



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 19TH JULY 2023

AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

MEMBERS: Councillors S. Ammar (Chairman), B. Kumar (Vice-Chairman), A. Bailes, R. Bailes, S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, A. M. Dale, J. Elledge, S. M. Evans, D. J. A. Forsythe, E. M. S. Gray, D. Hopkins, C.A. Hotham, R. J. Hunter, H. J. Jones, R. Lambert, M. Marshall, K.J. May, P. M. McDonald, B. McEldowney, D. J. Nicholl, S. T. Nock, S. R. Peters, J. Robinson, S. A. Robinson, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, J. D. Stanley, D. G. Stewart, C. B. Taylor, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

AGENDA

WELCOME

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 Council held on 24th May 2023 (Pages 7 - 16)**

4. **To receive any announcements from the Chairman and/or Head of Paid Service**

5. **To receive any announcements from the Leader**

6. **To receive comments, questions or petitions from members of the public**

A period of up to 15 minutes is allowed for members of the public to make a comment, ask questions or present petitions. Each member of the public has up to 3 minutes to do this. A councillor may also present a petition on behalf of a member of the public.

7. **Urgent Decisions**

8. **Changes to Committee Membership**

Members are asked to note the appointments of named substitutes to the following Committees:

Planning Committee - Councillors Jane Elledge and Peter McDonald

Appointments Committee – Councillor Sam Ammar

9. **Audit, Standards and Governance Annual Report 2022/2023** (Pages 17 - 34)

10. **Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2022/2023** (Pages 35 - 66)

11. **Role of the Independent Person** (Pages 67 - 72)

12. **Outside Bodies** (Pages 73 - 78)

13. **Appointment of Interim Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer** (Pages 79 - 82)

14. **Recommendations from the Cabinet**

To consider the recommendations from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12th July 2023 (to follow).

15. **Background Information on the recommendations from the Cabinet**

(i) Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2021-2040 (Pages 83 - 136)

(ii) Approval to Spend (Pages 137 - 150)

(iii) Draft Treasury Management Outturn Report 202/23 (Pages 151 - 166)

16. **To note the minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 21st June 2023 and 12th July 2023** (Pages 167 - 174)

The minutes from the meeting held on 12th July 2023 will be published in a supplementary papers pack.

17. **Questions on Notice** (Pages 175 - 176)

To deal with any questions on notice from Members of the Council, in the order in which they have been received.

A period of up to 15 minutes is allocated for the asking and answering of questions. This may be extended at the discretion of the Chairman with the agreement of the majority of those present.

18. **Motions on Notice** (Pages 177 - 182)

A period of up to one hour is allocated to consider the motions on notice. This may only be extended with the agreement of the Council.

19. **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

11th July 2023

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

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

GUIDANCE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING MEETINGS IN PERSON

Meeting attendees and members of the public are encouraged not to attend a Committee if they have if they have common cold symptoms or any of the following common symptoms of Covid-19 on the day of the meeting; a high temperature, a new and continuous cough or a loss of smell and / or taste.

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.



INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

Access to Information

The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 widened the rights of press and public to attend Local Authority meetings and to see certain documents. Recently the Freedom of Information Act 2000 has further broadened these rights, and limited exemptions under the 1985 Act.

- You can inspect agenda and public reports at least five days before the date of the meeting.
- You can inspect minutes of the Council, Cabinet and its Committees/Boards for up to six years following a meeting.
- You can have access, upon request, to the background papers on which reports are based for a period of up to six years from the date of the meeting. These are listed at the end of each report.
- An electronic register stating the names and addresses and electoral areas of all Councillors with details of the membership of all Committees etc. is available on our website.
- A reasonable number of copies of agendas and reports relating to items to be considered in public will be made available to the public attending meetings of the Council, Cabinet and its Committees/Boards.
- You have access to a list specifying those powers which the Council has delegated to its Officers indicating also the titles of the Officers concerned, as detailed in the Council's Constitution, Scheme of Delegation.

You can access the following documents:

- Meeting Agendas
- Meeting Minutes
- The Council's Constitution

at www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 24TH MAY 2023, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors S. Ammar (Chairman), B. Kumar (Vice-Chairman), A. Bailes, R. Bailes, S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, A. M. Dale, J. Elledge, S. M. Evans, D. J. A. Forsythe, E. M. S. Gray, D. Hopkins, C.A. Hotham, R. J. Hunter, H. J. Jones, R. Lambert, M. Marshall, K.J. May, P. M. McDonald, B. McEldowney, D. J. Nicholl, S. T. Nock, S. R. Peters, J. Robinson, S. A. Robinson, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, J. D. Stanley, D. G. Stewart, C. B. Taylor, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

In attendance: Mr. R. Laight (Chairman of the Council 2022/23)

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr P. Carpenter, Mrs. C. Felton, Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill and Mrs J. Gresham

1\23

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN 2023/24

Mr. R. Laight opened the full Council meeting in his capacity as retiring Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council and welcomed Members to the first meeting of the new municipal year.

Councillor. P. McDonald nominated Councillor S. Ammar for the position of Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council for the 2023/24 municipal year. In doing so it was noted that the election of a woman to the Office of Chairman would support diversity within the Council. It was highlighted that Councillor Ammar was an entrepreneur with a successful business. In addition to this, Councillor Ammar had previously been involved in fundraising for a number of charities within Bromsgrove including the Primrose Hospice. The nomination was seconded by Councillor M. Marshall.

Councillor R. Hunter proposed Councillor J. Robinson for the position of Chairman of the Council for the 2023/24 municipal year. In doing so, it was highlighted that Councillor Robinson was a hardworking member of the Bromsgrove community and would be an exceptionally good ambassador for the citizens of Bromsgrove. This nomination was seconded by Councillor D. Nicholl.

On being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor S. Ammar be elected as Chairman of the Council for the ensuing municipal year.

Councillor Ammar signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, thanked Members of the Council and stated that it was an honour to be elected to the Office of Chairman for the 2023/24 municipal year.

2\23

ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN 2023/24

Councillor K. May nominated Councillor B. Kumar to the Office of Vice-Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council for the 2023/24 municipal year. In doing so it was highlighted that Councillor Kumar was a Parish Councillor with a large amount of experience in Local Government. The nomination was seconded by Councillor A. Dale.

On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that Councillor B. Kumar be elected Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing municipal year.

Councillor Kumar signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thanked Members of the Council for electing him to the office of Vice-Chairman.

3\23

VOTE OF THANKS TO RETIRING OFFICE HOLDERS

Councillor K. May offered thanks to Mr. R. Laight for his successful time as Chairman of the Council, through some exceptional times during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a mark of the Council's appreciation of Mr. R. Laight serving as Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council, Councillor S. Ammar presented Mr. R. Laight with several gifts including two past pendants for him and his Consort.

RESOLVED that the thanks of the Council be tendered to Mr. R. Laight for services rendered as Chairman of the Council.

4\23

ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor P. Whittaker proposed that Councillor K. J. May to be elected to the position of Leader of the Council. Councillor A. Dale seconded the proposal.

On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that Councillor K. J. May be elected as Leader of the Council for a period of four years until the Annual meeting of the Council following the local elections in 2027.

5\23 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

6\23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

7\23 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 22ND FEBRUARY 2023**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22nd February 2023 were submitted for Member's consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22nd February 2023 be approved as a true and accurate record.

8\23 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

The Chairman confirmed her Consort would be her husband for the 2023/24 municipal year and her chosen charity would be announced at the next meeting of the Council in July.

9\23 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER INCLUDING APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY LEADER AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE CABINET**

Councillor K. May thanked Members for electing her once again as Leader of the Council. It was noted that there had been a clear message sent by the residents of Bromsgrove at the recent local elections which had resulted in a Council that had no overall control. It was highlighted that all parties had been contacted to find a way forward following the elections and the following appointments to Cabinet were subsequently being made by the Leader:

Agenda Item 3

Council
24th May 2023

Cllr Karen May	Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships
Cllr Sue Baxter	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration
Cllr Charlie Hotham	Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling
Cllr Steve Colella	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Climate Change
Cllr Shirley Webb	Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and Strategic Housing
Cllr Peter Whittaker	Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Community Safety (Including Car Parking)
Cllr Kit Taylor	Cabinet Member for Planning, Licensing and WRS

Councillor S. Baxter took the opportunity to address Members following the announcement of her appointment as Deputy Leader of the Council. In doing so, she explained that there were three Members of the 2023 Bromsgrove Independent Group within the Cabinet, and it represented an opportunity to encourage cross-party working. In addition to this, it was reiterated that the electorate had made its feelings clear at the recent local elections and that this new working arrangement within the Cabinet was the first step in initiating future change at Bromsgrove District Council.

10\23

URGENT DECISIONS

The Chairman confirmed that there had been no urgent decisions taken since the previous meeting of the Council.

11\23

APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES 2023/24

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling presented the report regarding the Appointments to Committees 2023/24. In doing so, Council was informed that this was a technical report concerning the political balance within the Council for the ensuing municipal year. The outcome of the recent elections had resulted in a change to the political balance of the Council.

The recommendations in respect of the political balance and appointments to Committees for 2023/24 were proposed by Councillor C. Hotham and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that

- 1) for the ensuing Municipal Year, the Committees set out in the table in Appendix 1 of the report be appointed and that the representation of the different political groups on the Council on those Committees be as set out in that table until the next Annual Meeting of the Council, or until the next review of political representation under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, whichever was the earlier;
- 2) Members be appointed to the Committees and as substitute Members in accordance with nominations to be made by Group Leaders (Appendix 1 to the minutes); and
- 3) the terms of reference for the Boards and Committees be confirmed.

12\23

APPOINTMENTS TO THE ARTRIX HOLDING TRUST - OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENT

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling presented the Appointments to the Artrix Holding Trust report for Members' consideration. Councillors A. M. Dale, J. Elledge, B. Kumar, M. Marshall, B. McEldowney and D. J. Nicholl were nominated to serve on the Artrix Holding Trust for a four-year term. The nominations were proposed by Councillor C. Hotham and seconded by Councillor K. J. May.

RESOLVED that the Members outlined in the preamble above be appointed to serve on the Artrix Holding Trust for a four-year term up to 2027.

13\23

SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling presented the Scheme of Delegations report. In doing so, it was highlighted that the Scheme of Delegations had been considered by the Constitution Review Working Group and was being presented to Council for ratification.

In terms of the report, Members were informed that the Scheme of Delegations allowed some Council decisions, for example minor

Planning application decisions, to be delegated to Officers without being considered by Members.

It was noted that if Members had any concerns in respect of the Scheme of Delegations, these could be raised at future meetings of the Constitution Review Working Group.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor C. Hotham and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that the current version of the Officer Scheme of Delegations be agreed.

14\23

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chairman explained that there had been no Questions on Notice received on this occasion.

15\23

MOTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chairman explained that one Motion on Notice had been received for consideration at the meeting.

Committee System

“We call upon the officers of the Council to prepare a report into the transition of the Council from a Cabinet System to that of a Committee System. The report to be presented to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to be held in September.”

The Motion was proposed by Councillor P. McDonald and seconded by Councillor H. Rone-Clarke.

In proposing the Motion Councillor P. McDonald noted that there were concerns across many Local Authorities regarding the effectiveness of the Cabinet system. He added that he felt it was necessary to revisit the governance structure at Bromsgrove District Council as a result of the recent local elections.

Members were informed that the Committee system did operate in other Councils across the County and had been successful in allowing all Members to have an equal voice when making decisions for residents.

During consideration of this Motion, Councillor McDonald noted that he was proposing an alteration to the wording of his original Motion (as tabled at the meeting) as follows:

“We call upon the Overview and Scrutiny Board to prepare a report regarding the transition of the Council from a Cabinet System to that of a Committee System. The report to be presented to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to be held in September.”

It was noted that the proposal for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to prepare such a report would result in a Member-led and transparent process.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Rone-Clarke echoed Councillor McDonald’s points regarding residents’ request for change and that a Committee system could reform the way things were done at the Council for the future.

Councillor R. Hunter responded to the Motion and commented that, although he was in support of the proposal, he felt it needed more emphasis on the timing of the implementation. It was with this in mind that he proposed an amendment to the end of the Motion as follows:

“We call upon the Overview and Scrutiny Board to prepare a report regarding the transition of the Council from a Cabinet System to that of a Committee System. The report to be presented to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to be held in September *with a view to standing up a Shadow Committee structure as soon as possible.*”

This amendment was seconded by Councillor D. Nicholl.

Members debated Councillor Hunter’s amendment. However, it was noted that it could be viewed as pre-emptive as to the outcome of the scrutiny review and its conclusions with respect to the committee system. Members commented that it was important that a thorough investigation should be carried out, so as to gather all of the evidence required in order to conclude whether the Committee system would be a suitable option for the Council going forward. It was reported that any implementation of a Committee system, if that was what the report recommended, could only be implemented at the next Annual Council meeting due to take place in May 2024 and therefore it would not be possible to implement any changes sooner. Members were assured that there would be a transition period in order to establish any system and to ensure that Portfolios and Committees were aligned effectively.

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On being put to the vote the amendment proposed by Councillor Hunter was lost.

Members debated the substantive Motion and in doing so the following was highlighted:

- Should the Committee system be implemented it was hoped that this would encourage greater cross-party working within the Council.
- The importance of making a change for the residents of Bromsgrove particularly in light of the exciting projects in progress as a result of the Levelling Up Funding and UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation for the District.
- The need to engage and analyse data effectively in the investigation in a transparent and public forum.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 18.3 a recorded vote was taken on this Motion and the voting was as follows:

Members voting FOR the Motion:

Councillor S. Ammar, Councillor A. Bailes, Councillor R. Bailes, Councillor S.J. Baxter, Councillor S. R. Colella, Councillor A.M Dale, Councillor J. Elledge, Councillor S. M. Evans, Councillor D. J. A. Forsythe, Councillor E. M. S. Gray, Councillor D. Hopkins Councillor C. A Hotham, Councillor R. Hunter, Councillor H. Jones, Councillor B. Kumar, Councillor R. Lambert, Councillor M. Marshall, Councillor K. J. May, Councillor P. M. McDonald, Councillor B. McEldowney, Councillor D. J. Nicholl, Councillor S.T. Nock, Councillor S. R. Peters, Councillor J. W. Robinson, Councillor S. A Robinson, Councillor H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, Councillor J. D. Stanley, Councillor D. G. Stewart, Councillor C. B. Taylor, Councillor S. A. Webb and Councillor P. J. Whittaker (31).

Members voting AGAINST the Motion:

(0)

Members ABSTAINING in the vote for the Motion:

(0)

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board prepare a report regarding the transition of the Council from a Cabinet System to that of a

Committee System. The report to be presented to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to be held in September.

16\23

OFFICER APPOINTMENTS

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling presented the Officer Appointment report. Members were advised that the report was in respect of the re-appointment of the Interim Section 151 Officer for a period of six months until December 2023.

During consideration of the report, it was highlighted that prior to Mr. P. Carpenter's appointment in April 2022, there had been significant instability within the Finance Team. In addition to this, it was raised that Mr. P. Carpenter had successfully navigated the Council through the issuing of the Section 24 Notice in late 2022. It was with this in mind that Councillor C. Hotham proposed the recommendations within the report. Councillor K. May seconded the recommendations.

Although some Members expressed their disappointment that a permanent appointment had not already been made, it was

RESOLVED that the appointment of the Interim Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 officer approved by Council for twelve months on 22nd June 2022 be extended for up to a further six months until 22nd December 2023.

17\23

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

During consideration of this item, it was reported that a decision needed to be taken urgently to appoint Members to serve on the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Board for the 2023/24 municipal year as outside body appointments. Members were advised that nominations needed to be taken as Urgent Business as the first meeting of the WRS Board in the 2023/24 municipal year was due to take place prior to the next meeting of the Council in Bromsgrove. It was noted that there were two vacant seats available to Bromsgrove District Council on the Board together with one named substitute position. Members were informed that one of the main Members of the Board needed to be a Member of Cabinet – the relevant portfolio holder for Regulatory Services.

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Councillor K. May nominated Councillor K. Taylor, as the relevant portfolio holder and Councillor H. Jones, who had served on the Board previously, with Councillor M Marshall nominated to serve as substitute. The nominations were seconded by Councillor S. Webb.

On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that Councillors K. Taylor and H. Jones be appointed to serve on the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Board and Councillor M. Marshall be nominated to serve as substitute on the Board for the 2023/24 municipal year as outside body appointments.

The meeting closed at 7.17 p.m.

Chairman

Bromsgrove District Council



Audit, Standards and
Governance Committee

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



Bromsgrove
District Council

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank Councillor Luke Mallett for his Chairmanship during this municipal year and wish him every success in the future.

I have had the pleasure of chairing the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee for the remaining municipal year and honour of chairing the Section 24 Audit Task and Finish Working Group.

My particular thanks go to Democratic Services Officers for their support, Mr Carpenter, Mrs Felton and Ms Howell for guiding the Task Group through what has been a very detailed process and members of the Task Group for reading through over 1,000 sides of reports and participating in almost 20 hours of Teams meetings.

Thanks should also go to those interviewees who have been open and honest in helping complete the Task Group's investigations.

There is one observation, from my short time as Chairman and that is that I believe the membership of this Committee should be expanded in line with similar challenge committees in this Council.

Councillor Steven Colella

Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee

Agenda Item 9

MEMBERSHIP



Steven Colella (Chairman)
December 2022 - May 2023



Adrian Kriss (Vice-Chairman)



Andrew Beaumont



Rachel Jenkins



Janet King



Peter Whittaker



Maria Middleton



Luke Mallett
(Chairman - May-
December 2022)



Caroline Spencer



Kate Van Der Plank
(May – December 2022)

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee's activities during the municipal year 2022-23.

The ultimate responsibility for Audit rests with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Finance and the Section 151 Officer. The Portfolio Holder is expected to attend each meeting as determined in the Council's Constitution.

During the year the Committee has considered reports and updates on the following subjects:

- Monitoring Officer's Report – which details complaints and training which has taken place during the period between meetings.
- Updates from the external auditors, Grant Thornton in respect of their work.
- Updates on the work of the Internal Audit Team.
- Section 24 Notice
- Risk Update
- Annual Review from The Local Government Ombudsman
- Financial Savings Monitoring Report
- The Statement of Accounts
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Report.

Further information about some of the key responsibilities of the Committee are detailed within this report.

Meeting dates and minutes of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee meetings can be found on the Bromsgrove District Council website, link detailed below:

[Meeting dates and minutes of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee meetings 2022-23](#)

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIT, STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Scope and Responsibility

The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee provides independent assurance to the Council in respect of:

- The effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements
- The Annual Governance Statement
- The Review of the Annual Statement of Accounts
- Risk Management Framework and strategies
- The effectiveness of the Council's financial and non-financial performance
- Anti-Fraud arrangements
- Whistle-blowing strategies
- Internal and external audit activity
- Democratic governance

The Committee is also responsible for the Council's Standards Regime which covers both District and Parish Councils. Areas encompassed within the Standards Regime include:

- Promoting High Standards of Conduct by Councillors and co-opted members of Council bodies.
- Assisting Councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
- Advising and training Members and co-opted members in respect of the Code of Conduct.
- Formulating advice to members and officers in declarations of gifts and hospitality.
- Granting dispensations to Councillors and co-opted members from requirements relating to interests as set out in the Code of Conduct.
- Considering reports from the Monitoring Officer following investigation into complaints about elected Members.

Meetings of the Committee – 2022-2023

The Council's constitution requires the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee to hold quarterly meetings.

Standards Regime

There are two main areas which are considered regularly in terms of the Committee's responsibility for Standards.

Monitoring Officer's Report

This covers Member Training, Member Complaints and Parish Council matters.

If the elected Member was found to have breached the Authority's Code of Conduct, the powers available to the authority include a formal letter of warning to the Member and formal censure by motion, of a committee, for the removal of the Member from a committee (which did not legally prevent the Councillor in question from attending) and adverse publicity.

The Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services added that the Council's Code of Conduct was designed primarily with the view of maintaining standards through a conciliatory approach and that there was a high reliance on the Monitoring Officer working in cooperation with political group leaders when finding resolutions to Member complaints.

It was reported through the Monitoring Officer's report that Members received training throughout the 2022-2023 municipal year. The training included the following sessions:

- Cyber Security training
- Safeguarding
- Member Safety Training
- Members on the Elections Act 2022

The Member Development Steering Group met a number of times throughout the municipal year and discussions took place regarding the Member Induction training that would be undertaken following the District Elections due to take place in May 2023.

The Constitution Review Working Group continued to meet during 2022-2023. Recently the group has discussed Supplementary Questions at Full Council meetings and Quorum Arrangements for the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee.

A number of Member complaints were received throughout the municipal year 2022-2023. In addition to this a number of general Parish Council queries of a procedural nature were also received and were being dealt with at a local level. It was also confirmed that a number of complaints have been made to the Monitoring Officer by Parish Councillors regarding matters that related to the Parish Councils. It was noted that these were most appropriately dealt with by Parish Councils and not by the District Council's Monitoring Officer.

Dispensation Report

At the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee meeting held on 21st July 2022 the Dispensations Report was presented to the Committee. This report explained that under the Localism Act 2011 there was a requirement to consider the granting of Individual Member Dispensations. In addition to this, it was also necessary to consider General Dispensations (including Budget and Council Tax discussions) and Outside Body Appointment Dispensations. The dispensations agreed at this meeting remain valid until the first meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee following the next District Council Elections in May 2023.

Parish Council Involvement

The Parish Council representative is able to add any item on to the agenda as required and this is highlighted within the Monitoring Officer's Report. Whilst Parish Councils have the opportunity to appoint two representatives on to the Committee, as has happened in previous years, only one of these places was taken up and the Parish Council representative for the municipal year 2022-2023 is Mr B. McEldowney.

Investigations and Enquiries

There have been a number of complaints this year at both a Parish and District level. These continue to be investigated locally by the Monitoring Officer.

There have been no investigations about Members which required a Hearings Sub-Committee to be convened.

The appointed Independent Person has continued to support the Monitoring Officer where necessary.

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

During the year the Committee has continued to receive updates on the work of the Internal Audit team including details of the following completed audit reports:

- Internal Audit Plan 2022-2023
- Internal Audit - Progress Report
- Interim Auditor's Annual Report and Audit Opinion 2020-21

EXTERNAL AUDITORS

During the year the Committee received reports from the current External Auditors, Grant Thornton on the following subjects:

- Grant Thornton - Sector Update
- Section 24 Report

The Progress Reports were considered at each meeting of the Committee and covered a range of issues including the following:

- Value for money
- Significant Risks
- Financial Statements
- Housing Benefits

SECTION 24 NOTICE

In November 2022, Bromsgrove District Council was issued with a Section 24 Notice with the key reason being the non-delivery of the 2020-2021 Statement of Accounts. As a result of this, it was agreed at a Full Council meeting held on 7th December 2022 that a root and branch investigation would be undertaken on how the Council arrived at the Section 24 Notice. Further details of this investigation and any recommendations are available in the Audit Task Group's final report. The following Members of the Committee were appointed to the Audit Task Group on 19th January 2023:

- Councillor S. Colella (Chairman)
- Councillor A. Beaumont
- Councillor J. King
- Councillor A. Kriss
- Councillor M. Middleton
- Councillor P. Whittaker

21st July 2022

RIPA Report 2022-23

This report is considered annually by the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee as the legislation it relates to is required to be reviewed each year.

As part of the presentation Members were informed that the regime was overseen by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office and included inspections of organisations by an Inspector appointed by the Commissioner.

At this meeting Members were advised of changes which had taken place since the Committee considered the last report in 2021 and were provided with details of refresher training which had also taken place.

Grant Thornton - Housing Benefit 2020-21 Certification Letter

This is a report that is presented annually to Members in respect of the work undertaken each year in the certification of the Council's Housing Benefit subsidy claim to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

During consideration of the Certification Letter for 2020-2021 it was reported that the workbook completion undertaken by Officers at the Council was of good quality. However, a number of issues had been identified and therefore additional testing needed to take place. It was also confirmed to the Committee that although the values were very small, any difference in monetary value was classified as a 'fail' and needed to be reviewed.

However, overall, it was a good news story as the number of errors had reduced and the Officers work was considered excellent.

Internal Audit Plan 2022-2023

At this meeting it was outlined that this was a risk-based plan which considered the adequacy of the Council's risk management, performance management and other assurance processes, as well as organisational objectives and priorities. Included in the report was the following:

- The adequacy of the resource allocation.
- The changing internal environment and ongoing transformational work being undertaken.
- Internal and external audit findings in respect of the financial systems and their inclusion as audit areas, as it is considered certain risks remain in these areas.

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- The flexibility of the plan and the balanced approach taken, with progress being monitored and reviewed regularly.
- If the plan were to be amended in the future this would be done in consultation with the Interim Section 151 Officer and brought back to this Committee.

Cyber Security was highlighted as currently of great concern to all Councils particularly in respect of insurance.

Internal Audit Annual Report & Audit Opinion 2021-22

This report was a summary of looking back over the last year's work and provided commentary on Internal Audit's planned delivery for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, against the performance indicators agreed for the service and further information on other aspects of service delivery.

During consideration of this report, it was noted that 4 reviews had limited or no assurance with potential risks to be addressed and 10 had moderate or above assurance and that an action plan was in place to address those areas with no or limited assurance.

At this meeting it was suggested that there was no doubt that the biggest challenge faced had been working through the new finance system together with the significant loss of experienced staff. It was noted that there had been a number of implementation issues, particularly with regards to cash receipting.

Risk Register Update

At the meeting that took place on 21st July 2022 the Risk Register report was considered. As part of this report, it was noted that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) had met in March 2022 and although there was a risk management system in place further work was needed to be done to embed this into Council practices. As a result of this, Members were informed that a Risk Group was to be established. In addition to this, it was confirmed that Risk Champions had been appointed and trained for each service area and that they provided a pro-active role in cascading down information to other Officers.

13th October 2022

Annual Review from The Local Government Ombudsman

The Committee considered the report on the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter, which set out the statistics for complaints made against the Council covering the years ending 31st March 2021 and 31st March 2022.

During consideration of this report, it was noted that the Monitoring Officer was required to report to Members, to summarise the findings on upheld complaints over a specific period. It was reported that any costs incurred from upheld complaints had been met from existing budgets and as such there was no direct financial implication to the Council resulting from any Ombudsman's recommendations.

Grant Thornton - Sector Update

The Committee received a local government audit sector update from the Engagement Lead for Grant Thornton. Included in this update was information regarding the future requirement from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for an Independent Member to be introduced to sit on Audit Committees at Local Councils. Members discussed the potential need for remuneration for this post and the difficulties the Council had encountered with past attempts at recruiting an Independent Member to the Committee.

Internal Audit - Progress Report

At this meeting the Committee received the Internal Audit Progress Report that summarised progress made against the delivery of the Internal Audit Plan 2022-23 as of 31st August 2022.

Information was provided regarding the Core Financial Systems which continued to occupy a substantial part of the internal audit team's planned time, due to the rectification work associated with the Council's new finance system. It was also reported that work continued on making progress with respect to areas which had returned a level of 'limited' assurance as reported in the Internal Audit Annual Report at the July Committee meeting.

There were concerns raised at this meeting regarding the 'limited' assurance in core areas of Council business such as Safeguarding and Fire Safety and at the request of Members the Council's Chief Executive attended the next meeting of the Committee.

Financial Savings Monitoring Report

The Interim Director of Finance presented the Financial Savings Monitoring Report and provided information on vacancy levels within the organisation, the staff pay award and increased energy costs.

Risk Update (Q1 & Q2)

During this update the Committee was advised that the Officer Risk Board continued to take place and that the process of risk monitoring was resulting in more risks being registered and mitigated.

The number of Departmental Risks continued to reduce and in terms of Corporate Risks, a risk had been added in relation to the delivery of Levelling Up, the UK

Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the Towns Fund projects, due to resource implications and the time limited spend of the funding.

9th November 2022

Section 24 Report

As this meeting Members were provided with the Section 24 Report from the external auditors and that they had powers under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to make, if necessary, statutory recommendations under Section 24 of the Act.

The background to the statutory recommendations was outlined for Members information with regard to the implementation of the new financial ledger system and the significant challenges experienced in respect of the Cash Receipting module.

Members were informed that the Cash Receipting module issues had been resolved and that the module was now live. However, the delays experienced had resulted in the non-delivery of the financial statements for 2019-20. This, in turn, had also impacted on the delivery of the publication of the 2020-21 accounts, which had been due by the end of July 2022.

Included in this report was the management response to the statutory recommendations and the actions that had already been undertaken.

During consideration of this report Members discussed the following in detail:

- Strict timescales and protocols that needed to be followed by the Council and auditors concerning the issue of a Section 24 Notice.
- The disappointment in respect of the statutory recommendations that had been issued by Grant Thornton
- The loss of Council staff and staffing levels within the Finance Team during the implementation of the new finance system.
- The timeline for completion of the outstanding financial statements for 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 financial statements.
- The external auditors' capacity to look at the financial statements.
- The approval process of the ERP including a Cash Receipting module system.
- The impact of Covid-19 on the finalisation of the accounts and implementation of the financial ledger system.
- The role of Internal Audit in the implementation of the new financial ledger system.
- Risk Management during the implementation of the new financial ledger system.

Interim Auditor's Annual Report 2020-21

The Interim Auditor's Annual Report 2020-21 was presented at this meeting. The report covered arrangements that were in place in the period up to 31st March 2021 and highlighted the following 3 key areas:

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1. Financial Sustainability
2. Governance
3. Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

In addition, there were 5 key recommendations and 13 improvement recommendations contained within the report.

During consideration of this report the importance of delivering the Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-2024 in two tranches and to have the correct staffing levels in order to do this was highlighted as vital to the Committee. In addition to this the following information was provided to Members:

- That the Corporate Management Team were driving extremely hard to increase the savings and a significant amount of the budget deficit had been covered.
- A considerable challenge that was still unknown was the large rise in inflation and associated pressures.
- Information on the Chancellor's Autumn Statement due on 17th November 2022.

Some concerns raised by Members during this item were as follows:

- Budget Holders' Responsibilities
- Workforce Planning
- Procurement Strategy

Audit Assurance of Safeguarding And Fire Evacuation (Verbal Update)

This verbal update in respect of the Audit Assurance of Safeguarding and Fire Evacuation was requested by the Chairman at the previous meeting of the Committee.

Members were reminded that the Safeguarding Audit, was given a moderate assurance not a limited assurance and that the Committee had received a report in April 2022, which had updated Members on the status and had highlighted that all actions had been completed. A further Safeguarding Audit would be undertaken in 2023-24 and the outcomes would be reported to the Committee. In addition to this, the Safeguarding Policy had been updated and Safeguarding training had also been rolled out to all Officers across the Authority.

The Health and Safety Training Records Audit, which had been undertaken in 2018 had been followed up and a report presented to the Committee in October 2021, stating that all of the actions had been completed and addressed.

Annual Appointment of Risk Champion

At this meeting no nominations were received for the role of the Risk Champion and therefore it was agreed that this item be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

14th December 2022

Annual Governance Statement 2020-21

The Interim Director of Finance presented the Annual Governance Statement 2020-21 which formed part of the annual closure of accounts process.

- Officers clarified that the purpose of this Annual Governance Statement was to provide the Council's governance position as of the 2020-21 financial year with sections on significant governance issues, including governance recommendations from the Section 24 Statement and the Interim 2020-21 Audit Report providing additional commentary on the progress that had been made up to the current point in time.
- Members requested that references to 'robust financial management' be removed from the Annual Governance Statement on the basis that the document referred to the financial year 2020-21, with only the appended sections in the tables referring to the progress that had been made since.
- It was clarified that AP/AR processes referenced on page 34 of the main agenda pack referred to the Accounts Payable/Accounts Receivable (AP/AR) systems. It was explained that the AP side of the system had worked correctly, whilst on the AR side the issue with cash receipting had been rectified as of 6 November 2022, but the process still required embedding.
- Officers noted that the Council's finance department was now almost up to full capacity, holding four vacancies with three agency staff covering those vacancies.
- Members asked how the effectiveness of working from home arrangements could be measured from an internal audit perspective. In response, it was stated that this was a matter of service delivery rather than audit and its effectiveness would be measured primarily by customer satisfaction rates, followed by the savings that it delivered. It was highlighted that local authorities had generally experienced a growth in productivity after switching to hybrid working measures.

Statement of Accounts 2020-21

The Interim Director of Finance presented the draft Statement of Accounts 2020-21 which provided the Committee with an opportunity to review the Accounts and formally approve them prior to the commencement of the external audit, estimated to

Agenda Item 9

start in mid-January 2023. A verbal update in respect of the Statement of Accounts was presented at a further meeting of the Committee on 19th January 2023.

Recommendation from Council for the Consideration of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee

As stated earlier in this report, at a meeting of Full council on 7th December 2022 a recommendation was made that the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee carry out a root and branch review of the process leading up to the Council's Section 24 Notice.

Following discussion of the recommendation it was agreed that an Audit Task Group would be set up and the investigation to take place in a timely manner.

Election of a Risk Champion

During consideration of this item Members requested that a role of the Risk Champion be presented for Members consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

19th January 2023

Root and Branch Review of how the Council arrived at the Section 24 Notice

At this meeting the Committee considered the arrangements for the proposed Audit Task Group to enable the root and branch investigation of how the Council arrived at the Section 24 Notice.

It was proposed that the meetings would start in early February 2023 and conclude prior to the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Review which was due to commence on 6th March 2023.

Verbal Update On Submission Of Statement Of Accounts 2020-21

It was reported that the indicative timeline for the issuance of opinion on the 2020-21 Statement of Accounts was July 2023 or later, with 2021-22 Accounts not expected to have an opinion issued before the end of the 2022-23 financial year, and the delivery of the 2022-23 Accounts expected before the end of the 2023-24 financial year; by which time the Council should be up-to-date with the auditing of the financial statements.

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In response to questions from Members, it was noted that the Section 24 Notice issued to the Council would lapse once the 2020-21 Statement of Accounts had been signed-off by the Auditors.

Internal Audit Progress Report

The Head of Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service reported that the main internal audit report before the Committee concerned the monitoring of the Council's fleet, and that three follow-up reports had also been submitted following the Committee's request for follow-up internal audit reviews in these areas.

Cyber security was raised at this meeting. The Committee was informed that cyber security insurance would not be available to local authorities after the end of this financial year as insurers were withdrawing this option due to the high risk. Bromsgrove District Council was covered by cyber security insurance until June 2024. But it was imperative that the Local Government Association (LGA) was lobbied on this matter to ensure that a 'self-insurance' option was available in the sector in the absence of private insurance provision.

Financial Savings Monitoring Report

This was the second Financial Savings Monitoring Report provided to Members this municipal year. During consideration of this item the overspend position of the Council and the amount of reserves were highlighted for Members' attention.

Risk Report

The Committee considered the Quarterly Risk Update at this meeting and that the Council now had an agreed definition of a Corporate Risk and that the number of departmental risks had continually reduced in the last 9 months. Issues with mould/damp in private sector properties and the cost of living would be included as a separate risk items in the future.

Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

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Worcestershire B61 8DA

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Overview and Scrutiny **Annual Report**

2022-2023



Bromsgrove
District Council

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to Bromsgrove District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board annual report for 2022/23.

The role of the Board is to cast a critical eye across the Council by scrutinising impartially and apolitically its operation and service provision for the benefit of residents.

It was nice to return to normality after the Covid years with all Board meetings being held in person. Task and working groups tended to continue using the virtual medium for meetings.

Over the last year topics investigated, amongst others, have included:

- Scrutiny of the Levelling Up fund awarded to the Council
- Air quality across the district and its measurement
- Council action on homelessness
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund mechanism for allocation
- The council's carbon reduction strategy
- The district wide CCTV system
- Annual review of the community safety partnership.

One task group was undertaken during the year: fuel poverty. The task group was well supported by Officers and my thanks also goes to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being for her support. The final report was well received. The Finance and Budget Working Group continued to meet regularly. However, the Board decided the Corporate Performance Working Group was no longer necessary and instead receives a six-monthly corporate performance report. Many thanks to those who chaired and contributed to the task and working groups.

During the year Jo Gresham, the Board's Democratic Services Officer was promoted to another role within the Council, I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her outstanding service to the Board and to welcome Mateusz Sliwinski as her replacement.

I would also like to thank all Board members for their work throughout the year and Officers of the Council who have contributed to the Board's work, in particular Councillor Jo Till, our able Vice Chairman. My thanks also go to Cabinet Members for their regular attendance and input to the Board's deliberations.

Councillor Charles Hotham
Chairman

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report which outlines our work during 2022-2023 (this covers the municipal year from May 2022 to April 2023) and provides general information on the overview and scrutiny processes at Bromsgrove District Council.

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the democratic decision-making process in local Councils, where elected Councillors outside of the Cabinet can contribute to shaping Council policy, community well-being and accountability. This is done by reviewing Council services and policies, community issues and key decisions and making recommendations for improvement.

The four key principles of Overview and Scrutiny, as defined by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) the lead organisation supporting Overview and Scrutiny in the country, are:

- provide constructive “critical friend” challenge;
- amplify the voice and concerns of the public
- be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- drive improvement in public services.

The Members of the Board consider these principles when selecting topics to investigate whether it is holding the Cabinet to account, reviewing policies, policy development or scrutiny of external bodies.

MEMBERSHIP (The Board is made up of 11 Members)



**Councillor Charles Hotham
Chairman**



**Councillor Jo-Anne Till
Vice-Chairman**



Councillor Sue Baxter



Councillor Andrew
Beaumont



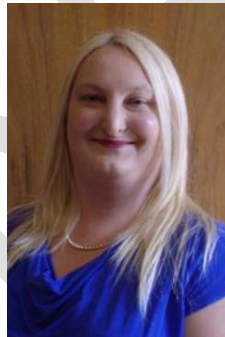
Councillor Steve
Colella



Councillor Richard
Deeming



Councillor Rob Hunter



Councillor Helen Jones



Councillor Adrian Kriss



Councillor Peter McDonald
until January 2023



Councillor Caroline Spencer

THE ROLE OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the Council's political structure, and it plays a vital role in improving the services that people of the District use, whether as a resident, employed here or just visiting. It does not just look at the way the Council carries out its services, it can look at anything which affects the lives of people within the District, and it allows citizens to have a greater say in Council matters.

Overview and Scrutiny allows Councillors to review and scrutinise decisions, look at existing practices and make recommendations to help ensure the residents of Bromsgrove District receive excellent services. The aim is to ensure Overview and Scrutiny adds value to the Council's decision-making process and makes a positive contribution towards policy development.

The detailed terms of reference and procedure rules for the Overview and Scrutiny Board can be found at Part 5 and Part 12 of the Council's Constitution. The Council's Constitution can be accessed by using the following link.

[Link to the Constitution of Bromsgrove District Council](#)

(Please click on the latest date to access the most recent version of the Council's constitution).

Meetings

Throughout 2022-23, Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings had been taking place in person and were open to the public to attend at Parkside Hall in Bromsgrove. Meetings are live streamed if there is significant local interest in the items being considered at Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings. Meetings of scrutiny Task Groups and Working Groups continue to be held remotely, since these meetings are private and are not live streamed.

REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE BOARD

The Board continues to receive updates in order to monitor the progress of recommendations it has made, through the Recommendation Tracker. This contains both recommendations put forward by Task Groups and accepted by the Cabinet, together with recommendations put forward by the Board itself. In respect of Task Groups, the Board does, where necessary, receive an update report 12 months following acceptance of its recommendations.

During the course of the year the Board received a number of reports and made a number of recommendations. There has been continued support from the relevant Portfolio Holders this year, with regular attendance from a number of them when a report which relates to their portfolio has been presented to the Board. This has given them an opportunity to hear first-hand the debate and ideas that the Board has put forward. On a number of occasions, whilst the Board has not made any recommendations in respect of an item, it has endorsed and supported recommendations which would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting.

30th May 2022

Corporate Performance Update - Performance Dashboard

As was agreed during the previous municipal year the Board considered matters in respect of Corporate Performance at Board level during 2022/23. At the meeting held on 30th May 2022 Officers assisting in the development of the new dashboard presented an update for Members' consideration. It was noted that the previous system was still available but was over a decade old and technically no longer fit for purpose. The new system would use more modern tools for accessing data.

It was explained that the current legacy dashboard had a number of technical limitations and a project had been set up to replace this with a modern more up to date dashboard. Initially the new dashboard would concentrate on the strategic measures in line with the Council Plan, touching on operational measures as part of the ongoing design.

In respect of timescales for implementation of the dashboard it was anticipated that it would be rolled out to officers and Councillors by the end of the year.

As part of consideration of the item, Members were given a demonstration of the development of the new dashboard to date and how it was envisaged it would be used.

Levelling Up Phase 1 Funding - Pre-Scrutiny

The Levelling Up Phase 1 Funding report was pre-scrutinised at this meeting, primarily from a funding perspective.

The update on progress to date was outlined for Members information. The recommendation included in the report requested delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services in order to spend up to

budgeted sum of £2.266m on the demolition of the Windsor Street site and the engagement of a design and build contractor for the Market Hall site.

At this meeting Councillor K. May provided details around the award of the Levelling Up funds and it being fundamental to further development across the District. During a detailed discussion procurement of contractors was discussed and the procurement process that was to be undertaken.

There were some concerns raised by Members in respect of the inclusion of the amount of £2.266m within recommendation 2 of the report. It was thought that the inclusion of an actual amount could potentially be compromise a cost effective tender for the projects. It was with this in the mind that the following amendment to the Cabinet recommendation was made:

“that authority be delegated to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services and the Executive Director of Resources to proceed to spend the Levelling Up Fund allocation up to a total of £2.266m 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.”

This recommendation was agreed by Cabinet at its meeting held on 1st June 2022.

Council Plan (Including Recovery and Restoration Plan) - Pre-Scrutiny

The addendum to the existing Council Plan was presented at this meeting and a brief overview of the report was provided to the Board.

It was noted that the Council Plan had been put in place prior to the pandemic. A workshop had been held with the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Cabinet Members in 2021 to ensure that the Council’s strategic purposes and measures remained relevant in a post pandemic world. There had been no changes to the majority of the Council’s priorities and milestones. However, there was a significant change in respect of the Green Thread, which had become a priority in its own right, with its own set of focal points. The addendum should be considered side by side with the Council Plan, which would be reviewed fully in 2023.

Members were reminded that the Recovery and Restoration Plan had been put in place as a response to the pandemic and the majority of this had now been completed, any remaining areas had been picked up within the Council Plan.

5th July 2022

Air Quality Annual Update

The Principal Officer (Planning & Pollution Control) from Worcestershire Regulatory Services presented the update on Air Quality. Included in the update were the following areas:

- DEFRA Annual Status Report 2022

- Actions Update – AQAP improvements
- Legislative Changes
- Air Quality Standards
- Trends in Monitoring

During a detailed discussion Members highlighted 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. In addition to this the importance of monitoring and the benefits of real time data was highlighted by Members. It was with this in mind that the following recommendation was agreed by the Board:

“that Cabinet invite 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.”

This recommendation was considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 12th October 2022 where a further presentation was given by Mr. Williams. He explained that there were new options for monitoring, including chemical based testing that was mobile and could be deployed in different locations as needed. Although there were financial implications of £4,000 to purchase and £2,000 to maintain the equipment, Cabinet agreed to the recommendation of installing an Electro Chemical Device as recommended by the Board.

Housing Enforcement Powers in the Private Rented Sector

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

An overview was provided of the Private Rented Sector legislation. Members were advised that there was limited data available on the range of enforcement which were undertaken in the District, both informally and formally.

The following matters were discussed in detail during consideration of this item:

- Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms in properties.
- Legislation on minimum energy performance certificate (EPC) rating requirements for properties to be privately let
- Legal definition of a landlord and park homes (including applying EPC rating legislation to such homes.
- Frequency with which property standards were monitored. Members were advised that the resources were not available to do pro-active assessment, but the team would respond to complaints about properties.
- Complaints about properties and fear of tenants to report issues with properties.
- Options for resolving tenants’ complaints about property standards including informal route and prosecution.
- Awareness about legislation and property standards required by landlords. It was noted that in many cases landlords were unaware of standards required

and compliance issues were resolved through Officers explaining the requirements to the landlord after which they would comply.

- Tenants' legal rights and resources to help people. It was noted that a great deal of information was available on the Council's website and Officers would help and support them when needed. There was also information about how to contact the Tenancy Association and information was promoted through the Council Tax leaflets. Additionally, the team worked closely with the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) including legislation that covered these. Current estimate for the number of HMOs in Bromsgrove was around 65.

11th October 2022

Worcestershire Homelessness And Rough Sleeping Strategy - Pre-Scrutiny

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager and the Housing Development and Enabling Manager presented a detailed presentation on the development of Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-25 and Action Plan. It was noted that the Homelessness Act 2002 placed a duty on all housing authorities to have an up-to-date homelessness strategy in place and the current Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy was due to expire on 31st December 2022. It was noted that subject to approval of the Strategy by Cabinet, a public consultation on the draft Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-25 would be held from 17th October to 4th December 2022.

Members discussed in detail a number of areas related to the Strategy and homeless in the District, and matters discussed included:

- Variation in funding allocated to local authorities through the Government's Homeless Prevention Fund for 2022/23
- Clarification around the Relief Duty.
- Trends in the number of rough sleepers in Bromsgrove including a decline in numbers during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Initiatives that were successful in reducing numbers of rough sleepers in the District, such as No First and No Second Night Out accommodation, which provided support above statutory duty.
- Ability of the services to respond to increased demand.
- Units of emergency temporary accommodation (TA) available in Bromsgrove
- Increase in the number of evictions from private sector accommodation due to the end of an embargo on Section 21 notice evictions.
- Reporting cases of rough sleeping and delays when reporting cases of rough sleeping to Streetlink to report rough sleeping. It was advised to report cases through the Streetlink website as any information submitted this way was logged on the central government website and alerted all local agencies, which enabled a coordinated, multiagency response.

- Other avenues to report rough sleeping/homelessness cases including feasibility of a 24-hour helpline.
- The issue of custody leavers being released on Fridays and a possibility of changing this policy on the national level.
- Mental Health Grant. The Worcestershire County Council (WCC) was not successful in the first round of bidding and another bid had been submitted by the public health team at WCC. Officers explained that, if successful, the grant would provide enough funds for appointment of only one health worker and other avenues were available to the Council to bid for larger funding.

Members requested that a Homelessness Services leaflet containing contact details of various support organisations be produced by the Council and that a local 24-hour contact number for reporting rough sleeping and homelessness cases be provided to Members. The recommendations of the Cabinet report were endorsed by the Board.

24th October 2022

Levelling Up Funding Update

A detailed update was received with respect to progress in the delivery of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) projects (LUF0297) in Bromsgrove Town Centre (the Windsor Street and the Former Market Hall sites). This update covered the period between April and August 2022.

The updates on the Windsor Street Site (former Fire Station) included the following:

- The Council purchased the site from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) and Worcestershire County Council (WCC) at a cost of £1.806m. It was noted this was below the original asking price of £2.4m.
- The direct cost to the Council of purchasing the Site was £285k, the remaining balance covered from the Levelling Up Fund.
- The freehold acquisition of the site enabled feasibility works to commence.
- The aim of the Windsor Street Site redevelopment was to deliver residential-led mixed housing which would include 29 town houses. It was confirmed that the residual land value stood at £1.90m (as of April 2022).
- The project was at the stage of that pre-development remediation works and building works would not commence on the Site until the remediation strategy and the environmental method statement had been fully approved by the Environment Agency (EA).
- It was currently planned that an operating lease would be granted to an operator once redevelopment had concluded. Site plan to resell the Site once redevelopment was completed. At present, an appraisal process was taking place with regards to finding a suitable operator.
- It was explained that parts of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding could be redirected towards either of the Levelling Up Fund projects, but such change would need approval of the Bromsgrove Partnership Board which oversaw the UKSPF funding. Authorities were nonetheless advised to prepare

reserve allocations from operational costs to ensure any overspends could be managed without redirecting funding from or to UKSPF projects.

The Board received updates on the Former Market Hall Site project as follows:

- Caution had to be exercised in this development as part of the Site lied in a conservation area and there was a landmark building adjacent to the Site.
- Cost was the main risk to the project delivery, exacerbated by the current inflationary pressures. Another risk was the short timeframe for planning submission as the deadline for this Site was March 2023. Public engagement would therefore need to commence immediately following the appointment of a multidisciplinary team in December 2022.
- Results of the survey of the creative business sector on the preferred uses for the Market Hall Site showed support for several different uses of the Site including as multifunctional community space, for creative studios, and workshop spaces.
- The soft market testing undertaken in July 2022 confirmed there was much interest for flexible workspace in the West Midlands.
- It was now recommended that a multidisciplinary design team (Multi-dis DT) be appointed for this project, as opposed to a contractor-led design team, from RIBA stage 2. This would enable the Council to avoid entering into an early agreement with a contractor and provided time to develop the project brief to a sufficient level before the document was released to the market.
- The Board requested to see a risk register for both Levelling Up Fund projects in order to fully understand the risk implications. Officers undertook to provide this to Members and reported that projects risks were monitored through quarterly risk reports which were being submitted to the Interim Section 151 Officer for sign-off and through bi-weekly meetings of the Levelling Up Projects Governance Board.
- It was currently envisaged that the ground floor of the proposed building would be occupied by commercial premises including food and beverage with space devoted for temporary exhibitions.
- It was impressed that any design proposals for the Site would need to be justifiable in terms of rental income generation to ensure the Site could operate without subsidy once in operation.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Update

The Board was updated on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in Bromsgrove as follows:

- Bromsgrove had been allocated a total of £2,805,712 from the UKSPF, available for a three-year period, from 2022/23 to 2024/25.
- The level of funding received would increase in each of the three years from £340,499 in 2022/23 to £1.784 million in 2024/25.
- The Government identified three investment priorities of Community and Place, Supporting Local Business, and People and Skills, which needed to be addressed with the use of UKSPF funding. Most of the funding was allocated

to year three of the UKSPF programme as this would be the only year in which funding would be available for the People and Skills priority.

- The Investment Plan submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) detailed 23 interventions, which were broad areas of investment where the fund would be spent in Bromsgrove. These interventions were spread across the three investment priorities. It was highlighted that the Council was not required to include details of any specific projects in the Investment Plan.
- The Government had provided an indicative date for issuing approvals for the Investment Plan of October 2022 onwards. Once approved, the Council was required to spend the funds on the interventions as submitted in the Investment Plan.
- As the initial call for projects had been open for a limited time only, a second call for projects had been undertaken for organisations to submit specific project proposals by 14th November 2022.

During the debate following presentation of the reports on this item, the following issues were discussed:

- Governance arrangements for managing the UKSPF within the District were explained. The Bromsgrove Partnership oversaw the development of the Investment Plan and would make decisions on project selection in its capacity as the local partnership group for managing the fund.
- UKSPF project selection criteria. It was explained that once the second call for projects had closed, all project proposal submissions would be assessed by a sub-committee of the Bromsgrove Partnership Board against strategic fit, deliverability, and value for money criteria. The Sub-Committee of the Partnership Board would then make recommendations to the main Board regarding which projects should be selected.
- Each project submission would be assigned against one of the three investment priorities and assessed against other projects assigned to that same investment priority. In Bromsgrove, it was recommended that 40 per cent of the funding should be allocated against Communities and Place priority, 30 per cent allocated to Supporting Local Business priority, and 30 per cent against People and Skills investment priorities. The Government allowed flexibility to vary these allocations by up to 30 per cent, where, for example, not enough projects were submitted in one of these investment priorities.
- Members requested that further detail be provided with respect of the decision-making arrangements for UKSPF fund allocations in Bromsgrove.
- Some Members requested that minutes of the Bromsgrove Partnership Board Sub-Committee be made available to the Overview and Scrutiny Board to enable transparency with regards to decision-making on UKSPF project allocations.

Climate Change Strategy/Carbon Reduction Implementation Plan

The Net Zero Projects Manager from the Midlands Net Zero Hub provided a detailed presentation on the Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy and Action Plan and the main points discussed included:

- Bromsgrove District Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy and Action Plan covered exclusively the carbon dioxide emissions of the Council (including emissions directly from the activities of the Council and emissions which the Council had influence over).
- The Council's carbon reduction targets were set in line with the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) target of 50 per cent carbon dioxide emissions reduction by 2030 and the ambition of becoming net zero by 2040.
- To reach an interim target of 50 per cent CO² emissions reduction by 2030, the Council would need to reduce its emissions by approximately 41 tonnes of per year. To achieve the net zero in the remaining 10 years to 2040, the Council would need to deliver on a target of approximately 51 tonnes reduction per year.
- The Council's 3-year Implementation Plan identified that Bromsgrove District Council emitted 818 tonnes of CO² in 2019 (the latest year for which data was available). The latest CO² emissions figure for Bromsgrove District as a whole was 669,200 tonnes per annum.
- The Council was successful in securing funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for the Artrix, which would contribute to a carbon reduction of 126 tonnes and a saving £16,000 per annum through the installation of heat pumps and solar panels.
- The Council had also applied for 'Public Sector Energy Efficiency Programme' funding for decarbonisation of the Parkside building.

During the consideration of this item the Board agreed to submit the following set of recommendations to the Cabinet:

1. *that the latest figure, quantifying Bromsgrove District Council's reduction in carbon emissions (in tonnes) between 2019 and the present, be provided.*
2. *that Birmingham City Council be asked to engage in partnership working on carbon reduction with Bromsgrove District Council and other Worcestershire Councils, especially given that Lickey Hills Country Park, located mainly in Worcestershire, is owned and maintained by Birmingham City Council.*
3. *that an easily accessible, infographic version of the Bromsgrove District Council Carbon Reduction Strategy and Action Plan be produced for the benefit of councillors and members of the public.*
4. *that Parish Councils be included as stakeholders in the Bromsgrove District Council Carbon Reduction Strategy and Action Plan and its ongoing development.*

These recommendations were considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 26th October 2022. The Cabinet had agreed to an amended set of these recommendations as follows:

1. All bordering Local Authorities be asked to engage in partnership working on carbon reduction with Bromsgrove District Council and other Worcestershire Councils and;
2. Parish Councils be included as stakeholders in the Bromsgrove District Council Carbon Reduction Strategy & Implementation Plan and its ongoing development and;
3. An easily accessible, infographic version of the Bromsgrove District Council Carbon Reduction Strategy & Implementation Plan be produced for the benefit of Councillors and members of the public on the website.

21st November 2022

CCTV Digitalisation Upgrade

The Head of Community and Housing Services presented a report on CCTV digitalisation upgrade. Since the last update on the CCTV scheme in April 2022 a further six camera locations in the District had been upgraded to digital and all cameras forming part of the CCTV scheme had been replaced.

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

Following the presentation, Members discussed the viability of either funding the upgrades to the remaining analogue cameras from the capital budget or holding discussions with the PCC regarding provision of funding for this purpose. Officers responded that the PCC was unlikely to be in a position to provide funding for this in the next few years and that the Council should also be mindful of any additional capital and revenue costs given current pressures. Most Members present were in agreement about giving priority to upgrading the remaining analogue cameras to digital and with this mind the Board made the following recommendations:

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

These recommendations were considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 18th January 2023. Recommendation 2 was agreed by Cabinet and recommendation 1 was recommended for approval by the Full Council. Recommendation 1 was subsequently approved by Full Council at its meeting on 25th January 2023.

Update on the Corporate Performance Dashboard

The Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy presented an update on the development of the Corporate Performance Dashboard and in doing so reported that the dashboard was in the final stages of development and would soon be available to view by Members and the public via the Council's website. It was reported that the Council would opt, subject to Members' agreement, to provide a public view of the dashboard as this did not entail having to purchase individual Power BI licences for each Member. This option also provided greater flexibility for Members in that the publicly available dashboard could be accessed from any PC that had an internet connection. Due to licensing policy for the Power BI suite, it would not be possible to provide access to the dashboard on a generic machine as licences were allocated to each named user.

It was anticipated the ongoing cost of the dashboard would not exceed £3,000 in licence costs per year. In addition, there would be a saving in staff time spent on populating the dashboard with data compared with the alternatives. The planned future move to the use of automated processes to generate quarterly reports, for example, would further reduce staff time costs. Members were informed that new performance indicator measures would be added to the dashboard on an ongoing basis following the live release.

Fuel Poverty Task Group – Final Report

The Chairman of the Fuel Poverty Task Group, Councillor R. Hunter, presented the final report of the Fuel Poverty Task Group. During the discussion it was explained that the Task Group had obtained evidence from a range of expert witnesses representing both the Council and external organisations and the Task Group's recommendations were evidence-based. These recommendations were ready to be implemented and this action would be timely.

The Chairman of the Fuel Poverty Task Group further noted that some of the actions outlined in the Task Group's recommendations had already started to be taken, for example a leaflet on fuel poverty had been produced by Officers which contained useful information for residents.

Following the presentation, Members discussed the work of the Task Group and it was noted that the Council and Act on Energy had undertaken publicity work to encourage people to come forward if they were struggling with energy costs or were in fuel poverty, and the Council had also sought to find ways to engage with those residents who were eligible for help but did not come forward.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed to recommend that the Cabinet adopt the recommendations of the Fuel Poverty Task Group, subject to a minor change to recommendation 6, to require that the Cabinet should actively explore all external

funding options available to the Council to support Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups. It was therefore recommended that:

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

These recommendations were approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 23rd November 2022.

Finance and Budget Working Group – Update

The Chairman presented an update on the Finance and Budget Working Group meeting of 17th November 2022, where the following matters were discussed:

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

With respect to the Notice of Motion, this related to a proposal submitted to provide free short term car parking for Blue Badge holders in all Bromsgrove District Council

(BDC) owned car parks. Consideration was given to whether a business case could be drawn up for this proposal and whether it was suitable to consider for consideration as part of the budget setting process. The Chairman reported that at the Finance and Budget Working Group meeting on 17th November 2022, most of the Members present agreed that provision of free short term car parking for Blue Badge holders would be prohibitively expensive for the Council at the current time. However, the Working Group asked Officers to investigate if more up-to-date data could be found from sources such as parking ticket machines, to determine the true demand for Blue Badge parking spaces in Bromsgrove.

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

17th January 2023

Planning Enforcement Update

The Technical Services Manager for Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) provided a report around planning enforcement. It was noted the most desirable outcome was always compliance by the offender within an acceptable timeframe. When there was a breach of planning conditions, the enforcement action taken by the local planning authority was proportionate to the severity of the breach in question and a staged approach was adopted towards ensuring compliance, whereby a number of warning letters would be issued to the applicant, and if this did not lead to resolution, formal enforcement action would be taken, starting with Enforcement Notices (including Stop Notices) and prosecution or injunction if no compliance had been secured.

During consideration of this report, Members asked discussed a number of matters related to enforcement and Officers provided answers to Members' queries.

It was requested that data on the number of planning enforcement cases that had been closed during the 2021-22 municipal year through to 10 November 2022 be provided and Officers undertook to compile and distribute this information to Members.

Finance and Budget Working Group – Update

During this update, the Chief Executive presented a report on the constitutional implications of allowing an elected Councillor who was not a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board to join the Working Group. It was explained that under the

legislation non- Overview and Scrutiny Members were not precluded from joining any of the Board's Task Groups, provided they were not Members of the Cabinet or the Chairman of the Council. It was also noted that under Section 15(5)(c) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the political balance rules, did not apply to Working Groups as these were not classed as 'ordinary committees' under the legislation. Members were advised, however, that as of this meeting, other Members of the Overview and Scrutiny 'pool' had not been consulted about this vacancy.

It was agreed by the Board that the membership of the Finance and Budget Working Group should be restricted to a sub-group of members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board unless this option had been exhausted and a long-term vacancy had been identified which necessitated a wider membership of the Overview and Scrutiny 'pool' to join the Working Group

The Board agreed that the following amendments be made to the Terms of Reference of the Finance and Budget Working Group, to apply from the start of the municipal year 2023-24:

1. The Working Group shall comprise 7 Members, to be made up of 6 Members (who are Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board) plus the Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee.
2. Should a vacant post remain after Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board had been approached, members of the Overview and Scrutiny "pool" (i.e. those who do not sit on the Overview and Scrutiny Board and are not Cabinet Members) may be appointed to fill the vacancy.

Levelling Up Fund Update – Purchase of Windsor Street Site and Former Market Hall Site

The Board received an operational update with respect to progress in the delivery of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) projects (LUF0297) in Bromsgrove Town Centre. The update covered the period September 2022 – January 2023 for the two projects taking place at Windsor Street Site and the Former Market Hall Site.

With regards to the Windsor Street Site, the Board was informed that:

- The Environment Agency (EA) provided a positive response to the remediation strategy that had been prepared for the Site.
- The draft remediation specification and monitoring plan had been prepared and would now be reviewed before submission to the EA.
- Soft market testing period for finding a remediation contractor had been extended following Programme Board agreement as additional procurement frameworks had to be approached due to a risk of inadequate number of returns by interested contractors.
- Going forward two procurement frameworks would be used, the Pagabo and the Consortium Procurement Construction (CPC) frameworks.

With regards to the Former Market Hall Site, the Board was informed that:

- One Creative Ltd would be appointed as the project's technical adviser and cost consultant following procurement exercise in November 2022.
- RIBA stage two closed in December 2022 with the brief for the design team including proposals for the Main Building to be a mix of open plan office spaces and adaptable workspaces with food and beverage provided on the ground floor
- Proposals for the Pavilion Building were to provide a two-storey pavilion-style building with a covered area to perform as a market square and the ground floor to be adaptable to hosting a range of community events and festivals.

The Board also received an update on the financial implications of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) projects at Windsor Street (Former Fire Station) and Former Market Hall Sites.

(During the consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which related to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

8th February 2023

Review of the work of North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership 2022-23

Local authorities were required to scrutinise and review the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership on an annual basis. At this meeting the work of the local crime and disorder reduction body, the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP), had been scrutinised by the Board, focusing on the work undertaken by the Partnership in Bromsgrove District.

Members received a detailed presentation and held a detailed debate on the NWCSP Plan for 2021-24, the core funding of NWCSP, and the grants available to the Partnership through the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and how they had been spent within Bromsgrove District. An update was also received on the initiatives of the Partnership, including the Community Safety Project updates for 2022-23. Case studies were also presented on Tibberton Improvement Project and on the resolution of a long standing anti-social behaviour (ASB) problem at West Hills, Hopwood boundary with West Heath, to showcase the positive impact that the Partnership had in reducing crime and disorder.

There was also a discussion regarding local initiatives, particularly with young people including the Empowering Young People Project, Youth Outreach, Young Citizen's Challenge, Bromsgrove Youth Hub, and The Respect Programme.

The Community Safety Partnership Manager and the Community Safety Project Officer presented the Review, and the information was well received by Members, who were grateful for such a detailed overview of the work of the Partnership.

13th March 2023

Overview & Scrutiny Board Report – Damp & Mould

The Board received a report on damp and mould in Bromsgrove District properties, detailing what powers the Council possessed regarding property standards and how Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT), a local registered provider, were dealing with this issue. It was noted that BDHT held approximately 86 per cent of the social housing stock in the district and thus were not the only social housing provider. Several other providers also operated in the district, and they were subject to the same responsibilities and requirements with regards to maintaining housing standards.

It was reported that:

- It was estimated based on the English Housing survey data that around 440 private rented sector properties in Bromsgrove suffered from damp and mould.
- In the last three years the Council's Private Sector Housing Team completed on average 62 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) inspections per year in Bromsgrove.
- The Housing Act 2004 introduced the HHSRS. It was a calculation of the effect of 29 possible hazards on the health of occupiers and any visitors and during inspections Officers assessed properties against all 29 hazards.
- The HHSRS applied equally to all tenures, therefore all enforcement options were available to the Council regardless of whether the premise in question was owner occupied, privately rented or a Registered Providers (RP) property.

During discussion some of the matters which were highlighted were as follows:

- Enforcement was built around a process of escalation and as such prosecution would only be considered in serious circumstances such as a deliberate, negligent, or persistent breach of legal obligations.
- The Council's Private Sector Housing Team would undertake a thorough assessment of the property based on HHSRS before determining whether damp and mould were occurring at a property due to lifestyle of property occupiers or due to structural issues, for example penetrative damp occurring from blocked gutters.
- A tenant could request inspection by calling the Private Sector Housing Team, but the landlord would also be informed and would need to be present at the proposed visit. In circumstances where the landlord was uncooperative, the inspection could take place without the landlord being present.
- External wall insulation would normally not cause damp to occur. Instead, the issue was that properties were becoming more sealed through so with no air circulation, which caused condensation and, in turn, mould. It was noted that this was often linked to lifestyle choices where occupants left windows and ventilation vents permanently shut and/or did not turn the heating on.
- Government guidance was awaited on powers available if tenants were not cooperating with the advice given on how to tackle mould/damp issues and the condition of the property was deteriorating due to negligence.

Former Market Hall Site Proposal – pre-scrutiny

The Board was informed that Bromsgrove District Council had been awarded £14.5m of Levelling Up Funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Almost £11m of this funding was allocated to the redevelopment of the Former Market Hall Site. In respect of allocation of funding, it was clarified that Levelling Up Funding could not be allocated to any other projects due to the strict funding criteria.

It was reported that public consultation was currently underway in Bromsgrove regarding the Community Hub proposal along with proposals for a high quality office building at the Former Market Hall site. The consultation was open for comments online on the Council's website until 21st March 2023.

It was highlighted that alongside the landmark office space, a rooftop bar and a high quality restaurant were also included in the design for Former Market Hall Site. These plans were designed to provide diversity and choice for visitors to Bromsgrove Town Centre. It was also noted that demand for premium office space in Bromsgrove had recently been evidenced in a report published by GJS Dillon regarding the Worcestershire Commercial Property Market.

(During the consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which related to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

29th March 2023

Provision of Street Name Plates

A report on Street Name Plates (SNPs) provision within Bromsgrove District was presented by the Environmental Services Manager. It was clarified that the Council had responsibility for the repair and maintenance of Street Name Plates (SNPs) on adopted roads. This included replacement, when necessary, either due to accidental damage, vandalism or normal wear and tear. On new developments, it was the developer's responsibility to erect SNPs initially to the Council's specification.

It was reported that the Council's contract with the existing approved manufacturer of street name plates was due to finish at the end of this financial year. A quotation exercise was due to be undertaken shortly to ascertain the manufacturer to be contracted for the next three years.

It was explained that SNPs were being ordered in bulk due to the saving on delivery costs that this option provided. Damage to SNPs was usually reported by the general public or Members. After a site inspection to determine what remedial works would be required, the damaged sign might be added to the order for the supply of a new SNP, with the manufacturer taking on average 6 weeks to complete the order after it had been raised.

Members discussed the annual budget currently allocated for replacement of street name plates and most Members felt that the current budget of £3,900 per year was too low to provide appropriate coverage of replacement and that the budget should be increased on the basis that at least two new signs per Ward would need to be installed per year.

A motion was agreed by the Board that it be recommended to Cabinet that it consider a report on Street Name Plates including data on the number of signs replaced each year and the newly tendered price per sign (including delivery), and that it be recommended that Cabinet agree to the annual budget for Street Name Plates (SNPs) to be increased to a level suggested as appropriate by Officers. The following two recommendations were agreed by the Board:

- 1. A report on Provision of Street Name Plates be presented to Cabinet.*
- 2. The budget allocation for provision of Street Name Plates be reviewed by Cabinet and increased as per Officer recommendation of the aforementioned report.*

These recommendations are due to be considered by Cabinet at its next meeting, currently scheduled for 7th June 2023.

Electric Vehicle Charging Update

An update on the provision of electric vehicle charging points within Bromsgrove District was provided. It was explained that the Council was looking to increase the number of charging points within the District providing 'off-street' charging facilities for residents with no access to their own charge point.

Currently, four detailed responses were received to the tender for this service which were being evaluated before the contract could be awarded. The prospective contractors were provided with a selection of locations (as listed in the report to the Board) some of which did not have chargers and others which only had one charging point in place. These were initial locations proposed for charging point installation and the rationale was that once the Council had engaged with a contractor, additional locations could be discussed at a later stage.

Some Wards were currently not on the list for charging point installation. This included Rubery South Ward where there had been delays due to contractor issues.

Fly Tipping and Environmental Enforcement Update

The Board received the briefing note and the matters highlighted included:

- Incidence of fly-tipping in the District had been decreasing and the number of recorded to date in 2022-23 had been the lowest recorded in the last eight years.
- The cost of environmental crime incurred by the Council had been reducing over the last 8 years. Nevertheless, the Council still had to spend almost £100,000 per year in tackling environmental crime.

- Demand for fly-tipping monitoring had been greater than the resource available to the Council and there were two cases of fly-tipping captured on CCTV footage that were currently followed up as active cases.

Members requested that Officers undertake the following actions:

- Review national legislation with respect to the maximum distance allowed for placement of CCTV warning signs away from the camera (without necessitating the use of RIPA legislation).
- Add a standing item on fly-tipping and environmental enforcement to the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme, to be considered on a bi-annual basis.

Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme

The Board agreed to cancel the meeting scheduled for 17th April 2023 due to the pre-election period and agreed to this Annual Report for 2022-23 being considered at the first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board in the 2023-24 municipal year.

Conclusion of the 2022-23 Year

The year was concluded with special mention and note of thanks to two long-standing Councillors and current Members of the Board, Councillors C. Spencer and Councillor R. Deeming, for whom this was the last year on the Council.

Councillor C. Spencer served as a Bromsgrove District Councillor for twenty consecutive years from the 2003-04 municipal year. Councillor Spencer represented Slideslow Ward and was the Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council from 2015 to 2019.

Councillor R. Deeming served as a Bromsgrove District Councillor for thirty-two years, having first joined the Council in 1987-88 municipal year. Councillor Deeming represented Cofton Ward. Among Chairmanship positions held over the years, Councillor Deeming had most recently been serving as the Chairman of the Licensing Committee in the current municipal year (2022-23).

Members of the Board expressed their gratitude to Councillors R. Deeming and C. Spencer for their stunning contribution to residents of Cofton and Slideslow respectively, and to Bromsgrove District as a whole.

The Chairman also took the opportunity to thank the rest of the Board for their contributions. Councillors A. Kriss, M. Middleton, and the Vice-Chairman, Councillor J. Till, were thanked for their service to the Council as it was noted they were not contesting the upcoming elections.

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (HOSC)

The Council's representative on this Committee must be a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and is required to provide the Board with regular updates on the work being carried out.

The Board's representative for the municipal year 2022/23 was Councillor S. Baxter.

During the year Councillor Baxter highlighted the following areas and responded to questions from Members:

- Ambulance Hospital Handover Times
- Mental Health provision in Worcestershire (including Hill Crest MH Ward)
- Physiotherapy Services and Elective Surgery
- Maternity Services in Worcestershire
- Community Ambulances and Primary Care (GP) Access within Worcestershire
- Health Inequalities resulting from the Covid-19 Pandemic
- Medical Staff Shortages.

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WORKING GROUPS – UPDATE

Background to Working Groups

In 2022-23 the Board continued to have a dedicated Finance and Budget Working Group. This had enabled a dedicated group of Members to consider these areas in both more detail and in a timelier manner and had also, when necessary, enabled Members to feed through any recommendations to Cabinet more promptly.

The terms of reference for the Finance and Budget Working Group were agreed by the Board and were regularly reviewed to ensure that the work being carried out remained relevant. This year the Board agreed to make some changes to the Finance and Budget Working Group terms of reference which are to be implemented from the start of 2023-24 municipal year. A review of the Working Groups, as part of the review of the overall Overview and Scrutiny Board function, had historically taken place at the April meeting. This year it was agreed that the April meeting would be cancelled and the Board's Annual Report be considered at the first meeting of the Board in the 2023-24 municipal year, where the Working Groups would also be reviewed.

Finance & Budget Working Group

Membership: Councillors C. A. Hotham (Chairman), Councillors S. R. Colella, R. Hunter, A. D. Kriss and J. Till

This Group met on four occasions this year and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling has attended all the Group's meetings, together with the Interim Director of Finance and the Head of Finance and Customer Services.

The list below contains some of the reports which the Working Group has considered and gives an insight into the work that has been carried out:

- 2023/24 Budget
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2025/26
- The Financial Outturn Report
- Blue Badge Motion which had been submitted by Councillor S. Robinson at the Full Council meeting held on 3rd November 2021
- Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts and Premiums report
- Fees and Charges

Once again, by being able to consider a number of reports in more detail and prior to their consideration at Cabinet, Members of the Board were able, via the Working Group, to play an increased part in the budget setting process.

Corporate Performance Working Group

As detailed in the previous year's Annual Report it was agreed by Members of the Board that the Corporate Performance Working Group would no longer meet in 2022-23. It was deemed more appropriate to scrutinise the Performance of the Council at the main Board meetings every 6 months.

In 2022-23, The Board considered items on the Performance Dashboard Update on two occasions and the Board was also regularly updated on the progress in implementing the Performance Dashboard throughout 2022-23 municipal year.

TASK GROUP INVESTIGATIONS & SHORT, SHARP REVIEWS CARRIED OUT

The detailed final reports of all these investigations can be found on the Council's website within the Overview and Scrutiny section.

Fuel Poverty Task Group

Membership: Councillors R. Hunter (Chairman), S. Baxter A.B Beaumont, M. Glass, H. Rone-Clarke, J. King, C. Spencer, and K. Van Der Plank

The outcome on the Fuel Poverty Task Group investigation can be found earlier in this report in the 'Reports Considered by the Board' section – 21st November, Fuel Poverty Task Group – Final Report.

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Conclusion

A significant amount of pre-scrutiny work has been carried out by the Board throughout the year and based on detailed discussions a number of recommendations had been made to Cabinet and Full Council. Some of these recommendations were subsequently approved by the decision-making bodies. In addition to this, the work of the the Finance and Budget Working Group has been useful in providing Members with an opportunity to look at complex finance reports in some considerable detail. During the year one task group (the Fuel Poverty Task Group) had also concluded and made a number of constructive recommendations which were accepted by Cabinet. Overall, this was a positive and constructive year for the Overview and Scrutiny function in Bromsgrove.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Overview and Scrutiny Board Meetings

Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings are open to the public. To find out more visit our website at <http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/the-council/overview-and-scrutiny.aspx> or telephone 01527 881288 and ask to speak to the Democratic Services Officer.

Public Involvement

If you would like to have your say on issues being considered by Overview and Scrutiny or to suggest a topic for consideration you can email scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk or complete the form on the Council's website at <http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/the-council/overview-and-scrutiny/public-participation.aspx>

Giving Evidence

Members of the public or organisations with a special interest or knowledge about a particular topic being considered by Overview and Scrutiny can put forward evidence to a Committee or appear as a witness to give evidence for an investigation. If you think you or your organisation might be able to participate in an issue currently under review, please contact us.

If you have a personal issue with a Council service you may find it more useful to contact your local ward Councillor who can help you decide the best way to take it forward.

Contact Overview and Scrutiny

If you would like to find out more about any aspect of the Overview and Scrutiny Board then you can email scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk or telephone 01527 881288 and ask to speak to the Democratic Services Officer.

Overview and Scrutiny

Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

Bromsgrove District Council

Parkside, Market Street, Bromsgrove B61 8DA

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Council
2023

19th July

Role of the Independent Person (Standards)

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Charles Hotham
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Claire Felton
Report Author	Job Title: Claire Felton Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services Contact email: c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact tel: (01527) 881429	
Wards Affected		All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		N/A
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council **RESOLVE** that:-

- 1) For the purposes of the appointment of independent persons under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011, the Council join the group of Worcestershire local authorities who operate a joint pool of independent persons.
- 2) Authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to appoint the named individual independent persons currently serving in the joint pool, and to make any future appointments to the role of independent person.
- 3) The current Independent Person Mr Mel Nock continue to act as Independent Person for Bromsgrove District Council for another four-year term until July 2027.
- 4) That any costs arising from the new arrangements for independent persons be met from the existing budget.
- 5) That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make any consequential changes to the Constitution.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2012 the Localism Act 2011 introduced changes to the rules governing how Councils uphold standards in public life. This resulted in the introduction of a new Code of Conduct for Members and changes to the way complaints were investigated and sanctioned. The changes brought in new rules relating to the disclosure of interests, including the possibility of police action in cases of non-disclosure of disclosable pecuniary interests.

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19th July

- 2.2 Amongst the new measures brought in was the requirement that each council should appoint at least one “independent person” whose views should be sought and taken into account by the authority before it decides on an allegation that it has decided to investigate (section 27 (7)(a) Localism Act 2011). The Localism Act also provided that the independent person could be consulted by an elected member whose conduct had been complained about, this option being available to both District Council members and Parish Council members.
- 2.3 At Council on 19th June 2012 Members approved the details of how the relevant provisions of the Localism Act 2011 would be implemented at Bromsgrove and delegate authority to the Head of Legal Services to carry out a recruitment exercise to identify suitable independent persons. Following two rounds of recruitment, at its meeting on 26th September 2019 Council appointed two independent persons being Mr Mel Nock and a second independent person who subsequently dropped out and had only limited involvement in the post.
- 2.4 Mr Mel Nock has thus been acting as the Council’s Independent Person since 2012. During this time the more informal approach to resolving complaints, including the involvement of the independent person and use of consultation with group leaders, has proved to be very useful and has resulted in local settlement being reached in the majority of incidents reported. The Independent Person has attended Council meetings to observe and made himself available for consultation as required by the legislation. An allowance is paid to compensate the independent person for their time and this amount currently stands at £1632 per annum.
- 2.5 At the time of writing this report Mel Nock has been serving as Independent Person for 12 years. The Monitoring Officer has been looking into the future of the role and how additional independent persons could be added to give more resilience.

The options considered by the Monitoring Officer are as follows:-

- a. To advertise the post of Independent Person and carry out an inhouse recruitment process. This would involve interviewing prospective candidates as to suitability through the Appointments Committee and providing training for any successful appointees.
- b. For Bromsgrove District Council to join the existing group of Councils in Worcestershire who jointly retain a pool of Independent Persons that are made available to all the Councils in the group as and when required. The current member authorities are Worcestershire County Council, Wyre Forest District Council, Wychavon District Council, Malvern Hills

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District Council, Worcester City Council and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. The host authority is Worcestershire County Council and the costs are shared by the participating councils.

- 2.7 Having considered the two options, the Monitoring Officer is of the view that the second option of joining the existing county wide joint pool has a number of advantages.
- The County Council who administers the group has indicated that in principle the Council may join. This will provide instant access to the existing joint pool of independent persons and will thus avoid the time and expense involved in carrying out inhouse recruitment.
 - The current independent persons from the joint pool will already have relevant experience of having dealt with member complaints for other councils.
 - Bromsgrove District Council would be required to contribute a percentage of the support costs for the Independent Persons in the joint pool but as all the costs would be shared between the participating councils it is not anticipated that this cost would exceed £500 per annum.
 - A further advantage of using the joint pool would be to provide greater resilience based on the number of independent persons in the pool which currently stands at six.
- 2.8 The outcome of the recent Corporate Peer Challenge, emphasised the importance of improving governance generally across the Council. The recommendations in this report will support that approach with particular regard to adding resilience, achieving efficiencies, and enabling the Council to involve a greater number of independent people with relevant experience in the standards process.
- 2.9 Members of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee considered a report from the Monitoring Officer summarising the proposals set out above at its meeting on 1st June 2023 and indicated their support for the option of using the county wide joint pool.
- 2.10 In addition, at that meeting of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee Members were advised that it was also proposed that, alongside entering the countywide pool, Mel Nock should be retained for a further term to support the Monitoring Officer in the management of Member-to-Member complaints.

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- 2.11 Members are therefore asked to approve in principle the change to using the County wide joint pool of independent persons. The relevant legislation (as set out at paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 below) requires the named individuals in the pool to be “appointed” by the Council. Historically this has been performed by Council but given that the new system is going to be more fluid and there may be occasions when changes are needed to be made more frequently, it is proposed that appointment of the named independent persons be delegated to the Monitoring Officer.
- 2.12 At the time of writing this report, the final arrangements for the Council to join the county wide group are being progressed with colleagues at the County Council. Mr Mel Nock’s continuing availability to act as Independent Person during this time and beyond will provide some continuity as well as a fall back position in case there is any delay in completing those arrangements.

OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The reasons for the decisions sought are set out in section 2 above. From an operational point of view, the process for the investigation of standards will be no different, save that rather than calling on Mr Mel Nock to fulfil the independent person role this will be undertaken by one of the independent persons from the joint pool.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The annual cost for the honorarium currently paid to Mr Mel Nock for his services as Independent Person is £1632. On the basis that he is retained for a further four years these costs will continue to apply but will be shared equally with Redditch Borough Council. In addition, the Council will be required to contribute a percentage of the fees of the independent persons in the joint pool. It is anticipated that the Bromsgrove Council contribution towards the shared fees would not exceed £500 and would therefore be met from the existing budget.
- 4.2 Other than details set out above, there are no financial implications of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 27 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 states that “a relevant authority must promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority.”

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5.2 Under section 28(6) and (7) of the Localism Act 2011, the Council must have in place arrangements under which allegations that a members or co-opted member of the authority (or parish council within the authority's area), or a committee or sub-committee of the authority has failed to comply with that authority's Code of Conduct can be investigated and decisions made on such allegations.

5.3 Such arrangements must provide for the authority to appoint at least one independent person, whose views must be sought by the authority before it takes a decision on an allegation which it has decided shall be investigated, and whose views can be sought by the authority at any other stage, or by a member (or a member, or co-opted member of a parish council) against whom an allegation has been made.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

6.1 Effective corporate governance including meeting the duty to promote and maintain high standards in public life and enabling conduct issues regarding councillors to be investigated are essential components for the Council's operation and the achievement of strategic purposes.

Climate Change Implications

6.2 None

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.3 None

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 By approving the recommendations in this report the Council will be fulfilling its statutory obligations under Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Council "Standards Regime" 19th June 2012

Council
2023

19th July

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Charles Hotham	11 th July 2023
Lead Director / Head of Service	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	10th July 2023
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter – Interim S151 Officer	10 th July 2023
Legal Services	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	10th July 2023
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	N/A	N/A
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	N/A	N/A

Council
2023

19th July

Outside Body Appointments 2023/24

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor C. Hotham	
Portfolio Holder Consulted			
Relevant Head of Service			
Report Author Claire Felton	Job Title: Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services Contact email: c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881429		
Wards Affected		All	
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		N/A	
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		An Effective and Sustainable Council	
Non-Key Decision			
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.			

1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Council considers nominating to the bodies listed at Appendix 1 as appropriate.

2. **BACKGROUND**

2.1 The Council makes appointments and nominations to a number of Outside Bodies each year. This report sets out the details of the appointments which are made by the Council.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 No specific legislation governs the appointment or nomination of members to outside bodies by the Council. Depending on the nature of the relationship the Council has with the organisation, the legal status of the organisation, its corporate, charity or other status and its constitution, there are differing legal implications for the members sitting on these bodies.

4.2 The Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order 2004 governs the Council's ability to indemnify members sitting on outside bodies.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The action proposed in this report supports the strategic purpose “an effective and sustainable Council”.
- 5.2 Council reviews outside body appointments on an annual basis to ensure that those bodies to which the Council puts forward nominations continue to address the needs and aspirations of the District.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.3 There are no specific climate change implications.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific equalities and diversity implications.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 A number of bodies ask the Council to make appointments to them for terms of office which vary from one year upwards.
- 6.3 The Council has previously agreed that a number of such appointments, usually to national or regional bodies, should be made by office. Where there are specific requirements for appointments these are shown against the organisations in the appendix.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There would be risks arising if the Council failed to make appointments to the Outside Bodies listed in this report; the nature of the risk would vary depending on the type of body in question. The Council needs to participate in certain Outside Bodies to ensure that existing governance arrangements can be complied with. On other bodies the risk would be less severe but non-participation would detract from the Council’s ability to shape and influence policies and activities which affect the residents of Bromsgrove.

Council
2023

19th July

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendices

Appendix 1 - list of appointments to outside bodies

Background Papers:

Terms of reference and governing documents of organisations are held by Democratic Services.

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor C. Hotham	
Lead Director / Head of Service	Peter Carpenter, Interim Deputy S151 – Finance	
Financial Services	Michelle Howell, Head of Finance & Customer Services	
Legal Services	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	

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Council Appointments to Outside Bodies

19TH July 2023

Organisation	No. of Appts & Length of Office	Appointed 2022/2023	Nominations 2023/2024
Amphlett Hall Management Committee	2 (previous years 4) 1 year	A. Beaumont S. Webb	
Citizens' Advice Bromsgrove and Redditch	2 1 year	J. Till S. Webb	
Hereford & Worcestershire Integrated Care Partnership Assembly	1 and a substitute (new group first appointment made by Council on 17th October 2022)	S. Webb Substitute:	
Midlands Joint Council for Environmental Protection	2 1 year	M. Glass	
West Mercia Police and Crime Panel <i>Rep and sub must be from majority political group on the Council</i>	1 rep and 1 substitute	H. Jones Substitute: A. Kriss	
Worcestershire County Council Corporate Parenting Board	1 1 year	M. Sherrey	
Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	1 1 year	Delegate to O&S Board (at the meeting on 10 th July 2023)	
Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board (previously Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee)	2 1 year To include relevant Portfolio holder and one other member of the controlling group and	P. Thomas H. Jones Substitute: R. Deeming	

Agenda Item 12

Organisation	No. of Appts & Length of Office	Appointed 2022/2023	Nominations 2023/2024
	one substitute		

Council
2023

19th July

APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM HEAD OF PAID SERVICE, RETURNING OFFICER AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Charlie Hotham, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling	
Portfolio Holder Consulted			
Relevant Head of Service		Deb Poole, Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy	
Report Author Claire Felton	Job Title: Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services Contact email: c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: (01527) 64252		
Wards Affected		NA	
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		N/A	
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		An effective and sustainable Council	
Non-Key Decision			
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.			

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council RESOLVE that

on the retirement of the current Chief Executive, Mrs Susan Hanley be appointed as the Council’s Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer on an interim basis until such time as a new Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service is appointed and is in post.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 This report details proposals in respect of the appointment of Mrs Susan Hanley as the Council’s Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer on an interim basis, following the current Chief Executive’s retirement, until a new Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service has been appointed and is in post.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

3.1 Section 21 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires the council to make arrangements to ensure that all the authority’s functions are properly co-ordinated as well as organising staff and appointing appropriate management through the appointment of

- proper officer(s).
- 3.2 The Council is required to appoint an officer as Head of Paid Service and this role has been carried out by the council's Chief Executive.
- 3.3 It is recommended that following the resignation of the current Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive, Mrs Hanley is appointed to the position of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service whilst the recruitment process is undertaken and until a new Chief Executive is in post.
- 3.4 The law requires that the appointment of Head of Paid Service, is made by full Council even where this is on a temporary basis and this cannot be delegated.
- 3.5 The Chief Executive is also appointed as the Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer and so it is recommended that Mrs Hanley is also appointed to these positions. Whilst there may be no immediate need, the recruitment of a new Head of Paid Service can take some months before a new officer is in post and so appointing to these positions now, to take effect when the current Chief Executive leaves, would be prudent; as again these appointments are the responsibility of full Council.
- 3.6 It is important for the operation of the Council functions that someone is identified as Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service. Rather than appoint an external interim to the role whilst recruiting to the substantive post, it is felt that, given her experience and skill set, the most appropriate solution for the Council is to ask Mrs Susan Hanley (current Deputy Chief Executive) to undertake the role on an Interim basis. It is also proposed that she would fulfil the functions of Returning Officer and Electoral Returning Officer on an interim basis.
- 3.7 Depending on the length of time it takes to recruit to the substantive position, there may need to be backfilling of the work currently undertaken by the Deputy Chief Executive. This will need to be developed as things become clearer with any additional financial implications resolved.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The salary difference between the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Executive is £22k per annum. From September, there is £15.8k of budget available a month from the vacant Chief Executive role to ensure posts are funded and backfilled until the role is filled.

- 4.2 It would be significantly more expensive for both Councils to source an external interim Chief Executive for the period of recruitment.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The key legal requirements are highlighted in Section 3.
- 5.1 Legislation regarding the appointment of the Council's Returning Officer is Section 35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Registration Officer is Section 8 of the same Act.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 6.1 The appointment of Mrs Susan Hanley as Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer on an interim basis, following the retirement of the current Chief Executive, will ensure that there is consistency and continuity during the period in which a new Chief Executive and Head of Service is being recruited.
- 6.2 This continuity will assist the Council in terms of being an effective and sustainable authority moving forward.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 There are no specific climate change implications.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4 There are no known equalities implications arising from the options outlined in this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 It is desirable for the Chief Executive appointment to be made in a timely way but this must be balanced with the need to carry out a full and robust process to select the best candidate. Leaving the Council with no Chief Executive risks destabilisation and risks the ongoing business of the Council.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Council
2023

19th July

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Charlie Hotham	
Lead Director / Head of Service	Deb Poole, Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy	
Financial Services	Pete Carpenter, Interim Section 151 Officer	7 th July 2023
Legal Services	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	7 th July 2023

WORCESTERSHIRE HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-2040

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Shirley Webb
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis
Report Author	Job Title: Judith Willis Contact email: judith.willis@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 0152764252 ext 3348
Wards Affected ALL	
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable and Sustainable Homes • Work & Financial Independence, • Living Independent, Active & Healthy Lives • Communities which are Safe, Well Maintained & Green
Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet RECOMMEND that:-

- 1) The Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2021 – 2040 be adopted.**
- 2) Officers be asked to develop a District Level Action Plan with consideration given to the proposals in this Strategy.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council adopted a Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan in 2017 which set out the strategic direction for housing across Worcestershire. This Plan has been reviewed and partners from across the County have produced a Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2021 – 2040 attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The Strategy sets out a 20-year vision for the County, recognising that decisions made today will have a significant impact on housing in the future.

2.3 The strategy has been developed with representation from the 7 Worcestershire Local Authorities, NHS providers, local housing providers and the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP). It has undergone consultation across a range of stakeholders in the County to ensure that it reflects the needs, challenges, and opportunities in Worcestershire.

2.4 The strategy serves several purposes:

- It is a vision for housing in the county to 2040.
- It provides a statement of intent focused on specific priorities
- It provides the foundation of a set of more detailed action plans to cause the necessary changes and actions to happen and be delivered.
- It provides an opportunity to evolve Worcestershire's housing market offer to meet the needs of its citizens and business over the longer term.

2.5 The strategy sets out the vision for housing in Worcestershire:

Worcestershire will be known for excellent housing. Everyone will have choices about how and where they live. Local homes will be warm, healthy and will lead the way towards Net Zero. Worcestershire housing will add to a better quality of life.

2.6 The vision will be delivered through four priority areas, which are:

- a) **Economic growth and jobs-** this priority focusses on the relationship between housing and the economy and the need to supply the right housing for people who live and work in Worcestershire.
- b) **Quality and standards-** this priority focusses on ensuring that housing in Worcestershire is as good as it can be and that the County takes advantage of innovation in how houses are planned, built and upgraded.
- c) **Health and wellbeing-** this priority focusses on the importance of affordable, healthy housing that supports everybody, whatever their needs or circumstances as well as creating and maintaining sustainable communities.
- d) **Net Zero carbon and climate change-** this priority

focusses on ensuring that housing in Worcestershire is decarbonized in line with national targets.

- 2.7 To accompany the Strategy a Countywide action plan has been developed with each Local Authority having responsibility to develop its own action plan to set out how it intends to meet and contribute towards the ambitions of the Strategy locally. This will include consideration of housing needs in rural parts of the District to be addressed in this action plan.
- 2.8 Due to the strategy setting out a 20-year ambition, the proposals for delivery are at three levels of detail:
- a) A 100-day plan to create momentum and promote awareness.
 - b) A 5-year action plan setting out key priorities across each of the four priority areas. These actions will be delivered through Countywide delivery groups.
 - c) A twenty-year road map outlining how the components of the strategy will support the delivery of the vision.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 Upon approval of the Strategy, Officers will develop an individual district-level action plan.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with adopting this strategy.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The deregulation Act 2015 abolished the statutory requirement for Council's to produce a Housing Strategy.
- 5.2 However, it is recognised across all the Worcestershire Council's and partners that Housing is key to the quality of life of residents and that this Strategy will provide future a vision and future direction to achieve this.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 6.1 The Strategy will support the Council's following Strategic purposes:

- Affordable and Sustainable Homes,
- Work & Financial Independence,
- Living Independent, Active & Healthy Lives
- Communities which are Safe, Well Maintained & Green

Climate Change Implications

- 6.2 Carbon reduction is a key feature of the Strategy with the fourth priority being 'Net Zero carbon and climate Change. This provides an ambition to reduce the impact that dwellings have climate change and help the Council meets its Climate Change Strategy vision.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.3 There are a range of equality considerations which have been taken into account in the development of the strategy. This includes the changing demographics across the County where it is projected that there will be an increasing ageing population and therefore a greater demand on later living housing provision.
- 6.4 Section 3.1 of the Strategy sets our population and Economics information which is then addressed within the Strategy.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Failing to influence the housing market in a strategic way could lead to a rise in homelessness locally, and impact upon the delivery of affordable housing. Implementation and monitoring of the Strategy and action plans will be undertaken by the Countywide delivery groups.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A – Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2021 to 2024

Cabinet
2023

12th July

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Shirley Webb	23.06.23
Lead Director / Head of Service	Judith Willis, Head of Community & Housing Services	20.06.23
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter	22.06.23
Legal Services	Claire Felton	21.06.23
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	-	
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matthew Bough	20.06.23

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Worcestershire Housing Strategy

2023 - 2040



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Foreword

Housing has always been an important consideration for the people of Worcestershire. Our towns and villages are attractive places to live, and many people aspire to move to the county. However, the challenges associated with ensuring that there is enough high quality, suitable housing to meet the needs of all citizens have been critical issues for many years. The cost-of-living crisis in 2022 and a continuing shortage of housing across all tenures has helped to highlight the importance of the role that housing plays in determining life chances in the county. However, there is room for improvement. By thinking of housing as one of Worcestershire's strategic assets, we can plan more effectively to deliver better outcomes, including health, well-being, and our low-carbon futures.

Local authorities play an important part in planning for future housing as well as providing services alongside housing including social care. In Worcestershire, these services are provided by the six District and Borough Councils and the County Council, all of whom are locally accountable. This arrangement ensures that local concerns are addressed in connection with housing and that new development respects local character. Looking forward, the role of local authorities in connection with housing can only become more extensive and more influential. Social care delivered in the home alongside other services for example is set to become an important enabler of independent living for our older residents. Work to improve the condition and performance of our homes will also play a key role in our meeting the UK's net zero carbon objectives.

To meet these expanded, long-term expectations, we need a long-term perspective. We will also need a joined-up approach. Whilst most of the work in connection with housing will continue to be undertaken by individual councils, it will make sense to approach many of our challenges in a consistent and collaborative way. Whilst we value the unique character of Worcestershire's communities, we also recognise that we can come together across the county to plan and to work together to deliver better outcomes for everyone who lives in the county.

In response to the challenges and opportunities we face, we have developed a long-term housing strategy for Worcestershire. The strategy focuses on key issues associated with how housing affects economic growth, jobs and health and wellbeing in the county as well as how housing can be harnessed to meet carbon and climate change ambitions. In the strategy we set out a joint-vision for housing for the period up to 2040 and a series of medium- and long-term priorities that all bodies interested in housing in Worcestershire can get behind. The benefit of having the strategy in place is that we will have a clear long-term vision for the role of housing in Worcestershire that we can all get behind and for which local authorities can be held accountable.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the process of developing the Worcestershire Housing Vision and Strategy, working with colleagues and stakeholders across the county to develop a flexible and adaptable plan that will equip us to work together to deliver better housing for everyone in the county. I am excited about the vision and the plan proposals and am confident that we can equip ourselves to meet the many complex issues surrounding housing in the county. Worcestershire housing will add to a better quality of life, and that is something that we can all work towards.

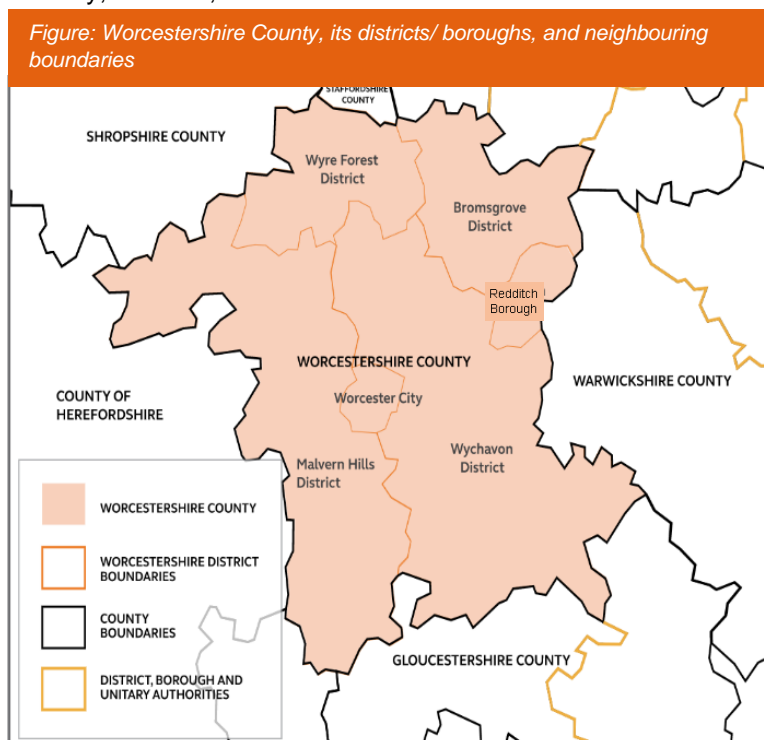


Kevin Dicks, Chair of the Worcestershire Housing Strategy Board

1 Introduction

1.1 Context and Background

Worcestershire benefits enormously from being right in the heart of England. With exceptional links into the UK motorway network, proximity to Birmingham International Airport, and in the medium term, HS2. The County has enjoyed one of the highest long-term economic growth rates outside of the Greater South-East and has real strengths in a diverse range of sectors including advanced manufacturing, agri-tech, cyber security, defence, and IT.



Worcestershire is a great place to live, with a diverse and contrasting choice of characterful urban and rural locations across the six districts/ boroughs. But the county has its challenges. Worcestershire has an older population than the national average, but the working age population is not growing quickly enough. Furthermore, the county's over 65s will grow in number by over 40% by 2040. To achieve its ambitious economic plan through to 2040, Worcestershire needs to build the workforce needed to attract and grow new businesses. To do this it will need to attract new families to live, work and grow in the county and it will need to retain its graduate and young talent. Worcestershire will also need to continue to care for its people, dealing in particular with issues of homelessness and ill-health as well as addressing the long-term implications of an ageing population.

Good quality housing is critical in attracting people to a place, but the Covid pandemic has also underlined the importance of fit for purpose housing in connection with people's health and wellbeing and has further reinforced the link between quality of housing and housing-related services to health and social care. Housing is also responsible for 22% of all UK carbon emissions and policies to accelerate decarbonisation will play a critical role in our fight against climate change.

Local Authorities in Worcestershire have policies and plans in place to manage housing delivery and housing related services in the short and medium term. However, there is the need for a long-term vision and a joined-up plan to enable the two tiers of government in Worcestershire to cooperate and collaborate (with third parties as needed) to deliver the best housing outcomes. Above all, authorities must focus on a range of actions to create and maintain momentum towards the long-term goal.

The 2040 Housing Strategy represents an ambitious, long term and important Vision for the County. It seeks to enable Worcestershire One Public Estate Partnership's (WOPEP) Housing Workstream to 'rebalance the housing market in Worcestershire in support of economic growth'. It sets out steps to support improving physical and mental health and wellbeing, reducing health inequalities, addressing climate change, and taking account of the longer-term impact of Covid-19. In short, it is a strategy that will improve the quality of life for the residents of, and visitors to, Worcestershire.

The starting point is a positive one. The county has a history of collaboration and partnership working across multiple services. Worcestershire developed one of the first One Public Estate (OPE) partnerships and has a very effective integrated care strategy (ICB) underpinned by effective working of local authorities, the NHS

and other health service providers across the county. Building on this well-established pattern, this Housing Strategy proposes further sharing of capability and best practice in a two-tier local authority context. The proposal, designed to ensure that services continue to be delivered in a joined-up way, is unique and has been developed through the collaborative working and engagement of a wide range of public sector partners, private sector businesses including Registered Providers¹ and third sector organisations. It is a Strategy for Worcestershire developed by the partners of Worcestershire.

¹ Registered Provider (RP) is the umbrella term to describe Housing Associations and other third sector housing providers involved in the provision of social and affordable housing. RPs are actively involved in the development of for sale and shared ownership homes as part of a cross-subsidy model which supplements affordable homes grant funding.

1.2 Content, Purpose, and Objectives

The Housing Strategy is focused on the twenty-year period to 2040. During this period, there will be significant changes to the housing market in Worcestershire as well as huge challenges to meet including the net zero carbon transition. Housing in Worcestershire will be very different in 2040 to what it is today.

This means that decisions taken today will have a big effect on the future of housing in Worcestershire, and it is right to plan for this. It is also important that short-term opportunities, that can be taken to improve the experience of housing now, are not missed because of the priorities of a long-term plan.

The 2040 Housing Strategy aims to bring these priorities together, by setting a long-term vision and strategic plan, whilst also identifying suggestions for the tactical 'jobs to be done' that are set out in short-term action plans.

The 2040 Housing Strategy is designed to be read in conjunction with a wide range of other policies and plans. Most importantly, it complements existing development plans and sets out to show how housing development can be well integrated with other aspects of public service focused on health and social care. The Housing Strategy is also aligned to other long-term plans including the Worcestershire LEP Strategic Economic Plan.

The Strategy also complements existing plans aimed at setting the direction of travel for long-term policy in net-zero carbon and for outlining a blueprint for how housing related functions can be most effectively coordinated across Worcestershire.

The 2040 Strategy has five main sections:

- **Vision** – summarising the strategy and the five main challenges to be addressed for Worcestershire.
- **Context** – describing the local social and economic factors that the strategy should address.
- **Strategic priorities** – describing the detailed objectives, actions, and outcomes of the strategy.
- **Strategy review and governance** – setting out the organisation required to implement the strategy.
- **Action plan** – proposing the short and medium-term actions that may follow in the first 5-year period and form the basis of each district's own action plan.

The strategy has been developed by a county-wide team with representation from the 7 local authorities, NHS partners, local housing providers and the Worcestershire LEP, facilitated by Arcadis. We have undertaken extensive consultation across many stakeholders to seek a broad range of Worcestershire focused voices, to understand the challenges and blockers and the opportunities to be addressed by the Strategy. Whilst we cannot take account of all points of view, we are confident that the strategy represents a balanced approach to addressing the many opportunities and challenges that Worcestershire will face between now and 2040.

2 Vision

The Vision Statement

Worcestershire will be known for excellent housing. Everyone will have choices about how and where they live. Local homes will be warm, healthy and will lead the way towards Net Zero. Worcestershire housing will add to a better quality of life.

The Call to Action

The strategy will set out the steps needed to make this happen focused on four priority areas:

- Economic growth and jobs.
- Quality and standards.
- Health, wellbeing, and inclusion.
- Net-zero carbon and sustainability.

Realising the Strategy

To make this vision a reality there are five big opportunities that need to be taken between now and 2040:

- Creating a culture of positive action in connection with housing. This will cover housing services, planning and other services focused on the Home. 'Getting things done' will help to ensure that Worcestershire is dynamic, growing, and a great place for everyone to live. This will be done by planning, by leadership and by everyone involved taking ownership of their role in making Worcestershire a better place to live.
- Reviewing aspects of housing services and planning across Worcestershire and reorganising where it makes sense to do so, sharing resources whilst protecting local accountability. Equipping Districts to take the assertive steps needed to implement the policies and aspirations that are set out in Development Plans.
- Using large scale developments to set the standard for sustainable development including place-based amenities and services. This will include getting the right mix of housing in a scheme and ensuring that services and infrastructure are in place from the outset.²
- Developing and managing affordable and social housing as an integral part of new and existing communities to increase inclusion in Worcestershire. This includes an active role for local authorities as planners, development partners and housing providers.
- Taking a leading role in the promotion of the net zero carbon agenda for housing, including organising and supporting public and private homeowners to meet their net zero targets.

Housing will be better in 2040 because of the active, evidence-led steps that will have been taken to sustain economic growth and housing development and to improve services and delivery. This strategy sets out these active steps and the timetable by which they will be taken. The jobs/actions to be undertaken are outlined in Section 4 – The Priorities.

² Scale in housing development is context dependent. At the largest scale, the strategy describes urban extensions and other strategic developments that will be accompanied by large-scale social and economic infrastructure. However, in the context of rural communities, developments of 100 to 150 homes are also 'large scale' and also create and opportunity and responsibility for local authorities to set challenging targets around housing quality and the quality of wider infrastructure provision.

3 Local, Regional and National Context

3.1 Population and Economics

Worcestershire is situated in the Midlands region of England and the County is home to the six districts/boroughs of Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester City, Wychavon, and Wyre Forest. The county has a diverse cultural heritage and a high-quality natural and urban environment. The unique character of the place is appreciated by the local community and attracts visitors and in-migration from all over the country contributing to economic growth.

Population

Worcestershire is home to 598,070 residents (mid-2020 ONS estimate)³ of which circa 60% (354,064) of residents are of working age (16-64). The working age population has grown by less than 1% since 2015. The County has a higher median age of population (45.3) than the regional (39.6) and national median age (40.2). 23% of the population is over the age of 65 which is higher than the West Midlands and England average. The growth rate of the older population is expected to increase steeply with the number of over 65's expected to grow by 42% by 2040 (with a particularly high rate of growth in 80+ year group) against the population growth of 30-45's which is expected to be 10% to 2040.

The number of households in Worcestershire is expected to grow by 20% by 2043. This growth is largely due to an increase in one-person households (over 50%). The number of such households is projected to rise by almost 21,000 over the 25-year period from 2018 to 2043⁴. By 2035, the number of people living alone in Worcestershire is expected to rise by 36%. Both trends are linked to the ageing population.

Different rates of growth in the working-age and later living cohorts are prominent issues for the housing strategy.

The strategy must deliver enough housing to accommodate families to support the growth ambitions of the county.

Similarly, it is important that housing supply and housing related services anticipate demand that will come from an ageing population.

Migration into and out of the County, as well as between districts within Worcestershire, conforms to the established national pattern of migration, with most movement being from rural to urban areas (urbanisation). Worcestershire tends to experience a net gain in almost all age groups. A high inflow of persons aged 75-plus and 60-64 is also prominent as people move into the County after retirement or early retirement.⁵

In Worcestershire, just over 70% of people are defined as living in larger urban areas, with 20% of the population living in rural villages, hamlets, or isolated dwellings. This illustrates that Worcestershire is "less urban" than either the West Midlands region (in which almost 85% of the population live in urban areas) or the whole of England (80% living in urban areas). Over 50% of people living in Wychavon and Malvern Hills live in a rural area, whereas Redditch and Worcester City are almost entirely urban.⁶

Worcestershire residents generally have good levels of health, with life expectancy being better than the national average. Some areas of lifestyle require improvement when compared to the national average. These include excess weight in adults, smoking at time of childbirth, breastfeeding initiation, and early years

³ONS, Mid-Year Population Estimates, UK, June 2020

⁴ONS, 2018-based household projections for local authorities and higher administrative areas within England

⁵Worcestershire Demographic Report – Census 2011

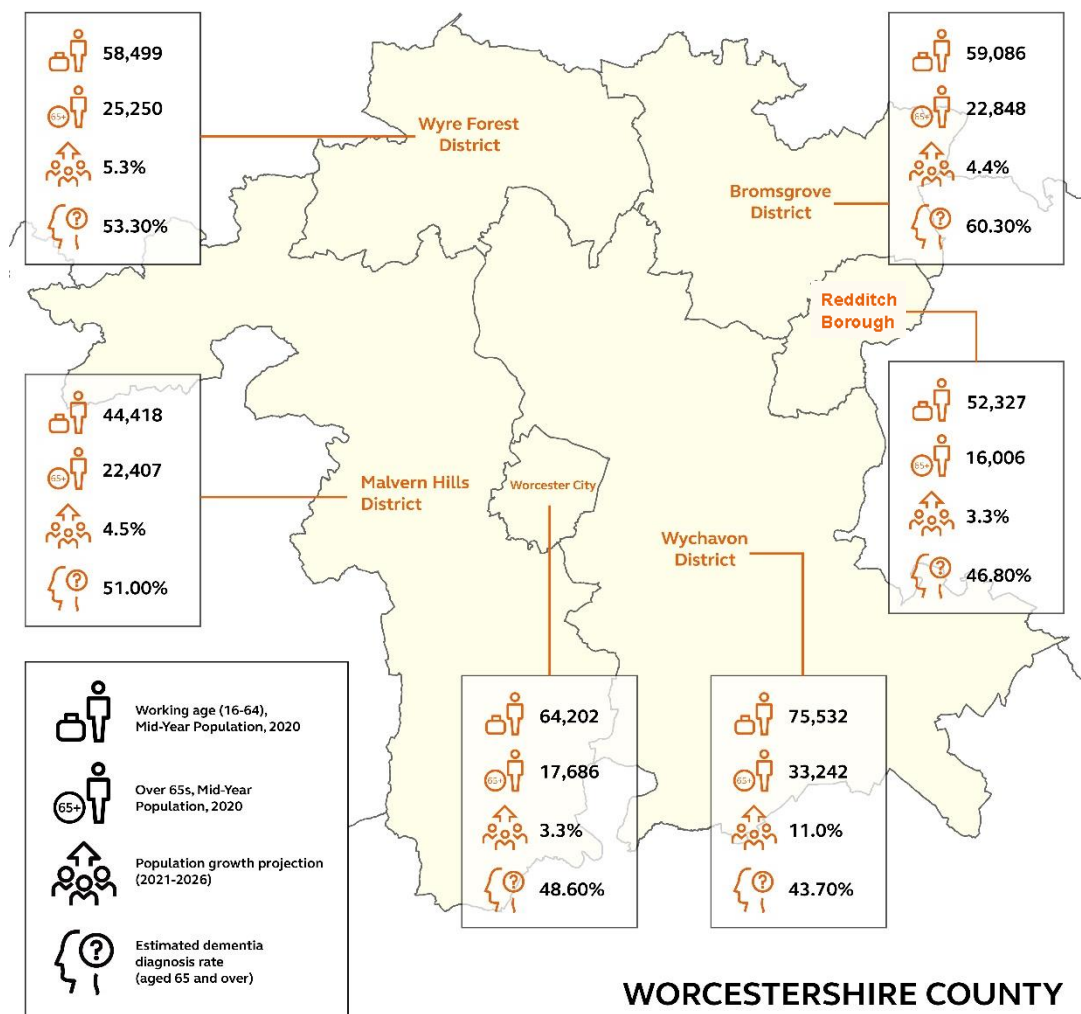
⁶Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Annual Summary September 2019

development for children eligible for free school meals.⁷ Dementia will be a significant issue in future years as the population in the oldest age groups grows. The number of people with dementia in Worcestershire is forecast to increase by 56% between 2019 and 2035 from 9,560 to 14,905.

The requirement for a long-term plan for the reshaping of later-living provision in the county is highlighted in the strategy. This will not only provide a wider range of housing options for the healthy later living cohort but will also support better provision of care services to older clients.

Worcestershire’s population does not reflect the ethnic diversity of the wider West Midlands region. The 2011 Census shows that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Persons (those not of White British origin) stand at around 7.6% of Worcestershire’s average. The estimate of 7.6% in Worcestershire compares to estimates of 20.2% in England and 20.8% in the West Midlands region. ⁸ We anticipate that this gap will close over the period of the strategy which may have some implications for future service delivery.

The graphic below summaries key population statistics across Worcestershire:



⁷ Worcestershire Health and Well-being Board, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2020, Executive Summary, Health Impacts of COVID-19

⁸ Worcestershire Demographic Report – Census 2011

Economic Performance

There has been good GVA growth in Worcestershire in the last five years, with one of the highest rates of any LEP in England. £14.1 billion GVA was generated in 2018 which is more than 10% of West Midlands total.

Currently there are 290,000 people in employment in Worcestershire, with good growth over the last five years. 3.5% of Worcestershire's economically active population are unemployed and perhaps as challenging, 1 in 18 of working residents have no qualifications. Worcestershire overall, however, performs well when compared to the region and country.

Median gross weekly earnings by residence in Worcestershire is £537 which is approximately 3% less than in the West Midlands and 10% less than in England. (This figure is significantly reduced by the gross weekly earnings in Redditch which is £460/week). Major infrastructure projects such as HS2 and private housing development are expanding at pace and will draw down from the labour supply. There will be a growing labour requirement from repair, maintenance, and improvement work, as for the demand retrofitting existing buildings to meet net zero emissions targets becomes more important. Covid-19 appears to have had little long-term impact on employment in the West Midlands based on latest data⁹ from ONS. Employment levels between May-July 2021 were above pre-Covid levels, and unemployment at 5.1% was significantly below the 5.9% unemployment recorded between December 2020 and February 2021.

Skills development in Worcestershire is addressed in the 2019 to 2024 Education and Skills Strategy, which brings together a county-wide Education and Skills Strategy Board and the WLEP Education and Skills Board. Adult education is likely to be subject to significant development with the announcement of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee in September 2020. This is likely to channel training resources to many skills that are relevant to the Housing Strategy.

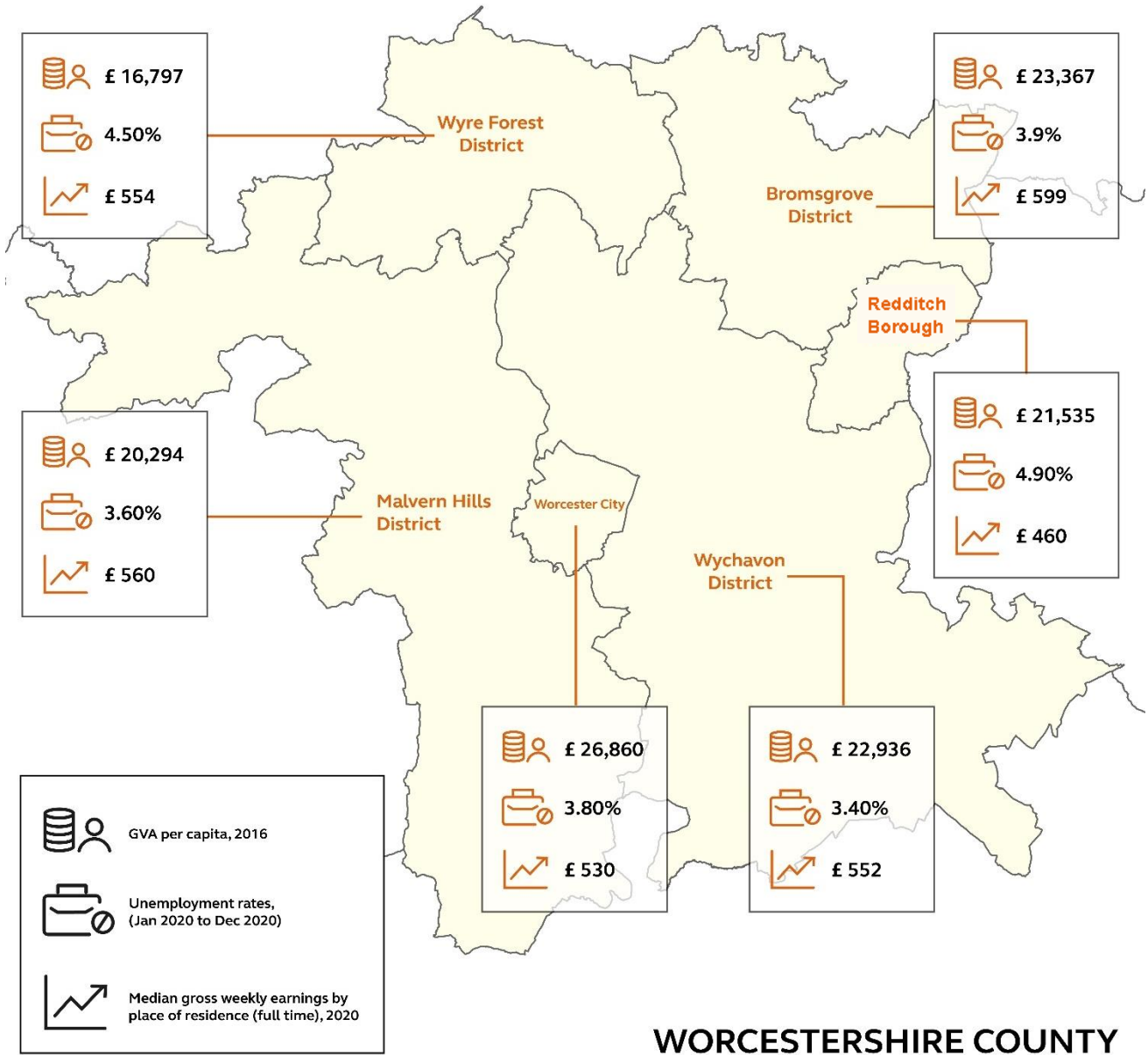
The link between employment and the housing market will be increasingly significant over the next 20 years.

The Strategy highlights the requirement to develop low carbon retrofit supply chains in Worcestershire aligned to national demand for decarbonisation.

These supply chains will potentially be developed to take advantage of existing capability and expertise in the County.

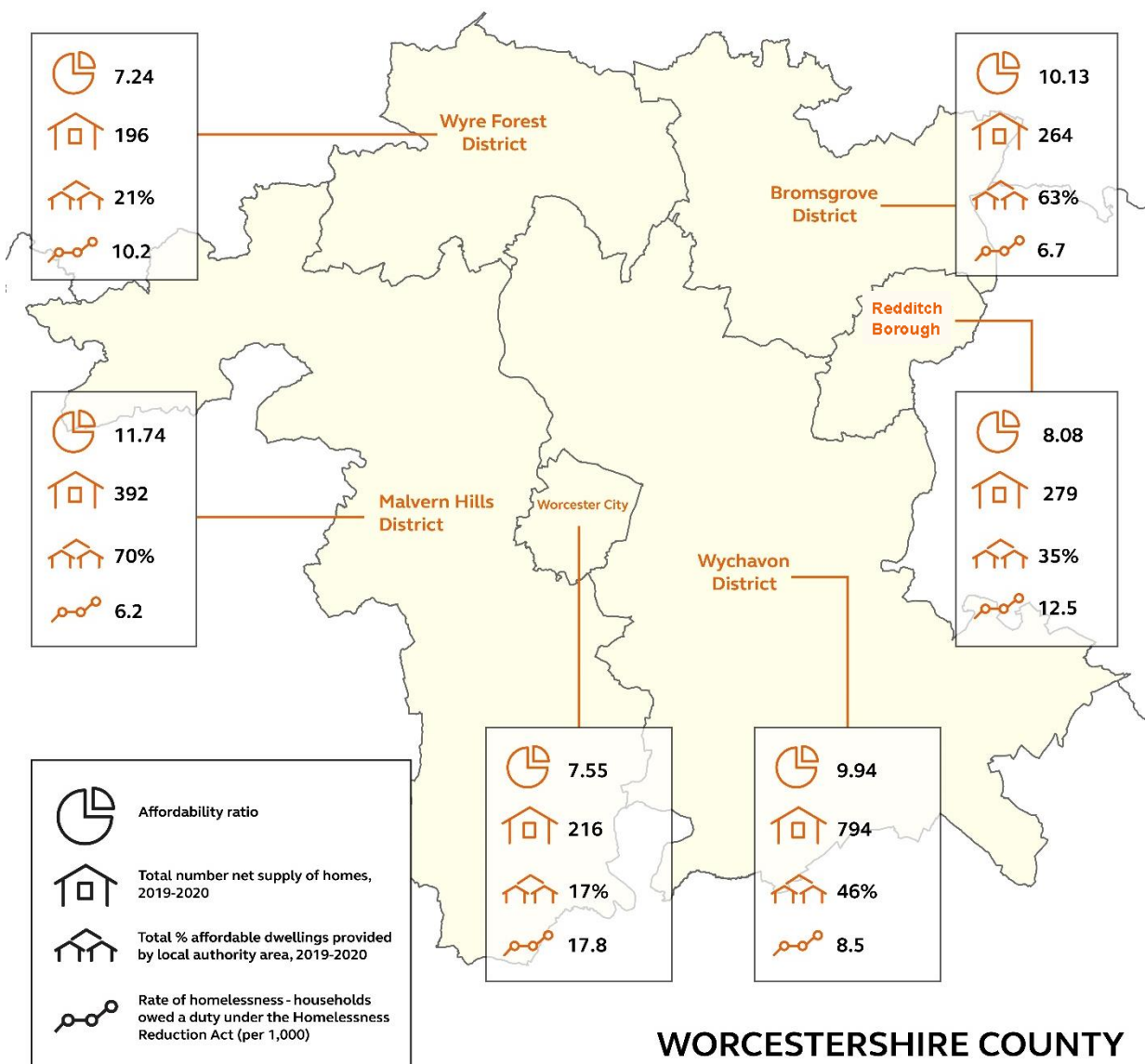
⁹ HI05 Regional labour market: Headline indicators for the West Midlands, published September 2021.

The diagram below summarises economic performance at a District/ Borough level across Worcestershire.



Housing Delivery and House Prices

Worcestershire, like many other places is seeing a growing disparity between house prices and income. Worcestershire's affordability ratio, calculated by dividing median house prices by median gross annual earnings, was 8.87 in 2020¹⁰. By comparison, the West Midlands region affordability ratio is 6.78 and England is at 7.84.¹¹ In Worcestershire, the rate of homelessness in terms of households owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act is 10.3 per 1,000, this is lower than the rate in England (12.30 per 1,000) and the West Midlands (11.20 per 1,000)¹². The rate of homelessness since the 2018-2019 financial year as remained steady in Worcestershire. The diagram below summarises the position at district level, of Countywide affordability, housing supply (including affordable housing) and homelessness.



¹⁰ In 2020, the median house price was £242,000 and median gross annual earnings were £27,285.

¹¹ ONS: House price to workplace-based earnings ratio

¹² PHE, Public Health Profiles (indicator source: MHCLG, Table A1, Detailed local authority level tables financial year 2019-20)

Housing affordability is closely related to the supply of new housing delivered through local development plans. Below is a summary of the Housing Delivery Test: 2020 measurement¹³ which is an annual measurement of housing delivery in relevant plan-making authorities. Generally, local authorities have performed well, with 8,103 homes being delivered across the County against a three-year target of 5,640. As a result of below target rates of build-out, Bromsgrove faces the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development and Wyre Forest must produce an action plan showing how they intend to boost delivery and have a 20% buffer on their housing land supply.

During the period 2017 to 2021, 4,115 affordable homes¹⁴ were delivered in Worcestershire, representing over 45% of the total stock delivered in this period.¹⁵

Table 1. Summary of the Housing Delivery Test, DLUHC

Area	Total number of homes required 2018-2021	Total number of homes delivered 2018-2021	Housing Delivery Test: 2021 measurement	Housing Delivery Test: 2021 Consequence
Bromsgrove	1,413	624	44%	Presumption
Redditch	0	881	n/a	None
Wyre Forest	627	618	99%	None
Worcester City }				
Malvern Hills }	3,281*	5,100	128%	None
Wychavon }				

***Local Planning Authorities with Joint plans being measured jointly for Housing Delivery Test: 2020 measurement*

The implication of presumption in Bromsgrove is that developers are free to bring forward housing development sites outside of the scope of the adopted Local Plan in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework. This means that Bromsgrove District Council has much less control over local development than would be the case normally, even though the securing of planning consent in the district has been shown to be very difficult over the past 5 years.

Improved housing delivery in Wyre Forest has resulted in the requirement for a 20% buffer being removed. As a result, Wyre Forest District Council has increased control over land in the development pipeline in the past 12 months.

The effective delivery of new housing is an important foundation for the 2040 Strategy.

The challenge will be that the housing continues to be delivered at rates to meet growth forecasts.

Furthermore, it is essential that new development meets the actual housing need of residents in the County whilst also delivering mixed, sustainable communities.

¹³ MHCLG, Housing Delivery Test: 2020 measurement

¹⁴ Note: Affordable housing includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. It can be a new-built property or a private sector property that has been purchased for use as an affordable home. Data sourced from MHCLG, Live Table 1008c.

¹⁵ MHCLG, Live Table 253.

Quality and performance of existing homes

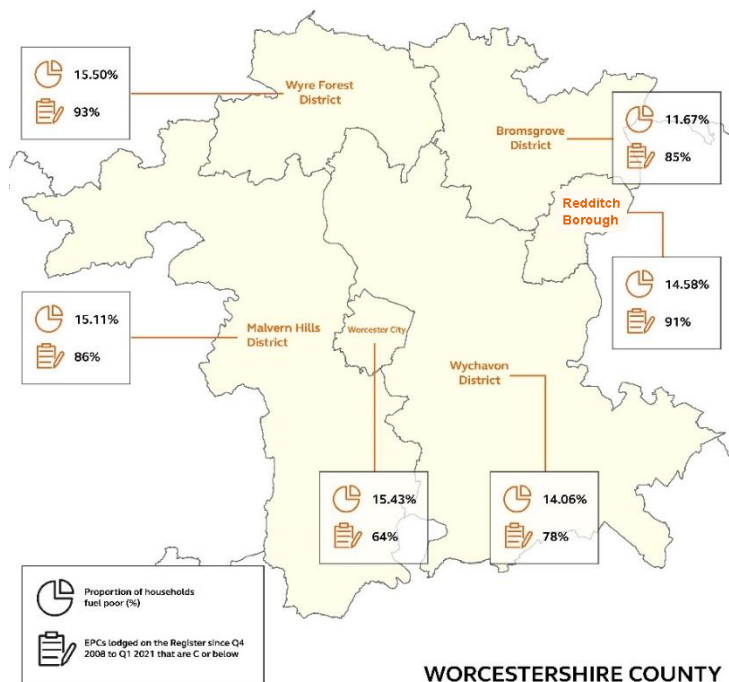
The quality of existing stock is an important consideration with respect to health and wellbeing of residents, and requirements for decarbonisation.

Fuel poverty is a material issue in Worcestershire, affecting around 14.4% of households compared with 13.4% of households in England as a whole¹⁶. A household is said to be fuel poor if it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain an adequate standard of warmth. Following significant increases in energy costs in the past 12 months, fuel poverty is expected to affect many more people, and as a result, might further accelerate investment in energy efficiency through programmes such as ECO+.

The health effects of fuel poverty are far-reaching and disproportionately affect older people as there are links between cold homes and respiratory conditions. The five-year average for excess winter mortality index in the County is higher than England's five-year average.¹⁷

Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) can be used as a proxy for housing quality and low carbon performance. Data for dwellings lodged on the Register from Q4 2008 to Q1 2021 show that 87% of EPCs issued in the county are C or below (vs 89% in England), whereas 37% of EPCs issued in Worcestershire are for properties in Bands A to C (vs 39% in England) and 6% are for properties in Bands F and G (vs 6% in England). Worcestershire is comparable to the England average.¹⁸

The diagram below summarises the position at district level, of the proportion of households in fuel poverty and the number of EPCs at C or below.



This data highlights the scale of the decarbonisation challenge in Worcestershire and the extent of work that will be necessary to bring homes up to net-zero carbon levels of performance.

¹⁶ ONS: Sub-regional fuel poverty data 2021. This data was collated before the 2022 energy price crisis and reflects the long-term trend.

¹⁷ ONS: Excess winter mortality data, England, and Wales, 2019 to 2020 (provisional) and 2018 to 2019 (final)

¹⁸ Live tables on Energy Performance of Buildings Certificates: Table D1

Connectivity

Worcestershire's central location makes the county excellently connected through a comprehensive multimodal transport network of railways and highways (via M5 and M42), which in turn gives easy access to markets and skills. Birmingham Airport is at the doorstep of the county which provides access to 100 international locations.

Accessibility within Worcestershire is naturally affected by the rural nature of much of the county, where low population densities are associated with a lower-grade road network. This is particularly the case in the North-west of the County. A limited number of road crossings over the River Sever are also a constraint to mobility and a cause of congestion.

Worcestershire is crossed by two nationally important rail lines – the North Cotswold line from London Paddington to Worcester, Great Malvern and Hereford and the Bristol to Birmingham Line. Local services operate to Birmingham along the Kidderminster, Bromsgrove and Redditch routes which face challenges of overcrowding, particularly during peak periods.

Cross Country services between South-West England, Birmingham, and the North-West and North-East pass through but do not stop in Worcestershire, and the County's network suffers from various constraints such as mechanical signalling and single line tracks which have a direct impact on train service timetables. The opening of Worcestershire Parkway station in 2020 adds capacity and connectivity to the network and enhances accessibility to the North Cotswold Line and Cardiff – Nottingham Cross Country services.¹⁹

Worcestershire's rail connectivity requires improvement and the critical importance of rail as a key enabler of economic activity and growth is reinforced in the Local Transport Plan.

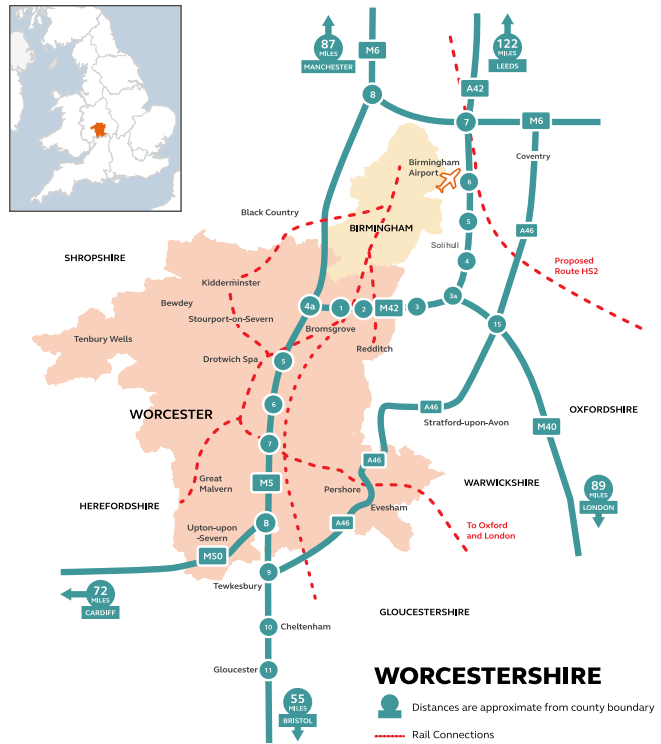


Figure: Location plan (top left) and transport map (bottom right)

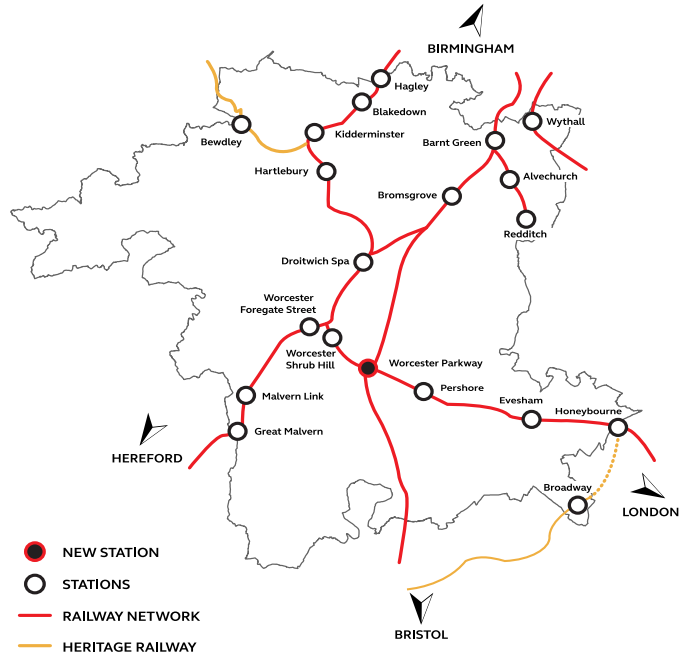


Figure: Rail connectivity plan

The implication for housing development is that much-needed improvements in transport network connectivity are likely to free-up further land for large-scale housing development in future – creating opportunities for the development of sustainable mixed communities as advocated in this Strategy.

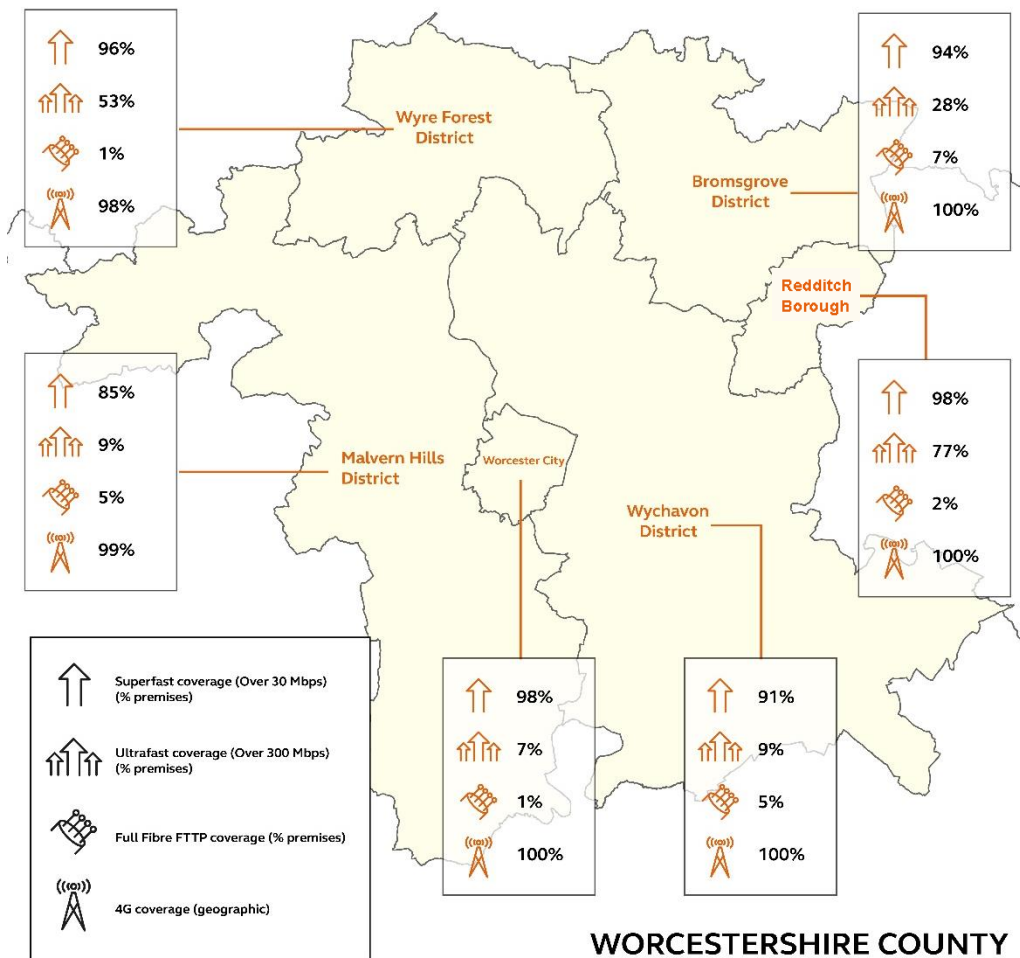
¹⁹ Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy, 2017

Redditch Borough

Worcestershire has good digital connectivity but there is room for improvement. Over 95% of premises have superfast broadband (30Mbps or greater) coverage and over 98% of the geography has 4G signal availability. By contrast, only Redditch and Wyre Forest have more than 50% of premises covered by ultrafast broadband (300Mbps or greater). The Fibre to Premises (up to 1 Gbps) coverage in Worcestershire needs improvement with Bromsgrove having 8% of premises covered (highest in the district) and Worcester City and Wyre Forest having 1% of premises covered (lowest in the district). Worcestershire is nevertheless driving innovation and has one of the first 5G testbed networks in the UK, operating from sites in Malvern and Worcester.²⁰

Worcestershire’s digital ambition and continued investment inherently will facilitate both remote working and the delivery of digitally enabled home care and support services.

The diagram below summarises the position at district level, of broadband coverage across the County.



Digital capability will play a significant role in meeting the ambitions of the housing strategy.

Following the creation of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership, this housing strategy will be important to maintain the close functional relationship between the districts and partners to work together to support the LEP’s ambitious Strategic Economic Plan.

²⁰ Worcestershire County Council Digital Strategy 2021-2023

3.2 Organisation, Administration and Strategy

Worcestershire is a 2-tier county formed of Worcestershire County Council and six District / Borough Councils. The County Council is responsible for services across the whole of the county such as education, transport, and social care. District/ Borough Councils are responsible for services such as housing and planning services. The table opposite provides a quick guide to the typical allocation of local authority responsibility for major services in England.

Status of Local Plans

The councils' shared vision for the future of the county is the foundation for the development of the Housing Strategy 2040. All parts of the county have developed their Local Plans and the Housing Strategy 2040 will respect and build on those Local Plans. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reinforces the need for a plan-led approach to securing infrastructure as well as promoting sustainable development. The status of the Local Plans is listed below:

- Bromsgrove District Local Plan (2011-2030) - review underway, consultation closed.
- Borough of Redditch Local Plan (2011-2030) - review commenced.
- Wyre Forest District Local Plan (2016 - 2036) was formally adopted in April 2022.
- The South Worcestershire Development Plan (2016-2030) which is the Local Plans of the partners Malvern Hills District, Worcester City and Wychavon District Council. The development plan is being updated to 2041. A consultation on the review closed in December 2022.

Status of WLEP Plans

The Worcestershire Councils have worked closely with the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) over the last 10 years bringing together a strategic partnership to facilitate the collaboration of the private, public and education sector to deliver meaningful programmes to support economic growth in the county. Significant improvements have been delivered through the Counties Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) launched in 2014. By 2020 this plan had been successful delivered 38,000 new jobs, 15,990 homes and a £2.0bn increase in GVA (Gross Value Added – GVA).

The SEP set up the Game Changer Programme to help meet the first objective. The programme provides investment opportunities by identifying key development and delivery of strategic sites for companies looking

	County Council	District Council
Education	✓	
Environmental health		✓
Highways	✓	
Housing		✓
Leisure and recreation		✓
Libraries	✓	
Local planning		✓
Local taxation collection		✓
Passenger transport	✓	
Public health	✓	
Social care	✓	
Transport Planning	✓	
Waste collection		✓
Waste disposal	✓	

for larger sites, HQs, and state of the art opportunities in some of the best locations in the country. These sites are shown on the adjacent map and include the Redditch Eastern Gateway, South Kidderminster Enterprise Park, Worcester Growth Corridor and Malvern Hills Science Park.

The SEP recognised the challenges with housing affordability in many parts of Worcestershire and recognise its importance to support economic growth. The Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan (WHPP) was developed, setting the strategic direction for housing across Worcestershire. The WHPP recognises that to maximise the health, wealth, and wellbeing of the residents of Worcestershire, and make the most effective use of existing resources, Councils need to work very closely with partner organisations across a range of sectors. The implementation of the national Health and Housing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Worcestershire is an early example of this integrated approach to service delivery. The WHPP aims are:

- Effective partnership working to delivery housing outcomes which will in turn support other strategic objectives, such as improved health and wellbeing, educational achievement of children, employment, crime reduction and sustainable communities.
- Improved collaboration, coordination and integration of healthcare and housing in the planning, commissioning and delivery of homes and services.
- Promotion of the housing sector contribution towards addressing the wider determinants of health, social exclusion, and re-offending.
- Maximising the delivery of housing by co-ordinating the activities of housing developers, providers and support agencies which will support economic growth.
- Addressing the housing needs of specific groups and sectors of the housing market.
- The provision of good quality housing to improve health and wellbeing.
- Integrated health, care and support and housing solutions to make best use of budgets across the NHS, local authorities, and partners to achieve outcomes for less; for example, drawing on the Better Care Fund to support service transformation.
- A co-ordinated response to long term changes in population.
- Better use of existing housing stock.
- Co-ordinated support for vulnerable people.
- Increasing availability of affordable homes.

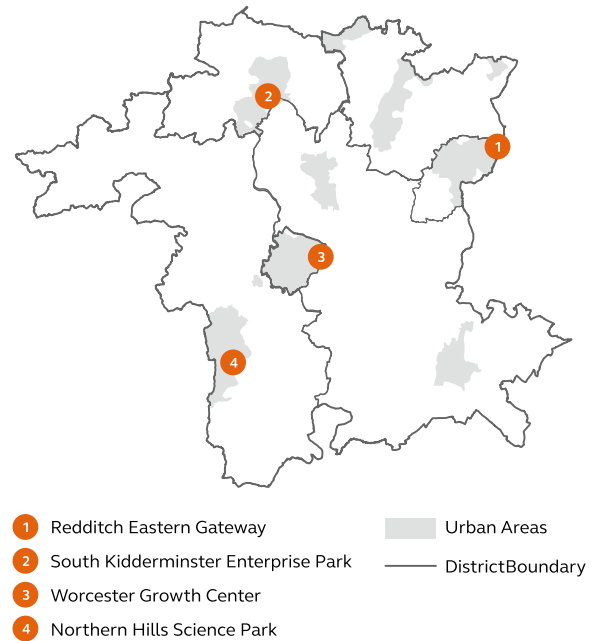


Figure: Economic "Game-Changer" Sites in Worcestershire

*This plan has now been refreshed and the WLEP has, in May 2023, outlined an ambitious and exciting 2040 new vision for the county that will create a connected, creative, and dynamic economy for all. The aim is to boost the economic value of the county by £2.5bn per year and create 18,500 extra jobs.

3.3 Policy

Housing and housing-related services in Worcestershire are governed by a wide range of policies. Many of these are developed at District level and are set out in Development Plans. They are regularly updated and consulted on and will continue to develop between now and 2040. The purpose of the 2040 Worcestershire Housing Strategy is to establish a common approach where this will improve the experience of residents without reducing accountability associated with local decision making and service delivery.

The 2040 Strategy is also being developed at a time where there will be significant change in housing policy related to planning, regulation and carbon emissions associated with new and existing buildings. There are also likely to be further changes to the management of the health service and the funding and management of social care.

The 2040 Strategy not only accommodates these changes but also sets out plans for a more coordinated Worcestershire-wide response – making better use of resources and in particular equipping authorities to implement changes to deliver the greatest benefit to the people of Worcestershire.

Significant changes to provision of housing and housing-related services include:

- **Social care reform.** The Social Care White Paper was published in December 2021, alongside an initial spending commitment of £5.4 billion for the three-year period to 2024/25. Integrating care with housing is a significant theme in the White Paper, and additional funding totalling £450 million, together with an £210 million extension to the Care and Support Specialist Housing fund (CASSH). Relevant proposals for the housing strategy include:
 - Integration of housing decisions into all health and care decisions
 - Support to the specialist housing market in line with an ambition to create a more diverse range of housing options.
 - Expanded funding for home adaptation.
 - Encouragement of longer-term thinking with respect to lifetime neighbourhoods
- **Housing management reform.** The implementation of the Charter for Social Housing Residents will require a significant change to the relationship between tenants of social landlords. The Social Housing Regulation Bill will further extend the rights of tenants and the powers of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) into areas of consumer issues including complaints handling, and housing decency. Together these will drive actions in connection with building safety, the introduction of consumer regulation for tenants, stronger resident engagement, and improved landlord performance metrics.
- **Building Safety Legislation.** The Building Safety Act was passed in Spring 2022. Secondary legislation will be passed over the next 2 years which will detail practical implementation. Local authorities and their affordable and social housing providers will have new statutory duties in connection with the safe management of higher risk residential buildings including undertaking the duties of the Building Safety Manager. These requirements are likely to be implemented prior to 2025.
- **Planning reform.** The Update was introduced into the House of Commons in May 2022. New provisions will affect Local Plans that are currently under development. Relevant aspects of the legislation include:
 - Removal of the requirement to maintain a rolling five-year supply of development land.
 - A greater focus on local planning issues through the introduction of National Development Management Policies dealing with issues that apply to most areas.
 - Further development in Neighbourhood Planning including a simpler neighbourhood planning tool called the Neighbourhood Priority Statement.
 - Replacement of SPDs with independently examined Supplementary Plans which will be used to create planning frameworks for new opportunities (e.g.; regeneration) or authority-wide requirements such as design codes.

- The introduction of a new Infrastructure Levy (IL), that will replace S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy. IL will be charged on sales value. Levy rates will be set locally and can vary within the boundaries of a planning authority. IL will be introduced gradually.
 - Requirements for planning authorities to produce Design Codes describing requirements for a planning consent to be granted, including the opportunity to produce more local design codes. Design Codes will be informed by the National Model Design Code.
 - Processes for assessing environmental impact assessment will be replaced by a single Environmental Outcome Report process. The level of protection will not be reduced.
 - Increase regeneration power including new CPO powers and the creation of a new form of Urban Development Corporation.
 - Enhanced enforcement powers associated with commencement and compliance with consents.
 - Increased fee levels to support better resourcing of the planning process.
- **Environment Act.** This will require developers to deliver 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) on development projects. Local Authorities will have an active role in approving and monitoring biodiversity plans. BNG requirements will be implemented from 2023 onwards.
 - **Net-zero carbon.** Significant progress will need to be taken to improve the energy efficiency and low carbon performance of over 80% of homes in Worcestershire. The Heat and Buildings Strategy was published in October 2021. Relevant aspects of the strategy include:
 - Government has set a target to reduce carbon emissions from buildings by 47 to 62% by 2035. All homes will need to be upgraded to EPC C by 2035.
 - All homeowners, including local authorities will have to replace all fossil-fuel heating appliances with clean-heat technology by 2050.
 - As part of the Clean Growth Strategy, social renters are required to prioritise fuel poor households, meeting EPC C by 2030.

In the 2022 Autumn Statement, the Government also set a target for a 15% reduction in national energy use by 2030.

- **Levelling-up.** Levelling up is a flagship policy of the Government. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill currently passing through Parliament includes a number of provisions to promote the levelling up agenda. These are in addition to the planning reforms noted above:
 - Levelling-up missions. Establish legal duty and powers to set and report on levelling-up missions designed to reduce spatial disparity.
 - Expanded devolution of powers in England to all areas that want devolved powers – e.g., opportunities for bespoke devolution deals, and the creation of a new combined county authority model.

Enhanced regeneration powers including updated compulsory purchase processes described under planning and measures to reinvigorate high streets.

4 Priorities

4.1 Overview – What Are the Priorities?

The Vision for Housing, set out in section 2 is:

The Vision Statement

Worcestershire will be known for excellent housing. Everyone will have choices about how and where they live. Local homes will be warm, healthy and will lead the way towards Net Zero. Worcestershire housing will add to a better quality of life.

The vision will be delivered through four priority areas. Section 4 sets out the actions associated with the priority areas in detail. We describe the four priorities and explain how actions are organised to be delivered over the twenty-year life of the Strategy.

The implications of the current wave of policy development and legislation are firstly that housing functions in Worcestershire will be required to implement notable change across most of their activities. This creates an opportunity to rethink some of the existing delivery models, taking advantage of modern technologies and remote and collaborative working. The new policy landscape also means that local policies will need to be reviewed and updated to take account of new priorities. The 2040 Strategy aims to start this process.

The priorities are the first level of structure of the Strategy. They relate to the greatest challenges facing public authorities in Worcestershire and the policy framework within which they operate. The priorities have played an important role in the development of the Strategy including detailed engagement focused on how housing is affected by activities in each priority area. The priorities are:



Economic growth and Jobs



Quality and Standards



Health and Wellbeing



Net-zero carbon and Climate Change

- **Economic growth and jobs** describe the relationship between housing and the wider economy of Worcestershire. This priority includes the supply of the right housing for people who live and work in Worcestershire and the creation of employment opportunities close to where people live. *By focusing on this priority, Worcestershire will become a more attractive location for employers and more prosperous, and it will make it easier for people to get to their place of work.*
- **Quality and standards** are about making sure that Worcestershire housing is as good as it can be and that people benefit from changes in how houses are planned, built, and upgraded. This priority will help Worcestershire take advantage of housing innovation whilst respecting the character and quality of the existing housing and communities. *Making this a priority emphasises the need to plan and prepare for changes that are coming to housing markets including forthcoming planning reforms, ensuring that the greatest benefit is secured from these developments as they occur.*
- **Health, wellbeing, and inclusion** focuses on links between healthy housing, places, and well-being for everyone. This priority highlights the importance of affordable healthy housing that supports people at all stages of their lives, whatever their circumstances. It is also about the creation of sustainable communities

that have all the facilities residents need and which are well connected. Making this a priority will focus attention on improving the quality of existing housing, the planning of new development, as well as thinking about how health and social services can be delivered alongside housing.

- **Net-zero carbon, and sustainability** is the essential focus on making sure that housing in Worcestershire is decarbonized in line with national targets whilst also making sure that the places and communities which we create are resilient, self-supporting, and safe. Making sustainability a priority highlights the long-term nature of investment in places and homes and the critical role that housing will play in addressing the climate emergency.

4.2 How Are the Priorities Organised?

Each of the priorities is described at four levels of detail:



- **The Vision.** This describes the high-level outcome in 2040 that the Strategy will deliver if all the actions are taken.
- **Strategic levers.** These are long-term, joined-up multi-party initiatives that will result in a change to the development, operation, or use of homes in Worcestershire.
- **Jobs to be done.** These are medium term actions necessary to make progress and address blockers to progress. The detailed jobs to be done will evolve during the life of the strategy, partly to reflect progress on the agenda and partly to account for new needs or opportunities.
- **Worcestershire's Plans (the outcome – how Worcestershire will be different).** This describes how the experience of housing in Worcestershire will be different when the strategy is implemented.

4.3 Strategy Priorities

Priority Area 1 – Economic Growth and Jobs

<p>Vision Statement or Objective for 2040</p> <p>Worcestershire has a competitive housing offer based on thriving communities that attract employers and employees and which support economic growth:</p> <p>Housing of all types is available to meet all needs including affordable housing and housing for later living. New housing is located conveniently for jobs and other amenities.</p>	
<p>Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire housing stock needs to be aligned to local demand as well as the wider market. • Ample affordable stock is needed because earnings in Worcestershire are below the national average. • An expanded Later Living provision is important to deal with the expected growth in the elderly population. • There are wider opportunities to attract a workforce by freeing-up and improving existing housing for use by young families. 	<p><i>In Worcestershire average full-time earnings are 10% lower than the national average.</i></p> <p><i>Worcestershire's median population age is over 45 – 5 years older than the median for the West Midlands.</i></p> <p><i>The number of over 60's will grow by 85% by 2035.</i></p>

- Steps taken by Local Authorities in Worcestershire support the viability and delivery of housing across a range of tenures.
- Worcestershire has made good progress delivering a high proportion of affordable housing, but this does not meet the needs of all residents.
- By partnering with developers, and actively participating in housing delivery through the release of public land and direct development, local authorities will have greater influence over the housing that is delivered.

Worcestershire's housing affordability ratio in 2020 was 8.87, compared to 6.78 for the West Midlands.

Strategic Levers

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Active use of land in public ownership that is available for development to support mixed community development.	Consistent and joined-up approach to the setting of Infrastructure Levy ²¹ contributions across the county to secure the necessary supply of affordable housing.	Appropriate use of regeneration tools including compulsory purchase and permitted development rights, to support residential development as part of town centre revitalization.

Jobs to be done

Job 1	Job 2	Job 3
Examine opportunities for coordination and collaboration of planning resources across the county that is compatible with local accountability. Share resources where this will support greater capability or accelerate response to planning reforms.	Use large-scale development opportunities including urban extensions as the engine for high quality, mixed-tenure sustainable communities. Actively coordinate or participate in development if needed to secure desired housing outcomes.	Equip local authorities in Worcestershire to participate in the development of public land for housing. Consider the establishment of a county-wide development capability in line with proposals for Urban Development Corporations

Who is involved?

- District Council housing, development, and planning
- County Council transport planning
- One Public Estate Team
- Worcestershire LEP
- Registered Providers and other housing providers
- Partnership housing developers
- DLUHC
- General public – through general and project specific consultation

The outcome – how Worcestershire will be different:

- A thriving housing market in the public and private sector, with more choice for everyone.
- More diverse communities that feature a range of house types and tenures.
- The joint planning of housing and employment land so that homes are located near jobs.
- Land values and development models that support the development and maintenance of sustainable communities.

²¹ The Infrastructure Levy (IL) is being introduced as part of a package of planning reforms included within the scope of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill. The IL is planned to be a non-negotiable fixed % fee charged on the development value of a project. Planning authorities will be able to set the level of the levy, which can vary across the area served by the authority. IL will ultimately replace Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy

Making it happen (essential actions):

Strategic Lever 1: Active use of land in public ownership		
<p>Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public land owned by Local Authorities, Public Bodies and Central Government can be used to increase the delivery of low-cost affordable and social housing. The equity value in public land will enable Local Authorities in Worcestershire to participate as partners in mixed community development. 	<p>Solution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public land can be directly developed by a Local Authority. Partnership arrangements can be used to participate in mixed-tenure development schemes. Land can be developed for the private market to create the capital needed for additional affordable housing development. 	<p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital released from public land can be invested directly into affordable housing. Local Authorities have the means to participate in development. Local authorities are in the position to incorporate affordable housing in the scope of mixed-tenure partnership development.
Jobs to be done1: Maximise coordination / collaboration in use of planning resources		
<p>Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the upcoming planning reforms and the need to plan for the net zero carbon transition, there are more specialist planning jobs to be undertaken. Coordinating common approaches and resources across Worcestershire is the best way to respond to these challenges. This approach builds on the successful collaboration that has already taken place in South Worcestershire. 	<p>Solution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning reform. Where possible Districts should develop a coordinated response to proposed planning reform including plan development processes, digital systems, and design code templates. Specialist resources (e.g., energy network planners) should operate on a cross-boundary basis. Strategic responses to shared, long-term challenges (net zero carbon, ageing population) should be developed on a county-wide basis. 	<p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve benefits of scale in the delivery of planning services. Resource-efficient response to major changes in planning such as the development of design code templates. Increase ability of Worcestershire to recruit specialist resources. Joined-up approach to long-term strategic objectives.

Other Strategic Levers:

Consistent and joined-up approach to negotiation. Sharing data and adopting a common approach to negotiation with developers with respect to development standards, contributions and sustainability requirements will reduce opportunities for negotiation arbitrage between districts.

Appropriate use of regeneration powers. Permitted Development Rights (PDR) and Compulsory Purchase (CP) are expected to play a valuable role in facilitating development as a part of town centre revitalization. Districts should be able to actively use the provisions of PDR and CP to achieve a balance of investment, appropriate regeneration, and development quality.

Other jobs to do:

Use large-scale development opportunities to set development benchmarks. The strategy highlights the importance of balanced, mixed tenure communities with appropriate amenity provision. Districts should view large scale housing developments including urban extensions as one-off opportunities to deliver these communities. This may require active development participation to deliver the required tenure mix. Proposed reforms to planning including Supplementary Plans and Urban Development Corporations, will provide Districts with the tools to actively engage with developers.

Establish a development capability. To make best use of publicly owned land assets and to be able to influence development outcomes, local authorities could benefit from creating their own development capability. This might involve direct development or partnership working with housebuilders such as Housing Associations or SME developers. Such a capability could facilitate the optimization of the use of local authority assets by enabling the consideration of a wider range of options including the use of Infrastructure Levy funds as finance for direct development. There may be opportunities to build some shared capability at a county-wide level. Specialist District Council resources and initiatives focused on development, could be shared, particularly if this reduces the overall headcount for a development function. A development function managed on a county-wide basis could still support dedicated, District-level development.

Priority Area 2 – Quality and standards

<p>Vision Statement or Objective for 2040</p> <p>Worcestershire needs to plan and prepare for changes to the way in which housing is built and managed so that the greatest benefit is secured and that the character and quality of existing communities is respected:</p> <p>Local Authorities make it a priority to prepare for changes in how homes are planned, built, and upgraded.</p> <p>Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing will be subject to a lot of change during the strategy period, including changes to planning rules, housing management and the wider adoption of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) for both new build and retrofit. Local Authorities in Worcestershire have an opportunity to influence this change but will need to act quickly and consistently to have an impact. Changes to processes and standards are likely to be complex and challenging to implement. Stakeholders must plan to ensure that sufficient resources are available to implement the planned changes effectively, and that opportunities to share expertise and common approaches are taken where appropriate. Local Authorities should be ambitious with respect to the quality and safety standards that they set, particularly in connection with the quality and performance of new-build housing, the safety of existing high-rise housing and retrofit to ensure issues with low energy performance and damp and mould are addressed. 			<p><i>By 2035, the number of people living alone in Worcestershire is expected to rise by 36%.</i></p>
<p>Strategic Levers</p>			
<p>Lever 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the wider adoption of housing delivered using Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) by collaborating across boundaries to consolidate public sector and Registered Provider demand to support MMC investment in the region. 	<p>Lever 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the planning reforms proposed in the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill to encourage great quality development. Develop local standards, design guides and codes as needed to secure high-quality development. Secure that sufficient resource is in place for any changes to the Local Plan process. 	<p>Lever 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare to implement the digital technologies envisaged for planning as part of the reforms to the planning system. 	
<p>Jobs to be done</p>			
<p>Job 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with local businesses, training providers and other partners to plan for development of supply chain capacity in order to meet changing needs and quality requirements. The housing strategy should consider wider aspects of delivery capacity in order to 	<p>Job 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a common approach to Design Codes across the county. Districts and distinct areas within districts have the opportunity to have their own codes based on a county-wide framework. 	<p>Job 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Fire Safety requirements for existing residential buildings over 11m high. Implement changes introduced by the Charter for Social Housing Residents. 	

<p>meet expected supply requirements. Key areas including skills for new build and retrofit construction trades, local developer, constructor and housebuilder capacity and access to specialist developers in areas including co-living and extra-care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well-developed design code will enable Districts to deliver much needed housing whilst ensuring that the character of Worcestershire is embedded within local housing standards. . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These measures will contribute to a better quality of life for affected residents in the county
<p>Who is involved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Council – planning, public health, and transport • District/ Borough Council – housing, management, housing development and planning • Registered Providers and other housing providers • National, regional and SME housing developers • Housing third parties including funders, insurers etc. 		
<p>Worcestershire’s plan – how it will be different:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The safety and quality of housing in the private and public sector will be a top priority evidenced by a proactive response to legislative changes to the management of social housing. The build quality of homes in Worcestershire will be enhanced by the implementation of ambitious design guides and development standards appropriate to place. • The encouragement of a diverse supply chain including local SME developers and investment in MMC capacity related to pooled demand from schemes in Worcestershire. <p>The successful implementation of digital planning systems and other changes will increase popular engagement with planning and other housing related issues. There will be sufficient capable local supply chain capacity to meet all needs of the strategy related to new build and retrofit housing markets.</p>		

Making it happen (essential actions):

<p>Strategic Lever: Support the wider adoption of housing delivered using MMC</p>		
<p>Opportunity</p>	<p>Solution</p>	<p>Outcome</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional methods of house building are less well suited to the production of high-performance, net-zero carbon homes. • The increase in the capacity of the MMC housing industry will be supported by the consolidation of demand from across Worcestershire. A large visible pipeline of opportunity can be used to attract investment to factories in the county. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consolidation of demand for MMC housing will be led by the public sector and by Registered Providers when delivering their own programmes. • A ‘clearing house’ function is required to bring together the demand from multiple programmes, along the lines of those developed for Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Sheffield City Region. • The clearing house will support the procurement of MMC homes from a range of suppliers on behalf of local clients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to MMC capacity in Worcestershire will be enhanced by the development of a clearing house function that consolidates demand from multiple clients. • The clearing house will simplify procurement and encourage investment. It might potentially encourage the development of MMC factories in Worcestershire. • The most important outcome will be the quality of homes produced which will contribute to reduced carbon emissions.

Jobs to be done: Plan for the development of supply chain capacity		
<p>Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment associated with the delivery of the housing strategy will create significant opportunities for business growth and local employment over the next 20 years. New skills in developing areas including low-carbon heat will be needed, whilst traditional skills associated with housebuilding will also be in high demand. Expanded housebuilding, combined with support for SME and self-build housing will encourage the creation of additional housing development capacity. As part of the Housing Strategy, Districts and the County Council should collaborate with the county business and skills ecosystem so that requirements are known and planned for. 	<p>Solution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills requirements specific to the housing strategy should be included in county skills planning including the Worcester Local Skills Plan and other skills initiatives. The Worcester LEP and other stakeholders dealing with skills and industry capability should have a defined role in the delivery of the housing strategy. Planning powers should be used where appropriate to support an SME supply chain and skills development across the county in line with wider economic planning. Skills development should be aligned to the creation of capable and competent low-carbon supply chain (See net zero carbon). 	<p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be sufficient business and workforce capacity to meet the opportunities created by the Worcestershire Housing Strategy. Planners, developers, and customers will have confidence that planned developments are deliverable. Local people will have the opportunity to participate in the housing sector including new areas associated with low-carbon construction. The housing sector will be properly integrated into skills and capability markets in Worcestershire and the wider West Midlands region.

Other Strategic Levers:

Use opportunities created by planning reforms to encourage great quality development. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill contains provisions that should enable Districts to raise the bar in terms of housing quality and infrastructure provision in line with local needs. Measures include 'Build Better, Build Beautiful' provisions, new Supplementary Plans and the funding transparency secured from a locally set Infrastructure Levy. A key objective of the housing strategy will be to encourage Districts to plan, organise and resource to secure the greatest leverage from the reforms to deliver better housing outcomes.

Prepare to implement the digital technologies envisaged for planning. Planning reforms will also accelerate the adoption of digital technologies to increase the level of public engagement with the planning process and to support the consent process. Districts should develop the capabilities to implement the required digital change programme.

Other jobs to do:

Develop Design Codes. Design codes are a well-established means of raising the standard of housing design. All Planning Authorities will be required to develop a design code. Some codes, for example, the Essex Design Guide have played an important role in maintaining the quality and character of housing in a locality. Planning Authorities in Worcestershire presently rely on supplementary planning guidance (SPG) that will also be repurposed as part of proposed changes. Districts should develop and implement a joined-up plan for design codes appropriate for different parts of the county in line with the National Model Design Code. The design code process is a departure from current practice and will benefit from a common, lessons-learned approach.

Advance preparation for the introduction of new Fire Safety requirements and housing management reforms. Management of public housing will be subject to significant change during the early part of the housing strategy resulting in much more controlled approach to fire safety management and improved rights of representation for tenants. The new safety regime for occupied higher-risk buildings will apply to occupied buildings that are either over 18m or over 7 storeys high²². Housing authorities and public sector providers should aim to prioritise the implementation of these measures as a means of improving housing services. This can be done by securing representative buy-in and by commencing elements of the change programme ahead of the finalisation of primary and secondary legislation. County, Borough and District Councils will not have a role in the registration, assessment, or assurance of safety regimes for higher-risk buildings.

²² Details of the new safety regime for occupied higher-risk buildings were published as part of a consultation in July 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-new-safety-regime-for-occupied-higher-risk-buildings/consultation-on-the-new-safety-regime-for-occupied-higher-risk-buildings>

Priority Area 3 – Health and Well-Being

<p>Vision Statement or Objective for 2040</p> <p>Housing has a central role in ensuring good Health and Wellbeing for everyone in Worcestershire:</p> <p>Local Authorities and their partners make it a priority to work to ensure that Worcestershire is a great place to live for everyone.</p> <p>Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing plays a crucial role in contributing to quality of life in Worcestershire. Secure and warm housing is essential for good health. Avoiding fuel poverty and homelessness is part of this. Worcestershire has pockets of significant need associated with affordability, security of tenure and access to services. The Strategy prioritises reducing health inequalities, improving the life chances of more disadvantaged people alongside the wider population. Local Authorities and health partners in Worcestershire collaborate to deliver great services to citizens, centred around the home. Housing is recognised as having a key role to play in the provision of adult social care. Worcestershire’s Integrated Care System provides a well-developed and collaborative approach to health and social care. The housing strategy will integrate with the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board. The valuable touchpoints that housing services provide to people with complex care needs will be used to support care pathways. 			<p><i>By 2035, the number of people living alone in Worcestershire is expected to rise by 36%.</i></p>
	<p><i>The number of people diagnosed with dementia is forecast to increase by 56% between 2016 and 2035.</i></p>		
	<p><i>14.4% of households are affected by fuel poverty in Worcestershire compared to the national average of 13.4%</i></p>		
<p>Strategic Levers</p>			
<p>Lever 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the delivery of a diverse range of affordable and social housing to suit the needs of citizens at all stages of life. This will equip Worcestershire to address care issues including acute housing needs, homelessness, and wider provision for later living more effectively. 	<p>Lever 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a role for housing in the delivery of health and wellbeing services. This could potentially include service hubs working out of community facilities developed as part of housing schemes. Alternatively, contact points associated with housing services could be used. Integrate with other services that support wellbeing including leisure services. 	<p>Lever 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt an area-based operating model that integrates the community with public and private housing providers and other service providers including leisure facilities. 	
<p>Jobs to be done</p>			
<p>Job 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take steps to improve the life chances of people living in poor quality housing. This will include the coordination of Net Zero Carbon retrofit programmes to reduce fuel poverty, tackle damp and mould and deliver improvements to amenities and 	<p>Job 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop later independent living housing products in line with an expected increase in the elderly share of the population, meeting the needs of both locals and inward migrants. The products should include co-living and 	<p>Job 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote mixed communities, with care supported by digital technologies. This will be achieved by working with a diverse range of housing providers, particularly in connection with larger scale development. 	

public spaces to encourage active lifestyle choices.	extra-care developments to meet market expectation.	
<p>Who is involved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Council – social care and public health • District Council – housing, development, and planning • Integrated Care System Partners • Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust • Worcestershire Primary Care Network • Registered Providers and other housing providers 		
<p>The outcome – how Worcestershire will be different:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire has a diverse mix of healthy housing that directly contributes to improved health outcomes. • Worcestershire has sufficient housing to need all housing needs. Homelessness and acute housing need are reduced as a result. • Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board works closely with providers of housing and housing services to ensure that housing contributes improved health and wellbeing. • Social and health services delivery takes place via the home and community, focused on the needs of people. • Housing developments are planned to include active travel, community, and social facilities from the outset. 		

Making it happen (essential actions):

Strategic Lever: Increase the delivery of a diverse range of affordable and social housing		
<p>Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality housing plays an important role in quality of life. Affordability is important in Worcestershire due to below average wage levels. • Homelessness and acute housing need will only be addressed if additional housing is developed to meet the need. • Housing aimed to the needs of different groups including single adults and older residents will help to secure those specific needs can be readily met. 	<p>Solution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A diverse range of housing will be delivered by a partnership approach. It will include the involvement of specialist service providers, housing developers, the public sector and the third sector. • New housing will meet the needs of currently underserved groups including families and single young adults at risk of homelessness. • The planning system will play a key role in the matching of demand and supply – backed by an evidence-base of need. 	<p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More good quality, healthy, affordable housing will improve health outcomes – particularly for people whose choice of housing is limited due to personal circumstances. • Levels of measurable deprivation including homelessness will fall. • Housing, health, and social care services will be better integrated with some services being accessible through the use of digital technology enabling access to digital consultation and online services in community settings.
Jobs to be done - Take steps to improve the life chances of people living in poor quality housing		
<p>Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor quality housing is known to contribute directly to health inequality. Fixing problems with 	<p>Solution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net zero retrofit should be prioritised to improve the energy performance of the local 	<p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire’s net zero retrofit programme delivers

<p>existing housing through retrofit programmes will result in better health outcomes. Improving accessibility in housing will also increase independence and will improve quality of life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness is closely associated with poor physical and mental health. • Worcestershire has an ageing population. Many older residents live in their own homes. Many of these homes also need to be updated to make them warm, dry, secure, and accessible. 	<p>housing stock and tackle issues with damp and mould.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public programmes should prioritise poor quality housing first. • Disposal of ‘hard to improve’ housing which will slow down improvement works by public bodies should not be permitted. • Housing providers should develop more dedicated accommodation for the homeless, including making use of PDR powers to develop new accommodation in suitable locations. • Independent living housing should be developed to meet the needs of local residents, enabling existing properties to be improved and reused. 	<p>healthy homes to the most-needy residents before 2030.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public retrofit programmes prioritise housing that is in the poorest condition. • Housing provision for the homeless meets the needs of all groups including single people and families. • Elderly homeowners can access help and support to improve their homes or to move to more suitable accommodation.
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Other Strategic Levers:

Develop a role for housing in the delivery of health and wellbeing services. Opportunities include the integration of housing services contact points with other aspects of support for people with additional care and service needs. Use of digital technologies for housing management and for in-home care will also provide new long-term opportunities to integrate pathways associated with housing, social care, and healthcare.

Adopt an area-based operating model that integrates the community with public and private housing providers. Community-based approaches such as the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach should be considered in the County as a means of organizing services in both existing and new communities. The principle should be that services are developed in consultation with local communities and build on the foundations of existing initiatives rather than replacing with new, centralized models. Initial work using the ABCD model has commenced in Worcestershire. These pilot projects should inform the development of a broadly-based strategy for community engagement through to 2040.

Other jobs to do:

Develop Later Living products including co-living, independent living, and extra-care. Support the development of dedicated/ tailored later living accommodation to enable Worcestershire residents to have a wider range of options including downsizing. Enable development at sufficient scale across the county so that it can be operated economically – attracting more investment. Integrate later living developments as hubs into county-wide social and healthcare provision.

Promote mixed communities, with care supported by digital technologies. The strategy recommends that pathways associated with housing should be used to support the delivery of health and social care services. Two opportunities facilitated by the planning system are the provision of communal hub facilities in new development including within co-living and extra-care settings, and the embedding of devices and connectivity to facilitate digitally enabled support and care. Districts should set and meet challenging targets for the delivery of accessibility modifications to increase the independence of elderly residents.

Priority Area 4 – Net Zero Carbon and Climate Change

Vision Statement or Objective for 2040

Climate change is one of the most important challenges that the housing strategy will address. A large share of the housing stock in Worcestershire will need retrofit by 2040 to meet net-zero targets in line with the Heat and Buildings Strategy²³ (HBS):

Specific roles have been identified in the strategy for Local Authorities, including planning for decarbonisation, decarbonising local authority stock, providing information, and raising awareness of support available for the decarbonisation. Above all, Local Authorities must continue to prioritise the tackling of climate change over the extended period to 2050.

In Worcestershire fuel poverty affects around 14.4% of households

Why?

- Government data suggests that 87% of homes in Worcestershire will require substantial retrofit investment to meet net-zero targets. Retrofit investments will create warmer, healthier homes with lower fuel bills helping to improve well-being (by tackling damp and mould issues) and eliminate fuel poverty.
- Local planning authorities in Worcestershire have opportunities and powers under the Environment Act to intervene to promote biodiversity recovery and improvements to air and water quality.
- Energy transition is a big economic opportunity and Worcestershire already benefits from employment created by Worcester Bosch. There is an opportunity to further develop a low-carbon heat eco-system based on consulting, and installation services focused on the local market.

Strategic Levers

Lever 1

- Support the development of local low-carbon supply chains to deliver high-quality, best value retrofit to the public and social and affordable housing sector. This initiative will build on the long-term finance offered by the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund launched in 2021.
- District councils should promote the adoption of PAS2035 on programmes beyond the scope of LAD and ECO²⁴
- Adapt procurement models used for the Decent Homes programme such as Fusion 21 to create local jobs, maximise programme buying power and manage retrofit portfolios. Work with registered providers and other large-scale housing

Lever 2

- Promote the development of sustainable communities based in part on the 20-minute town model. 20-minute towns combine a diverse range of homes in different tenures, employment, social and welfare services, and green space within an area that can easily be accessed using public and active travel options. Sustainable communities should also be designed to be healthy and resilient, with ample green space to support exercise and biodiversity as well as long-term responses to climate change threats. The benefits of promoting a sustainable community's model are that it is a holistic response to all of the challenges

Lever 3

- Develop a coordinated plan for benefits realisation associated with the implementation of the Environment Act in connection with housing development.
- Develop a framework for the agreement of biodiversity net gain investments to enhance public realm and public amenity.
- Consider biodiversity net-gain as an integral part of wider programmes associated with protected and priority species and habitats.

²³ BEIS. Heat and Building Strategy. October 2021

²⁴ Energy Company Obligation Scheme. Under ECO energy providers fund housing improvement programmes for low-income households. ECO4 will commence in April 2022.

<p>owners to create a large-scale retrofit programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop capacity for energy planning and mapping for decarbonisation in anticipation of the introduction of heat network zoning in 2025. 	<p>highlighted in the Housing Strategy.</p>	
<p>Jobs to be done</p>		
<p>Job 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a public engagement strategy aligned to the extended timescales of the HBS. Plan to engage with homeowners through to 2050 to raise awareness of retrofit opportunities. • Design the programme and specification to focus on privately rented and owner-occupied housing aligned to incentives outlined in the HBS. • Raise awareness of existing and planned incentives for decarbonisation so that NZC opportunities are considered when homes are upgraded. Keep the engagement programme under regular review to assess impact and to align to new incentives as they are developed. 	<p>Job 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress on decarbonization as quickly as possible targeting the worst performing housing. Prioritise securing funding through ECO, Local Authority Delivery Scheme and Social Housing Decarbonisation. • Develop county-wide strategies and targets in line with the long-term evolution of national decarbonization strategies. Anticipate direction of travel and adjust in response to detail such as the 2026 decision on hydrogen gas heating. This applies to new build and retrofit. 	<p>Job 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an approach to the net-zero carbon retrofit of homes in Worcestershire focused initially on homes in the public sector but with a long-term target to encourage the upgrade of private homes. <p>This will initially build on existing schemes including ECO/ECO+ and over time will expand to cover the wider private sector including the rental sector.</p> <p>This will anticipate the effect of incentives including funding and triggers for improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Worcestershire plan will go beyond the strategy by promoting a common assessment process through an early emphasis on public engagement.
<p>Who is involved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Council – planning, public health, sustainability, and transport • District Council – housing, management, housing development and planning • DLUHC • Midlands Energy Hub • Registered Providers and other housing providers • Energy generators contributing to ECO. • National, regional and SME housing developers. • Regional construction supply chain • Housing third parties including funders, insurers etc. • Training providers including the Higher Education sector. 		
<p>Worcestershire’s plan – how it will be different:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire will make rapid progress in the development of a decarbonisation plan and will be ahead of programme with respect to decarbonisation of existing public and private sector housing through retrofit by 2040. 		

- New communities developed in Worcestershire will be master planned, designed and built to be sustainable from the outset.
- Worcestershire will have a coordinated approach to the implementation of the Environment Act, which will support enhancements to biodiversity and resilience across the County.

Making it happen (essential actions):

Strategic lever: Develop local low-carbon supply chains to be capacity to deliver the retrofit programme		
<p>Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net zero carbon retrofit will require the development of a completely new supply chain. • Adoption of the PAS 2035 standard will promote the development of a competent supply chain for the roll-out of retrofit at scale. • The development of the supply chain will require a programme of work, competent assured contractors, trained operatives, and a materials supply network. • Local authorities will have access to Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding and wider programmes in connection with the retrofit of the non-residential public estate to accelerate the development of this local capacity. 	<p>Solution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This initiative will rely on the long-term development of funding solutions for net zero carbon retrofit in the public sector building on the platform of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. • Local Authorities have developed locally based supply chains for previous programmes such as Decent Homes. A good exemplar is the Fusion 21 programme developed for the 2008 Decent Homes programme. • Fusion 21 featured a visible pipeline of work, a framework of local contractors, a training programme, a bulk material purchasing programme and a pre-agreed pricing framework. 	<p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a local supply chain for retrofit accredited to PAS 2035 is an essential step to ensuring that Worcestershire people fully benefit from net zero carbon – accelerating home improvement and creating local jobs and a local SME retrofit network. • The outcome of the strategy will be made more certain using proven supply chain models. • Expanded capacity for retrofit in Worcestershire will enable the rate of progress to be maintained and may also achieve savings related to scale economies. • The supply chain should be accessible by the public and private sector.

Jobs to be done: Develop a public engagement strategy to encourage private sector decarbonisation		
<p>Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most homes in Worcestershire are privately owned. The HBS anticipates that most homeowners will undertake their own retrofits in line with heating system upgrades. • Most homes in Worcestershire will require improvement works, so it makes sense to make early progress on 'no-regret' solutions that improve home comfort. • Eventually home-owners will need to install a low-carbon heat source like a heat pump. However, the right solution might not yet be available. 	<p>Solution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HBS is a long-term strategy designed to work with the 'grain of consumer behaviour'. An engagement strategy needs to be similarly long-term. • Actively participate in 'inward engagement' through public consultation by Government, so the needs of Worcestershire are considered in policy development. • Encourage public adoption of existing and future advice sources as highlighted in the HBS including the Simple Energy Advice platform. 	<p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised awareness of the importance of homes in tackling climate change. Citizens accept the need for substantial change to buildings and behaviours needed to retrofit / decarbonise housing. • Accelerated adoption of energy and carbon saving measures in line with the long-term trajectory needed to meet net zero targets. • People in Worcestershire are aware of the changes that are coming and have the time to prepare.

<p>Making the right changes at the right time is critical.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of low carbon opportunities for existing homeowners will increase take-up of solutions over the 30-year period of the HBS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote awareness of the availability of support including advice and grants • Promote the awareness of retrofit incentives including upgrades to EPCs and other planned changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing retrofitted to meet NZC principles will be free of damp and mould. • Active participation by Worcestershire in policy formulation relevant to housing decarbonisation.
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Other Strategic Levers:

Promote the development of sustainable communities. Sustainable communities are a product of the people who live in a place and the homes and other facilities that support them. Sustainable communities should be mixed and diverse, readily accessible and should have facilities that meet the needs of all members of the community. These communities should also be designed to be sustainable in the face of climate change and other environmental challenges. Worcestershire will see large-scale housing development over the 20 years of the strategy. One of the most effective ways of meeting the objectives of all four priority areas will be to ensure that the largest-scale developments make a full contribution to climate change mitigation. This will be enabled by ambitious early master planning supported by local authorities, potentially facilitated by Supplementary Plans and development bodies including Urban Development Corporations.

Strategic lever 2.

Develop a coordinated plan for benefits realisation following the implementation of the requirements of the Environment Act in connection with housing development, including biodiversity net gain. Integrate the plan with housing planning and development so as to support the creation of sustainable, resilient communities. Consider joint working across Worcestershire where this will deliver better outcomes for the local environment.

Other jobs to do:

Accelerate progress on decarbonisation as quickly as possible. The HBS is designed to allow for the adoption of decarbonising technologies with the ‘grain’ of consumer behaviour. The strategy also promotes ‘no-regrets’ associated with new-build and off-grid homes where measures taken now will deliver benefit. Public sector retrofit should proceed as quickly as possible with initial support from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

Targets to increase adoption of low-carbon technologies are challenging, and work to create momentum in Worcestershire allied to existing low-carbon industries will increase the pace of uptake.

Develop an approach to the net-zero carbon retrofit. Most low carbon retrofit will take place in privately owned homes. Standardised approaches to retrofit based on PAS 2035 will help to improve standards, quality, and confidence for the consumer. This work will be delivered by the private sector, but Worcestershire will play a key role in facilitating a common approach. This is likely to involve working with Central, Regional and Local Government Partners to refine common standards suitable for use in the private housing sector.

5 2023-2025 Action Plan

It will be the responsibility of each district council to consider the ambitions set out in this strategy and develop its own action plan.

This section of the report sets out proposals for consideration in the development of these district-level action plans. As the strategy sets out a 20-year ambition, the proposals are at three levels of detail:

- A 100-day plan to create momentum and to promote awareness of the strategy across affected parties.
- A 5-year action plan setting out key priorities across the four priority areas.
- A twenty-year road map, showing how the components of the strategy will come together to support the delivery of the vision.

5.1 The 100-day plan

The purpose of the Housing Strategy is to deliver a step-change in housing provision in Worcestershire.

Worcestershire will be known for excellent housing. Everyone will have the choice of how and where they live. Local homes will be warm, healthy and will lead the way towards Net Zero. Worcestershire housing will add to a better quality of life.

This is summed up in the Vision for Housing:

As set out in this strategy, this vision will be delivered through coordinated action over 20-years across four broad areas of policy:



**Economic
growth and Jobs**



**Quality and
Standards**



**Health and
Wellbeing**



**Net-zero carbon
and Climate Change**

In order to create momentum in 2023, we propose a simple 100-day plan focused on the creation of momentum and awareness. The plan should act as a call for action around the following major opportunities:

- Creating a culture of positive action in housing and planning authorities to secure that Worcestershire is a dynamic, growing, and great place for everyone to live.
- Organising and actively collaborating in housing and planning authorities across Worcestershire. Taking assertive steps to meet the policies and aspirations that are set out in Development Plans.
- Using large scale development to set the standard for sustainable development including place-based amenities and services.
- Develop and manage affordable and social housing as an integral part of new and existing communities to increase inclusion in Worcestershire.
- Engaging with, organising, and supporting public and private homeowners to meet net zero targets.

Actions during the first 100 days:

We recommend the following key actions:

1. Obtain approvals and political support.
2. Develop individual district-level action plans with consideration being given to the proposals in this strategy.
3. Agree areas of collaboration.
4. Develop governance.

This Strategy serves several purposes:

- It is a vision for housing in the county to 2040.
- It provides a statement of intent focused on specific priorities.
- It provides the foundation of a set of more detailed action plans to cause the necessary changes and actions to happen and be delivered.
- It provides an opportunity to evolve Worcestershire's housing market offer to meet the needs of its citizens and business over the longer term. improving quality of life.

5.2 Action Plan 2023-2025

The proposed action plan summarises the series of key next steps to be implemented during the period 2023 to 2025 in order for the strategy to achieve its purpose. These are organised by the four priority areas, together with a series of important enabling actions. The proposed actions need to be developed by Partners, collectively and where necessary at individual organisational level to respond to the items proposed below.

	Proposed Actions	Outcome	Benefits
Enabling actions			
Engagement strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare and implement bespoke targeted stakeholder engagement programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligned stakeholders support for the strategy and implementation of its recommendations / next steps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick and frictionless implementation of strategy delivering early benefits.
Strategy update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree strategy monitoring and evaluation process. Agree strategy review periods - we recommend a review every 12 months and a refresh every 3 years. Develop review and refresh process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant focus on delivery and evolution of strategy. Maintenance of evidence base of impact and benefits delivered – enabling ongoing stakeholder support. Strategy remains ambitious and future looking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy remains up to date and relevant to Worcestershire, its citizens, and stakeholders. Worcestershire remains the most attractive place to live, work, learn and enjoy leisure time in the UK.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the effectiveness of existing governance arrangements as part of the strategy roll-out. Consider establishment of housing board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined governance model mobilised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification and recognition of linkages between economic / housing / health activity leading to more impactful decision making and greater benefits being delivered. Development of culture of positive action and collaboration – task and finish approach.
Government support & involvement of DLUHC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop key areas from the strategy where Government intervention, support or policy change is required to deliver the best possible outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy outcomes are delivered efficiently and effectively through recognition that support is required and changes in policy are made that positively impact delivery through the life of the strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The type and quality of homes required are delivered in Worcestershire.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate and act on strategic case for Homes England support around key interventions and initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homes England resources are deployed to support the Worcestershire agenda. 	
Evidence Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Plan for collecting, measuring, and reviewing data/ to form an evidence base for decision making and policy changes/support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence base to demonstrate to developers that a step change in activity in Worcestershire is required – for example NZC and independent living homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The type and quality of homes required are delivered in Worcestershire.
Economic Growth and Jobs			
Opportunity Pipeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop 5+ year public sector pipeline of development sites. Review existing known sites for housing and identify new possibilities e.g., WOPEP estate rationalisation, land promotion, change of use. Classification, appraisal, prioritisation of sites; identifying capacity, viability, timescales, and wider benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial programme of sites for development. Increased rate of delivery of social and affordable housing. Visible pipeline for the development of Offsite Manufacture Barriers and enablers to development identified and plans to mitigate prepared. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pipeline informs opportunity for alternative housing delivery models. Drives efficiency opportunities through better use of assets and associated cost savings. Underpins confidence in ability to directly influence housing market.
Development of housing delivery capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Local Plans to assess the most appropriate way of bringing the sites forward for development Consider alternatives to land sale including establishment of delivery vehicle(s). Establish a clearing house function to consolidate demand for MMC. Assess alternative delivery vehicles considering a range of factors. Explore potential partners such as Homes England, Registered Providers etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of Delivery Vehicle capacity within district councils or option to sell assets to traditional market - aligned to stakeholder ambitions. Delivery of a diverse range of housing to meet the needs of all citizens. Direct delivery sets standards and expectations for large-scale development including sustainable communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to accelerate delivery of affordable housing (or other tenure) aligned to county's social, economic, and environmental needs. Setting benchmarks on design quality. Opportunity to explore new innovations and drive forward agreed initiatives e.g., net zero carbon, modern methods of construction, healthy homes etc. Best value capital and revenue generation. <p>*See Quality and Standards action</p>

Effective deployment of housing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on (existing) collaborative cross-county working practices between district councils to prepare for additional workload and requirements for new capability that will come from planning reform. • Address / assess in terms of 'jobs to be done' and how best to deliver; recognising the significant opportunities transformation could realise. • Adopt a consistent approach to dealing with development parties to secure the necessary supply of social housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive action and collaboration between the district councils that is able to respond to the Strategy and adapt to the changes and additional workload that will likely result from planning reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency of delivery / lower cost to deliver / greater capacity to deliver / higher quality of delivery. • Joined up consistent approach to market leading to better housing being delivered across the county. • Best practice developed and applied with a 'local lens'.
Quality and standards			
Support the adoption of MMC housing by collaboration across boundaries to consolidate MMC demand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector and Registered Provider housing developers to support adoption of MMC solutions at scale. • Clearing house to be established across the county to consolidate demand from multiple programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to MMC capacity in the county is enhanced. • Procurement of MMC housing is simplified for public bodies in the county. • Quality of housing delivered in the county will be enhanced and productivity will increase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased housing delivery capacity in Worcestershire based on a more diverse housebuilder supply chain. • Delivery of better-quality housing
Plan for the implementation of planning reform to encourage great quality development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare to use planning reform to promote great quality development. • Develop local standards, design guides and codes as needed to secure high-quality development. • Building planning capability to manage large scale consents. • Plan for a faster planning process and secure opportunities for participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective implementation of major changes to the planning system. • Better quality development with more amenity for the community. • Improved engagement with stakeholders as part of future housing planning activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth implementation of reform to planning. • A housing offer that underpins / supports economic growth. • Increased volume of house building to meet targeted need. • Better use of planning resources across the county.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare to implement digital technologies as part of planning reform. 		
Develop local supply chain capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for opportunities associated with growth in new build and retrofit markets. • Collaborate with local businesses, training providers and other partners to plan for development of supply chain capacity. • Consider business capacity as well as skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient capacity is planned to meet the requirements of the housing strategy. • Local people have the opportunity to participate in the housing sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing requirements are met. • The housing market supports good quality jobs and local enterprise. • Worcestershire economy benefits from further diversification
Design Codes and Quality Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a common approach to development of localised Design Codes across the county. • Set minimum standards and expectations for large scale development / settlements. • Take a lead on permitted development rights in town centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving the delivery of housing aligned to Worcestershire's economic and community / citizen needs. • Delivery of citizen centric, mixed sustainable communities with high quality placemaking principles as standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housebuilders in Worcestershire deliver beautiful homes that meet the needs of all occupiers. • Worcestershire is the best place to live in England. • Zero carbon communities are developed with increased resilience to climate change and lower cost of retrospective measures.
Advance preparation for the introduction of new Fire Safety requirements for existing residential buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan to implement forthcoming building safety legislation in connection with Local Authority and Registered Provider managed housing over 11m in height (where relevant). • Integrate the plan with wider reforms in connection with the management of social housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire will have a county-wide plan to implement building safety management programmes as soon as practicable. • Reforms will be implemented as a single programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living in affected housing will benefit from improved safety management practice.

Health, wellbeing, and inclusion.			
Increase the delivery of a diverse range of affordable and social housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an accurate model to forecast demand for lower-cost housing. • Design of affordable housing requirements in the planning system to meet diverse housing needs. • Wide range of tenures in large-scale developments including urban extensions. • Local authority participation in development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data-led approach to affordable and social housing provision. • Supply of housing aligned to the needs of the local working population. • Greater diversity of housing supply, particularly in larger development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire meets the housing needs of all citizens. • More choice of social and affordable housing increases social mobility. • Homes and jobs are located more closely together.
Tackling homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the findings and recommendations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to align ambition and direction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A joined-up approach to resolving the challenges of homelessness and rough sleeping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy will seek to deliver a long-term housing solution to the homeless of Worcestershire.
Improve the life chances of people living in poor quality accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise net zero retrofit to deal with poorest quality housing first. • Develop dedicated housing to meet the needs of the homeless. • Prohibit the disposal of hard to decarbonise homes in public ownership. • Promote private sector retrofit schemes to older residents in privately owned homes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire's most needy residents benefit from warm, healthy accommodation. • Public retrofit funding is focused on housing that is in the poorest condition. • Fewer people are homeless. • Elderly homeowners can access support to improve their homes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved health outcomes for Worcestershire's most needy residents. • Greater equality in access to healthy housing. • Greater independence for elderly homeowners who will be helped to improve their homes.
Deliver housing suitable for later living in line with forecast demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate growth following the reform of funding for social care including sector-specific forecasts. • Work with partners to provide evidence base to support and promote the adoption of 'Lifetime Homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned housing supply in line with predicted demand. • Resilient new housing able to meet the requirements of all potential residents. • Increased interest from the development supply chain in the development of age-specific housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire meets the needs of an important and growing housing cohort. • Older residents live in suitable housing. • Family homes are recycled for younger families.

	<p>Standards’ to reflect better the demographics of the county.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to provide evidence base to support and promote later living housing through the planning system. Enable private sector operators to achieve scale in the county. • Work with extra-care housing providers to respond to the post-COVID-19 landscape and in raising the quality of existing accommodation to meet market expectation and need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended life of existing sheltered housing stock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health issues associated with loneliness and fuel poverty etc are addressed.
<p>Develop a role for housing in the delivery of health and wellbeing services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with Integrated Care System Partners with the need to identify opportunities to better integrate housing service and healthcare pathways. • Identify opportunities to pilot health and well-being hubs using existing community facilities. • Learn from assisted tech pilot undertaken by Community Housing and current initiatives and commission a single strategy to explore how digital technology can be used to facilitate healthcare in the home (over the long-term). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on existing collaborative initiatives. Make full use of the contact opportunities created by housing services to provide other support as needed. • Develop a partnership-based model for shared community services and activities focused on the shared community facilities delivered by new build housing development. • Accelerate the adoption of digital care services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More joined-up working centred on the home. • Effective use of community facilities to host outreach activities and events. • Early appreciation of the potential of digitally enabled home healthcare ahead of growth of demand in Worcestershire.
<p>Net zero-carbon and climate change</p>			
<p>Public engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop long-term plan for public engagement to increase awareness of the need for home decarbonisation and access to resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire people understand the issues, are engaged and are ready when they need to act to decarbonise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster rate of decarbonisation • Wider base of support for decarbonisation measures • More homes that are healthier, less polluting and free of damp and mould.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer chances to progress decarbonisation are missed because of better knowledge. 	
Healthy, sustainable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set standards and expectations for the delivery of high quality, mixed-tenure sustainable communities. • Promote the development of sustainable communities based in part on the 20-minute town model. • Carry out feasibility study / pilot project on creating a model of “Worcestershire Healthy Housing”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of sustainable communities that are great places for everyone to live. • Evidence base developed for new model of housing development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthier more economically active population. • Places that promote healthy, economically active lifestyles leading to lower costs for public services. • Reduced long-term cost of health and social care to the public sector. <p>Worcestershire is seen as a trailblazing county – the healthiest in England.</p>
Net-zero carbon retrofit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current and planned NZC initiatives in the county and beyond including engaging with Registered Providers to assess size of opportunity / demand / need. • Develop a common approach to the retrofit challenge for both social and private housing based on PAS 2035. • Promote awareness and benefits of Net Zero Carbon retrofit to homeowners. • Prioritise / pilot poor quality housing with multiple issues e.g., high energy costs, risks to health through for e.g., damp and mould. • Develop local low-carbon supply chains to deliver retrofit to the public sector. • Consider the countywide economic model where the public sector takes a proactive/ interventional role in delivering retrofit to the private sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire local authorities have a plan for retrofit and are active participants in discussions about funding and implementation. • A common approach minimises duplication of resources and inconsistent standards. • Homeowners are engaged early, creating awareness. • Worcestershire develops a local supply chain to deliver assured net zero carbon retrofit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early progress and quick wins on the biggest housing challenge affecting Worcestershire. • Consistent implementation minimises operational disruption to Local Authority housing teams. • Capture the economic benefits through local supply chain opportunities. • Accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon county. • Accelerate retrofit programmes to improve quality standards of existing homes with better energy efficiency and being free of damp and mould.

Public engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop long-term plan for public engagement to increase awareness of the need for home decarbonisation and access to resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire people understand the issues, are engaged and are ready when they need to act to decarbonise. • Fewer chances to progress decarbonisation are missed because of better knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster rate of decarbonisation • Wider base of support for decarbonisation measures • More homes that are healthier and less polluting.
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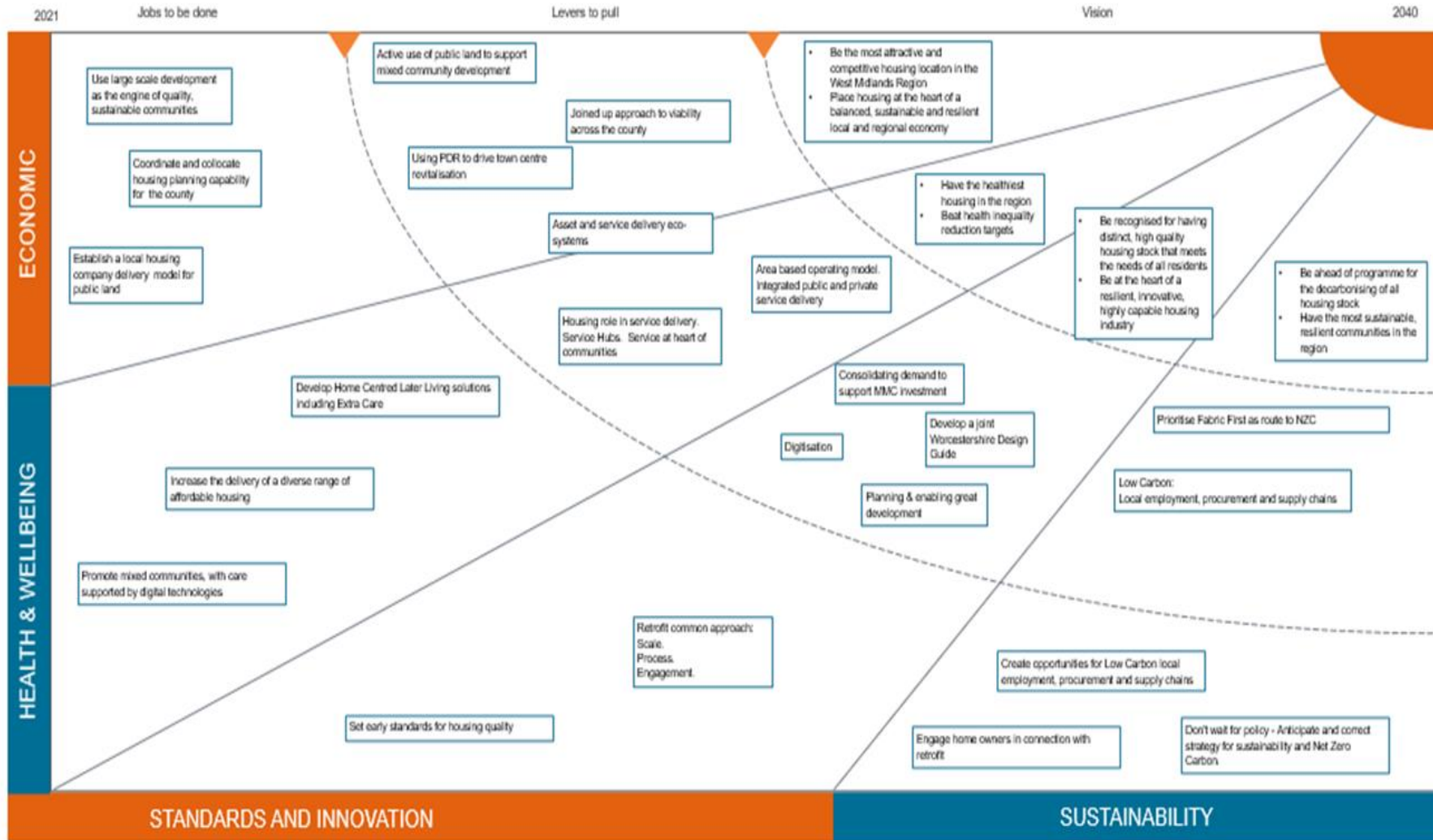
5.3 Long-term transformational road map

The road map summarises the main activities that are described and explained in the priorities section in the sequence required to deliver the 2040 objective.

The road map highlights the integrated nature of the strategy and the long-term nature of the actions required to deliver the expected level of change. This emphasises the importance of the five opportunities highlighted in the strategy:

- Creating a culture of positive action in housing and planning authorities to secure that Worcestershire is a dynamic, growing, and great place for everyone to live.
- Organising and actively collaborating in housing and planning authorities across Worcestershire. Taking assertive steps to meet the policies and aspirations that are set out in Development Plans.
- Using large scale development to set the standard for sustainable development including place-based amenities and services.
- Integrating affordable housing into new development in all communities.
- Engaging with, organising, and supporting public and private homeowners to meet net zero targets.

Transformation Roadmap



Arcadis UK

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London EC3M 4BY
United Kingdom

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arcadis.com

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Approval to Spend Report

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

1. **SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to set out to Cabinet the key implications of the New Procurement Bill which the Council has to comply with from 1st April 2024, and what the Council needs to do to meet its obligations.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet are asked to Recommend to Council that:

- **The Key Decision threshold is raised to £200k.**
- **On a quarterly basis a report “the Approval to Spend Report” will be provided to Cabinet which sets out the Council’s Procurement Pipeline for approval to be included on the forward plan and an analysis of spending over the past 4 years to identify spending with suppliers over the £200k limit to ensure this spending is converted to properly contracted expenditure and rogue expenditure is dealt with.**
- **That items from the initial pipeline report at the appropriate Key Decision level, as set out in Appendix C, are added to the forward plan.**

3. **KEY ISSUES**

Introduction

3.1 This report sets out the key implications of the new Procurement Bill, which needs to be enacted by 1st April 2024. The Bill brings even more transparency to how Councils undertake their business. The report sets out:

- the key parts of the new Bill
- Transparency arrangements already in place at the Council

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- Council procurement governance requirements
- An analysis of present procurements and comparison of limits against local Councils
- The proposed way forward.

The Procurement Bill

- 3.1 The Bill will reform the UK's public procurement regime, making it quicker, simpler, more transparent and better able to meet the UK's needs while remaining compliant with our international obligations
- 3.2 It will introduce a new regime that is based on value for money, competition and objective criteria in decision-making. It will create a simpler and more flexible, commercial system that better meets our country's needs. And it will more effectively open up public procurement to new entrants such as small businesses and social enterprises so that they can compete for and win more public contracts.
- 3.3 It will strengthen the approach to excluding suppliers where there is clear evidence of their involvement in Modern Slavery practices, and running throughout each part of the Bill is the theme of transparency.
- 3.4 Contracting authorities must have regard to delivering value for money, maximising public benefit, transparency and acting with integrity. Integrity must sit at the heart of the process. It means there must be good management, prevention of misconduct, and control in order to prevent fraud and corruption. The Bill also includes a duty on contracting authorities to have regard to the particular barriers facing SMEs, and to consider what can be done to overcome them.

Key Points within the Bill

Undertaking a Procurement

- 3.5 The Bill introduces a new procedure for running a competitive tendering process - the competitive flexible procedure - ensuring for the very first time that contracting authorities can design a competition to best suit the particular needs of their contract and market.

Contract Management

- 3.6 The important work on procurement does not stop once a contract has been awarded. Part four of the Bill sets out steps that must be taken to manage a contract. This includes the strengthening of rules ensuring that suppliers are paid on time and new requirements to assess and publish information about how suppliers are performing.

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Transparency Notices

3.7 The Bill proposes a number of measures to ensure greater transparency to make it easier to scrutinise procurement decisions. In particular, contracting authorities will be required to publish:

- a "pipeline notice" where contracting authorities consider that they will spend more than £100 million on certain types of procurement in the next financial year;
- a tender notice at the commencement of the procurement procedure;
- more detailed information about the evaluation to unsuccessful bidders;
- a contract award notice before (instead of after) entering into a public contract;
- information about contracts after they have been concluded;
- a copy of any public contract with a value exceeding £2 million within 90 days of it being entered into;
- information about payments under public contracts to enable scrutiny by the general public;
- a contract implementation notice to update on performance against KPIs;
- a contract change notice in advance of implementing amendments; and
- a contract termination notice ahead of the expiry or termination of a contract.

Measures already in place

3.8 Whilst the above may appear daunting, the recent work that the Council has already done to put measures in place means that the majority of the requirements under the new Bill are already being met with a few changes required for transparency purposes.

Our existing measures include:

- No Compliance No Order which was implemented on the TechOne system on the 1st April 2023. With this, an order cannot be raised unless it's linked to a contract or an identifiable procurement route. We are 3 months into this process and in the short term we will allow orders not linked to contracts as long as the contracting process is under way (which is checked/approved by the Procurement Team. By the end of the Calendar year we expect high compliance as contracts will have been set up for all significant expenditure.
- All new suppliers have to be approved by the procurement and payments teams. Up to September 2022 new suppliers were approved just by the payments teams. The

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new route ensures that we are making the most value of contracting and reducing rogue non contract linked expenditure.

- Monthly spending of over £500 is placed on the Councils Website. Please use this link <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/finance/supplier-payments-over-%C2%A3500.aspx>
- That the Council has an EPC Card system for small expenditure. Controls are in place using these Cards:
 - Maximum monthly expenditure.
 - Individual transaction limits.
 - Merchant Category Group code blocking
 - Each supplier is classified with a Category Group code. Any number of these codes can be blocked or left unblocked to ensure compliance with business policies.
- The contracts register is available to Officers, Members and the Public – See Appendix C.
- The Procurement team is available for monthly meetings with HOS and this ensures the procurement team has visibility of what service departments are procuring to ensure contracts are set up to ensure compliance to the No Compliance No Order regime.
- Procurement training is provided to the teams on request in order for them to understand the new and wider procurement requirements. The procurement team recently provided a series of training in September 2022.
- Monthly Accounts payable training delivered to ensure that those administering procurements within Service Departments understand how to use the TechOne system to properly code those requisition and orders.
- There is a dedicated Procurement Teams Page (See **Appendix A**) for Officers which covers:
 - The Procurement Process
 - Award Procedures
 - Frameworks Commonly Used
 - How we Advertise our Contract Information
 - Requests for Training
 - Social Value
 - Glossary of Procurement Terms
 - Template documents

Council Governance

- 3.9 Part 6 of the Constitution sets out the Schemes of Delegation. The schemes of delegation set out what decisions can be delegated to Cabinet and individual Officers. These are set out in Appendix B.

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- 3.10 The Council Constitution sets out that from a financial basis a “key decision” is any item that has a combined financial spend (either as a single item or for the length of the contract) of £50,000.
- 3.11 Key decisions need to be on the Council’s forward plan. Then
- Cabinet Decisions are actioned via a Cabinet Report;
 - Decisions delegated to Officers are actioned via an Officer Decision notice.

This includes Revenue, Capital and S106 allocations.

The Present Council Procurement Pipeline

- 3.13 The Council’s Procurement Pipeline, which is presently based on the Contracts Register, is set out in Appendix C along with the initial “pipeline document”. The Procurement Pipeline provides a forward look of potential contracting opportunities and when existing contracts are due to expire. The initial pipeline document which has been derived from the Council’s existing Contracts database. However, as set out in section 3.8 above, this is in the process of being built and so departmental procurement officers have been asked to update the Pipeline document for any procurements that they have coming up in 2023 and 2024 that are over £50k for the life of the contract and are not already on the contract register.
- 3.14 The key task of the pipeline is **to allow for proper planning of procurements** to ensure the Council maximises its contracting opportunities by
- Alerting Officers and Members to contracts coming to the end of their terms;
 - Reducing the likelihood of duplicating contracts;
 - Ensuring that if decisions are Key that they are on the appropriate Key Decision Registers
- 3.15 By having an up to date procurement pipeline, and ensuring procurements and the associated key decisions are efficiently planned, we will ensure that the Council is delivering fully to the new Procurement Bill which becomes a requirement on the 1st April 2024.
- 3.16 Assessing the current joint procurement register we have the following levels, by spending, of contracts:
- Contracts Register – taken as at 17th June
- Over £200k – 44 Contracts
 - £100K to £200k – 32 Contracts
 - £50k to £100k – 36 Contracts
 - £10k to £50k – 94 Contracts

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- Up to £10k – 62 Contracts

Capital (Just Bromsgrove) – taken from the present capital programme approved in February 2023

- Over £200k – 9 Schemes
- £100k to £200 – 2 Schemes
- £50k to £100k – 1 Scheme

3.17 It is clear from this data that the present £50k threshold for Key Decisions covers far too many projects as many contracts last for multiple years. The majority of Councils have traditionally set the key decision limit at the EU Threshold level of £179k. Other Councils in Worcestershire have the following key decision limits:

- Wyre Valley - £50,000
- Worcester City – £164,176 in 2017, suggests not required in present structure

As a further Comparison we have

- Birmingham – Capital £1m, Revenue £500k, Chief Officers £200k
- Solihull - £500k
- Wolverhampton - £250k

Proposal

3.18 Given the above points, it is proposed that:

- The Key Decision threshold is raised to £200k. The logic of this is for revenue expenditure using GCloud, contract lengths can be up to 4 years. As such this is the existing £50K limit expanded to the full term of revenue contracts. This new threshold will apply to all classes of delegated decision.
- On a quarterly basis a report “the approval to spend report” will be provided to Cabinet which sets out from the Procurement Pipeline those procurements that should be talking place over the next year. This report will be refreshed every quarter and can be converted once approved by Cabinet into the ongoing forward plan.
- That as part of this report an analysis of spending will be made of the past 3 years to identify spends with suppliers over the £200k limit to ensure this spending is converted to properly contracted expenditure and rogue expenditure is dealt with.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 No Legal implications have been identified.

5. Strategic Purpose Implications

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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 borough 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. Procurements by their nature have 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 procurement officers to consider their current procurement position and to ensure actions are in place to mitigate any expenditure that is not contracted properly.

7. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

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

8. **APPENDENCES**

Appendix A – Dedicated Procurement Team Page
Appendix B – Bromsgrove Scheme of Delegation
Appendix C – Forward Pipeline and Contracts Register

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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Appendix A – Dedicated Procurement Teams Page

Thinking about procuring something? Read the process here first then ask us for any advice you may want or need. [Email us](#) or post in [the chat in this channel](#). Procurement is part of Legal Services.

What you procure, when, and why, is up to you and your teams inside the councils' usual political processes. It's your work.

How you procure, however, is **not** up to you. As public employees how we procure is regulated, and there is a process you must follow, with support from Procurement. The process is simple, essential, and will help you to procure well.

It's your responsibility.

Service Protocol – Procurement

Our service protocol can be found [here](#)

The process of procurement

Follow this simple **four-step process** whenever you think about procuring. Links to relevant supporting resources are included as you go along. Documents you may wish to refer to here are collected in [the Files tab of this channel](#).



Step 1: DETERMINE THE NEED

1. What are you procuring? Identify and scope the requirement. (Refer to: *Procurement Training*, as a summary of the formal *Contract Procedure Rules*)
2. Agree the procurement with management, including, for new a requirement, whether it's a priority.

Step 2: SPECIFY THE PROCUREMENT TO MEET THE NEED

1. Set out exactly what will you need to buy. This step is critical as it will determine what you end up getting. (Refer to: *Specification training* and *Specification template*. Here's some Crown Commercial Service [info on writing a specification](#))
2. Determine which award procedure you will be following. See [the Award procedures section](#) below for more.
3. Get your specification approved with management, and where necessary get advice from Legal Services.

Step 3: GO TO MARKET (only skip this if your award procedure is a direct award via a framework)

1. Depending on your award procedure, run your tender or quotation procedure. Refer to the template documents, terms and conditions, etc., in [the Files tab](#) on this channel. The standard terms & conditions are not appropriate for all procurements, so please check with Legal Services which terms and conditions are suitable for you.
2. If you are using the procurement portal to go to market, Procurement will handle incoming questions via the portal.
3. Evaluate supplier responses. (Refer to: *Evaluation training*)
4. Feed back to all bidders, and where necessary get advice from Legal Services first.

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Step 4: AWARD/CONTRACT

1. Award the business / contracts.
2. Notify and sign contracts.
3. Request that the supplier and contract are added to the system (all new suppliers require a [new supplier form](#) to be sent to Payments (that file is always available over on [the Purchasing and Payments channel](#) of the ERP Support Team, which is where you should go if you want more support on adding a new supplier).
4. Manage the business / contracts as an ongoing concern.

Note: procurements may require technical guidance by Legal Services at certain points before they can proceed. This protects both you and the councils from compliance issues. Most contract and larger-value awards require technical guidance.

Award procedures

All procurements must follow the relevant **award procedure** in line with councils' Contract Procedure Rules. This isn't just our policy, it's the law, and it protects you, the councils, and the public purse.

The award procedure depends on the amount you're spending. Generally speaking the more money you are spending, the more demanding the award procedure, and the more time you will need to allow for it including getting any technical guidance.

Which award procedure do you need to follow?

Total value of spending (including repeat spending on the same thing)	Award procedure	Written evidence you need on file (emails are ok)	Retain evidence for
£0- £3,000	Order off a Framework*		
	or		
£0- £3,000	There must be evidence of competitive enquiries being undertaken, with details of final selection criteria recorded and retained for one year from date of purchase (this can be in by email) Good practice is to get three quotes. This can be via email with a required response date.	Framework agreement or Your enquiries and how you decided	Purchase date or contract end date plus one year
	Send your final choice to Procurement for logging on the Contracts Register & ERP. Order off a Framework*		
£3,001 - £25,000	or		
	Get at least 3 written quotations and record how you decided which supplier to award to, this can be completed by email.	Framework agreement or Your quotes and how you decided	Purchase date or contract end date plus one year
	Send your final choice to Procurement for logging on the Contracts Register & ERP.		

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	<i>Optional:</i> Ask Procurement to advertise the opportunity for you!		
	Order off a Framework*	Framework agreement	
	or	or	Purchase date or contract end date plus five years
£25,001- £50,000	Contact Procurement to advertise an invitation for businesses to quote	All procurement documentation	
	Send your final choice to Procurement for logging on the Contracts Register & ERP.		
	Order off a Framework*		
£50,001 – £177,897.50 (goods and services) or £4,447,447.50 (works)	or	Framework agreement	Purchase date or contract end date plus five years
	Contact Procurement to advertise an invitation to tender via the Proactis Portal managed by Procurement Team.	or	
Figures exclusive of VAT	Send your final choice to Procurement for logging on the Contracts Register & ERP.	All procurement documentation	
	Order off a Framework*		
Over £177,897.50 (goods and services) or £4,447,447.50 (works)	or	Framework documentation	Purchase date or contract end date plus five years
Figures exclusive of VAT	Contact Procurement to Advertise on 'Find a Tender' and via the Proactis Portal managed by Procurement Team.	or	
	Send your final choice to Procurement for logging on the Contracts Register & ERP.	All procurement documentation	

**Where there is no adequate framework (see below) we can establish our own mini-framework of suppliers to meet a procurement need. Please ask.*

Frameworks we commonly use

Frameworks go to the market so you don't have to.

They invite suppliers to compete to win business from multiple framework customers (us, and organisations like us). This saves time for you, and can mean significantly better prices too, because framework suppliers aren't just competing for your business - they're competing for the business of every customer who comes to that framework. Frameworks can be a simple, low admin way to procurement compliance.

Other sector specific frameworks are available, so if you don't see what you need here or these frameworks don't have what you need on them, please ask.

- Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) <http://www.ypo.co.uk/>
- ESPO <http://www.espo.org/supplier-area/becoming-a-supplier.aspx>
- Crown Commercial Service <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/crown-commercial-service>
- LHC <https://www.lhc.gov.uk/>
- Fusion 21 <https://www.fusion21.co.uk/>

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- EEM Ltd <http://eem.org.uk/>
- PFH <http://procurementforhousing.co.uk/>
- NHS SBS [Procurement Services - NHS SBS](#)
- Procure Partnership [Procure Partnership Frameworks | Procurement For The Public Sector \(procurepartnerships.co.uk\)](#)

Here's some more information on [what a framework is](#), from the Crown Commercial Service.

How we advertise our contract information

We use the Proactis Pro Contract (Due North) platform, and sometimes we use Government platforms too.

- **All our contracts:** [Proactis Pro Contract \(Due North\)](#). Users can sign up for alerts.
- **Our lower value contracts but over £25k:** [HM Government Contracts Finder](#)
- **Our higher value contracts over £177,897.50 (goods and services) or £4,447,447.50 (works):** [HM Government Find a Tender](#)

We also use Proactis for our [contract register](#), which is a public record of all our contracts.

Request training

Procurement training is **mandatory** if you purchase for our councils. The Procurement team offer regular training sessions across the councils, but you can request your own bespoke training at any time by contacting the team. We recognise that one size does not fit all!

Request training anytime by contacting Procurement. Training documents that support the key areas of procurement are available in the Files tab of this channel.

Social Value

Social value in procurement is about making sure that what you buy creates additional benefits for society. To get it right, you need to start thinking as early as possible about how to apply it to what you are buying.

Here's a [link to Crown Commercial Service article on Social Value](#).

Glossary of Procurement Terms

Running a procurement can involve technical language that can sometimes be a little daunting. We want to help you understand some of the [common terms and abbreviations](#) you may come across.

Related documents and files

See [the Files tab in this channel](#).

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Appendix B – Bromsgrove Scheme of Delegation

Link to the Council's Scheme of Delegation

<https://moderngovwebpublic.bromsgrove.gov.uk/documents/s53711/6%20Scheme%20of%20Delegations%20April%202022.pdf>

Appendix C – Contracts Register and Forward Pipeline

Link to the Council's Contracts Register

[Contracts register \(due-north.com\)](#)

Forward Pipeline – Bromsgrove Specific

Council	Contract Title	Contract Description	Department	Current Contract Expiry Date	Procurement Start Date	Contract Commencement Date	Contract Length	Extension	Contract Value (anticipated Lifetime Value)	Planned Procurement Route (project type?)	Suitable for SME's?	Suitable for VCSE's?
Joint	Supply of MFD	Supply of MFD and associated requirements	Communications	31/08/2023	01/05/2023	01/09/2023	5	0		Framework	Y	N
Joint	ERP System	ERP system	Finance	13/06/2023		14/06/2023	2	2		Framework	N	N
Bromsgrove	Dangerous Dog Contractor Ser	Framework Agreement Dangerous Dog Contractor Services For	WRS		TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC		Framework	N	N
Bromsgrove	Dangerous Dog Contractor Ser	Worcestershire Regulatory Services		06/04/2024						Open Tender	Y	Y
Bromsgrove	Dog warden cover	framework agreement to provide dog warden cover for Worcestershire regulatory services.	WRS	28/02/2024	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC		Open Tender	Y	Y
Bromsgrove	out of hours dog warden serv	framework agreement to provide out of hours dog warden services for	WRS	28/02/2024	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC		Open Tender	Y	Y
Bromsgrove	Management and maintenance of data centre	Management and maintenance of data centre infrastructure	ICT	01/01/2024	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	£378,000			
Bromsgrove		Civica Open Revenues	Revenues & Benefits	01/12/2023	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC		Framework	Y	N
Joint	Christmas lighting	Contract for the design, supply, installation, maintenance, and removal of Christmas lighting displays for the Borough of Redditch and District of Bromsgrove Including	Leisure	31/01/2023	01/05/2023	01/11/2023	3	0	150,000	Open Tender	Y	Y
Bromsgrove	PROVIDE Kennelling of Dogs	FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE Kennelling of Dogs FOR	WRS	31/03/2024	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC		open Tender	y	y
Bromsgrove	IDOX Software	BDC-Call-off contract to support and maintenance for Idox Uniform and DMS solution	WRS	28/02/2023	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	£77,000	Framework	Y	N
Bromsgrove	Water Supply	Water, Wastewater and Ancillary Services VIA CCS RM6187	Property Services	30/04/2023	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	£45,000	Framework	N	N
Joint	Energy Advice	Provision of Energy Advice and Energy Efficiency Schemes in Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough	Housing Strategy	31/05/2024	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	£161,000	Open Tender	Y	Y
Bromsgrove	Fuel	BDC Diesel Fuel via CCS RM6177	Environmental -	31/03/2024	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	£450,000.00	Framework	N	N
Bromsgrove	Fuel	RBC Diesel Fuel via CCS RM6177	Environmental -	31/03/2024	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	£24,000.00	Framework	N	N
Bromsgrove	Vehicle Hire	Vehicle Hire and Car Share (BDC) Via CCS RM6013	Environmental - Fleet	31/07/2023	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC				
Bromsgrove	Wheeled Bin	Supply of wheeled plastic bins via ESPD 860_22 BDC	Environmental - Stores	31/03/2024	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	£300,000.00	Framework	Y	Y
Bromsgrove	Air Quality Monitoring	Air Quality Monitoring	WRS	N/A	Aug-23				£276,000	Open Tender	Y	Y

Bromsgrove Capital Schemes
 Levelling UP Scheme
 UK Shared Prosperity Scheme

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Disabled Facilities Grant
Home Repairs Assistance
New Fleet Replacement
Replacement Parking Machines
Wheely Bin Purchases
Footpaths Maintenance
Buildings Maintenance

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Draft 2022/23 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Charlie Hotham, Finance and Enabling Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Michelle Howell
Report Author	Job Title: Head of Finance & Customer Services email:michelle.howell@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 0152764252
Wards Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report for 2022/23 presents the draft outturn position on the Council's Capital and Treasury Management Strategies, including all prudential indicators. There is the requirement for progress to reported through Cabinet to Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are asked to Recommend to Council that:

- 1 That Cabinet note the Treasury Outturn Position for 2022/23.

3. Background

Introduction

- 3.1 In June 2022 the Authority adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Authority to approve treasury management semi-annual and annual reports.
- 3.2 The Authority's treasury management strategy for 2022/23 was approved at a meeting on 22nd June 2022. The half yearly update was presented to Cabinet on the 23rd November 2022. The Authority has borrowed and invested

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substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risk remains central to the Authority's treasury management strategy.

- 3.3 CIPFA published its revised Treasury Management Code of Practice [the TM Code] and Prudential Code for Capital Finance in December 2021. The key changes in the two codes are around permitted reasons to borrow, knowledge and skills, and the management of non-treasury investments. The principles within the two Codes took immediate effect although local authorities could defer introducing the revised reporting requirements within the revised Codes until the 2023/24 financial year if they wish, which the Authority has elected to do.
- 3.4 Treasury risk management at the Authority is conducted within the framework of the TM Code. This Code now also includes extensive additional requirements for service and commercial investments, far beyond those in the 2017 version.

*External Context***Economic background:**

- 3.5 Economic background: The war in Ukraine continued to keep global inflation above central bank targets and the UK economic outlook remained relatively weak with the chance of a mild recession. The economic backdrop during the January to March period continued to be characterised by high energy and commodity prices, high inflation, and the associated impact on household budgets and spending.
- 3.6 Central Bank rhetoric and actions remained consistent with combatting inflation. The Bank of England, US Federal Reserve, and European Central Bank all increased interest rates over the period, even in the face of potential economic slowdowns in those regions.
- 3.7 Starting the financial year at 5.5%, the annual CPI measure of UK inflation rose strongly to hit 10.1% in July and then 11.1% in October. Inflation remained high in subsequent months but appeared to be past the peak, before unexpectedly rising again in February. Annual headline CPI registered 10.4% in February, up from 10.1% in January, with the largest upward contributions coming from food and housing. RPI followed a similar pattern during the year, hitting 14.2% in October. In February RPI measured 13.8%, up from 13.4% in the previous month.

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- 3.8 Following the decision by the UK government under Rishi Sunak and Jeremy Hunt to reverse some of the support to household energy bills announced under Liz Truss, further support in the form of a cap on what energy suppliers could charge household was announced in the March Budget to run from April until end June 2023. Before the announcement, typical household bills had been due to rise to £3,000 a year from April.
- 3.9 The labour market remained tight albeit with some ongoing evidence of potential loosening at the end of the period. The unemployment rate 3mth/year eased from 3.8% April-June to 3.6% in the following quarter, before picking up again to 3.7% between October-December. The most recent information for the period December-February showed an unemployment rate of 3.7%.
- 3.10 The inactivity rate was 21.3% in the December-February quarter, slightly down from the 21.4% in the first quarter of the financial year. Nominal earnings were robust throughout the year, with earnings growth in December-February at 5.7% for both total pay (including bonuses) and 6.5% for regular pay. Once adjusted for inflation, however, both measures were negative for that period and have been so throughout most of the year.
- 3.11 Despite household budgets remaining under pressure, consumer confidence rose to -36 in March, following readings of -38 and -45 in the previous two months, and much improved compared to the record-low of -49 in September. Quarterly GDP was soft through the year, registering a 0.1% gain in the April-June period, before contracting by (an upwardly revised) -0.1% in the subsequent quarter. For the October-December period was revised upwards to 0.1% (from 0.0%), illustrating a resilient but weak economic picture. The annual growth rate in Q4 was 0.6%.
- 3.11 The Bank of England increased the official Bank Rate to 4.25% during the financial year. From 0.75% in March 2022, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) pushed through rises at every subsequent meeting over the period, with recent hikes of 50bps in December and February and then 25bps in March, taking Bank Rate to 4.25%. March's rise was voted by a majority of 7-2, with two MPC members preferring to maintain Bank Rate at 4.0%. The Committee noted that inflationary pressures remain elevated with growth stronger than was expected in the February Monetary Policy Report. The February vote was also 7-2 in favour of a hike, and again with two members preferring to keep Bank Rate on hold.

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- 3.12 After reaching 9.1% in June, annual US inflation slowed for eight consecutive months to 6% in February. The Federal Reserve continued raising interest rates over the period with consecutive increases at each Federal Open Market Committee meetings, taking policy rates to a range of 4.75%- 5.00% at the March meeting.
- 3.13 From the record-high of 10.6% in October, Eurozone CPI inflation fell steadily to 6.9% in March 2023. Energy prices fell, but upward pressure came from food, alcohol, and tobacco. The European Central Bank continued increasing interest rates over the period, pushing rates up by 0.50% in March, taking the deposit facility rate to 3.0% and the main refinancing rate to 3.5%.
- 3.14 Financial markets: Uncertainty continued to be a key driver of financial market sentiment and bond yields remained relatively volatile due to concerns over elevated inflation and higher interest rates, as well as the likelihood of the UK entering a recession and for how long the Bank of England would continue to tighten monetary policy. Towards the end of the period, fears around the health of the banking system following the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank in the US and purchase of Credit Suisse by UBS caused further volatility.
- 3.15 Over the period the 5-year UK benchmark gilt yield rose from 1.41% to peak at 4.70% in September before ending the financial year at 3.36%. Over the same timeframe the 10-year gilt yield rose from 1.61% to peak at 4.51% before falling back to 3.49%, while the 20-year yield rose from 1.82% to 4.96% and then declined to 3.82%. The Sterling Overnight Rate (SONIA) averaged 2.24% over the period.
- 3.16 Credit review: Early in the period, Moody's affirmed the long-term rating of Guildford BC but revised the outlook to negative. The agency also downgraded Warrington BC and Transport for London.
- 3.18 In July Fitch revised the outlook on Standard Chartered and Bank of Nova Scotia from negative to stable and in the same month Moody's revised the outlook on Bayerische Landesbank to positive. In September S&P revised the outlook on the Greater London Authority to stable from negative and Fitch revised the outlook on HSBC to stable from negative.
- 3.19 The following month Fitch revised the outlook on the UK sovereign to negative from stable. Moody's made the same revision to the UK sovereign, following swiftly after with a similar move for a number of local authorities and UK banks including Barclays Bank, National Westminster Bank (and related entities) and Santander.

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- 3.20 During the last few months of the reporting period there were only a handful of credit changes by the rating agencies, then in March the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) in the US quickly spilled over into worries of a wider banking crisis as Credit Suisse encountered further problems and was bought by UBS.
- 3.21 Credit Default Prices had been rising since the start of the period on the back of the invasion of Ukraine, and in the UK rose further in September/October at the time of the then-government's mini budget. After this, CDS prices had been falling, but the fallout from SVB caused a spike on the back of the heightened uncertainty. However, they had moderated somewhat by the end of the period as fears of contagion subsided, but many are still above their pre-March levels reflecting that some uncertainty remains.
- 3.22 On the back of this, Arlingclose reduced its recommended maximum duration limit for unsecured deposits for all UK and Non-UK banks/institutions on its counterparty list to 35 days as a precautionary measure. No changes were made to the names on the list.
- 3.23 As market volatility is expected to remain a feature, at least in the near term and, as ever, the institutions and durations on the Authority's counterparty list recommended by Arlingclose remains under constant review.
- 3.24 Local authorities remain under financial pressure, but Arlingclose continues to take a positive view of the sector, considering its credit strength to be high. Section 114 notices have been issued by only a handful of authorities with specific issues. While Arlingclose's advice for local authorities on its counterparty list remains unchanged, a degree caution is merited with certain authorities.

Local Context

- 3.25 On 31st March 2023, the Authority had net borrowing of £2.5m arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure. The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while usable reserves and working capital are the underlying resources available for investment. These factors are summarised in Table 1 below.

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Table 1: Balance Sheet Summary

	31.3.23 Actual £m
Draft General Fund CFR	30.4
Less:	
External borrowing	(3.8)
Internal (over) borrowing	26.6
Less: Draft Usable reserves/working capital	(24.1)
Net borrowing	2.5

*** Figures are draft as still to close 20/21 and 21/22 Statements of accounts which impact opening 2022/23 opening balances**

- 3.26 The Authority pursued its strategy of keeping borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing, in order to reduce risk and keep interest costs low.
- 3.27 The treasury management position at 31st March 2023 and the change during the year is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Treasury Management Summary

	31.3.22 Balance £m	Movement £m	31.3.23 Balance £m	31.3.23 Rate %
Long-term borrowing	0	0	0	0
Short-term borrowing	0	3.7	3.7	4.50
Total borrowing	0	3.7	3.7	
Long-term investments	0	0	0	0
Short-term investments	7	(5.8)	1.2	4.05
Cash and cash equivalents	0	0	0	0
Total investments	7	(5.8)	1.2	
Net borrowing / (investments)	(7)	9.5	2.5	

Borrowing

- 3.28 CIPFA's 2021 Prudential Code is clear that local authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return and that it is not prudent for local authorities to make any investment or spending decision that will increase the capital

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financing requirement, and so may lead to new borrowing, unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the Authority. PWLB loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield unless these loans are for refinancing purposes.

- 3.29 The Authority has reviewed its capital programme in light of changes to the CIPFA Prudential Code and PWLB lending arrangements to ensure that borrowing to invest primarily for commercial return is no longer undertaken.

Borrowing Strategy and Activity

- 3.30 As outlined in the treasury strategy, the Authority's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing lower interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Authority's long-term plans change being a secondary objective. The Authority's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio and, where practicable, to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing.
- 3.31 The cost of both long and short-term borrowing rose dramatically over the year, with rates at the end of March around 2% - 4% higher than those at the beginning of April. Rate rises have been driven primarily by inflation and the need for central banks to control this by raising interest rates. Particularly dramatic rises were seen in September after Liz Truss' 'mini-budget' included unfunded tax cuts and additional borrowing to fund consumer energy price subsidies: over a twenty-four-hour period some PWLB rates increased to 6%. Rates have now fallen from September peaks but remain volatile and well above recent historical norms. The PWLB 10 year maturity certainty rate stood at 4.33% at 31st March 2023, 20 years at 4.70% and 30 years at 4.66%.

Explain the impact on the authority, and current strategy.

- 3.32 At 31st March 2023 the Authority held £3.7m of short term loans, a £3.7m increase on 31st March 2022, as part of its strategy for funding previous and current years' capital programmes. Outstanding loans on 31st March are summarised in Table 3 below.

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Table 3A: Borrowing Position

	31.3.22 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	31.3.23 Balance £m	31.3.23 Weighted Average Rate %	31.3.23 Weighted Average Maturity (years)
Public Works Loan Board	0	0	0		0
Banks (LOBO)	0	0	0		0
Banks (fixed-term)	0	0	0		0
Local authorities (long-term)	0	0	0		0
Local authorities (short-term)	0	3.7	3.7	4.50%	< 1
Total borrowing	0	3.7	3.7		

3.33 The Authority's borrowing decisions are not predicated on any one outcome for interest rates and a balanced portfolio of short- and long-term borrowing was maintained.

3.34 The Authority had remained debt free until this short term debt requirement and its capital expenditure plans do not currently imply any need to borrow over the near term. Investments fell by £5.8m to £1.2m as capital receipts were used to finance capital expenditure and reserves used to finance the revenue budget.

Treasury Investment Activity

3.35 CIPFA published a revised Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes on 20th December 2021. These define treasury management investments as investments that arise from the organisation's cash flows or treasury risk management activity that ultimately represents balances that need to be invested until the cash is required for use in the course of business.

3.36 The Authority holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. During the year, the Authority's investment balances ranged between £9.0m and £1.2 million due to timing differences between income and expenditure. The investment position is shown in table 4 below.

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Table 4: Treasury Investment Position

	31.3.22 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	31.3.23 Balance £m	31.3.23 Income Return %	31.3.23 Weighted Average Maturity days
Banks & building societies (unsecured)					
Covered bonds (secured)					
Government (incl. local authorities)	7.0	(6.0)	1.0	4.05	9
Corporate bonds and loans					
Money Market Funds	0	0.2	0.2	3.94	34
Other Pooled Funds					
Real Estate Investment Trusts					
Total investments	7.0	(5.8)	1.2		

3.37 Both the CIPFA Code and government guidance require the Authority to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its treasury investments before seeking the optimum rate of return, or yield. The Authority’s objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.

3.38 Bank Rate has increased from 0.75% at the beginning of the year to 4.25% at the end of March 2023. Short-dated cash rates, which had ranged between 0.7% - 1.5% at the beginning of April, rose by around 3.5% for overnight/7-day maturities and 3.3% for 6-12 month maturities.

3.39 By end March 2023, the rates on DMADF deposits ranged between 4.05% and 4.15%. The return on the Council’s Money Market Funds ranged between [0.5% - 0.7% p.a.] in early April and between [3.9% and 4.1%] at the end of March.

3.40 The progression of risk and return metrics are shown in the extracts from Arlingclose’s quarterly investment benchmarking in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Investment Benchmarking – Treasury investments managed in-house

Undertaken through Brokers

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Externally Managed Pooled Funds: The authority currently does not invest in any of these vehicles.

- 3.41 The change in the Authority's funds' capital values and income earned over the 12-month period is shown in Table 4.
- 3.42 Because these funds have no defined maturity date, but are available for withdrawal after a notice period, their performance and continued suitability in meeting the Authority's medium- to long-term investment objectives are regularly reviewed. Strategic fund investments are made in the knowledge that capital values will move both up and down on months, quarters and even years; but with the confidence that over a three- to five-year period total returns should exceed cash interest rates.
- 3.43 The Authority had budgeted £250,000 income from these investments in 2022/23. Income received was £111,350, whilst a further £4,500 has been declared and is due to be paid by April/May.
- 3.44 The DLUHC published a consultation on the IFRS 9 pooled investment fund statutory override for English authorities for fair value gains and losses on pooled investment funds which was due to expire with effect from 2023/24. The options under evaluation were to allow the override to lapse, to extend it, or to make it permanent. The override will be extended for two years and therefore remain in place for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years. Under the Regulations, gains and losses resulting from unrealised fair value movements relating to treasury pooled investment funds, that otherwise must be recognised in profit or loss under IFRS 9, are not charges to the revenue account, and must be taken into an unusable reserve account.
- 3.45 Where investment income has exceeded budget, the Authority has transferred revenue savings to an earmarked reserve to manage future volatility. This reserve was £0m on 31/3/2023.

Non-Treasury Investments

- 3.46 The definition of investments in CIPFA's revised 2021 Treasury Management Code covers all the financial assets of the Authority as well as other non-financial assets which the Authority holds primarily for financial return. Investments that do not meet the definition of treasury management investments (i.e. management of surplus cash) are categorised as either for

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service purposes (made explicitly to further service objectives) and or for commercial purposes (made primarily for financial return).

3.47 Investment Guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Welsh Government also broadens the definition of investments to include all such assets held partially or wholly for financial return.

3.48 The Authority also held £0m of such investments.

3.49 The Authority held £0m of investments made for commercial purposes

Treasury Performance

3.50 The Authority measures the financial performance of its treasury management activities both in terms of its impact on the revenue budget and its relationship to benchmark interest rates, as shown in table 6 below.

Table 6: Performance

	Actual £m	Budget £m	Over/ under	Actual %
Short Term Borrowing	3.7	0	3.7	4.5
Total borrowing	3.7	0	3.7	
PFI and Finance leases	0	0	0	0
Total debt	3.7	0	3.7	
DMO	1.0	0	1.0	4.05
Money Market Funds	0.25	0	0.25	4.00
Total treasury investments	1.25	0	1.25	

Compliance

3.51 The Interim Director of Finance reports that all treasury management activities undertaken during the year complied fully with the CIPFA Code of Practice and the Authority's approved Treasury Management Strategy apart from the movement up of the Councils operational limit for its bank which increased to

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£2m. Compliance with specific investment limits is demonstrated in table 7 below.

- 3.52 Compliance with the authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt is demonstrated in table 7 below.

Table 7: Debt Limits

	2022/23 Maximum	31.3.23 Actual	2022/23 Operational Boundary	2022/23 Authorised Limit	Complied? Yes/No
Borrowing	3.7	3.7	45.0	50.0	Yes
PFI and Finance Leases	0	0	1.0	1.0	Yes
Total debt	3.7	3.7	46.0	51.0	Yes

- 3.53 Since the operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring it is not significant if the operational boundary is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this is not counted as a compliance failure.

Table 8: Investment Limits

	2022/23 Maximum	31.3.23 Actual	2022/23 Limit	Complied? Yes/No
Any single organisation, except the UK Government	0	0	£5m each	Yes
Any group of organisations under the same ownership	0	0	unlimited	Yes
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	0	0	£5m per group	Yes
Negotiable instruments held in a broker's nominee account	0	0	£5m per manager	Yes
Limit per non-UK country	0	0	£5m per broker	Yes
Registered providers and registered social landlords	0	0	£5m per country	Yes
Unsecured investments with building societies	0	0	£2.5m in total	Yes
Loans to unrated corporates	0	0	£2.5m in total	Yes

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Money Market Funds	£6.5m	£250k	£20m in total	Yes
Real Estate Investment Trusts	0	0	£20m in total	Yes

Treasury Management Indicators

3.54 The Authority measures and manages its exposures to treasury management risks using the following indicators.

3.55 **Security:** The Authority has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

	31.3.23 Actual	2022/23 Target	Complied?
Portfolio average credit rating	AAA	A	Yes

3.56 **Liquidity:** The Authority has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling three-month period, without additional borrowing.

	31.3.23 Actual	2022/23 Target	Complied?
Total cash available within [3] months	£1.25m	£2.5m	No
Total sum borrowed in past [3] months without prior notice	£2.75m	0	Yes

The council maximises the use of cash balances and minimises borrowing where possible to reduce the exposure to interest rates given the economic market. The council also undertakes short-term borrowing with Redditch Borough Council without advance notice when there is a short-term cashflow need.

3.57 **Interest Rate Exposures:** This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limits on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interests was:

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Interest rate risk indicator	31.3.23 Actual	2022/23 Limit	Complied?
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	50,000	£500,000	Yes
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	50,000	£500,000	Yes

3.58 The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investment will be replaced at current rates.

3.59 **Maturity Structure of Borrowing:** This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of all borrowing were:

	31.3.23 Actual	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Complied?
Under 12 months	£3.75m	100%	0%	Yes
12 months and within 24 months	0	100%	0%	Yes
24 months and within 5 years	0	100%	0%	Yes
5 years and within 10 years	0	100%	0%	Yes
10 years and above	0	100%	0%	Yes

3.60 Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

3.61 **Principal Sums Invested for Periods Longer than a year:** The purpose of this indicator is to control the Authority's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The limits on the long-term principal sum invested to final maturities beyond the period end were:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Actual principal invested beyond year end	£1.25m	0	0
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£1.5m	£1.0m	£0.5m
Complied?	Yes	Yes	Yes

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4. **IMPLICATIONS**

Financial Implications

4.1 Financial implications are set out in section 3.

Legal Implications

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

Service / Operational Implications

4.3 Monitoring will be undertaken to ensure that targets are achieved.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

4.4 The implementation of borrowing and investment decisions indirectly affect all Council interactions as it is fundamental to the management of working capital to make operational decisions.

5. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

5.1 There is a risk Investment income could be lost if the Council do not invest with "accredited" institutions. The Council can no longer "borrow for gain" and if did would no longer be able to use the Public Works Loans Board to finance its debt.

6. **APPENDICES**

None

6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Treasury Management Strategy. Cabinet 3rd May 2022

7. **KEY**

None

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 21ST JUNE 2023, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), S. J. Baxter (Deputy Leader),
C.A. Hotham, C. B. Taylor, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillor S. T. Nock

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr P. Carpenter,
Mrs. C. Felton and Mrs J. Gresham

1/23 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S. Colella.

2/23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3/23 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE CABINET HELD ON 15TH MARCH 2023**

The minutes from the Cabinet meeting that took place on 15th March
2023 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 15th March
2023 be approved as a true and accurate record.

4/23 **RENEWAL OF THE ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING (ERP)
CONTRACT**

The Interim Executive Director of Finance presented the report regarding
the renewal of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Contract and in
doing so informed Members that the existing contract was due to expire
at the end of June 2023. Members were advised that the procurement
would take place through the G Cloud, a local government framework,
as it had been previously. However, it was clarified that, the new
contract would not include the use of the HR and Payroll modules. It was
queried whether, given the issues that had been experience during the
implementation of the ERP System, if the Council could procure a new

supplier. Officers reported that were the Council to procure an alternative supplier to TechOne, the issue with Cash Receipting would still need to be cleared prior to any transfer to an alternative supplier. This would also result in further financial investment being made. Therefore, it was considered that to reprocur TechOne was the most satisfactory way forward. It was likely that there would need to be a further review process and potential new implementation in two years' time.

Cabinet was informed that it was hoped that the issues experienced in the Cash Receipting module of the system would be resolved by the end of the calendar year and that an update was planned on the system in early July 2023. It was noted that several available updates had been skipped due to the previous issues experienced and now that the system was working well this update would bring the system back up to date. It was clarified that slipping some updates had been made to ensure stability within the system before any updates were made.

In respect of the contract with Wincave, which was required in relation to the cash receipting system, it was reported that the contract did not expire until December 2023, however the process for procurement of a new contract would need to be undertaken in September 2023.

Following the presentation of the report Members asked several questions including:

- Invoicing within the system – it was reported that there had been some issues experienced regarding invoicing previously, however these were now resolved and had resulted in the issuing of old invoices that needed to be paid. It was noted that this was a positive outcome of the system, in that the Council were able to chase any outstanding debts.
- Systems Accountants – The use of Systems Accountants would be usual during the implementation of Finance systems. However, the Council did not currently have these roles within the Finance team. However, staff members had now been identified who could be trained in this area for the future. It was hoped that this would ensure that when the AMS contract finished, the finance team would be able to provide this function in-house.
- The cost as a result of not procuring the HR and Payroll modules – It was reported that this was not yet known, and that the pricing would be set out in the framework contract. The £190K 2022/23 cost for system included a rebate for year 4 due to the issues encountered during the implementation.

- Review of system – it was noted that any system needed to be market tested on a periodic basis. However, it was confirmed that regular testing took place on the ERP system within the Council and that the TechOne system was intuitive for users.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling, queried the wording of the following resolution contained within the report. As follows:

‘That the AMS contract continued until the Council had confidence that their in house resource was capable of delivering all or part of that function.’

It was clarified and agreed that *‘their’* included in the resolution above referred to the Council, and not AMS.

Subject to the preamble above regarding resolution 2, it was

RESOLVED that

1. the Council reprocured TechOne but at a reduced licence fee to reflect that HR and Payroll would not be used and delegated the finer negotiations to the Interim Director of Finance.
2. the AMS contract continued until the Council had confidence that their in house resource was capable of delivering all or part of that function.
3. the Wincave contract be renewed via a tender process in the autumn.

5/23

QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Interim Director of Finance presented the Quarter 4 Performance Monitoring report. The following was highlighted for Members’ consideration:

- The 2022/2023 Quarter 4 Outturn position would be considered at the next Cabinet meeting on 12th July 2023. This would allow the Finance team to reduce the volumes of items in Suspense and complete the Revenue and Capital Outturn suite of reports which were due for submission to Government on 31st July 2023.
- Improvements in several Operational Service Measures including a decrease in staff turnover, which was 1% lower than the national average. An increase in Council Tax collection rates and an increase in the speed in which Planning applications were processed.

- The remediation works at Windsor Street progress and process that had been undertaken to obtain quotes.

Following the presentation of the report Members queried the following areas:

- Measuring Health and Wellbeing – Some Members queried whether measures such as obesity were included in this report given that some of the responsibility for these issues did not lie with the Council. Officers noted that as the Council Plan was due to be refreshed shortly, this would provide Members an opportunity to look at the Council's priorities and include them in any future iteration of the Council Plan, if necessary.
- What measures were being taken by the Council to encourage residents to decrease their waste consumption given that the data regarding the amount of waste had been measured at 18% of residual waste, 35% was food was (45% of which was still in the packaging). It was confirmed by Officers that the Head of Service for Environmental Services was working on a briefing for all Members in this area, given the far reaching changes that were to be made in the new Environmental Act by Central Government. It was noted that the Head of Service for Environmental Services would work with Councillor P. Whittaker as the relevant Portfolio Holder to ensure Members are kept fully up to date with the potential changes in this area.

RESOLVED that

The Q4 Performance data for the Period January to March 2023 be noted.

6/23

QUARTERLY RISK UPDATE

The Interim Director of Finance presented the Quarterly Risk Update and informed Members that this was the fourth cycle of Corporate and Departmental Risk review since a baseline exercise was undertaken in April 2022.

As a result of these regular reviews, it was reported that there had been mitigation and reduction of risk across the Council and that measures to reduce risk had become business as usual. In addition to this, the Council had undertaken an update of the 4Risk system, the Council's repository for risk management and had established an Officer Risk

Group in order to ensure that a common approach to risk was embedded across the organisation.

Cabinet was informed that when the original baselining exercise took place there had been 105 Departmental Risks identified which reduced to 82 Departmental Risks following a review in June 2022. Currently there was a total of 55 Departmental Risks (2 Red, 21 Amber and 32 Green). The Red risks were in respect of the Revenue and Benefits Teams work, which currently included manual intervention when processing claims and therefore was considered to be an increased risk. The Bromsgrove Leisure contracts were also highlighted as a Red risk.

Members were keen to understand whether there needed to be a further risk included in respect of some partnership working, given the number of projects they were currently undertaking. It was felt that this would be an area that could be highlighted as a risk, particularly as one of the partners, North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) were managing a significant number of time-limited projects. Members were advised that the projects undertaken by NWEDR were risk assessed on a project by project basis.

The Interim Director of Finance informed Cabinet that at a recent conference hosted by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DHLUC) risks surrounding the number of Levelling Up projects across the country, the timescales for delivery, and the need for specialist contractors across many of these projects had been raised. It was hoped that there may be some flexibility of deadlines for some of the projects nationally in the future.

A further risk raised by Members was around the recruitment of the Chief Executive and Executive Director of Finance posts, that were to be advertised in the near future. Members agreed that this was a significant area of risk, and it was imperative that a succession plan was in place. Officers undertook to look at the risks as highlighted and progress accordingly.

RESOLVED that subject to the preamble above

The present list of Corporate and Departmental Risks and additional risks highlighted during the course of the meeting be considered and noted.

7/23

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 13TH AND 29TH MARCH 2023

Councillor C. Hotham presented the item in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny Board minutes from 13th and 29th March 2023 in his role as previous Chairman of the Board for the municipal year 2022/2023. He wished to thank all Members of the Board who carried out detailed and successful scrutiny during his time as Chairman.

In respect of the minutes of the meeting held on 13th March, Cabinet was informed that there had been a report considered regarding Damp and Mould, which had been well received and answered many of the Members questions. In addition to this, it was noted that the regular update regarding the Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and a report on the Former Market Hall were considered.

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 29th March 2023 outlined the reports considered. Councillor C. Hotham stated that this had been a productive meeting which had included consideration of a report regarding the Provision of Street Signs, which had resulted in the Board making two recommendations. As a result, the budget for street signs, had been increased and included in the budget for 2023/24.

RESOLVED that

- 1)The recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at the meeting on 29th March 2023 be noted.
- 2)The minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings that took place on 13th and 29th March be noted.

8/23

PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE REQUIREMENTS - RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT TASK GROUP

The Interim Director of Finance presented the report in respect of the Project Management Office. It was explained that this report was being considered as a result of a recommendation made by the Audit Task Group. The Task Group had conducted a detailed investigation into why the Section 24 Notice had been issued to Bromsgrove District Council in October 2022. The Bromsgrove Audit Task Group had considered hundreds of pages of written evidence and had held eight meetings over a period of 20 hours in February and early March 2023. The report and recommendations from the Task Group had been considered at a

meeting of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee held on 9th March 2023, and subsequently at a Cabinet meeting held on 15th March 2023, when all of the recommendations were agreed.

Cabinet was informed that high level corporate projects were reported quarterly to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and were also included as part of the Quarterly Finance and Performance Report.

Furthermore, Members were advised that the Council already had a number of Officers trained to be project managers at Prince 2. It was noted that these skills needed to be realigned in order to ensure that trained staff were, where operationally possible, project managing Council projects.

Officers reported that, the CMT had recently reviewed the number of projects that were either underway or planned to start across the organisation. However, a further review was undertaken in February and March and a third of these projects were moved from the project list and were now considered Business as Usual. Once the final number of projects was established, they had been categorised as follows:

- Economic Development and Regeneration.
- Housing.
- ICT Related
- Organisational Change Related

The Interim Director of Finance reported that the Project Management Office Requirements, in response to the Audit Task Group report, recommended that two new roles be established: a Programme Manager and Programme Officer. The establishment of these roles had been a recommendation from the Audit Task Group. It was hoped that by recruiting to these roles that the project framework would be adhered to more successfully and that reporting on all projects would be on a monthly basis. The salaries for these two roles would be in total between £70k and £110k. It was noted that these costs would be included in any costs allocated to a project and therefore would be spread across all service areas.

Members welcomed this report in light of the findings of the Audit Task Group. However, some Members were keen to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the Programme Manager and Programme Officer were made clear when established; and that staff who were recruited had the correct qualifications. It was confirmed by Officers that this would be the case and that both roles would mainly report to the CMT.

There was a query regarding how NWEDR projects were managed, and Officers clarified that this area was covered by the Governance Group which was chaired by the Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Council.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Formal reporting of all projects be undertaken on a monthly basis by Officers and that this information to be included in the Quarterly Finance and Performance Reports for Members.
- 2) A compliance structure be put in place to ensure the delivery of projects and the management of the multiple interdependencies across projects. This included:
 - a. A council programme office be established to provide oversight and validation of the delivery of projects across the organisation.
 - b. The roles of a programme manager and a programme officer be established to provide support for the delivery of this oversight, especially for ICT and Organisational Change projects across the organisation.

9/23

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

There was no urgent business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 6.59 p.m.

Chairman

Bromsgrove District Council – 19th July 2023 Member Questions

1. **From Councillor H. Rone-Clarke** **Question for the Leader**

"In recent years, the A38 roundabout at Morrison's (Redditch Road) and immediate surrounding area has been subject to much development; new shops, a Costa Drive-Thru and planned improvements to the A38 mean this area will soon be unrecognisable compared to 5 years ago. Local residents along with myself are, as a result, calling for air pollution monitoring so they can be educated as to the air quality around their homes.

I'm aware that studies have been undertaken prior to development suggesting it would not have a negative impact, but given the other changes that have taken place in the area, will the leader write to Highways to request that a survey is undertaken as soon as possible?"

2. **From Councillor S. Evans** **Question for the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration**

"The Lib Dem group welcomes the investment of £14.5 million to improve Bromsgrove, however we would like to ensure that the opportunity is taken to regenerate the entire High Street.

Would the cabinet member please confirm whether the ruling Conservative and Independent administration agrees with me that the Council should install hanging baskets, flower planters and heritage lighting on Bromsgrove High Street?"

3. **From Councillor R. Hunter** **Question for the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Climate Change**

"I understand that members of Bromsgrove Sports and Leisure who were unable to access the pool for an extended period earlier this year due to maintenance issues were given the option to pause their membership. Do you think this is sufficient or do you agree with me that members who were inconvenienced but continued to pay membership fees should be offered recompense such as a limited period of free membership?"

**4. From Councillor S. Robinson
Question for the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Licensing and WRS**

“Do you think the A38 BREP will really support the housing needs it is purported to and do you agree with the County Council that the plans, including the closure of the right hand turn into School Lane, are in the best interests of the people of Bromsgrove? “

**5. From Councillor J. Robinson
Question for the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration**

“Could you please update us on what has caused the delay to the old market hall redevelopment site and confirm if it is still being taken forward as the best solution for the area?”

NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion has been submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 by Councillor S. Evans:

“This Council recognises the need to be open and transparent, with council meetings being accessible to the residents of Bromsgrove.

This Council therefore resolves to ask its officers to produce a business case for the implementation of live video broadcasts for full council meetings, and this business case should be presented at the full council meeting in October.”

NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion has been submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 by Councillor P. McDonald:

"A great number of local authorities televise their council meetings allowing residents to watch local democracy from the comfort of their homes. This opens the council to full scrutinisation of its actions in the council chamber and shows local democracy at work. Therefore, we call upon officers to present options as to how meetings of full Council can be televised by the next Council meeting."

NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion has been submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 by Councillor H. Rone-Clarke:

"There is a threat to the future of our libraries and the way in which they are to be managed. It is proposed that Bromsgrove, Rubery and Wythall Libraries will be the first in the County to become 'unmanned.' There will be serious consequences associated with such changes both for staff and users of this service. Therefore, we call upon the Overview and Scrutiny Board to investigate the consequences of such action."

NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion has been submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 by Councillor E Gray:

“Unfortunately, at the moment the Council does not have the staff to put bids in for funding from the Lottery and other organisations. At a time when our recreation grounds are crying out for investment it needs this capacity. I therefore call on the Cabinet to review the structural vacancy list as a matter of urgency to explore the reason why these posts remain unfilled.”

NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion has been submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 by Councillor J. Robinson:

“This Council opposes the closure of ticket offices at local railway stations including Bromsgrove, Hagley and Wythall and calls on the Leader of the Council to write to the Rail Delivery Group and Secretary of State setting out our opposition to the plans. Council also calls for its media platforms to be used to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage residents to give their views.”

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