. This will push more households into needing affordable housing.

The council is working with developers to secure the maximum provision of affordable housing on developments and RP's to bring forward affordable housing. A Housing First policy with a local connection criteria is being

presented to Council to ensure these discounted homes are provided for local applicants in the first instance.



Performance measure

- Number of homeless approaches (see table below)

Update

On average we are seeing 28 approaches for homelessness assistance per month this year which is consistent with the last few years with the exception of 20/21 due to the results of the pandemic.

Performance measure

- Number of threatened with homelessness preventions – see comments below

Update

On average 59% of approaches are owed the prevention duty providing the ability to plan for the loss of accommodation rather than having to deal with actual homelessness.

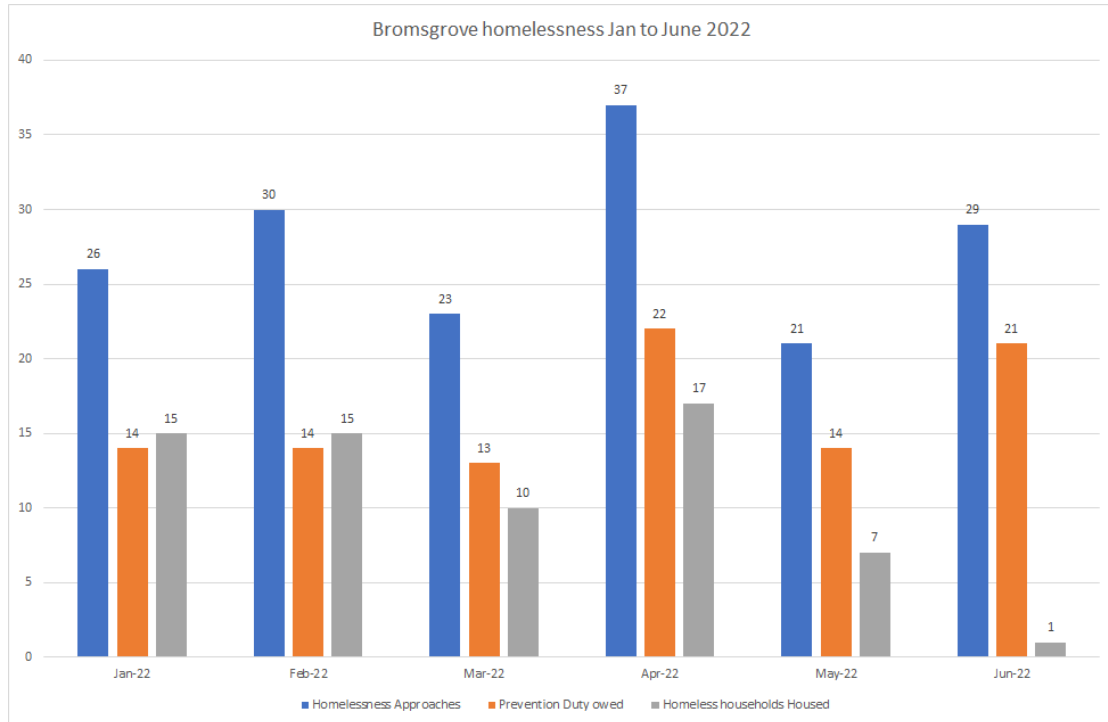
Performance measure

- Number of homeless applicants housed- see comments below

Update

When looking into those housed under homelessness duties the majority (75%) are housed in social housing. It has been positive that 25% have been

housed within the private rented sector helping to reduce the burden on social housing.



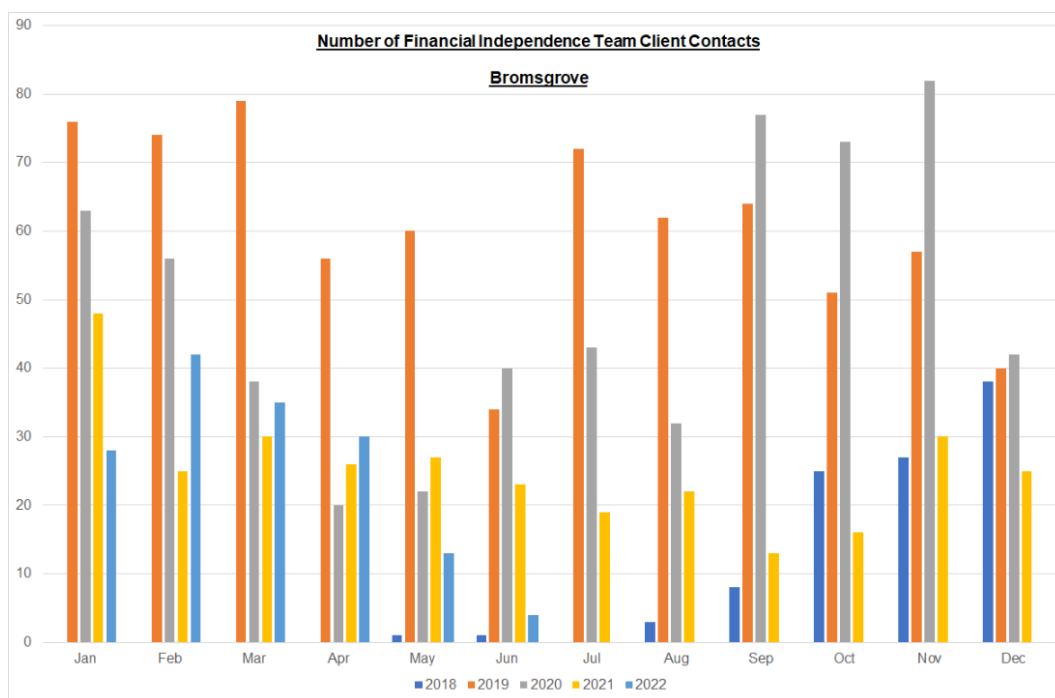
3. Work and Financial Independence

In 2022/23, we will find ways to further support, engage, and empower our residents to maintain / achieve financial independence.

We will provide quality services that help to empower residents through good financial advice, the effective coordination and signposting of services, and partnership working.

Performance measure

- Number of Financial Independence Team client contacts.



Performance measure

- Number of clients accessing Starting Well service.

Update

It is recommended that this measure is removed as it does not add value to this priority and data is not collected to the level to identify work or financial support.

Performance measure

- Number of young people with positive outcomes because of Enhanced Youth Support intervention.

Update

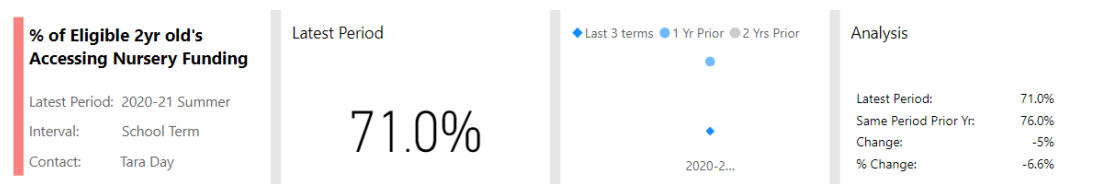
It is recommended that this measure is removed as it does not add value to this priority and data is not collected to the level required.

Performance measure

- Number of eligible children accessing nursery funding across the district.

Update

Data is reported termly, although only summer term data is available at present. The take up of nursery places supports parents in taking up work.



In respect of the above, Bromsgrove performance is good. The County average was 65% and the national average for 2021 was 62%. The impact of COVID is still likely to be a cause on take up being even higher; as well as there not being enough suitable childcare providers.

Work has been undertaken within the Starting Well Partnership with nursery providers and Worcestershire Childrens First (WCF) to look at this. We used to receive a list and would proactively contact all families with eligible children to encourage take up of the funding and support in signposting to suitable childcare providers – over the past year we have not received this list as there was a change made within the DfE and an issue around information sharing/data protection and WCF were unable to share the lists with us – during this time our Community Team held some ‘back to work’ events in collaboration with our Job Centre colleagues; we have promoted the funding on social media and all events/health clinics. In the last few weeks, we have received the lists so once again we will be able to proactively contact families who are eligible. It should be noted some nurseries across the County have closed in the past 6 months due to staffing numbers and not being able to recruit – this may impact once again on the number of appropriate childcare places available.

Performance measure

- Number of households provided with energy advice – see below

Performance measure

- Number of energy rebate payments.

Update

Between 26 April and 18 July 2022, a total of 24,365 payments of £150.00 have been processed.

4. Improved Health and Wellbeing

In 2022/23 we will work with communities to help them identify and develop their strengths. We will look at ways to encourage physical movement into part of people’s normal routines. We will look to catalyse an integrated approach to care.

Performance measure

- Deliver improved outcomes from the actions in the Leisure Strategy

Update

The Leisure Strategy will be going to Council later this year.

Performance measure

- Number of Community Builders in post.

Update

- There are currently two in post:
 - Catshill (started Dec 2021)
 - Rubery (started Dec 2021)

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach built on tried and tested methods from sustainable community development practice. It is not a set formula that can be prescribed in a one size fits all manner. The aim of ABCD approaches is to create the conditions that will enable both place and people to flourish, reduce inequalities, improve quality of life that supports communities to thrive and to reduce or delay the need for long term care and support

ABCD does this through an approach which consists of:

- Community Builders - paid workers ideally hosted by neighbourhood organisations.
- Community Connectors - individuals living locally who may organise and support local activities.
- 'Small Sparks' grants - funds for groups and individuals to support hyper local activity

Community Builders are on fixed term contracts with the hope that these will be extended, and the longer-term aim is other areas will be covered if funding becomes available for additional Community Builders.

5. Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour

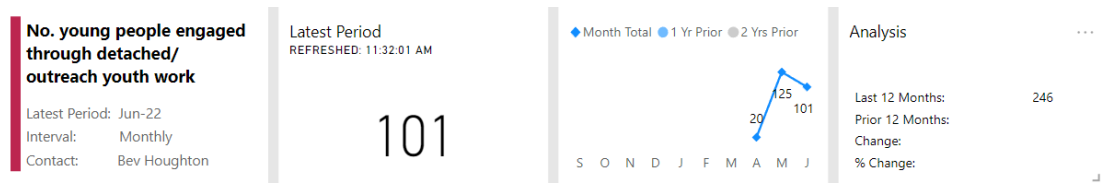
Working with Community Safety partners we will implement crime prevention projects and promote community safety services to reduce the hazards and threats that result from the crime, violence, and anti-social behaviour. We will also promote and support victim services that are in place to help and encourage recovery from the effects of crime.

Performance measure

- Number of young people engaged through Detached/Outreach youth work.

Update

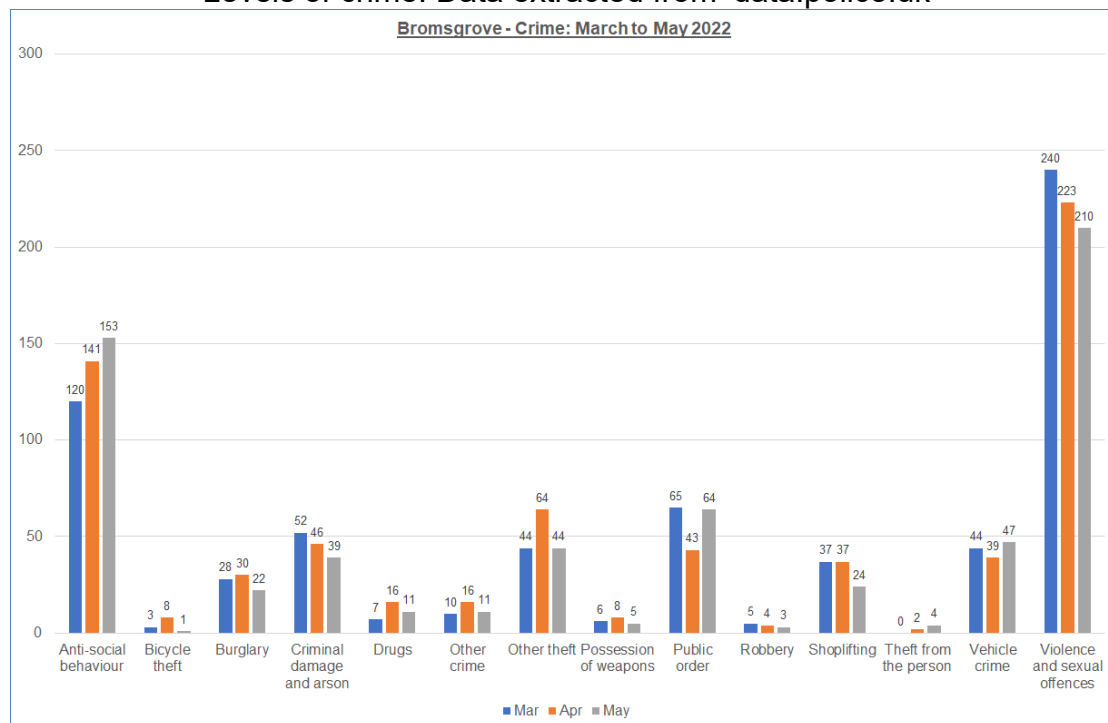
This is a new measure from April 2022.



The youth outreach team periodically support the Bromsgrove Street Pastors with joint patrols, engaging with young people who are found out in the Night-Time Economy hours. Safeguarding intervention and signposting is carried out by the youth workers and followed up with partner agencies in the following days. The month of May saw an increase in community concerns in the Bromsgrove Central areas which led to increased youth patrol activity.

Performance measure

- Levels of crime. Data extracted from 'data.police.uk'

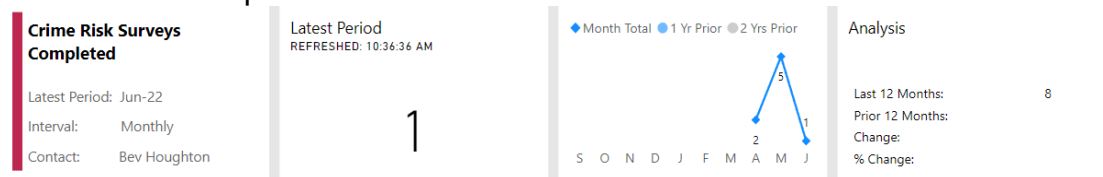


“Total Recorded Crime” is increasing when compared to the previous twelve-month period (which includes periods of Covid-19 restrictions up to July 2021). Recorded crime dropped during lockdown periods as people were restricted to their homes and public places were closed. Many offence types are now returning to pre-Covid reporting levels and North Worcestershire has seen increases in reports of vehicle crime, public order and violent offences as reflected in the district data this quarter. Please note: Crime data is reliant on public reporting of offences – it is widely recognised that some offence groups are known to be significantly under reported and some community groups are known to particularly under report for a variety of reasons. Contrary to reports of crimes, reports of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) incidents increased during the Covid-19 lockdown periods. This was due to extremely high volumes of reported Covid-19 breaches. The end of lockdown measures

and subsequent reduction in reported breaches saw ASB reports reduce considerably. Since a peak in May 2020, there has been a gradual reduction in ASB reports to below pre-Covid levels. However, since Feb 2022 there has been a slight upward trend across all North Worcestershire districts as reflected in this quarter's data. Nuisance ASB is the most common incident type accounting for 88% of all ASB reports. Nuisance ASB is defined as – when a person causes trouble, annoyance or suffering to a community.

Performance measure

- Number of crime risk surveys carried out. This is a new measure from April 2022.



Update

Comment to June 2022 - Partners and Elected members raised concerns around safety and security of several vacant buildings which led to multi-agency working and crime risk assessments being carried out in Windsor Street (x2) and High Street.

6. Green Thread

There will be a renewed focus on innovation as we play our part in the response to climate change and biodiversity challenges. Working with partners across the region, including the LEPs and the Waste Partnership, we will explore the possibilities of modern technologies to our fleet but also how innovative technology can help us deliver greener and more efficient systems internally. We also need to maintain work around waste minimisation and maximising recycling, particularly around recycling quality and the implications of the new Environment Bill.

Performance measure

- Have an agreed and funded plan and capital replacement programme for the Council's fleet subject to any budget constraints.

Update

We now have Environment Savings Trust reports giving information to assist with the future of the fleet.

Presentations regarding the EST reports and findings have been made to the Climate Change panel.

Money is allocated in the capital programme for consultant support regarding greening the fleet and the development of a revised capital programme.

Officers are currently working to procure a suitable consultant and are also arranging a visit to Nottingham City Council who are leaders in this field to learn from their experience.

Performance measure

- Have an agreed plan in place to deliver new requirements of national Resources and Waste Strategy and Environment Act.

Update

Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) funding gained via the waste partnership to fund a study to look at options for waste collection and disposal across Worcestershire.

Findings from the consultants presented to a joint meeting of the Worcestershire Leaders Board and Waste Partnership Board.

Final report awaited, and still awaiting the results of the Government's waste consultation, which will advise what exactly the Council will be required to do. Moving forward we are using the waste board as a task and finish group to examine the options to create a report and recommendations that can be agreed by Worcestershire Councils.

Performance measure

- Introduce vegetable derived diesel into the councils' vehicles to reduce carbon emissions subject to any budget constraints.

Update

Signed up to the framework and just awaiting final documentation so that HVO can be purchased.

Performance measure

- Households supported by the Council's energy advice service

Update

A new contract commenced in June 2022 so data is currently unavailable.

7. Financial Stability

Council resources will continue to be constrained. We will continue to work on ensuring our people, assets and financial resources are focused on the priorities and activities that most effectively deliver wellbeing and progress for our population.

Performance measure

- Financial performance – actuals consistent with budget.
- Levelling Up Fund Project delivered within budget.

Financial information provided within separate report.

8. Organisational Sustainability

The Council will work to maximise the use of digital infrastructures, including cloud technologies, to enhance its support for customers. Ensuring the Councils infrastructure can securely process the increased demand placed on it by the expanding use of Internet of Things devices will be key to its digital success.

Performance measure

- Number of corporate measures accessible through the dashboard.

Update

The organisation is moving from the current legacy dashboard to a new Power BI dashboard. Power BI is an interactive data visualisation software product with a primary focus on business intelligence. Currently there are 29 strategic measures available via the dashboards.

Performance measure

- % of staff able to work in an agile way.

Update

This is a new measure and will be reported from January 2023

9. High Quality Services

Council people are key to its success. We need to recruit, retain, and motivate the right employees, with the right knowledge, skills, and attitude to deliver excellent services and customer care.

Performance measure

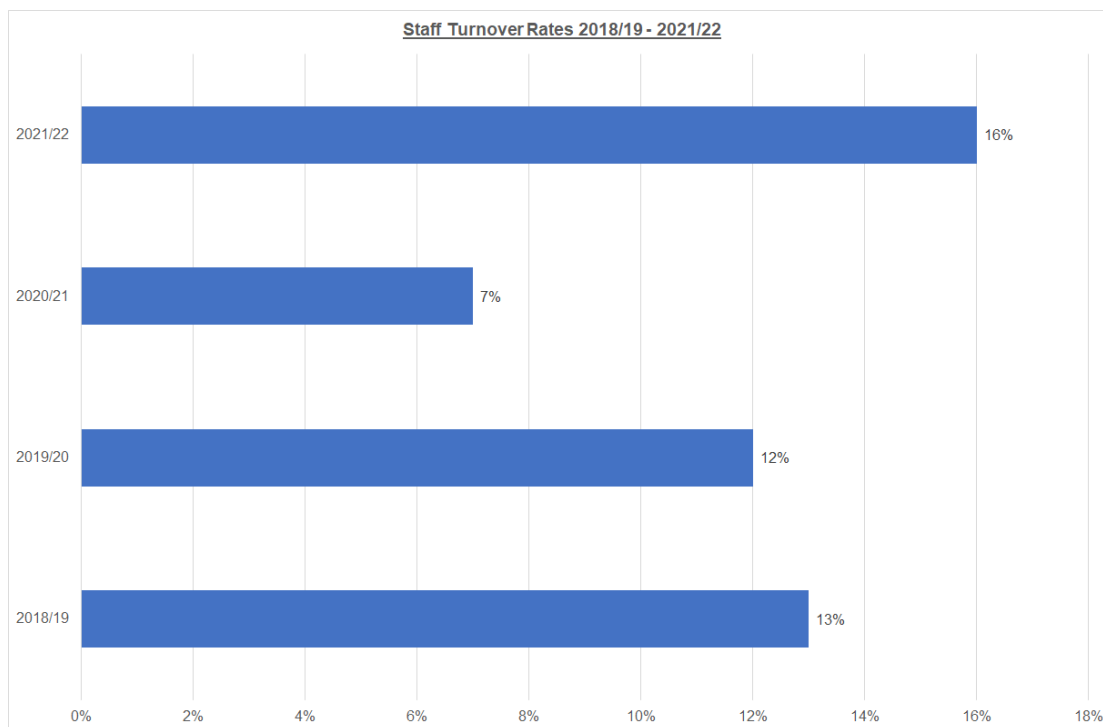
- % Of employees who undertake management training.

Update

The management training was launched for the first time in Summer 2022. It is an annual measure; the first data will be reported in 2023.

Performance measure

- Staff turnover rates in relation to national rates



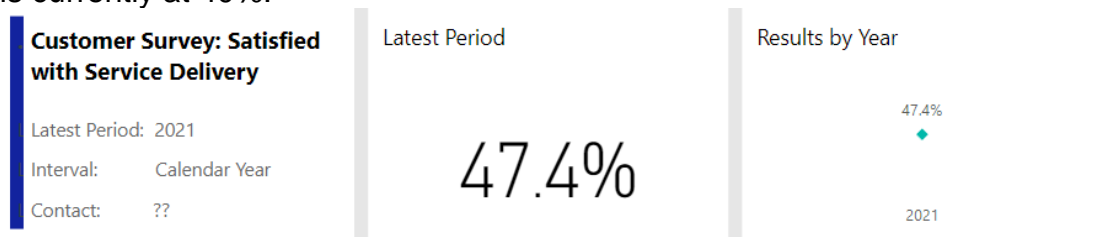
Staff turnover for 21/22 was 16%. This compares with the national average of 15% for 2021.

Performance measure

- Customer satisfaction with service delivery, measured through the Community Survey.

Update

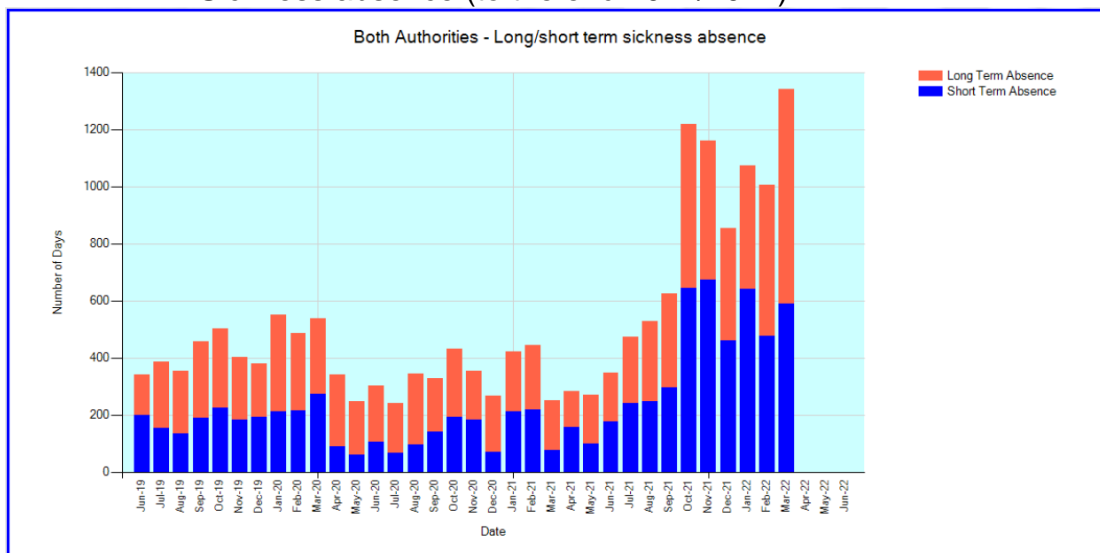
This is a new data set and as such, there is no historical data to provide context until after the next survey in October 2022. However, national customer satisfaction with LA's according to the Local Government Chronicle is currently at 40%.



Appendix F Operational Measures Business Transformation, Organisational Development & Digital Services

Performance measure

- Sickness absence (to the end 2021/2022):



Update

The data provided now includes Covid related absences. We have seen an increase in sickness compared to 19/20 which was the last data pre-covid, with 6.6 days lost per FTE. For this reason, it is difficult to compare to previous years, but we can clearly see a rise in days lost. By way of a comparator the national number of days lost to sickness absence in 2021 according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) was 4.6 days.

Environmental Services

BDC Domestic Waste Collection

Performance Measure

- Percentage of Household Waste sent for re-use, recycling & composting.

	21/22	22/23
April	44.40	46.69
May	49.24	55.59
June	59.99	57.51
July	57.58	
August	49.75	
September	48.45	
October	36.71	
November	50.72	
December	50.87	
January	39.59	
February	33.89	
March	42.89	

Update

This is a National Indicator measuring the percentage of household waste arisings which have been sent by the Authority for reuse, recycling, and composting, and is used in the national league tables ranking Local Authority performance. In 2020/21 Bromsgrove was ranked 175th

Recycling levels fluctuate over the year due to both seasonal effects and personal habits of residents. Bromsgrove has an established garden waste service with nearly 50% take up across the District that supports a strong recyclable percentage against the residual waste.

Performance Measure

- NI191 Residual Waste per household (kg) - BDC

	21/22	22/23
April	50.01	42.43
May	38.81	37.22
June	39.35	37.28
July	38.16	
August	40.89	
September	45.06	
October	41.50	
November	39.36	
December	35.86	
January	39.86	
February	35.38	
March	49.26	

Update

Although Bromsgrove still has high levels of residual waste it also has good use of the dry recycling service throughout the year that combined with the garden waste supports a strong overall recycling percentage. Waste Composition Analysis currently being done across sample areas of Bromsgrove will give us further insight into what residents are disposing of in their residual waste bins, which will support future service planning and communication campaigns to target this waste and seek to further reduce it.

Performance measure

- BDC Fly Tipping

Update

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	163	159	240	182	113	132	104	148	103	56	76	84
2022	75	85	125	102	85	119	96	0	0	0	0	0

This overview reflects the number of fly tips identified across the District requiring resources to remove and indicates the scale of the problem and any trends resulting from enforcement and education actions. The detailed data is used to identify patterns of behaviour and geographic locations that can be targeted with signage and cameras to identify those responsible and deter behaviour or support further enforcement action against those who continue to illegally dump their waste.

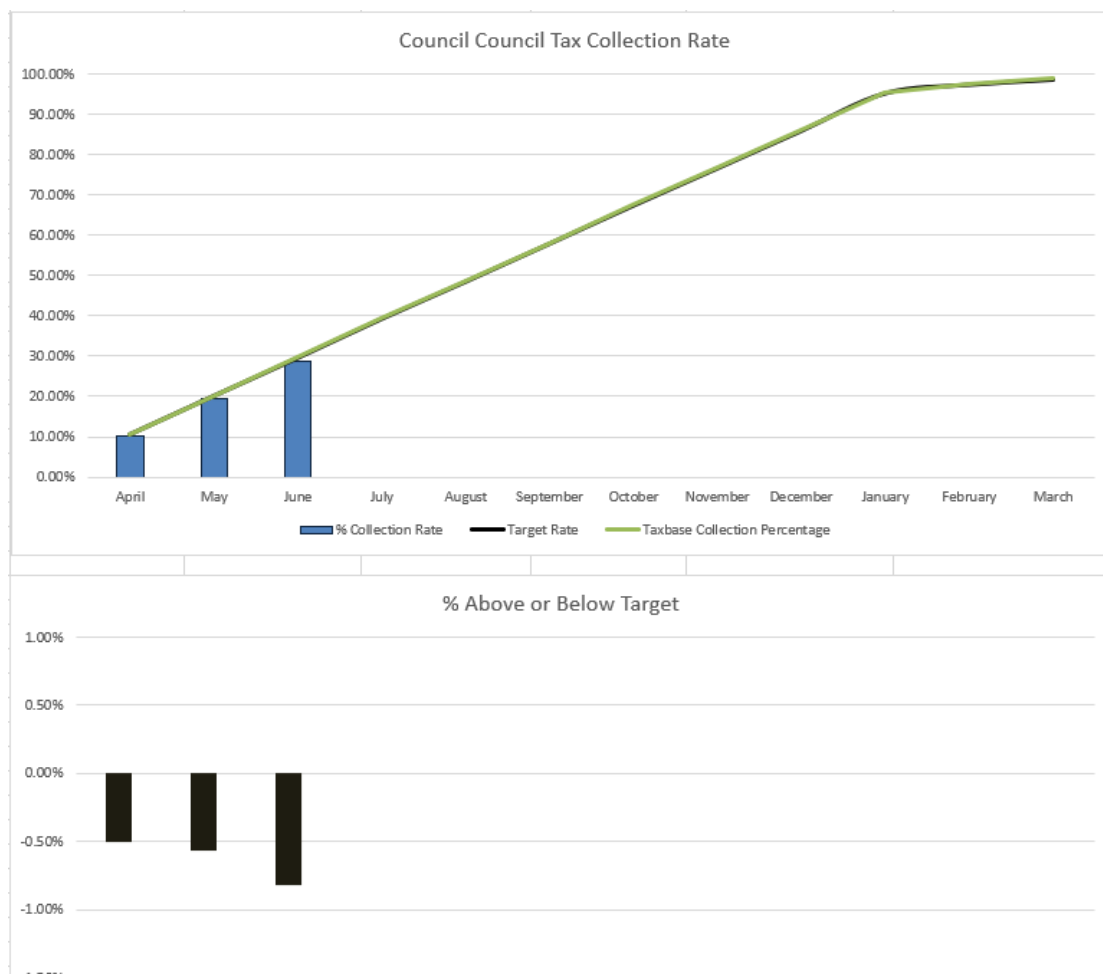
Finance and Customer Services (incl Revenues & Benefits)

Performance measure

- Council Tax Collection Rate

Update

The Council is responsible for the collection of Council Tax income on behalf of itself and precepting authorities such as the County Council, The Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia, and the Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority. Any reductions to the target collection rates result in additional charges to the precepting authorities in the following financial year. Collection rates are a reflection of the economy and with the current “cost of living crisis” it is expected that collection rates might fall.

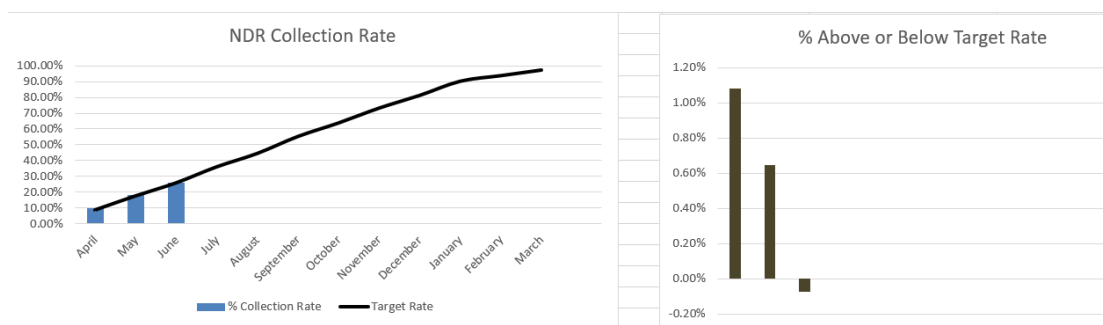


Performance measure

- NDR Collection Rate

Update

The Council is responsible for the collection of Business rates on behalf of itself and the Government. Like the Council Tax, any reductions to the target collection rates result in additional charges to the collecting authorities in the following financial year. Collection rates are a reflection of the economy and with the current “cost of living crisis” it is expected that collection rates might fall. Presently as of June we are slightly below these target rates already. It should be noted that for the past 2 years during the C-19 pandemic there were significant reliefs for businesses. 2022/23 is the first year without those reliefs.



Performance measure

- Revenues Processing

Update

There are always significant quantities of items being processed by the Revenues team including both on Council Tax and Business Rates queries. This activity has been increased in the initial 3 months of 2022/23 by the administration of the Energy Rebate Payments. In terms of Benefits processing, new claims are being turned round in 20 days and changes of circumstances are being actioned within 9 days

Month	Completed Items	Completed < 7 Days	Completed < 14 Days	Completed < 21 days	Completed < 28 Days	Completed > 28 days	Outstanding Documents
Apr	2550	527	313	280	718	712	1869
May	4887	991	505	452	810	2129	2044
Jun	7660	1500	773	609	947	3831	2031
Jul	9388	1819	935	706	1059	4869	

Performance measure

- Online Customer Interactions

Update

Online Customer transactions and Revenues calls (the next two tables) are being significantly affected by the administration of the Energy Rebate scheme which affects over 27,000 households in the district.

Month	On-Line Service Requests	Auto Processed	Referenced	Rejected
Apr	1097	270	350	477
May	1602	559	474	569
Jun	4297	3462	331	504

Customer Services

Performance measure

- Revenues Calls

Update

Revenues Calls					
Date	Calls Answered	Avg Queue Size	Avg Wait Time	Avg Number Logged in Staff	Average call length*
Jan-22	2962	2.1	06:29	4.7	08:06
Feb-22	2758	1.4	05:20	4.1	07:23
Mar-22	3888	4.9	07:56	4.0	07:45
Apr-22	3307	3.5	07:20	4.0	07:29
May-22	4086	4.4	07:05	4.9	07:55
Jun-22	3981	6.8	09:32	4.8	07:58

* call length does not include 'wrap up' time which is the work involved after the customer has ended the call

Performance measure

- Number of Web Payments

Update

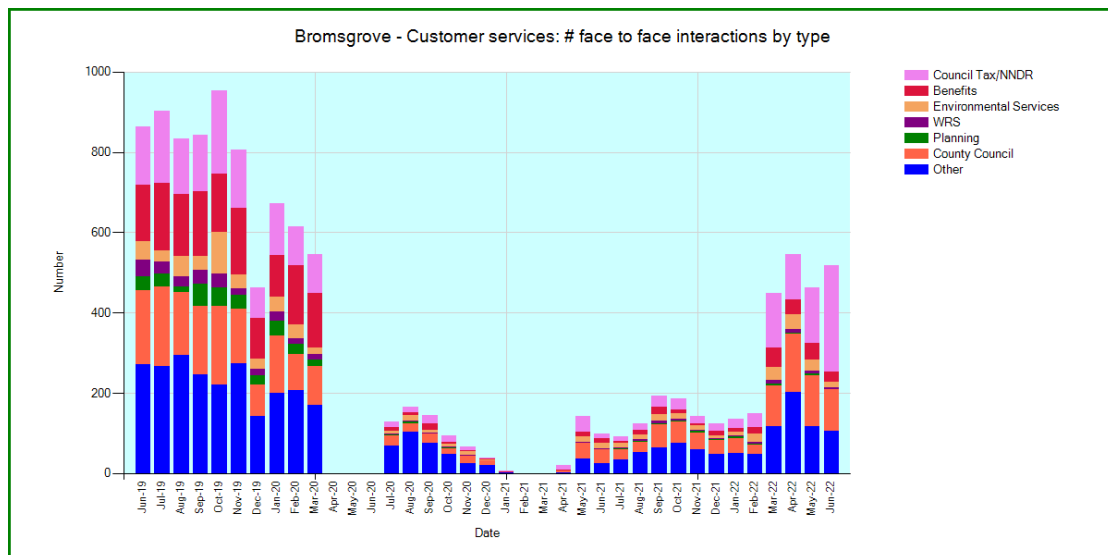
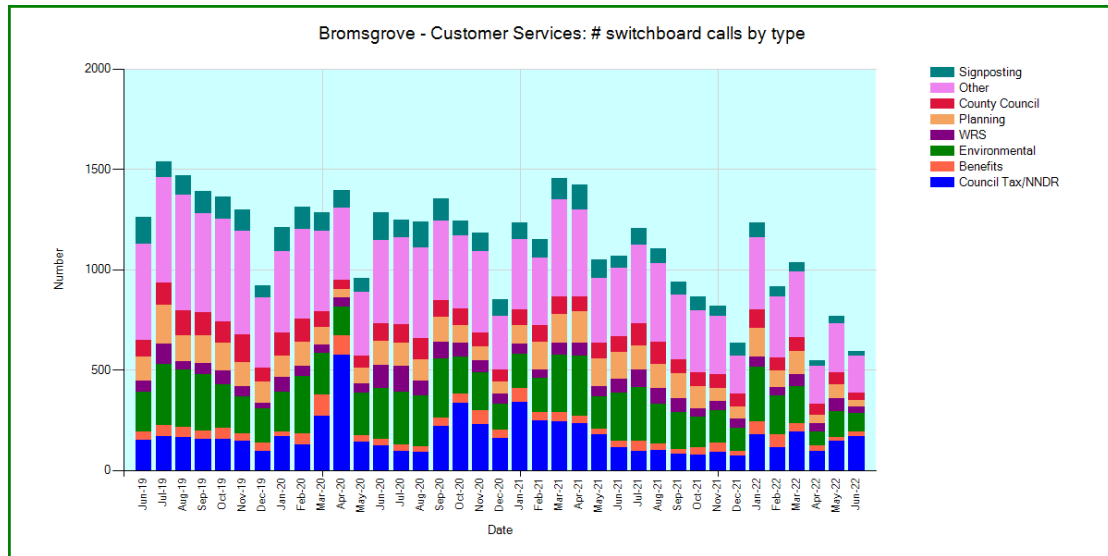
Number of Web Payments		
Date	RBC	BDC
Jan-22	3637	2019
Feb-22	2582	2175
Mar-22	2795	1450
Apr-22	3445	1339
May-22	3693	1754
Jun-22	3337	1189

Performance measure

- Customer Service calls

Update

There have been slightly fewer Customer Services calls the first quarter of 22/23 compared to the previous 2 years, although those numbers might be slanted due to the Country being under C-19 restrictions. This can be seen better in terms of the face to face interactions which reflect the periods when the Cash Office was closed and the fact that C19 has led to customers interacting with us in other ways.



Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services

The Leisure Strategy has been received and shared with CMT (Corporate Management Team), it will be reported to Committee in October and there will be a prominent level of stakeholder engagement and discussions with CMT.