

Public Document Pack



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

MONDAY 22ND APRIL 2024

AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

MEMBERS: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), S. T. Nock (Vice-Chairman), A. Bailes, R. Bailes, A. M. Dale, E. M. S. Gray, R. J. Hunter, B. Kumar, S. A. Robinson, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke and J. D. Stanley

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence and Named Substitutes**
2. **Declarations of Interest and Whipping Arrangements**

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. **Governance Systems Review - Implementation Progress Update (Pages 7 - 60)**
4. **Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Update**

5. **Impact of Heatwaves Short Sharp Review - Terms of Reference** (Pages 61 - 62)
6. **Agile Working - Update on Implementation** (Pages 63 - 64)
7. **Local Heritage List for Bromsgrove District - Action Plan Update** (Pages 65 - 70)
8. **Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)** (Pages 71 - 78)
9. **Reprofiling of Capital Fleet Replacement Budget - Domestic Waste Fleet** (Pages 79 - 84)
10. **Foodbank & Community Shop Provision Task Group - Final Report** (Pages 85 - 100)
11. **Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2023-24**
(Report to follow). This report will be published in a Supplementary Papers pack.
12. **Cabinet Work Programme** (Pages 101 - 106)
13. **Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme** (Pages 107 - 108)
14. **To consider, and if considered appropriate, to pass the following resolution to exclude the public from the meeting during the consideration of item(s) of business containing exempt information:-**

RESOLVED: that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it/they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, as amended, the relevant paragraph of that part, in each case, being as set out below, and that it is in the public interest to do so:-

Item No	Paragraph
15	3
16	3, 4
17	3, 4
15. **Parking Enforcement Consultancy** (Pages 109 - 116)
16. **Interim Update on the Transfer of Economic Development Unit (EDU) From Wyre Forest DC to Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils** (Pages 117 - 122)

17. **To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 11th March 2024 (Pages 123 - 144)**

Sue Hanley
Chief Executive

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

12th April 2024

**If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
Mat Sliwinski**

**Parkside, Market Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8DA
Tel: (01527) 64252 Ext: 3095
Email: mateusz.sliwinski@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk**

GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Please note that this is a public meeting.

You are able to see the meeting in person. Agenda for the meeting is available to view from the Committee Pages of the Council's website.

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 flu or 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 the Board 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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Overview and Scrutiny Board

22nd April 2024

Governance Systems Task Group - Constitution Review - Recommendations

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Charlie Hotham, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services
Report Author Claire Felton	Job Title: Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services Contact email: c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk	
Wards Affected		No specific ward relevance
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

The Overview and Scrutiny Board is asked to **RECOMMEND** that

- 1) The Joint Arrangements, at Part 7 of the constitution, be updated, as detailed in Appendix A;
- 2) The Planning Procedure Rules, at Part 14 of the constitution, be updated, as detailed in Appendix B and the Planning Call in process be removed from the Officer Scheme of Delegations at Part 6 of the constitution;
- 3) The Scrutiny Procedure Rules, at Part 12 of the constitution, be updated as detailed in Appendix C;
- 4) The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee Procedure Rules, at Part 13 of the constitution, be updated as detailed in Appendix D;
- 5) The amendments to the Member Officer Relations Protocol, at Part 22 of the constitution, whereby the Member Enquiries Guidance should be added as an appendix to that part of the constitution, be approved; and
- 6) The Committee terms of reference for the Licensing (Miscellaneous) Sub-Committees A and B for the number of Councillors be amended as detailed in Appendix F.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report details the outcomes of the latest meeting of the Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG), held on 12th March 2024, at which various changes to the Council's constitution were discussed.
- 2.2 Members are invited to consider the background to the recommendations proposed by the CRWG and to determine whether to endorse the group's recommendations.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Joint Arrangements

- 3.1 Part 7 of the Council's constitution details joint arrangements in place with which Bromsgrove District Council has some involvement, such as shared service arrangements.
- 3.2 The content of the Joint Arrangements section in the constitution has been reviewed by Officers and changes are being proposed to update the information that is provided, as detailed at Appendix A to the report.
- 3.3 This includes the proposal to remove reference to the former Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) from the Joint Arrangements document, as this LEP no longer exists.
- 3.4 A further change is proposed to remove reference to the Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Board from the Joint Arrangements section. This proposal is being made in a context in which Officers are proposing to update the Committee Terms of Reference, at Part 5 of the constitution. It is suggested that in future the updated Committee Terms of Reference should be divided into two parts; Part A will focus on the terms of reference for "internal Committees", such as the Planning Committee, and Part B will focus on the terms of reference for joint bodies with which the Council has some involvement.
- 3.5 The review of the content of the Committee Terms of Reference is currently still taking place and will be reported for Members' consideration in due course.

Overview and Scrutiny Board

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Planning Procedure Rules

- 3.6 There is a process at Bromsgrove District Council that enables Members to call in particular Planning applications for the consideration of the Planning Committee.
- 3.7 Currently, the guidance in respect of the call in process for planning applications is listed at Paragraphs 7 – 8 in the Introduction to the Officer Scheme of Delegations, at Part 6 of the constitution.
- 3.8 The ongoing review of the Council's constitution has highlighted that this is not the most logical location for this information about the Planning call in process to be located.
- 3.9 In this context, to enhance the clarity and transparency of the process, it is proposed that the guidance in respect of the Planning Call in process should be incorporated into the Planning Procedure Rules at Part 14 of the constitution, as detailed in Appendix B to this report.
- 3.10 Further changes are proposed to the Planning Procedure Rules in relation to removing reference to the temporary process that was in place for planning site visits held during the Covid-19 pandemic. These temporary arrangements no longer need to be in place.
- 3.11 Members are asked to note that the Council's existing procedures for planning site visits continue to feature in the Planning Code of Practice, at Part 24 of the constitution. As no changes are proposed to the process for carrying out site visits, this has not been included as an appendix to this report, but this part can be viewed as a background paper to the report.

Scrutiny Procedure Rules

- 3.12 Part 12 of the Council's constitution is the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, which details the procedural rules for the Council's Overview and Scrutiny process.
- 3.13 The Scrutiny Procedure Rules include guidance with respect to the types of items that may be included on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.
- 3.14 The CRWG considered two proposed changes to the rules that would help to clarify the types of items that would not be accepted for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Board:
- Anybody can add an item for consideration at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board. There is a risk that an individual

Overview and Scrutiny Board

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could call for the same subject to be debated at consecutive meetings of the Board over a period of time, which would take up time at meetings of the Board at the expense of debating other issues that might be of particular concern to the local community. It is therefore proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules should be amended so as to clarify that a subject may not be considered at a meeting if it has previously been debated at a meeting of the Board held in the preceding 6 months, unless there has been a significant change in circumstances.

- There is a legal restriction preventing Overview and Scrutiny of specific planning and licensing applications. It is proposed that, to ensure transparency in the process, this should be clarified in the Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

3.15 Presently, Procedure Rule 1.3 stipulates that a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board may appoint a substitute to attend Board meetings on their behalf on only two occasions during a municipal year. The rationale for this proposal was that, due to the importance of the Overview and Scrutiny function and the need for continuity, Members of the Board should attend meetings wherever possible and limit their absences.

3.16 Concerns were raised at the CRWG meeting about the restrictions arising from this procedural rule in respect of substitutions at meetings of the Board. As an alternative, the CRWG is proposing that each member of the Board should have a designated named substitute who would be kept informed of the work of the Board and could step in to attend meetings on behalf of the Board member should they be unable to attend a meeting.

3.17 Reference was also made at the CRWG meeting to procedure rule 7.2, which relates to holding quarterly meetings between the Leader, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee to co-ordinate work programmes. Members noted that these meetings had not been taking place and the group concluded that, as there are many other opportunities for Members to enter into dialogue, both formally and informally, these meetings were not considered to be necessary. Therefore, the CRWG proposed that this requirement should be removed from the Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

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Audit, Standards and Governance Committee Procedure Rules

- 3.18 Part 13 of the Council's constitution contains the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee's Procedure Rules.
- 3.19 Included within these rules is a requirement for the Monitoring Officer's report to be considered as a regular item on the agenda for meetings of this Committee. The Monitoring Officer's report provides updates on key matters relating to the Council's standards regime as well as on Member training and the work of the CRWG.
- 3.20 In most years, the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee meets four times a year. However, since the Council was issued with a Section 24 Notice in 2022, the Committee has been meeting six times a year and this meeting regularity is due to continue until all of the points in the Section 24 recommendations have been addressed.
- 3.21 The CRWG was advised that Monitoring Officer reports have been prepared for consideration at all of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee meetings held during the 2023/24 municipal year. However, there have not been significant changes from a standards perspective in the time that has elapsed between meetings during the year.
- 3.22 In this context, it is proposed that it would be more appropriate in future for the Monitoring Officer's reports to be presented for the consideration of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee on a quarterly basis. There would remain the potential for additional copies of this report to be drafted during the year should circumstances require.

Member Officer Relations Protocol – Addition of Member Enquiries Guidance

- 3.23 In recent months, Group Leaders have discussed the process followed at the Council for consideration and resolution of enquiries raised by Members with staff.
- 3.24 The Council's Business improvement Team (BIT) reviewed the arrangements that were in place, in terms of staff responding to queries received from Members. This review identified that there were a range of approaches adopted by teams across the Council. Whilst many staff had positive working relationships with Councillors, approaches to responding to Members varied and there was a lack of consistency. In addition, timescales for responding to Members varied.

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- 3.25 In this context, Officers have drafted guidance for staff in respect of responding to Member enquiries. The intention of this guidance is to enable greater consistency to emerge in respect of the processes that staff are expected to follow when responding to Members' queries. This guidance should also provide clarity about timescales and expectations, to the benefit of elected Members and the residents that they serve.
- 3.26 Part 22 of the Council's constitution contains the Member Officer Relations Protocol. This protocol outlines the appropriate working relationships between Members and Officers at Bromsgrove District Council. It is suggested that the guidance would be appropriate to attach as an appendix to this protocol in the Council's constitution.
- 3.27 In considering this matter, Members are asked to note that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) will be monitoring data arising from the Member enquiries that are reported through this process so that any trends or areas of concern can be addressed as they emerge.

Committee Terms of Reference – Licensing Miscellaneous Sub-Committees A and B

- 3.28 In the past, there was a constitutional requirement for either the Chairman or the Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee to act as the Chairman of any Licensing Sub-Committee meetings that were convened.
- 3.29 This requirement created challenges when attempting to arrange and secure membership for meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committees. There were also challenges that arose when both the Chairman and the Vice Chairman had conflicts of interest in relation to the application due to be considered. Council therefore agreed in an urgent decision made in November 2020 that there should not longer be a requirement for the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee to chair meetings of the Sub-Committees.
- 3.30 Reference is still made in the terms of reference to the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Committee Licensing Committee forming one of the number of members serving on a Licensing Sub-Committee. This creates challenges in terms of organising meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee as the Chairman and Vice Chairman may not always be available in the day on the dates when meetings need to be held. They may also have potential conflicts of interest relating to the applications on the agenda.
- 3.31 This is not specified as a requirement in the special provisions as to membership for the Licensing Sub-Committee and an amendment to

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the information about the number of Councillors on Licensing Sub-Committees would help to provide useful clarity in respect of this rule.

- 3.32 It is therefore proposed that the information relating to the number of Councillors on a Licensing Sub-Committee in the terms of reference for the Licensing Sub-Committee should be updated to remove reference to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee, as detailed in Appendix F.

General Updates to the Constitution

- 3.33 It is important to note that these recommendations have been made in a context in which a comprehensive review continues to be undertaken on behalf of the Council. This review has taken on board the findings arising from the Governance Systems Task Group, whilst also aiming to simplify and reduce the current length of the constitution.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Review and revision of the Constitution is governed by Article 15 of the Constitution.
- 5.2 The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) highlights functions which cannot by law be the responsibility of the Executive which cannot be subject to scrutiny. This category includes functions relating to town and country planning and development control and functions relating to licensing and regulation.
- 5.3 There is no legal requirement for the Chairman or the Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee (parent) to also be a member serving on a Licensing Sub-Committee meeting.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 6.1 The action proposed in this report supports the strategic purpose “an effective and sustainable Council”.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.2 There are no specific climate change implications.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.3 There are no specific equalities and diversity implications.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 There is a risk that if the proposed changes to the constitution are not approved the document will remain lengthy and in some places both out of date and lacking in clarity. This is because the changes proposed in this report are designed to enhance the transparency of this constitution and to make the layout and content more user friendly.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendices

Appendix A – Joint Arrangements – Updated in Track Changes

Appendix B – Planning Procedure Rules – Updated in Track Changes

Appendix C – Scrutiny Procedure Rules – Updated in Track Changes

Appendix D – Audit, Standards and Governance Committee Procedure Rules – Updated in Track Changes

Appendix E – Member Officer Relations Protocol, Including Member Enquiries Guidance at Appendix 1 – Updated in Track Changes

Appendix F – Extract from Committee Terms of Reference – Licensing (Miscellaneous) Sub-Committees A and B

Background Papers

Planning Code of Practice, at Part 24 of the Council's Constitution: [24 Planning Code of Practice 2018 \(bromsgrove.gov.uk\)](#)

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22nd April 2024

9. **REPORT SIGN OFF**

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Charlie Hotham.	11 th April 2024
Lead Director / Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	April 2024
Financial Services	Pete Carpenter, Director of Finance and Resources	March 2024
Legal Services	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	April 2024

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PART 7

JOINT ARRANGEMENTS

This section sets out the joint arrangements the Council has entered into with other local authorities, and is divided into the following parts:-

- Shared Services with Redditch Borough Council
- Other arrangements

[Further information in relation to Joint Committees that the Council participates in are referenced in Part B of the Committee Terms of Reference]

Commented [SS1]: WRS section now moved to committee terms of reference - Part 5

Commented [SS2]: GBSLEP has been disbanded

1. Shared Services with Redditch Borough Council

The Council operates shared services with Redditch Borough Council. Whilst both councils are politically independent, they have a joint chief executive and a joint management team. The shared services arrangement is facilitated primarily by the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government Act 2000, and operates in accordance with service specific agreements and the Overarching Framework Agreement between the two councils.

In 2009 Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council took the decision to work in partnership. The first step was the appointment of a joint chief executive and in 2010 this was followed by the appointment of a joint management team. The co-operation between the Council was formally recorded in a legal agreement known as the "Overarching Framework Agreement" which was signed in 2011.

The overall aim was to introduce collaborative working, bringing teams together to provide services jointly across the two councils, and delivering savings and efficiencies for both councils. From the outset both Councils chose to remain politically independent, with separate processes for decision making and operating independent budgets and spending.

Working practices have been put in place through the Overarching Framework Agreement and under the relevant local government legislation, and officers employed by one Council may carry out functions for the other in accordance with the Councils' respective Schemes of Delegation.

Since the introduction of shared services savings and efficiencies have been found by the reduction in senior management posts and subsequent re-structures as teams have been brought together.

Other benefits have included increased resilience for teams, cultivation of greater expertise and specialism amongst staff and economies of scale. As collaborative working has developed over time, further savings and efficiencies have been achieved from procurement initiatives, services reviews and service re-designs.

PART 7

2. Other arrangements

The Council has agreed to enter into other arrangements for sharing services with local authorities. These are summarised below: -

a. Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service

The Council operates a shared service arrangement with Malvern Hills District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Worcester City Council, and Wychavon District Council under which the authorities collaborate and provide one shared Internal Audit Service for all the authorities. The service is hosted by Worcester City Council and is regulated by a formal agreement.

b. Payroll Service

The Council has entered into an arrangement with Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council for the authorities to collaborate and provide one shared service for Payroll services across the three authorities.

The service is hosted by Redditch Borough Council and regulated by a formal agreement.

c. North Worcestershire Building Control Service

The Council has agreed to enter into an arrangement with Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council for the authorities to collaborate and provide one shared service for building control services across the three authorities. The shared service is hosted by Bromsgrove District Council and is regulated by a formal agreement.

d. North Worcestershire Water Management

The Council has agreed to enter into an arrangement with Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council for the authorities to collaborate and provide one shared service for land drainage service across the three authorities. The shared service is hosted by Wyre Forest District Council and is regulated by a formal agreement.

e. North Worcestershire Emergency Planning

The Council has agreed to enter into an arrangement with Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council for the authorities to collaborate and provide one shared service for emergency planning across the three authorities. The shared service is hosted by Wyre Forest District Council and is regulated by a formal agreement.

PART 14

APPENDIX B PLANNING COMMITTEE PROCEDURE RULES

1.

Terms of Reference of Planning Committee

1.1

The Council will appoint a Planning Committee.

1.2

The Terms of Reference of the Planning Committee are set out in Part 5 of the Constitution.

2.

Time and Place of Meetings

1.1

There shall be at least 10 meetings of the Planning Committee each year.

1.2

The time and place of Planning Committee meetings will be determined by the Chief Executive and notified in the agenda.

3.

Composition of the Planning Committee

3.1

The Planning Committee will comprise 11 Councillors.

3.2

Article 8.4 of the Articles at Part 2 of this Constitution applies to the Planning Committee.

3.3

Members of the Planning Committee who cannot attend a particular meeting may arrange for a substitute to attend in his or her place provided that they have completed the appropriate training.

3.4

The Leader of the Council cannot be a member of the Planning Committee and cannot sit as a substitute on the Planning Committee.

4.

Chairman

4.1

The Planning Committee will appoint one of its members as Chairman at its first meeting following the Annual Council Meeting.

4.2

The Chairman of the Planning Committee cannot be a member of the Cabinet.

5.

Quorum

The quorum for a meeting of the Planning Committee is 6.

6.

Application of Council Procedure Rules

The Council Procedure Rules (as specified in Council Procedure Rule 22) will apply to all meetings of the Planning Committee except as modified by these Rules.

BDC May 2024

PART 14

7 Procedure for Determining Applications for Planning Permission

- 7.1 An officer will present the report of the Head of Planning, ~~and~~ Regeneration and Leisure Services.
- 7.2 Members of the public who have registered to speak may address the meeting when invited to do so by the Chairman and in accordance with the public speaking rules.
- 7.3 Ward members who have registered to speak may then address the meeting when invited to do so by the Chairman and in accordance with both the public speaking rules and these Procedure Rules.
- 7.4 The Chairman will invite members of the Committee to address the meeting. With the consent of the Chairman, members of the Committee are entitled to address the meeting more than once.
- 7.5 Before taking the vote the Chairman will read out the recommendation of the Head of Planning and Regeneration Services and ascertain if any member of the Committee wishes to put forward an alternative recommendation.
- 7.6 If no alternative recommendation is put forward the Chairman will proceed to the vote.
- 7.7 If one or more alternative recommendations are put forward the Chairman will:
- (a) request each member who puts forward an alternative recommendation to read out the alternative recommendation and specify the reasons for the alternative recommendation;
 - (b) invite the Head of Planning and Regeneration Services to advise the Committee on the extent to which the alternative recommendation and reasons for it fall within or outside planning policy;
 - (c) consider whether an adjournment is required to enable the member proposing the alternative recommendation to take advice from officers;
- and only then proceed to the vote.
- 7.8 Each member of the Committee may vote only once in favour of either the recommendation proposed by the Head of Planning and Regeneration Services or an alternative recommendation.

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PART 14

8. Public Speaking at Planning Committee

- 8.1 The Council has decided to introduce a public speaking scheme to allow members of the public and other parties to EITHER give their views in person OR in writing about an application for planning permission which affects them when it is being considered by the Planning Committee.
- 8.2 The four classes of speaker who may exercise the opportunity to speak publicly at Planning Committee are:
- objector (or agent/ spokesperson on behalf of objectors);
 - applicant, or their agent (or supporter);
 - Parish Council representative (if applicable);
 - Ward Councillor
- 8.3 A person wishing to address either in person or in writing the Planning Committee must give notice to the Democratic Services Team of his or her intention to do so by 12.00 noon two working days prior to the Planning Committee meeting in question. ~~A person~~ ~~Members of the public~~ registering to submit comments in writing must submit the written statement by the same deadline.

Members of the public who register to address a meeting of the Planning Committee can do so using one of the three options below:-

- By attending in person and addressing the ~~the~~ committee verbally;
 - By joining the meeting virtually by video link and addressing the committee verbally; or
 - By providing a written statement in advance of the meeting to be read out by an officer.
- 8.4 A total of three minutes shall be allocated to the applicant and/or his/her agent (or to a member of the public) who wish speak in favour of a planning application; if more than one person wishes to speak the time will be allocated in accordance with the Council's Guidance for Public Speaking at Planning Committee.
- 8.5 A total of three minutes shall be allocated to ~~a person~~ ~~members of the public~~ who wishes to either speak or provide a written statement, against a planning application; if more than one person wishes to either speak or provide a written statement, the time will be allocated in accordance with the Council's Guidance for Public Speaking at Planning Committee:-

~~Written statements will be read out by the Democratic Services Officer at the meeting. The written statement should be a length that would take no longer than the allotted time to read. The Democratic Services Officer when reading the written statement will not speak for more than the allotted time, when doing so.~~

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PART 14

8.6 ~~Written statements will be read out by the Democratic Services Officer at the meeting. The written statement should be a length that would take no longer than the allotted time to read. The Democratic Services Officer when reading the written statement will not speak for more than the allotted time, when doing so.~~

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8.7 A total of three minutes public speaking time shall be allocated to the representative of the local Parish Council; if more than one Parish Council representative wishes to speak the time will be divided equally between them. The time limits for public speaking may be extended at the discretion of the Chairman but only in exceptional circumstances.

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8.87 A total of three minutes shall be allocated to Ward Councillors who wish to speak in relation to a planning application or proposed confirmation of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) in their ward; if more than one Ward Councillor wishes to speak the time will be divided equally between them. In the event that a Ward Councillor is unable for any reason to exercise their Ward Councillor speaking rights they may nominate a substitute member to represent the views of the ward residents.

8.98 Guidance for public participation at Planning Committee is published from time to time by the Council. The Chairman of the Planning Committee will retain the discretion to decide at the meeting in which order the public speakers will address the Committee.

8.109 The Chairman shall invite the representative of Head of Planning and Regeneration at the conclusion of public speaking on planning applications to correct any factual inaccuracies.

8.119 The Council has also decided to introduce a public speaking scheme to allow members of the public and other parties to EITHER give their views in person OR in writing on the subject of an application in respect of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

8.124 The public and other parties will be permitted to register to speak publicly at meetings of the Planning Committee either in opposition to or in support of a TPO.

8.132 A person wishing to address the Planning Committee either in person or in writing the ~~Planning Committee~~ in respect of TPOs must give notice to the Democratic Services team in accordance with the timescales set out at paragraph 8.3.

8.143 A total of three minutes shall be allocated to a person member of the public who wishes to speak or provide a written statement to be read out in respect of a TPO. If more than one person wishes to either speak or provide a written statement, the time will be allocated in accordance with the Council's Guidance for Public Speaking at Planning Committee.

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PART 14

8.1~~54~~ Where a planning application is fully considered at Planning Committee and public speaking rights are exercised, in the event that Members decide to defer application there will be no further public speaking rights. This rule will apply to all classes of public speaker listed at paragraphs 8.2. and 8.1~~32~~ above.

9 **Members of the Planning Committee with Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) or other disclosable interests and Public Speaking**

Any Member who considers they have a DPI or other disclosable interest in any planning matter, whether or not as a Planning Committee Member, should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer, deputy Monitoring Officer or a member of the Democratic Services Team at an early stage.

~~10 — Site Visits~~

~~During the pandemic, formal site visits will not be possible. Officers will endeavour to provide as much information as necessary, to assist members in their understanding of the site. Should any member of the Committee decide to go on a personal visit to see a site, then they must observe the following:~~

- ~~• Only view the site from the public highway (you do not have the authority to enter a site);~~
- ~~• Do not engage in any conversation with any person you may see at the site, nor disclose the purpose of your visit. If you are approached, explain that the purpose of the visit is to view the site and its surroundings and that you cannot enter into any discussion about the merits of the application.~~
- ~~• Do not take photographs or make recordings with any device including your phone.~~
- ~~• View alone – no third parties may accompany you. Someone can travel with you in your car, but must not be with you when viewing the site.~~

10 Calling-In Procedure for Ward Members for Planning Committee

10.1 When a ward member wishes to call in an application to Planning Committee for consideration, they will, within 21 days of receipt of the notification of that application, contact the case officer and set out their reasons for wanting the application to be considered at committee rather than by officer delegation. The case officer will, in writing, record the request and reasons and send a written record to the Portfolio Holder,

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Chairman of the Planning Committee and any other ward member(s) for the area in which the application site is situated, of the request and reasons.

10.2 If a request is made after the deadline set out in paragraph 10.1 above, the Chairman of the Planning Committee shall make the final decision, taking into account all relevant matters, as to whether the application is considered by the Planning Committee, and will inform the case officer of his decision within 2 working days of receiving the request from the case officer. The ward member who made the request will also be informed of the Chairman's decision.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES - EXTRACT

1. Arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny

The Council will appoint an Overview and Scrutiny Board, as set out in Article 6 of this Constitution.

- a. The Overview and Scrutiny Board will have responsibility for the Council's overview and scrutiny and call-in functions, scrutiny of the budget, petitions, Councillor Calls for Action and scrutiny of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
- b. The Overview and Scrutiny Board will establish time limited Task Groups, the terms of reference of which will be agreed by the Board, to investigate issues in depth and agree reports prepared by the Task Groups; or itself undertake selected reviews.
- c. The Overview and Scrutiny Board will have responsibility for monitoring performance improvement, identifying unsatisfactory progress or performance and making recommendations on remedial action to the Cabinet
- d. The Overview and Scrutiny Board will have responsibility for monitoring the Council Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy and making recommendations to Cabinet.

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Board will comprise 11 Councillors. All Councillors except members of the Cabinet may be members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

- 1.2 Where a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board is unable to attend a board meeting a substitute may attend in his or her place. There will be a named substitute for each member of the Board who will be kept informed of all of the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, including receiving copies of the agenda for meetings of the Board, so that they are fully informed when attending meetings on behalf of the lead Member.~~The ability to appoint a substitute may only be exercised by Overview and Scrutiny Board members on up to two occasions during each municipal year. In extenuating circumstances and upon application to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, this may be waived. This rule does not apply to task group meetings.~~

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- 1.2
- 1.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Board may (except in relation to call-ins) appoint such Task Groups as it considers appropriate to enable it to perform the overview and scrutiny functions on behalf of the Council. The size of each Task Group will vary according to the purpose for which it is established. The terms of reference, the chairmanship and membership of a Task Group shall be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board. .

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2. Co-optees

- 2.1 The [Overview and Scrutiny](#) Board shall be entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of a number of people as non-voting co-optees of the [Overview and Scrutiny](#) Board.

3. Meetings of the [Overview and Scrutiny Board Boards](#)

- 3.1 There shall be at least 9 ordinary meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board in each year.
- 3.2 There shall be not less than 1 meeting every 12 month period of the Overview and Scrutiny Board in its capacity to scrutinise and review the Council's responsibilities for the crime and disorder functions.
- 3.3 Extraordinary meetings may be called from time to time as and when appropriate.
- 3.4 An extraordinary meeting may be called by the Chairman [or any 3 members](#) of the [Overview and Scrutiny](#) Board, ~~or by any 3 members of the Board.~~

4. Quorum

The quorum for meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board shall be 6.

5. Participation in Meetings

No member may be involved in scrutinising a decision in which he/she has been directly involved. If any member of ~~a~~ [the Overview and Scrutiny](#) Board finds that a decision in which he/she has been directly involved is to be scrutinised, he/she shall declare the fact to the ~~relevant~~ [Overview and Scrutiny](#) Board and take no part in the discussion and voting in the part of the meeting which relates to that decision.

6. Chairman

- 6.1 At its first meeting following the Annual Council Meeting the [Overview and Scrutiny](#) Board will:
- a. appoint one of its members as Chairman; and
 - b. appoint one of its members as Vice-Chairman.

7. Work Programme

- 7.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Board will be responsible for setting its own work programme and in doing so shall make provision for:-

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- a. the views of members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board who are not members of the largest political group on the Council;
- b. the Cabinet Work Programme;
- c. suggestions of matters for scrutiny made by the Council or by Cabinet;
- d. suggestions of matters for scrutiny made by the Leader arising from his/her quarterly meeting with the ~~Chairmen~~ Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Chairman of Audit, Standards & Governance Committee in accordance with paragraph 7.2 below;
- e. suggestions of matters for scrutiny made by Councillors, members of the public or partner organizations;
- f. Councillor Calls for Action;
- g. Scrutiny of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership;
- h. Petitions referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board by the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer;
- i. Scrutiny of the budget (Medium Term Financial Plan);

7.2 The placing of items on the work programme is subject to the following limitations: -

- a. That no item that has previously been considered in the preceding 6 months be placed on the work programme unless there has been a significant change in circumstances.
- b. That the Overview and Scrutiny function does not permit the scrutiny of individual applications for example in relation to the granting of planning permission, or of licences or other regulatory processes. In accordance with The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) scrutiny of functions which cannot by law be the responsibility of the Executive cannot be undertaken. This category includes functions relating to town and country planning and development control and functions relating to licensing and regulation.

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~~7.2 The Leader shall meet quarterly with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Chairman of the Audit, Standards & Governance Committee with appropriate officers in attendance to review and, where appropriate, co-ordinate their respective work programmes.~~

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8. Procedure at Overview and Scrutiny Board Mmeetings

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8.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Board shall at each meeting consider the following business:

- a. consideration of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting;
- b. declarations of interest (including whipping declarations);
- c. responses of the Cabinet to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Board;
- d. the Cabinet Work Programme;
- e. progress on on-going overview and scrutiny exercises (if appropriate);
- f. reports from the quarterly meetings between the Leader and Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Chairman of the Audit, Standards & Governance Committee (if appropriate);

~~g.~~ g. matters set out on the agenda for the meeting in accordance with paragraph 9 below;

~~g.~~

~~h.~~ h. consideration of any matters referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in relation to call-in of a decision;

~~h.~~

~~i.~~ i. any petitions referred by the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer;

~~i.~~

~~j.~~ j. any Councillor Calls for Action which have been received;

~~j.~~

~~k.~~ k. scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Plan (if appropriate);and

~~l.~~ l. scrutiny of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

9. Agenda items

9.1 Any member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board shall be entitled to give notice to the Chief Executive that he/she wishes an item relevant to the functions of the Overview and Scrutiny Board to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board. On receipt of such a request the Chief Executive will ensure that it is included on the next available agenda.

9.2 Where a matter is referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board by the Council (including a matter referred by the Monitoring Officer under Council Procedure Rule 11.10), it shall be considered at either the first or second ordinary meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board following the referral.

9.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Board shall also respond, as soon as their work programme permits, to requests to review particular areas of Council activity from the Council, the Cabinet or the Leader ~~(arising from his/her quarterly~~

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meeting with the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, and the Chairman of the Audit, Standards & Governance Committee).

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APPENDIX D - AUDIT, STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

PROCEDURE RULES - EXTRACT

1.

Role of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee

1.1

The Council has established an Audit, Standards and Governance Committee.

1.2

The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee works independently of the Council's Executive and Scrutiny to provide assurance to the Council on the effectiveness of its governance arrangements .

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1.3

The ultimate responsibility for audit rests with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for finance and the Section 151 Officer. Therefore the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee can make recommendations but it is not the role of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee to be a substitute for management of Internal Audit.

1.4

The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee do not have the power to make decisions with regard to Internal Audit or to direct officers with regard to Internal Audit.

1.5

The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee shall work in partnership with the Council's Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer, Leaders of the Political Groups and the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for corporate governance to support the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted members of Council bodies.

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2. Terms of Reference

2.1

The terms of reference of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee are as follows:

To provide independent assurance to the Council in relation to:

a. The effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements, risk management framework and internal control environment, including overseeing:

- Risk management strategies;
- Anti-fraud arrangements;
- Whistle-blowing strategies;
- Internal and external audit activity
- Democratic Governance

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- b. the effectiveness of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent it affects exposure to risk and poor internal control;
- c. the annual governance statement.
- d. The review of the annual statement of accounts, confirming the appropriate accounting policies have been followed, including the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

Appointment of External Auditors

- e. To arrange the recruitment and operation of the Council's Auditor Panel and to recommend the appointment of external auditors in accordance with the requirements of the Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Standards

- f. Promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors and any co-opted members of Council bodies.
- g. Assist Councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
- h. Advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- i. Monitor the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- j. Advise, train or arrange to train Councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.
- k. Formulate advice for Members and officers on declarations of gifts and hospitality and monitor and review the arrangements for recording interests, gifts and hospitality.
- l. Grant dispensations to Councillors and co-opted members from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct.
- m. For both District and Parish Councils, deal with any report from the Monitoring Officer following an investigation into a complaint concerning the Members' Code of Conduct.
- n. For both District and Parish Councils, consider and determine allegations that a Councillor or co-opted Councillor may have failed to follow the

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Code of Conduct and where a breach of the Code is established, impose sanctions as delegated by full Council or make recommendations as to any sanctions to the appropriate person or body.

- o. Monitor and review the operation of the Protocol on Member-Officer relations.
- p. Monitor and review the operation of the Protocol on Member-Member relations.

2.2 Within those terms of reference, the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee will:

Audit

- a. agree the annual and strategic audit plans;
- b. review Internal Audit's progress against the audit plan and consider Internal Audit performance measures;
- c. receive and consider a summary of work undertaken by Internal Audit since the last meeting, plus current status;
- d. receive and consider executive summaries of financial process/procedures;
- e. receive and consider executive summaries of Value For Money reports;
- f. receive and consider executive summaries of contract audit reports;
- g. receive and consider executive summaries of any special investigations undertaken by Internal Audit.
- h. receive and consider a chronological summary of Internal Audit reports awaiting departmental response and address any evident problems.
- i. monitor the proportion of key recommendations actioned since the previous meeting.
- j. consider all external audit reports including the Annual Audit Letter.

Standards

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k. receive and consider a quarterly report from the Monitoring Officer detailing any Code of Conduct issues which have arisen since the last quarterly report, an update on Member training and any requests for dispensations.

k.l. deal with any report from the Monitoring Officer following an investigation into a complaint concerning the Members' Code of Conduct.

l.m. through the operation of a Hearings Sub-Committee, consider and determine allegations that a Councillor or co-opted member may have failed to follow the Code of Conduct and where a breach of the Code is established impose sanctions as delegated by Full Council or make recommendations as to any sanctions to the appropriate person or body.

m.n. the exercise of k – m above in relation to the Parish Councils in the Council's area and the members of those Parish Councils.

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MEMBER - OFFICER PROTOCOL

Introduction and Principles

- 1.1 The purpose of this Protocol is to guide Members and Officers of the Council in their relations with one another in such a way as to ensure the smooth running of the Council.
- 1.2 Given the variety and complexity of such relations, this Protocol does not seek to be either prescriptive or comprehensive. Its objectives are
 - To promote trust, openness, fairness and honesty by establishing some ground rules
 - To define roles so as to clarify responsibilities (i.e. who does what), avoid conflict and prevent duplication or omission
 - To secure compliance with the law, codes of conduct and the Council's own practices
 - To lay down procedures for dealing with concerns by members or officers.

Although the protocol offers guidance on some of the issues which most commonly arise, it forms part of the Council's Constitution and as such must be followed by Members and Officers. It is hoped, however, that the approach which it adopts to these issues will serve as a guide to dealing with other circumstances. Except as specifically set out in this Protocol, questions of interpretation will be determined by the Monitoring Officer unless the particular provision requiring interpretation relates to a matter to be determined by the Chief Executive.

- 1.3 This Protocol is to a large extent a written statement of current practice and convention. It seeks to promote greater clarity and certainty. If the Protocol is followed it should ensure that Members receive objective and impartial advice and that Officers are protected from accusations of bias and any undue influence from Members.
- 1.4 It also seeks to reflect the principles underlying the Code of Conduct which applies to Members. These are:
 - Selflessness – serving only the public interest
 - Honesty and integrity – not allowing these to be questioned
 - Not behaving improperly
 - Objectivity – taking decisions on merit
 - Accountability – to the public; being open to scrutiny
 - Openness – giving reasons for decisions
 - Personal judgement – reaching one's own conclusions and acting accordingly
 - Respect for others – promoting equality; avoiding discrimination; respecting others (member/member as well as member/officer)

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- Duty to uphold the law – not acting unlawfully
- Stewardship – ensuring the prudent use of the Council's resources
- Leadership – acting in a way which has public confidence

These principles underpin this protocol. Officers are bound by the Council's own code of conduct for staff and, in some cases, by their professional associations. The purpose of this code is to enhance and maintain the integrity (real and perceived) of local government and the Code, therefore, demands very high standards of personal conduct.

- 1.5 This Protocol should be read in conjunction with the Members' Code of Local Government Conduct, the Council's Constitution and any guidance issued by the Audit, Governance and Standards and/or Monitoring Officer. The protocol has been approved by the Council's Standards Committee (now the Audit, Standards & Governance Committee), which will monitor its operation and which is responsible for reviewing the practical application of the Protocol, and making suggestions for its improvement and development. Breaches of the protocol by a member may result in a complaint to the Standards Board for England if it appears the Members' Code of Conduct has also been breached. Breaches by an officer may lead to disciplinary action.

The Role of Members

- 2.1 Members have a number of roles and need to be alert to the potential for conflicts of interest which may arise between the roles. Where such conflicts are likely, Members may wish to seek the advice of senior colleagues, the relevant senior officer(s), and/or the Monitoring Officer.
- 2.2 Collectively, Members are the ultimate policy-makers determining the core values and priorities of the Council and approving the authority's policy framework, strategic plans and budget.
- 2.3 Members represent the community, act as community leaders, and promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of the community, often in partnership with other agencies.
- 2.4 Every elected Member represents the interests of, and is an advocate for, his/her ward and individual constituents. He/she represents the Council in the ward, responds to the concerns of constituents, meets with partner agencies, and often serves on local outside bodies.
- 2.5 Some Members have roles relating to their position as members of the Executive, overview and scrutiny committees, or other committees of the Council.
- 2.6 Members of the Executive may have individual delegated powers, but will often work closely with officers in relevant departments in preparing policies and decisions which are subsequently approved by the Executive. Although

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Executive members may, to a significant extent, determine matters within their portfolios, the implementation of their decisions is the responsibility of officers.

- 2.7 Members serving on overview and scrutiny committees monitor the effectiveness of the Council's policies and services, develop policy proposals and examine community issues. They also monitor service provision by other bodies insofar as it affects the District, e.g. local health service provision.
- 2.8 Members who serve on other committees and sub-committees collectively have delegated responsibilities, e.g. deciding planning applications, licensing applications and other quasi-judicial matters, which by law are excluded from the remit of the Executive.
- 2.9 Some Members may be appointed to represent the Council on local, regional or national bodies. Guidance for Members on their participation with external bodies is contained within the protocol "Guidance for Members on Outside Bodies".
- 2.10 As politicians, Members may express the values and aspirations of the party political groups to which they belong, recognising that in their role as members they have a duty always to act in the public interest.
- 2.11 Members are not authorised to instruct officers other than in the circumstances set out below, and should take care to ensure that their conduct is not open to misinterpretation in this regard. Instructions may legitimately be given:-
 - Through the formal decision-making process;
 - To request the provision of consumable resources provided by the Council for members' use
 - Where an Executive Member is indicating to a Senior Officer the way in which policies and decisions might be prepared, but any such instruction given must not compromise an officer's professional judgement and must not be inconsistent with the Council's established policies and procedures
 - Where staff have been specifically allocated to give support to a member or group of members; and
 - In the case of political assistants
- 2.12 Members are not authorised to initiate or certify financial transactions, or to enter into a contract on behalf of the Council.
- 2.13 Members must avoid taking actions which are unlawful, financially improper, or likely to amount to maladministration. Members have an obligation under their code of conduct to have regard, when reaching decisions, to any advice provided by the Monitoring Officer or the Chief Financial Officer.
- 2.14 Members must respect the impartiality of officers and do nothing to compromise it, e.g. by insisting that an officer change his/her professional advice.

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The Role of Officers

- 3.1 Officers are responsible for giving advice to Members to enable them to fulfil their roles. In doing so, officers will take into account all available relevant factors.
- 3.2 Under the direction and control of the Council (including, as appropriate, the Executive and committees), officers manage and provide the Council's services within the framework of responsibilities delegated to them. This includes the effective management of employees and operational issues.
- 3.3 Officers have a duty to implement decisions of the Council, the Executive and committees which are lawful and which have been properly approved in accordance with the requirements of the law and the Council's constitution, and duly minuted.
- 3.4 Officers have a contractual and legal duty to be impartial. They must not allow their professional judgement and advice to be influenced by their own personal views.
- 3.5 Officers must assist and advise all parts of the Council. They serve the Council as a whole. They must always act to the best of their abilities in the best interests of the authority as expressed in the Council's formal decisions.
- 3.6 Officers must be alert to issues which are, or are likely to be, contentious or politically sensitive, and be aware of the implications for Members, the media or other sections of the public.
- 3.7 Officers have the right not to support Members in any role other than that of member, and not to engage in actions incompatible with this protocol. In particular, there is a statutory limitation on senior officers' involvement in political activities.

The Relationship: General Points

- 4.1 Both Councillors and Officers are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one another, but their responsibilities are distinct. Councillors are responsible to the electorate and serve only so long as their term of office lasts. Officers are responsible to the Council. Their job is to give advice to Councillors and the Council, and to carry out the Council's work under the direction and control of the Council, the Executive, their committees, and subcommittees.
- 4.2 At the heart of the Code, and this Protocol is the importance of mutual respect, confidence, and trust. Member/Officer relationships are to be conducted in a positive and constructive way. Therefore, it is important that any dealings between Members and Officers should observe standards of courtesy and that neither party should seek to take unfair advantage of their position or seek to exert undue influence on the other party.

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- 4.3 A key element in the relationship is a recognition of and a respect for each other's roles and responsibilities. These should be reflected in the behaviour and attitude of each to the other, both publicly and privately. Informal and collaborative two-way contact between Members and officers is encouraged, but personal familiarity can damage the relationship, as might a family or business connection. Members and officers should inform the Monitoring Officer of any relationship which might be seen as unduly influencing their work in their respective roles. Inappropriate relationships can be inferred from language/style. When attending formal meetings, officers and Members should use formal forms of address to each other – e.g. Members should be addressed as "Councillor XX" or "Chairman", while Officers should generally be addressed as "Mr. XX" or "Mrs. XX". A greater level of informality may be appropriate in other circumstances, e.g. a one to one between a Head of Service and their respective Cabinet Member but it is safer to err on the side of formality.
- 4.4 It is not enough to avoid actual impropriety. Members and officers should always be open about their relationships to avoid any reason for suspicion and any appearance of improper conduct. Where a personal relationship has been disclosed, those concerned should avoid a situation where conflict could be perceived. Specifically, an officer should not sit on a body or participate in any decision which directly affects the officer on a personal basis. Members are bound by the Code of Conduct which contains a similar restriction.
- 4.5 A Member should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an Officer in a manner that is incompatible with the objectives of this Protocol. This is a long-standing tradition in public service because an Officer has no means of responding to such criticisms in public. If a Member feels he/she has not been treated with proper respect or, courtesy or has any concern about the conduct or capability of an Officer, and fails to resolve it through direct discussion with the Officer, he/she should raise the matter with the respective senior officer. The senior officer will then look into the facts and report back to the Member. If the Member continues to feel concern, then he/she should raise the issue with the Chief Executive who will look into the matter afresh. Any action taken against an Officer in respect of a complaint will be in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Disciplinary Rules and Procedures.
- 4.6 An Officer shall not discuss with a Member personal matters affecting himself/herself or matters relating to the conduct or capability of another Officer or to the internal management of a Section/Division. This does not prevent an officer raising on a personal basis, and in his/her own time, a matter with his/her ward member.
- 4.7 Where an Officer feels that s/he has not been properly treated with respect and courtesy by a Member, he/she should raise the matter with his/her senior officer or the Chief Executive as appropriate, especially if they do not feel able to discuss it directly with the Member concerned. In these circumstances the senior officer or Chief Executive will take appropriate action either by

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approaching the individual Member and/or group leader or by referring the matter to the Monitoring Officer in the context of the Council's Code of Conduct.

- 4.8 With the exception of political assistants, officers work to the instructions of their senior officers, not individual Members. It follows that whilst such officers will always seek to assist a Member, they must not be asked to exceed the bounds of authority they have been given by their managers. Except when the purpose of an enquiry is purely to seek factual information, Members should normally direct their requests and concerns to a senior officer, at least in the first instance.
- 4.9 Officers will do their best to give timely responses to Members' enquiries. However, officers should not have unreasonable requests placed on them. Their work priorities are set and managed by senior managers. Members should avoid disrupting officers' work by imposing their own priorities. Members will endeavour to give timely responses to enquiries from officers.
- 4.10 Members and officers should respect each other's free (i.e. non-Council) time.
- 4.11 Members seeking advice, information, or support from officers should as a normal rule make contact firstly with the Head of Service for the department in question, and although the Head of Service may refer the matter to another officer care should be taken to ensure that the other officer is supported in whatever manner may be required. In the event that officers receive direct contact from Members and are uncertain how to respond, they should immediately seek advice from their own Manager or Head of Paid Service. It is acceptable for a custom-and-practice arrangement to develop whereby Members approach other officers direct, but all parties should take care to ensure that the Member, the Officer, and the Head of Service are content with the arrangement.

The Relationship: Officer Support to Members: General Points

- 5.1 Certain statutory officers – the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Financial Officer – have specific roles and these are addressed in the Constitution. Their roles need to be understood and respected by all Members.
- 5.2 The following key principles reflect the way in which the Council's staffing body generally relates to Members:
- all officers are employed by and accountable to the authority as a whole;
 - support from officers is needed for all the authority's functions including Full Council, Overview and Scrutiny, the Executive, individual Members representing their constituents etc;
 - the authority will seek to avoid potential conflicts of interest for officers arising from the separation of the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny role; and
 - all officers will be provided with training and development to help them support the various Member roles effectively and to understand the Council's structures.

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- 5.3 On occasion, a decision may be reached which authorises named Officers to take action between meetings following consultation with a Member or Members. It must be recognised that it is the Officer, rather than the Member or Members, who takes the action and it is the Officer who is accountable for it.

The Relationship: The Council as Employer

- 6.1 Officers are employed by the Council as a whole
- 6.2 Members' roles in employment matters are limited to
- The appointment of specified posts as defined in the Council's Officer Employment Procedure Rules and Scheme of Delegation
 - Approving human resources policies and conditions of employment; and
 - Hearing and determining appeals

Members should not act outside these roles.

- 6.3 If participating in the appointment of officers, members should
- Remember that the sole criterion is merit (other than in the case of political assistants, where political considerations may apply)
 - Never canvass support for a particular candidate
 - Not take part where one of the candidates is a close friend or relative
 - Not be influenced by personal preferences, and
 - Not favour a candidate by giving him/her information which is not available to other candidates
- 6.4 A member should not sit on an appeal hearing if the appellant is a friend, a relative or an officer with whom the Member has had a working relationship.

The Relationship: Officer Support to Members and Party Groups

- 7.1 It must be recognised by all Officers and Members that in discharging their duties and responsibilities Officers serve the Council as a whole and not any political group, combination of groups, or any individual Member of the Council.
- 7.2 There is now statutory recognition for party groups and it is common practice for such groups to give preliminary consideration to matters of Council business in advance of such matters being considered by the relevant Council decision-making body. Officers may properly be called upon to support and contribute to such deliberations by party groups but must at all times maintain political neutrality. All Officers must, in their dealings with political groups and individual Members, treat them in a fair and even-handed manner.
- 7.3 The support provided by Officers can take many forms. Whilst in practice such Officer support is likely to be in most demand from whichever party group is for the time being in control of the Council, such support is available to all party groups.

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- 7.4. Certain points, must, however, be clearly understood by all those participating in this type of process, Members and Officers alike. In particular:
- Officer support must not extend beyond providing information and advice in relation to matters of Council business. Officers must not be involved in advising on matters of party business. The observance of this distinction will be assisted if Officers are not present at meetings or parts of meetings, when matters of party business are to be discussed;
 - Party group meetings, whilst they form part of the preliminaries to Council decision making, are not empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Council. Conclusions reached at such meetings do not therefore rank as Council decisions and it is essential that they are not interpreted or acted upon as such; and
 - similarly, where Officers provide information and advice to a party group meeting in relation to a matter of Council business, this cannot act as a substitute for providing all necessary information and advice when the matter in question is formally considered by the relevant part of the Council.
- 7.5 Special care needs to be exercised whenever Officers are involved in providing information and advice to a party group meeting which includes persons who are not Members of the Council. Such persons are not bound by the Council's Code of Conduct (in particular, the provisions concerning the declaration of interests and confidentiality) and for this and other reasons, Officers must not attend and/or give advice to such meetings and Members should not ask officers to do so.
- 7.6 Officers must respect the confidentiality of any party group discussions at which they are present and, unless requested to do so by that party group, should not relay the content of any such discussion to another party group or to any other members. This must not prevent an officer providing feedback to other senior officers on a need-to-know basis.
- 7.7 Members must not do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise an officer's impartiality. The duration of an officer's attendance at a party group meeting will be at the discretion of the group, but an officer may leave at any time if he/she feels it is no longer appropriate to be there.
- 7.8 An officer accepting an invitation to the meeting of one party group shall not decline an invitation to advise another group about the same matter. He/she must give substantially the same advice to each. An officer should be given the opportunity of verifying comments and advice attributed to him/her in any written record of a party group meeting. No Member will refer in public or at meetings of the Council to advice or information given by officers to a party group meeting.
- 7.9 An officer who is not a senior officer shall not be invited to attend a party group meeting, but a senior officer may nominate another officer to attend on his/her behalf. It is recommended that a Group wishing to invite any officer to address

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it must seek the approval of the relevant Corporate Director before approaching the officer.

7.10 In relation to budget proposals:

- the Executive Cabinet shall be entitled to confidential discussions with Officers regarding options and proposals. These will remain confidential until determined by the Executive Cabinet or until published in advance of Committee/Council meetings, whichever is the earlier; and
- the opposition groups shall also be entitled to confidential discussions with Officers to enable them to formulate alternative budget proposals. These will remain confidential until determined by the respective opposition groups or until published in advance of Committee/Council meetings, whichever is the earlier.

7.11 It must not be assumed by any party group or Member that any Officer is supportive of any policy or strategy developed because of that Officer's assistance in the formulation of the policy or strategy.

7.12 Any particular cases of difficulty or uncertainty in this area of Officer advice to party groups should be raised with the Chief Executive who will discuss them with the relevant group leader(s).

The Relationship: Officer Support: The Executive

- 8.1 It is clearly important that there should be a close working relationship between Executive Members and the Officers who support and/or interact with them. However, such relationships should never be allowed to become so close, or appear to be so close, as to bring into question the Officer's ability to deal impartially with other Members and other party groups.
- 8.2 Executive Members will take collective decisions in accordance with the constitution and will not otherwise direct staff except in such circumstances as may be permitted by the Scheme of Delegations. Senior officers will be responsible for instructing staff to implement the Executive's decisions.
- 8.3 In addition to individual members of the Executive, senior officers have the right to submit papers to the Executive as a whole or to individual Executive members for consideration. Whilst Executive Members will routinely be consulted as part of the process of drawing up proposals for consideration or the agenda for a forthcoming meeting, it must be recognised that in some situations an officer will be under a professional duty to submit a report. Similarly, a senior officer will always be fully responsible for the contents of any report submitted in his/her name. This means that any such report will be amended only where the amendment reflects the professional judgement of the author of the report. This is to be distinguished from a situation where there is a value judgement to be made. Any issues arising between an Executive Member and a senior officer in this area should be referred to the Chief Executive for resolution in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.

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- 8.4 Senior officers and Executive members shall agree mutually convenient methods of regular contact. Before taking any formal decisions, the Executive will seek appropriate professional advice including that of the Monitoring Officer and Chief Financial Officer, and will not direct officers in the framing of recommendations.
- 8.5 Before any formal decisions with a financial implication are taken by the Executive, the Chief Financial Officer and the senior officer(s) for the service(s) concerned must be consulted. This is to ensure that those officers who are budget holders:
- are aware of the proposed decision
 - have had the opportunity to offer advice, and
 - are subsequently able properly to authorise the financial transactions needed to implement decisions.
- 8.6 An individual Executive member who is minded to write or commission a report about a matter within his/her portfolio must ensure that those other members and officers who need to know of the matter are so informed. There is a particular requirement to involve other Executive members on cross-cutting issues.
- 8.7 When making decisions, Executive members must state the reasons for those decisions. The written record of the decisions must include the reasons.
- 8.8 Where functions which are the responsibility of the Executive are delegated to Officers or other structures outside the Executive, the Executive will nevertheless remain accountable to the Council, through Overview and Scrutiny Committees, for the discharge of those functions. That is to say, the Executive will be held to account for both its decision to delegate a function and the way that the function is being carried out. Officers taking decisions under delegated powers must consider the advisability of informing the relevant Executive member(s) of their intentions in advance when the matter to which the decisions relate is likely to be sensitive or contentious, or has wider policy implications.
- 8.9 Officers will continue to work for and serve the local authority as a whole. Nevertheless, as the majority of functions will be the responsibility of the Executive, it is likely that in practice many Officers will be working to the Executive for most of their time. The Executive must respect the political neutrality of the Officers. Officers must ensure that, even when they are predominantly supporting the Executive, their political neutrality is not compromised.
- 8.10 In organising support for the Executive, there is a potential for tension between senior officers and Cabinet Members with portfolios. All Members and Officers need to be constantly aware of the possibility of such tensions arising and Officers and Members need to work together to avoid such tensions and conflicts existing or being perceived.

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The Relationship: Officer Support: Overview and Scrutiny

- 9.1 Chairmen and other leading overview and scrutiny members shall maintain regular contact with the officer(s) providing the principal support to the overview and scrutiny function. In consultation with chairmen, it shall be the responsibility of those officers to ensure that those who need to know of matters being considered or for possible future consideration are so informed.
- 9.2 An overview and scrutiny committee or its chairman acting on its behalf may require officers to attend overview and scrutiny meetings. Regard must be had to the provisions of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in respect of the periods of notice which must be given about such attendance. Members should not normally expect junior officers to give evidence. All requests should be made to senior officers in the first instance.
- 9.3 It is recognised that officers required to appear before an overview and scrutiny committee may often be those who have advised the Executive or another part of the Council on the matter under investigation. In these circumstances, the officer may have a conflict of interest. Both members and officers need to consider the severity of the conflict. If deemed appropriate, research and advice may be sought from external sources.
- 9.4 Subject to 9.3 above, officers should be prepared to justify advice given to the Council, the Executive, or other committees, even when the advice was not accepted. Officers must also be prepared to justify decisions they have taken under delegated powers.
- 9.5 In giving evidence, officers must not be asked to give political views.
- 9.6 Officers should respect Members in the way in which they respond to Members' questions.
- 9.7 Members should not ask questions of officers or other witnesses in a way which could be interpreted as harassment. Neither should they ask about matters of a disciplinary nature. It is not overview and scrutiny's role to act as a disciplinary tribunal in relation to the actions of Members or officers. Neither is it the role of officers to become involved in what would amount to disciplinary investigations on a Panel's behalf. This is the Chief Executive's function alone in relation to staff, the Monitoring Officer's and the Audit, Governance and Standards as regards the conduct of Members. This means:
 - Whilst overview and scrutiny may seek to establish the facts about what occurred in the making of decisions or implementing of Council policies, their questioning should not be directed to the conduct of individuals in such a way that there is the implication of allocating criticism or blame;
 - In these circumstances, it is for the Chief Executive to institute a formal enquiry, and overview and scrutiny may ask (but not require) him/her to do so.
- 9.8 Overview and scrutiny proceedings must not be used to question the capability or competence of officers. Chairmen and Members need to make a distinction

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between reviewing the policies and performance of the Council and its services, and appraising the personal performance of staff. The latter is not an overview and scrutiny function.

- 9.9 Overview and scrutiny should not act as a 'court of appeal' against decisions or to pursue complaints by individuals (Councillors, Officers, or members of the public) as other procedures exist for this. Some of these are internal, e.g. the Corporate Complaints Procedure, and others are external/statutory, e.g. Commissioner for Local Administration or appeal to the Courts. That said,
- Overview and scrutiny may investigate the manner in which decisions are made
 - They can comment on the merits of a particular policy affecting individuals.
- 9.10 It would be unfair to invite someone to appear before a Panel without telling them in general terms what they will be asked, or not giving them adequate time to prepare. Overview and scrutiny Members ought to provide written questions ('Indicative Topics') beforehand, so that the answers can form the basis of the questioning and discussion. In addition, speakers ought to be told the general line that further questioning is likely to take. Questioning should not stray outside the subject area that the Panel had previously indicated.

The Relationship: Officer Support: Regulatory Committees

- 10.1 The appropriate senior officers will offer to arrange regular informal meetings with chairmen, vice-chairmen, and spokesmen of regulatory committees and sub-committees.
- 10.2 Senior officers have the right to present reports and give advice to regulatory committees.
- 10.3 Members of a regulatory committee or sub-committee shall take decisions within the remit of that committee or sub-committee, and will not otherwise instruct officers to act.
- 10.4 At some regulatory committee or sub-committee meetings, a resolution may be passed which authorises a named officer to take action between meetings in consultation with the chairman. In these circumstances it is the officer, not the chairman, who takes the action and is responsible for it. A chairman has no legal power to take decisions on behalf of a committee or sub-committee, neither should he/she apply inappropriate pressure on the officer.

Local Members and Officers

- 11.1 To enable them to carry out their ward role effectively, Members need to be fully informed about matters affecting their ward. Senior officers must ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the requirement to keep local Members informed, thus allowing Members to contribute to the decision-making process and develop their representative role.

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11.2 This requirement is particularly important:

- During the formative stages of policy development, where practicable
- In relation to significant or sensitive operational matters
- Whenever any form of public consultation exercise is undertaken, and
- During an overview and scrutiny investigation

Issues may affect a single ward but where they have a wider impact, officers should ensure that all relevant Ward Members are informed.

11.3 Whenever a public meeting is organised by the Council to consider a local issue, all the Members representing the wards affected should be invited to attend the meeting as a matter of course.

11.4 If a local Member intends to arrange a public meeting on a matter concerning some aspect of the Council's work, he/she should inform the relevant officer. Provided that the meeting has not been arranged on a party political basis:

- An officer may attend and
- The meeting may be held in Council-owned premises

No such meetings should be arranged or held in the immediate run-up to Council elections (i.e. from the date on which Notice of Election is issued).

11.5 Whilst support for Members' ward work is legitimate, care should be taken if staff are asked to accompany Members to ward surgeries. In such circumstances:

- The surgeries must be open to the general public, and
- Officers should not be requested to accompany Members to surgeries held in the offices or premises of political parties.

11.6 Officers must never be asked to attend ward or constituency political party meetings.

11.7 It is acknowledged that some Council staff (e.g. those providing dedicated support to Executive members) may receive and handle messages for Members on topics unrelated to the Council. Whilst these will often concern diary management, care should be taken to avoid Council resources being used for private or party political purposes.

11.8 In seeking to deal with constituents' queries or concerns, Members should not seek to jump the queue but should respect the Council's procedures. Officers have many pressures on their time. They may not be able to carry out the work required by Members in the requested timescale, and may need to seek instructions from their managers.

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Members' Access to Information and to Council Documents

- 12.1 This part of the protocol should be read in conjunction with the Access to Information Rules in the Council's constitution. Regard should also be had to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, and the rights of Members described in this section of the protocol are supplementary to their rights as members of the public under that Act.
- 12.2 Members have the ability to ask for such information explanation and advice as they may reasonably need in order to assist them in discharging their role as a Member of the Council. This can range from a request for general information about some aspect of the Council's activities to a request for specific information on behalf of a constituent. Where information is requested on behalf of a third party, it will only be provided if:
- It is in the public domain, and
 - the Data Protection Act does not prevent disclosure
- 12.3 Every member of the Executive, an overview and scrutiny committee, and/or any other committee or sub-committee, has a right to inspect documents about the business of that overview and scrutiny committee, other committee or sub-committee or the Executive. In relation to business of the Executive, by virtue of Regulation 17 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000:
- where there is a meeting (e.g. Cabinet) and there is a document which is in the possession/under the control of the Executive relating to the business to be conducted at that meeting, that document shall be available for inspection;
 - there are exceptions for exempt and confidential material and any document that contains advice provided by a political advisor or assistant.
- 12.4 A Member who is not a member of a specific overview and scrutiny committee, other committee or sub-committee, or the Executive may have access to any document of that specific part of the Council provided:
- He/she can demonstrate a reasonable need to see the documents in order to carry out his/her role as a member (the "need to know" principle), and
 - The documents do not contain "confidential" or "exempt" information as defined by law.
- 12.5 The exercise of the "need to know" principle depends upon an individual Member being able to demonstrate that he/she has the necessary 'need to know'. In this respect a Member has no right to 'a roving commission' to go and examine documents of the Council. Mere curiosity is not sufficient. The crucial question is the determination of the 'need to know'. This question must initially be determined by the particular senior officer whose Division holds the document in question (with advice from the Head of Legal & Democratic Services). In the event of dispute, the question falls to be determined by the Head of Paid Service

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12.6 A member should obtain advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or Head of Legal & Democratic Services in circumstances where he/she wishes to have access to documents or information:

- Where to do so is likely to be in breach of the Data Protection Act, or
- Where the subject matter is one in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary or other disclosable interest as defined in the Members' Code of Conduct.

12.7 Any Council information given to a Member must only be used by the Member for the purpose for which it was requested, i.e. in connection with the proper performance

12.8 Whilst the term 'Council document' is very broad and includes for example, any document produced with Council resources, it is accepted by convention that a Member of one party group will not have a 'need to know' and therefore a right to inspect a document which forms part of the internal workings of another party group.

12.9 Members and officers must not disclose information given to them in confidence without the consent of a person authorised to give it, or unless required by law to do so. When requested to do so, officers will keep confidential from other Members advice requested by a Member.

12.10 Further and more detailed advice regarding Members' rights to inspect Council documents may be obtained from the Head of Legal & Democratic Services.

Media Relations

13.1 Local authorities are accountable to their electorate. Accountability requires local understanding. This will be promoted by the Authority, explaining its objectives and policies to the electors and rate-payers. In recent years, all local authorities have increasingly used publicity to keep the public informed and to encourage public participation. Every Council needs to tell the public about the services it provides. Increasingly, local authorities see this task as an essential part of providing services. Good effective publicity aimed to improve public awareness of a Council's activities is, in the words of the Government, to be welcomed.

13.2 Publicity is, however, a sensitive matter in any political environment because of the impact it can have. Expenditure on publicity can be significant. It is essential, therefore, to ensure that local authority decisions on publicity are properly made in accordance with clear principles of good practice. The Government has issued a Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. The purpose of the Code is to set out such principles. The Code affects the conventions that should apply to all publicity at public expense and which traditionally have applied in both central and local government. The Code is issued under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1986 as amended by the Local Government Act 1988 which provides for the Secretary

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of State to issue Codes of Recommended Practice as regards the content, style, distribution and cost of local authority publicity, and such other matters as he/she thinks appropriate. That section requires that all local authorities shall have regard to the provisions of any such Code in coming to any decision on publicity. The following is extracted from the Code:-

“The period between the notice of election and the election itself should preclude proactive publicity in all its forms of candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election. Publicity should not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual members or groups of members. However, it is acceptable for the authority to respond in appropriate circumstances to events and legitimate service enquiries provided that their answers are factual and not party political. Members holding key political or civic positions should be able to comment in an emergency or where there is a genuine need for a member level response to an important event outside the authority’s control. Proactive events arranged in this period should not involve members likely to be standing for election.”

- 13.3 All formal relations with the media therefore must be conducted in accordance with the Council’s agreed procedures, with the law on local authority publicity, and with the Government’s Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.
- 13.4 Press releases or statements made by officers must promote or give information on Council policy or services. They will be factual and consistent with Council policy. They must not be used to promote a party group.
- 13.5 Officers will keep relevant Members informed of media interest in the Council’s activities, especially regarding strategic or contentious matters. Likewise officers will inform the Council’s Press Officer of issues likely to be of media interest, since that unit is often the media’s first point of contact.
- 13.6 If any Member is contacted by, or contacts the media, on an issue, he/she should
- Indicate in what capacity he/she is speaking (e.g. as Portfolio Holder, as Ward Member, on behalf of the Council, or on behalf of a party group)
 - If necessary (and always when he/she would like a press release to be issued), seek assistance from the Council’s Press Officer and/or relevant senior officer, except in relation to a statement which is party political in nature, in which case the statement should not be issued under the Council’s name
 - Consider the likely consequences for the Council of his/her statement (e.g. commitment to a particular course of action, image, allegations of jumping to conclusions or pre-determining a decision)
 - Never give a commitment in relation to matters which may be subject to claims from third parties and/or are likely to be an insurance matter

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- Consider whether to consult other relevant Members
- Take particular care in what he/she says in the run up to local or national elections (i.e. from the date on which Notice of Election is issued) to avoid giving the impression of electioneering, unless he/she has been contacted as an election candidate or as a political party activist

Correspondence

- 14.1 Correspondence between an individual Member and an Officer should not normally be copied (by the Officer) to any other Member. Where exceptionally it is necessary to copy the correspondence to another Member, this should be made clear to the original Member. In other words, a system of 'silent copies' should not be employed.
- 14.2 Official letters on behalf of the Council should normally be sent in the name of the appropriate Officer, rather than in the name of a Member. It may be appropriate in certain limited circumstances (e.g. representations to a Government Minister) for a letter to appear in the name of a Cabinet Member or the Leader, but this should be the exception rather than the norm. Letters which, for example, create legal obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council should never be sent out in the name of a Member, Executive or otherwise. The Chairman of the Council may initiate correspondence in his/her own name.
- 14.3 When writing in an individual capacity as a ward Member, a Member must make clear that fact.

Access to Premises

- 15.1 Officers have the right to enter Council land and premises to carry out their work. Some officers have the legal power to enter property in the ownership of others.
- 15.2 Members have a right of access to Council land and premises to fulfil their duties. When making visits as individual Members, Members should
- Except in the case of visiting The Council House, and wherever practicable, notify and make advance arrangements with the appropriate manager or officer in charge;
 - Comply with health and safety, security and other workplace rules;
 - Not interfere with the services or activities being provided at the time of the visit.

Use of Council Resources

- 16.1 The Council provides all Members with services such as IT,, printing and photocopying, and goods such as stationery and computer equipment, to assist them in discharging their roles as Members of the Council. These goods and services are paid for from the public purse. They should not be used for private purposes or in connection with party political or campaigning activities.

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- 16.2 Members should ensure that they understand and comply with the Council's own rules about the use of such resources, particularly
- Where facilities are provided in Members' homes at the Council's expense
 - In relation to locally-agreed arrangements, e.g. payment for private photocopying; and
 - Regarding ICT security
- 16.3 Members should not put pressure on staff to provide resources or support which officers are not permitted to give. Examples include:
- Business which is solely to do with a political party
 - Work in connection with a ward or constituency party political meeting
 - Electioneering
 - Work associated with an event attended by a Member in a capacity other than as a member of the Council
 - Work in connection with another body or organisation where a Member's involvement is other than as a Member of the Council
 - Support to a Member in his/her capacity as a councillor of another authority

Interpretation, complaints and allegations of breaches

- 17.1 This part of the protocol should be read in conjunction with the Council's Confidential Reporting Code.
- 17.2 Members or officers with questions about the implementation or interpretation of any part of this protocol should seek the guidance of the Monitoring Officer.
- 17.3 A Member who is unhappy about the actions taken by or conduct of an officer should:
- Avoid personal attacks on or abuse of the officer at all times
 - Ensure that any criticism is well-founded and constructive
 - Never make a criticism in public, and
 - Take up the concern with the officer privately.
- 17.4 If direct discussion with the officer is inappropriate (e.g. because of the seriousness of the concern) or fails to resolve the matter, the Member should raise the issue with the officer's manager or the relevant senior officer.
- 17.5 A serious breach of this protocol by an officer may lead to an investigation under the Council's disciplinary procedure. Members may not themselves undertake investigations under the Council's disciplinary procedure and such investigations must be undertaken solely by the Head of Paid Service or other officer acting under his/her direction.
- 17.6 An officer who believes a Member may have acted other than in accordance with this protocol or the Members' Code of Conduct should raise his/her concerns with the Monitoring Officer, who will consider how the complaint or

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allegation should be handled. At a minor level, this may be no more than informally referring the matter to the leader of the relevant party group, but more serious complaints may be referred to the Standards Board for England.

Member Enquiries

18.1 Officers will respond to enquiries received from Members in accordance with the 'Best Practice for Handling Member Enquiries', attached at Appendix 1 to this part of the constitution.

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Conclusion

189.1 Mutual understanding, openness on these sort of sensitive issues, and basic respect for each other are the greatest safeguard of the integrity of the Council, its Members and Officers.

189.2 This Protocol was first adopted by the Council as part of the Constitution on 5th July 2005 and revised in September 2006 and again in January 2014.

198.3 Copies of the Protocol are available on the Council's website as part of the Constitution.

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Best practice for handling member enquiries

Appendix 1



Best practice for handling member enquiries

Agenda Item 3

Members routinely make enquiries to the corporate and operational teams on behalf of constituents and/or centred around issues relating to their wards, with an expectation that we reply in a timely and accurate manner. Whilst the range of enquiries vary in complexity and type, the nature of which we deal with these should be courtesy and consistent.

Please note: member complaints will follow the corporate complaint route i.e. when normal service routes have failed.

Service areas can still be flexible and have fluidity in relation to professional judgement along with system management, although it is an expectation that certain standards of best practice are adhered to. The guidance below is to be followed by all for all member enquiries across both authorities:

- Acknowledgement of member enquiry is undertaken within **2 working days** with clarity being provided on the next steps along with person dealing with enquiry.
- Full response to initial enquiry should be provided at the **earliest opportunity** and should be clear and concise to ensure that repeat demand or escalation is preventable. **Maximum response time for a full reply should be no more than 10 working days (10 working days should apply in exceptional or complex cases only).**
- Whilst having a consistent approach to replying should be paramount, some member enquiries will naturally fall within an 'urgent' and/ or 'high importance' level and immediacy of response will need to be applied in these cases.
- Any member enquiry received must adhere to GDPR standards and cautious to be given in relation to confidential or highly sensitive matters. If you have any doubts, then please check before replying.
- Where the enquiry is complex in nature, requires multiple or 3rd party response or will take a longer time period for reply, **members are to be kept informed of progress and timescales on a regular basis (frequency jointly agreed between officer and member) and lines of communication remain open and two-way.**
- Where the member enquiry requires escalation to assist in resolving the matter internally i.e. not satisfied with response, delays in acknowledgement or routine updates, then these will be forwarded to the PAs or external escalation mechanism (WRS) where this will be logged formally on the corporate complaints system (as a councillor complaint) and assigned to the relevant member of the corporate management team. **These escalations will be routinely reviewed by CMT as part of the quarterly monitoring.**
- Acknowledgement and full responses should be dealt with in a professional manner, ensuring the use of formal writing and correct use of language.
- To aid members in contacting the correct managers/officers when raising enquiries, contact information should be pro-actively and routinely shared with members (especially when changes to personnel or process occurs) via mod.gov and it is expected that ALL out of office replies are activated with signposting to alternative contact in their absence.
- You are encouraged to be proactive with your portfolio holders and members on service changes especially where you have identified potential impacts to local residents and businesses, so that thorough and clear responses and channels of communication directly to service areas are easily accessible.
- Political awareness training to be rolled out to **ALL** staff who deal with member enquiries.

The purpose of this guidance is to have a clear, consistent and courteous approach across both authorities to member enquiries and to build and maintain good working relationships. The corporate management team expect that member enquiries are dealt with promptly and professionally, with escalations being raised on a rare and exceptional basis.

APPENDIX F - COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE - EXTRACT PART 5

LICENSING (MISCELLANEOUS) SUB-COMMITTEES A AND B (Parent Committee – Licensing Committee)

Sub-Committee A and Sub-Committee B will sit in rotation

Number of Members	3 (from the membership of the Licensing Committee) including either the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Licensing Committee (with a fourth Member on standby for each meeting)
Politically Balanced Y/N	N (but to include where possible a member of the opposition)
Quorum	3
Procedure applicable	Rules Council Procedure Rules (with the exception of Council Procedure Rules 1-4, 9-11, 13.4, 13.5, 14, 18.2, 20.1 and 22)
Terms of Reference	To determine licensing applications (other than those arising under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005) including (but not limited to): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. private hire and hackney carriage driver, operator and vehicle licensing; 2. street trading consents; 3. sex shop applications; 4. pet shop licences; 5. animal boarding licences; 6. riding establishment licences; 7. charitable collections; 8. street amenity consents.
Special provisions as to the Chairman	None
Whipping arrangements	No whipping is permitted
Special provisions as to membership	Neither the Leader nor Deputy Leader may be a member of the Licensing (Miscellaneous) Sub-

APPENDIX F - COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE - EXTRACT PART 5

	<p>Committee</p> <p>Only those Councillors who have undertaken appropriate training may sit on the Licensing (Miscellaneous) Sub-Committee.</p>
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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD – Short Sharp Review of the Impact of Heatwaves

Terms of Reference as at March 2024

The Short Sharp review of the Impact of Heatwaves has been set up by the Overview & Scrutiny Board to carry out scrutiny of the Impact of Heatwaves.

1. The Task Group be made up of 6 Members with a quorum of 3. The Task Group will meet throughout the next three months at intervals to be decided by the Group.
2. The Task Group will be a standing item on the agenda of the Overview & Scrutiny Board and either a verbal or written report will be provided at each of the Board's meetings by the Chairman of the Task Group.
3. The Task Group is able to make recommendations to the Overview & Scrutiny Board who will then put forward its recommendations for consideration by Cabinet or directly to Cabinet/Council.
4. The Task Group is expected to complete the investigation, which is a short, sharp review within three months and provide its findings and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in a written report at that time.

Aims and Objectives of the Task Group

The Short Sharp Review of the Impact of Heatwaves Task Group will cover the following areas:

1. Explore lessons learned by the Council and partner agencies from the heat events in Summer 2022.
2. Assess the level of co-ordination between agencies and their roles in emergency planning and response, including the Council's role in these responses.
3. Assess best practice guidance available in respect of this matter. This should include considering the governance guidance paper on hot weather and health from May 2023 and a report from the National Audit Office on Governmental Resilience in Extreme Weather from December 2023.
4. Explore potential ways in which to increase education of and information to the public about actions they could take in response to heat events and services available.
5. Explore opportunities to expand community and business resilience. This could include investigating the potential roles of cool hubs and other ways to keep people cool, awareness campaigns, community action groups and resilience measures.

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Briefing Note on Agile Working – 22nd April 2024 Bromsgrove Overview and Scrutiny Board

- 1) Review of the title 'Agile working' as it might be misconstrued as in project management terms it was a way of implementing large projects. Officers undertook to review the title as the initiative was important for recruitment and retention.

Agile Working has been widely used to explain the way that this policy is setting out the way we want to work as an organisation it is quoted as "Agile working is all about connecting processes, people and technology in order to create a dynamic workforce." There is a difference between this and flexible working which has its own policy and is part of employment law. As a project board we are aware of Agile Project Management and will assess if this has an impact on what current or perspective staff understand by our working policy.

Update April 2024:

The project team have been working with Human Resources who are reviewing the recruitment and induction process. They have had no feedback around the Councils wording for Agile Working causing confusion, but this is continuing to be monitored.

The project has surveyed all Service managers to ensure that Agile Working is being implemented in their services whilst looking at the business need. This is also to look at any issues that services are having with training or the infrastructure in place. There has been an increased hotdesking space provided at Parkside as well as continuing to improve the equipment in place to help staff have a suitable workspace that is suitable for shared use.

- 2) Investigate the possibility of introducing a follow up to measure satisfaction with customers' interaction with services. For example, a form of trustpilot-style of providing feedback when customers interact with service areas. The project team would pick this up.

As an organisation we are already looking at this and the project team will look at how this can be used to give the best feedback across all our customer facing services. The Repairs and Maintenance teams will be using a new system from April next year that will allow for a feedback survey to be done at the time and sent confidentially back to the system.

The Business Improvement Team are doing a piece of work looking at how we can best collect satisfaction from customers across the organisation that have had an interaction with us. The Agile Working project will continue to work with them on this.

Update April 2024

The project team are working with a survey company to create a pilot that uses a variety of communication mechanisms to make sure that we capture all the different methods used by our customers and residents.

The team will also be looking at the results from the system repairs and maintenance system that has been implemented this month to see if that would be suitable to implement wider into other front facing services.

- 3) Progress on increasing responsiveness of officers to members and what progress has been made in looking at this issue so far by the project team.

Update April 2024

The 'Best Practice for Handling Member Enquiries' document, attached as appendix at item 3, with a slight amendment to inform that all initial escalations are to the PA of the Chief Executive for triaging and inputting onto the corporate complaints system (this is written into the document). The escalations are now being reviewed as part of quarterly reporting. Soft launch of changes has been rolled out with a full launch across both organisations being currently being drawn up with the communication team.

Local Heritage List for Bromsgrove District –

Overview and Scrutiny Board April 2024 update

1 At the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Board on the 11th March officers presented a report detailing the proposed changes to the Local Heritage List (LHL) strategy, and confirmation of the consultation arrangement for the local heritage list going forward.

2 As part of the discussion that followed members questioned the arrangements for member involvement in the LHL and the timescales for the completion of the LHL. Two recommendations we put forward for the Cabinet to consider, these recommendations were subsequently discussed and agreed at the Cabinet meeting of the 13th March.

1) That District Ward Councillors be directly involved in the consultation process for the Local Heritage List (LHL) in their respective ward areas.

2) That the final Local Heritage List (LHL) for Bromsgrove, covering the whole district, be completed and published within the next 18 months.

3 It was agreed that officers would prepare an update report for the next Overview and Scrutiny Board which set out the progress to date and set out how the LHL could be completed in 18 months.

Progress on the LHL to date

Parishes/areas completed and ready to go out to consultation.

Parish	Number of buildings surveyed	Number of buildings proposed for the draft list	Number of buildings rejected for the draft list
Alvechurch	164	42	122
Belbroughton	280	40	240
Beoley	80	18	62
Dodford	136	29	107

4 As can be seen four the parishes have been surveyed and draft LHL's for these areas have been compiled and are ready to be consulted on in late spring 2024. This has involved the assessment of 660 buildings and structures resulting in 129 building and structures being proposed for the list.

Parishes/areas currently being compiled

5 Three areas are currently being surveyed, Bromsgrove Town, Lickey and Blackwell Parish and Wythall Parish. Bromsgrove is the area which more than likely contains the highest number of buildings and structures of all of the areas we will survey. As it stands we have currently assessed 251 buildings and structures in Bromsgrove town of which there are a possible 89 for inclusion on the LHL at this point. The work on Bromsgrove town is still to be completed.

The breakdown of these buildings and structures by ward is as follows.

Ward	Number of buildings surveyed	Number of buildings proposed for the draft list	Number of buildings rejected for the draft list	Number of buildings which require further analysis
Aston Fields Ward	11	5	5	1
Bromsgrove Central Ward	37	18	16	3
Hill Top	3		3	
Charford Ward	2	2		
Lowes Hill Ward	20	9	8	3
Marlbrook Ward	3	1	1	1
Norton Ward	22	7	9	6
Perryfields Ward	2	1	1	
Rock Hill Ward	5	1	4	
Sanders Park Ward	104	29	64	11
Sidemoor	12	4	6	2
Slideslow	7	3	3	1
Tardebigge	23	9	11	3

We have also surveyed 170 and 150 building and structures in Lickey and Blackwell Parish and Wythall Parish respectively

Completion of the local list and ward member involvement

6 It was agreed that officers should look to complete the LHL within 18 months of the 11th March overview and scrutiny board. This gives a target date for completion of September 2025. The following table identifies the timeline for how this can be achieved, we have programmed the remaining areas to be completed in alphabetical order. The completion of the LHL is a high priority for the conservation team and completion by September 2025 could be possible although it is a very tight timetable to follow.

Agenda Item 7

7 As can be seen below requires constant uninterrupted work on the LHL over that 18 month period. The ability to meet the 18 months deadline will be very dependent on a number of factors remaining constant, such as staffing levels, conservation officer requirement to input into the development management process, Conservation Officer input required on the local plan review, and as yet other unknown factors which will require management of priorities.

8 It also cannot be overlooked that it impossible to accurately predict how long each area will take because, we simply have no way of knowing how many buildings and structures will need to be assessed, how much research time we will need to invest in each building or structure, and how much interest we generate and consultation responses we receive, all of these factors will take a different amount of time per building or structure and per area, and do not necessarily relate to the size of the area being surveyed.

9 A large very rural area with only a few buildings or structures to survey could on the face of it could take a fraction of the time of a more urban area where there are significantly more building and structures to assess. Although if those more urban areas have already been the subject of significant research by others then the workload can be significantly reduced, whereas the more rural area with less structures to look at but less existing data to rely on could actually generate a significant amount of work in undertaking primary research.

10 As the work progresses officers committed to providing quarterly updates on progress to the Overview and Scrutiny Board, these will contain any suggested changes to the program of completion.

The timing below are approximate

Spring = March / April / May

Summer = June / July / August

Autumn = September / October / November

Winter = Jan / February / March

Area to be surveyed	Survey	Publication of draft LHL	Adoption of area LHL
Alvechurch	Complete	Spring 2024	Summer 2024
Belbroughton	Complete	Spring 2024	Summer 2024

Agenda Item 7

Beoley	Complete	Spring 2024	Summer 2024
Dodford	Complete	Spring 2024	Summer 2024
Bromsgrove Town	Currently being completed	Summer 2024	Autumn 2024
Wythall	Currently being completed	Summer 2024	Autumn 2024
Lickey and Blackwell	Currently being completed	Summer 2024	Autumn 2024
Barnt Green Parish	Summer 2024	Autumn 2024	Winter 2025
Bentley Pouncefoot Parish	Summer 2024	Autumn 2024	Winter 2025
Bourneheath Parish	Summer 2024	Autumn 2024	Winter 2025
Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish	Summer 2024	Autumn 2024	Winter 2025
Clent Parish	Autumn 2024	Winter 2025	Spring 2025
Cofton Hackett Parish	Autumn 2024	Winter 2025	Spring 2025
Finstal Parish	Autumn 2024	Winter 2025	Spring 2025
Frankley Parish	Winter 2025	Spring 2025	Summer 2025
Hagley Parish	Winter 2025	Spring 2025	Summer 2025
Hunnington Parish	Winter 2025	Spring 2025	Summer 2025
Romsley Parish	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Autumn 2025
Rubery	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Autumn 2025
Stoke Parish	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Autumn 2025
Tutnall and Cobley	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Autumn 2025

Ward Member involvement

11 How individual ward members are involved in the process was discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny board. It is proposed that Ward members are contacted a minimum of three times in the process.

Contact 1 – when officers begin surveying the members of a ward, the intention of this initial contact is to explain the process and the likely outcomes. At this stage if the Ward member has suggestions for buildings and structures to be included in the survey then we'll happily accept them.

Contact 2 – on completion of the draft LHL for the ward, the intention of this contact is to provide the ward member with prior notification as to what we have surveyed and what we are proposing to consult on. This is also an opportunity to suggest further buildings to be surveyed if it is felt that we have missed something.

Contact 3 - prior to adoption, the adoption of the list is a cabinet procedure therefore there will be formal reporting around this element, which will include not only the actual list itself but also information on the consultation undertaken and the outcomes from that consultation. We will contact the ward member prior to the report being published to run through the suggested final LHL before the cabinet formally considers it.

12 For those areas where we have begun work already we propose to contact those ward members immediately to update them on the work that has been undertaken and explain the process going forward. All members will be given sufficient time both to understand the process, and input as required irrespective of where their ward sits in the completion timescales.

Mike Dunphy
Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager
April 2024

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Bromsgrove District Council
Disabled Facilities Grant briefing
Overview & Scrutiny Board
22 April 2024

Overview - Disabled Facilities Grants

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) are mandatory grants to support the provision of adaptations to promote independent living within the home, subject to the provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) provides each local authority in England with a DFG allocation which is contained within the Better Care Fund paid to the County Council and passported to the Local Housing Authority

Under the Regulatory Reform Order – Local Authorities have some flexibility on how it uses its allocation. The use of this flexibility must form part of the Council's Housing Assistance Policy.

A DFG is the only mandatory housing grant available. If an applicant makes a valid application, the Council has a duty to approve the grant. The lack of budget is not a valid reason to refuse or withhold a grant approval. There is no minimum grant amount and a maximum mandatory grant of £30,000. This figure was set by the Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2008. The DFG is a 'means tested' grant and contributions may be required to progress the application.

The council uses its powers to place a local land charge against the property where the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant exceeds £5,000. The charge may be up to a maximum of £10,000 and repayment of the sum on charge is required where the adapted property is sold, transferred or otherwise disposed of within a 10-year period from completion of the work.

The grant is awarded to the person, not the household, so multiple grants for the same household are possible. Minor adaptations costing £1,000 or less, equipment, and reablement (for at least six weeks) must be free of charge and is provided by social care through the County Council (Care & Support Regulations 2014).

DFGs are tenure blind so are available for owner occupiers, private tenants, housing association tenants and Council housing tenants.

It is considered good practice to offer a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) service to support a disabled person and their family through the complicated process of

carrying out major building works. In Worcestershire a partnership of the 6 Local Housing Authorities and Worcestershire County Council commissioned a HIA referred as the Worcestershire Promoting Independent Living Service and this is provided by Millbrook Health Care under a contract until March 2025. There is also a fee of 14.9% paid to the home improvement agency through the DFG funding for each completed scheme. The services in Bromsgrove managed through this agency and funded through the Council's DFG allocation are listed below:

- Mandatory DFG
- Discretionary DFG top up
- Dementia Dwelling grant
- Hospital Discharge grant
- Home repair assistance
- Housing options
- In house OT (x1) and trusted assessor trained staff
- Energy efficiency measures
- Self-Funder disabled adaptations

DFG – Process

There are 4 key elements to a robust DFG decision:

- The disabled occupant - Robust decision-making begins with a comprehensive assessment of the applicant's needs. This involves gathering relevant information about the applicant's disability, their living situation, and the specific adaptations required to improve their quality of life and independence at home
- The applicant - DFG decisions must be based on clear criteria for financial eligibility. This involves assessing the applicant's financial circumstances to determine their ability to contribute towards the cost of the adaptations.
- The eligible works - Before approving a DFG application, it is essential to assess the technical feasibility of the proposed adaptations. This involves evaluating factors such as the structural integrity of the property, building regulations compliance, and the availability of suitable contractors to carry out the work.
- Amount of grant – Does the scheme require additional funding above the maximum grant available.

Agenda Item 8

There are 5 key stages of delivering a home adaptation. Applicants can undertake the process of submitting a DFG application without the use of the HIA.

- **Stage 0:** first contact with services – This is mainly through Health, Adult Social Care, the Council or direct to the HIA
- **Stage 1:** An assessment and identification of the relevant works for the disabled occupant is undertaken by the OT service (Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health & care HNS Trust) or applicants can employ a suitably qualified OT to undertake an assessment.
- **Stage 2:** The HIA will identify the relevant works and assess if the works are necessary and appropriate in conjunction with the OT. The HIA undertakes casework and any technical requirements and obtain quotes, undertake the means test and if proceeding complete the DFG application and submit the formal grant application to the Council for approval.

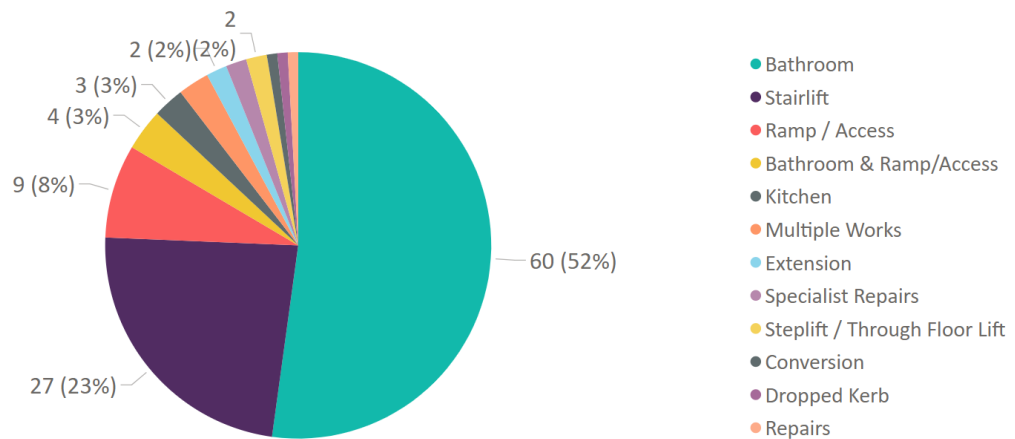


- **Stage 3:** The Council assess if they are reasonable and practicable and approves or rejects the application. The Council has a maximum of 6 months to approve the application.
- **Stage 4:** When approved Millbrook will instruct the works and project manage the adaptations.

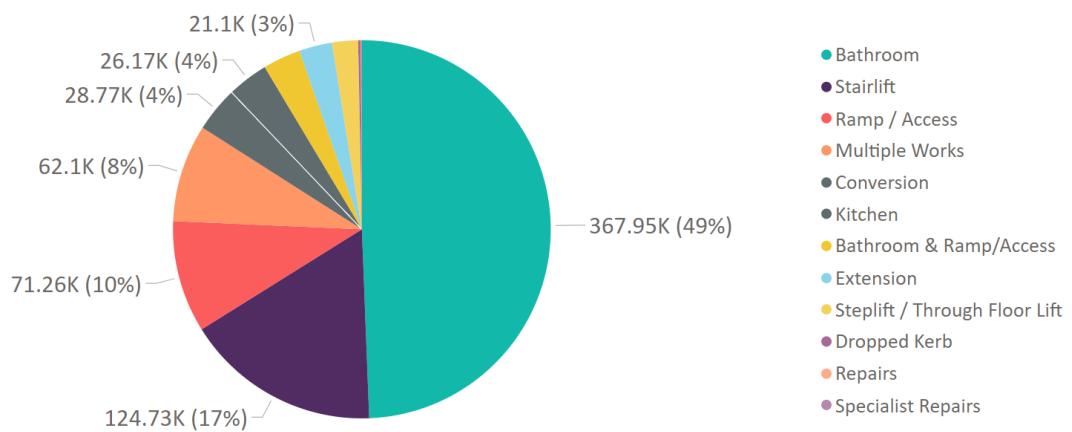
DFG's in Bromsgrove

The following information has been provided by Millbrook Health Care as part of the current re-tendering work being undertaken.

DFG completions by Job Type
Bromsgrove
2022-2023



DFG Expenditure in £s by job/adaptation type
Bromsgrove
2022-2023

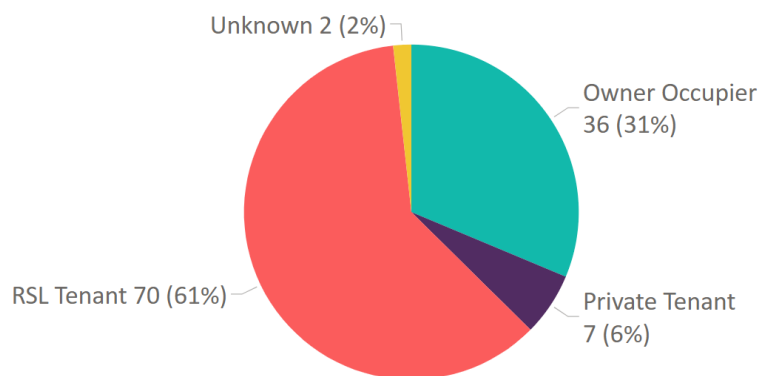


Agenda Item 8

Number, median delivery times, total value, and average value of DFG completions by adaptation type in Bromsgrove 2022-23

Adaptation Type	Cases	Total Payment	Average Payment
Bathroom	60	£367,951.52	£6,132.53
Stairlift	27	£124,728.40	£4,619.57
Ramp / Access	9	£71,255.63	£7,917.29
Bathroom & Ramp/Access	4	£24,071.53	£6,017.88
Kitchen	3	£26,171.65	£8,723.88
Multiple Works	3	£62,104.84	£20,701.61
Conversion	1	£28,772.86	£28,772.86
Steplift / Through Floor Lift	2	£16,596.37	£8,298.19
Extension	2	£21,102.71	£10,551.36
Repairs	1	£365.39	£365.39
Specialist Repairs	2	£330.92	£165.46
Dropped Kerb	1	£1,617.17	£1,617.17
Total	115	£745,068.99	£6,478.86

DFG recipients by tenure
Bromsgrove
2022-2023

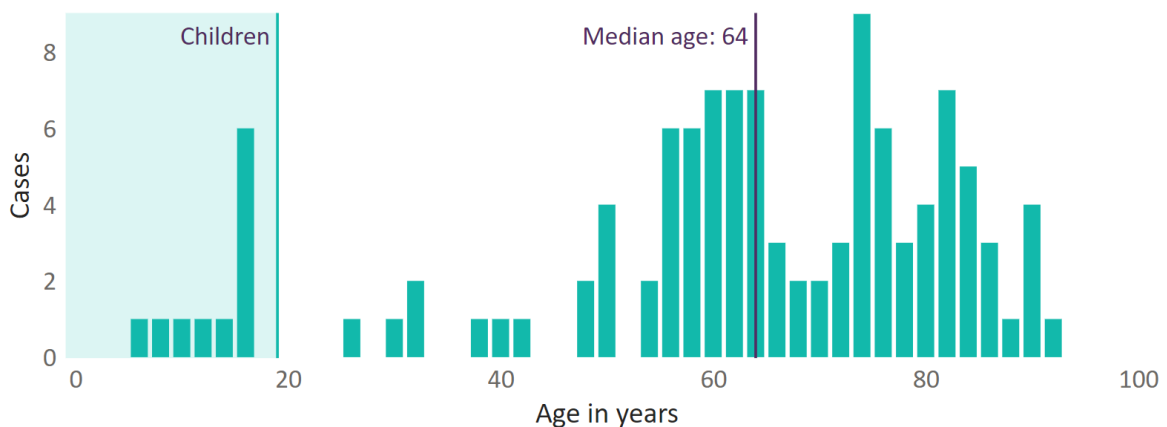


Agenda Item 8

Distribution of the tenure DFG recipients in Bromsgrove 2022-23

Tenure	Cases	Median delivery time in working days	Total payment	Average payment
Owner Occupier	36	118	£241,230.45	£6,700.85
RSL Tenant	70	127	£446,496.65	£6,378.52
Private Tenant	7	136	£48,713.07	£6,959.01
Unknown	2	11	£8,628.82	£4,314.41
Total	115	127	£745,068.99	£7,084.70

Histogram of the age of DFG recipients
Bromsgrove
2022-2023



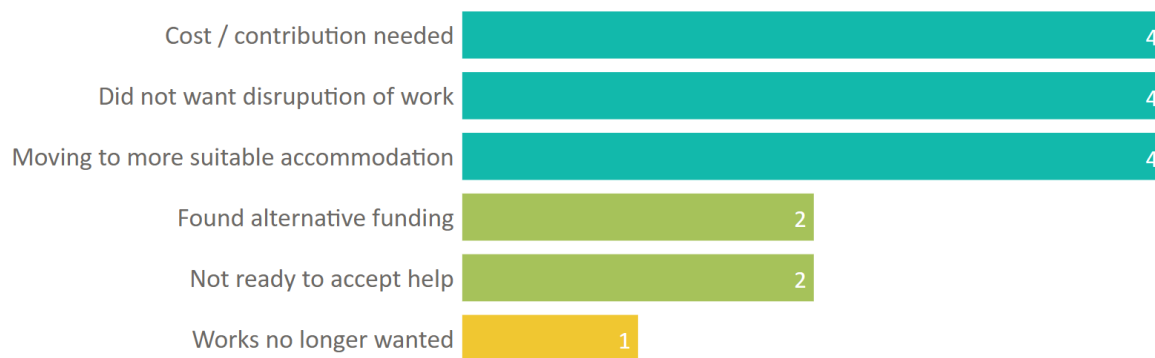
Age of DFG recipients 22/23

Age	Cases	Median delivery time in working days	Total Payment	Average Payment
Adult	73	167	£438,972.89	£6,013.33
Child	4	276	£106,548.71	£26,637.18
Total	77	169	£545,521.60	£7,084.70

Reasons clients did not want to proceed with a DFG

Bromsgrove

2022-2023



Cases

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Overview & Scrutiny

22 April 2024

Reprofiling of Capital Fleet Replacement Budget – Domestic Waste Fleet

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor P. J. Whittaker - Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Community Safety (including Car Parking)
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Simon Parry
Report Author: Matthew Austin	Job Title: Environmental Services Manager Contact email: matthew.austin@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 548206	
Wards Affected		All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		Communities which are safe, well maintained & green
Scrutiny Report		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. Context:

- 1.1. In 2021, as part of a review of Council finances, the decision was taken to extend the life of operational vehicles by an extra year before replacement, and also to start refurbishing Waste Collection Vehicles to extend their life by a further period in order to reduce the capital expenditure on new vehicles, and make savings that could be put towards the increased costs of more expensive energy efficient vehicles as part of our Climate Change ambitions in the future.
- 1.2. This was mirroring an approach taken by other Local Authorities, such as neighbouring Wyre Forest, who have refurbished their vehicles previously with positive results to extend the life of their assets.
- 1.3. This would also have given more time for the HGV Electric Vehicle market to develop, as current options are limited in performance and cost more than twice as much as existing internal combustion vehicles.
- 1.4. This saw a reduction on Capital investment from circa £200,000 per vehicle to an intended £70,000, with an expectation of a further five-year operational life before replacement.
- 1.5. When this adjustment was made, no allowance was given for the operational impact of refurbishment, which removed multiple vehicles from the operational services for extended periods, requiring the use of hire

Overview & Scrutiny

22 April 2024

vehicles to support service delivery, and introducing an additional unbudgeted revenue pressure.

- 1.6. In addition to this, the first few vehicles took nearly 12 months to be refurbished as a result of parts and supply issues that were confirmed as affecting the sector during 2022/23, and subsequent vehicles have all over run on planned timescales, resulting in significant unbudgeted costs on Hire Vehicles.

Actual Revenue Costs - Truck Hire against a zero budget.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
BDC	59,869	103,700	260,874

- 1.7. This has resulted in a backlog of vehicles that have exceeded their operational life, and we currently have six vehicles that should have been refurbished/replaced by the end of the 2023/24 financial year, that haven't.
- 1.8. Due to significant mechanical failures with these older vehicles on our existing fleet, in addition to the normal operational requirements for vehicles to be in for servicing, MOT's, and day to day repairs, we are currently reliant on a number of hire vehicles to maintain our minimum service at additional un-planned cost.
- 1.9. It has also been identified in conjunction with our corporate procurement team that the refurbishment and vehicle hire done to date has not been arranged through a compliant procurement route, and so further work has been paused whilst reviewing our options regarding the capital replacement schedule.
- 1.10. Having extended the operational life of our Waste Collection vehicles from seven years to eight, it has become apparent that the level of failure and breakdowns associated with these vehicles has increased considerably as a result of the volume of work and mechanical wear and tear experienced.
- 1.11. In parallel with these pressures, the workshop providing maintenance for all of the Environmental Services vehicles has been understaffed for over five years now as result of high demand for HGV mechanics in the private sector on higher salaries, and the recent retirement of one of our HGV mechanics has now left us with 50% of the mechanics built into our staffing structure.
- 1.12. This is a similar picture at our Redditch workshop as well, which also supports our shared fleet across the two authorities, and is also running at 50% of planned staffing levels.

Overview & Scrutiny

22 April 2024

- 1.13. We currently have four mechanic vacancies that we are attempting to recruit to across the two sites, and this has necessitated increased use of third parties to support the maintenance of our fleet and avoid service failure, as well as associated delays as a result of capacity pressures on the private sector as well.
- 1.14. In conjunction with the reduced staffing currently in place at our Workshops, the extended life of Refuse vehicles and associated increased mechanical failure has put considerable pressure on our already reduced workshop teams to maintain an operational fleet each day, and those vehicles that have been refurbished have continued to see mechanical failure arising from the age of the chassis and elements that were not included in the refurbishment specification, which was primarily targeted at the body of the vehicle and waste compaction systems.
- 1.15. This need to prioritise work on the Waste Collection fleet (Domestic & Commercial) has impacted on the availability of other vehicles required for statutory services such as road sweepers, Place Team vans for litter picking and fly tip removal. It has also impacted on discretionary and chargeable services such as the District Public Toilet cleaner's vehicle, and WRS's dog warden van, which has impacted on their income generation as well.

2. Background:

- 2.1. The combined collection fleet for Domestic Waste in Environmental Services consists of sixteen 26ton vehicles, one 18ton vehicle, and three smaller trucks operating from the Bromsgrove Depot; and eight 26ton vehicles and one 18ton vehicle operating from the Redditch Depot. Services require a minimum of twenty 26ton vehicles, one 18ton vehicle, and one small RCV daily to operate the service across the two Authority areas.
- 2.2. Due to the legal requirement for regular inspections and servicing to maintain a safe and compliant fleet, as well as routine maintenance and repairs on an operational fleet that collects waste from 40,000 households each week, it is best practice to operate a number of spare vehicles, and the rural nature of Bromsgrove puts additional pressure on the fleet as a result of high mileages and narrow lanes requiring specific vehicles to support consistent collections in certain areas where standard RCV's cannot gain access.
- 2.3. The Redditch information is included for reference, as the shared service operates jointly across the two Local Authorities areas.

Overview & Scrutiny

22 April 2024

3. Proposals:

3.1. In light of the increased costs and operational challenges arising from the extended vehicle operational lifespans, refurbishment experience, and staffing issues within our workshop, it is proposed to revert to a seven-year replacement cycle on our Waste fleet, and re-profile the Capital Fleet Replacement budgets to support the purchase of replacement vehicles that will reduce the maintenance pressure on our workshop and support our operational service delivery.

3.2. It is proposed to increase revenue funding to support the ongoing use of hire vehicles to safeguard operational service delivery of the waste service during 2024/25 to recognise the pressures on the existing fleet and maintenance arrangements.

3.3. In light of the proposed continuance of using ICE vehicles for the Waste Collection Service, it may be appropriate to consider a planned timescale for investing in HVO to ensure that we maximise our Carbon benefits by reducing our usage of fossil fuels in the operation of our Fleet.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. It is proposed to re-profile the existing Capital replacement budget apportioned to the Waste Fleet as shown below, which illustrates the timeframe consistent with the 7 year life span of the vehicles currently on our fleet:

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Spend
Current Capital Programme	280,000	350,000	350,000	0	3,500,000	2,250,000	2,250,000	0	8,980,000
No. of Vehicles	4 (Refurb)	5 (Refurb)	5 (Refurb)		8 (Buy)	5 (Buy)	5 (Buy)	0	
Proposed Reprofiling	0	2,180,000	1,265,000	820,000	0	0	0	0	4,265,000
No. of Vehicles	0	10 (Buy)	6 (Buy)	4 (Buy)	0	0	0	0	0
Impact on Revenue Repayments (MRP) and Interest Payments	-15,960	88,350	342,654	371,536	289,179	-339,071	-660,499	-644,539	-568,350

Overview & Scrutiny

22 April 2024

- 4.2. The current timescales on the purchase of new refuse collection vehicles is approximately 40 weeks. During that time, it is expected that there will be an ongoing need for Hire Vehicles to support the delivery of Operational Services, for which there is currently no revenue budget.
- 4.3. To address this, it is recommended that a one-off revenue budget of £150,000 be approved for 2024/25 to reflect the current reliance on hire vehicles until such time as new vehicles become available, or staffing in the workshop be improved to reduce the down time of existing assets.
- 4.4. This additional revenue funding would be linked to the proposed re-profiling and purchase of new vehicles, and would need to be increased significantly beyond this as an on-going pressure beyond the 2024/25 financial year if the replacement programme is not adjusted.

5. Environmental/Climate Change Implications

- 5.1. Previous discussions had been looking at the possible transition to alternative energy efficient vehicles from 2026/27, but it has been identified that until parallel discussions around the future of the existing depots have been resolved and implemented, it is unknown what infrastructure will be achievable to support a transition to such vehicles.
- 5.2. With no current timescale for a rationalisation/relocation of our current space limited Depot Spaces, it is unlikely that we will be in a position to invest in alternative vehicles before 2030.
- 5.3. A decision has already been made to make greater use of HVO¹ as a Diesel alternative that provides sustainable carbon savings over fossil fuels at an approximate cost increase of 20% at current prices.
- 5.4. Current plans have been built into the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 30% of our Diesel usage to be replaced with HVO from the 2024/25 financial year on, and this will support a Carbon benefit to the authority alongside on-going use of ICE vehicles when compared with our previous arrangements.
- 5.5. The use of HVO in 2024/25 will reduce the Carbon impact from our Domestic Refuse service by an estimated 162 Tons of CO₂ per year in comparison with the use of Diesel alone.
- 5.6. Although HVO is more expensive than Diesel, and so places a pressure on revenue budgets, this will defer the higher financial pressure associated with converting the fleet to Electric or other alternative energy

¹ Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil

Overview & Scrutiny

22 April 2024

sources until such a time as technology and funding allows for a further review of the fleet and investment in appropriate vehicle technology to support delivery of improvements in line with the Climate Emergency declaration that the Council made in 2019.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1. The current refurbishment programme has not been compliant with procurement rules, and a return to purchase of vehicles through a compliant framework agreement will prevent further non-compliance.

6.2. As there is no legal agreement or contract linked to the refurbishment programme, there are no legal implications associated with not continuing with this approach.

7. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

7.1. Equalities and Diversity Implications

7.2. There are no implications arising from the reprofiling of the fleet.

8. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Whittaker – Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Community Safety	10 April 2024
Lead Director / Head of Service	Simon Parry - Head of Environmental Services	27 March 2024
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter – Deputy Chief Executive	27 March 2024
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings – Principal Solicitor	27 March 2024
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	N/A	
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matt Eccles – Climate Change Manager	27 March 2024

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
BOARD**

**FOODBANK AND
COMMUNITY SHOP
PROVISION
TASK GROUP**

FINAL REPORT

April 2024



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

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MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP



Chairman – Cllr Esther Gray



Cllr Alan Bailes



Cllr Bakul Kumar



Cllr Peter McDonald



Cllr David Nicholl



Cllr David G. Stewart

SUPPORTING OFFICER DETAILS

Mat Sliwinski – Democratic Services Officer
Email: democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The task group first met on 20 December 2023 and was set up as a result of concerns arising from the rise in foodbanks and community shops in some areas of the District to combat the poverty and deprivation families find themselves facing. This meant they were unable to meet their families essential need for food and other fundamentals during the cost-of-living crisis.

Following previous task group reports on fuel poverty, we were better informed about the impact of the cost-of-living on families both in terms of those out-of-work and those who are termed as working poor. The foodbank/community shop task group identified the criteria that would form a framework of investigation to establish how the charitable organisations were meeting the needs of the families affected.

We visited six locations over a period from 12 January 2024 – 19 February 2024. This included, Alvechurch Larder, New Starts (Aston Fields), Sidemoor Community Project [CIC], Catshill Baptist Church Foodbank, The Basement Project - in Bromsgrove Hanover Street and Hollywood Life Centre Foodbank. We wholeheartedly thank those organisations for what they do. We also thank them for taking the time to speak to the task team and showing us how they have managed the complex and time-consuming role of supporting people faced with food poverty.

We also thank Officers Judith Willis and Della McCarthy for their time in sharing their engagement with these organisations and their time to speak to the task group. This provided a clear background as to what the Council are doing in support of signposting residents of Bromsgrove District for help in this crisis, and in finding funding streams to support the organisations providing this service. This involves much more than this in real terms as Officers explore any opportunities, in what is a cost-of-living crisis, to continue their support of organisations as effectively as possible and to provide information to communities about what to do if they are suffering from fuel poverty, need access to warm hubs and help in claiming benefits.

The task group looking at Foodbanks/Community Shops represented a cross-party section of the full council at Bromsgrove District Council. I thank each of you for your participation in what entailed visiting all of those organisations across the district to ensure we could gather the information we needed to fulfil the criteria of the task.

We believe the recommendations made will ensure the Council can enhance this support and extend it where we identified gaps in provision. The gaps were found both geographically and in the level of support equally reaching all residents across the whole district. The important note to consider was that the council assist and do not take over and dictate which model must be followed, but that all organisations feel well supported. The organisations have evolved from what are unique communities with diverse needs. We applaud them for their initiative and energy in what they do.

Councillor Esther Gray
Chairman, Foodbank and Community Shop Provision Task Group

TASK GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

After consideration of the evidence available and interviewing witnesses the Task Group have proposed the following recommendations (supporting evidence can be found under the relevant chapters within the main body of this report):

Recommendation 1
That the Council update its website to include contact details of all foodbanks in the district which wish to be on the list. The Council will ensure that the webpage links to the foodbanks' websites and/or other contact details of the foodbanks, such as telephone and social media, are up-to-date and that information on how to get in touch is easily accessible.
Financial Implications for recommendations:
There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
Legal Implications for recommendations:
There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation. Foodbanks must first be asked whether they give permission for their contact information to be included on the Council's website before the website can be updated with their details.
Resource Implications:
Officer time in updating and monitoring the webpages.

Recommendation 2
That all organisations providing foodbanks receive the appropriate and necessary support and resources from Bromsgrove District Council, which is proportionate and equivalent to their size and what they require. In the transition period, if the organisation is growing, appropriate support and funding needs to be allocated.
Financial Implications for recommendations:
There are potential financial implications in relation to this recommendation if funding or resources are provided by the Council.
Legal Implications for recommendations:
The Council follows a transparent and fair process when deciding to provide support. Also, it is understood that the Council will provide support subject to the resources being available.

When allocating any resources in the form of funds, the Council would need to take into account data such as the number of users, number of potential users within the geographical area covered by the organisation and other factors, in deciding the level of support.

Resource Implications:

Officer time ensuring that the approach compiled with equalities. Resource implications if support is provided.

Recommendation 3

That the Council develop a consistent universal understanding/ guidelines of what level of recording of users' personal information is required for the needs of the community engaged in the foodbank service without breaching the GDPR legislation. That the Council recognise there might be specific recording requirements as conditions attached to accessing specific funding streams.

Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.

Legal Implications:

There are direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation, in particular around making sure the Council is clear on what level of recording of users' data is required as part of any grant process / Government requirements to access the grants.

Resource Implications:

Officer time in establishing a clear set of guidelines/policy.

Recommendation 4

That the Council endeavour to investigate, under the auspices of existing arrangements available to the Council, such as the Bromsgrove Partnership, whether communities in areas of the district that do not currently have foodbanks require this provision, and that the Council make best effort to create a food bank in Rubery where a need has already been identified.

Financial Implications:

It is noted that any Council-led investigation would need to be funded as the Council does not have dedicated officer capacity to undertake this investigation.

Should it be deemed feasible for the Council to create additional foodbank provision, there would need to be a budget approved to create a food bank in Rubery or anywhere else. This has not been required previously with existing food banks as these have been established by the local communities/groups themselves.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.

Resource Implications:

Officer time in investigating the feasibility of establishing food bank provision / in contacting the voluntary sector.

Recommendation 5

That the Council continues to develop opportunities to enable foodbank organisations to come together as part of a network to support each other and to promote the sustainability of the help being provided to the community across the district. That the Council makes clear that joining the network is a pre-requisite if applying for Council funding, should this become available in future.

Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.

Resource Implications:

Officer time in informing the organisations of this proposal and Council's role in supporting the setting up and facilitating of a network with a view to it being owned and run by the Network of community organisations itself. Network of community groups was already in place in Bromsgrove and foodbank organisations could be encouraged to join these networks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Task Group met on 20 December 2023 and selected a Chairman. The elected Chairman, Cllr Esther Gray, then obtained the Task Group's agreement regarding the aims and objectives of this review. This followed a discussion at the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Board in October where Members were provided with an overview presentation on foodbank provision in the district. It was also agreed that this Task Group must be completed as quickly as possible but that it was very dependent upon the task team being able to gain appointments with the organisations who run the identified Foodbanks and Community Shops across the district.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TASK GROUP

- Establish how accessible the foodbanks/community shops are for residents.
- Consider the operating models being used by each organisation to gather information which might help share and promote best practice for success.
- To consider the scope of the project in the deliverables achieved by established organisations and describe the major objectives of those organisations; and their primary aims in meeting community need and compare needs identified in a diverse widespread district.
- To look for gaps in support for those facing food and other essentials poverty in Bromsgrove District and explore how these could be met.

WHAT WE DID:

We met with the main person identified as in charge of the operation on site and spoke with other staff or members of the organisation.

We observed residents making use of the provision and on occasion spoke with them about how accessible they found it. We were also shown around the layout of buildings and storage areas establishing what space and resources were shared with other users of the building or where some also co-existed within areas where the community socialised and used the space as a warm hub.

We were given documents outlining times of opening and how the principles of operation were drafted. We saw leaflets advertising the provision and also, on occasion, had reference to web pages and social media pages for reference in our evidence gathering.

SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED:

The Task Group visited six locations over a period from 12 January 2024 – 19 February 2024. This included: Alvechurch Community Larder, New Starts (Aston Fields), Sidemoor Community Project (CIC), Catshill Baptist Church Foodbank, The Basement Project Bromsgrove - Hanover Street and Hollywood Life Centre Foodbank.

The Task Group found three organisations that take no agency referrals before meeting residents and listening to what they needed, then made best efforts to supply what they need from what they have gathered to hand. Those that take no referrals are: Alvechurch Larder, Sidemoor Community Project and Hollywood Life Centre Food Bank.

The Task Group found that three organisations take agency referrals before the residents are able to access the provision. Those organisations that take referrals are: New Starts, (for foodbank but not for Community Shop), Basement Project (as well as self-referrals) and Catshill Baptist Church, (which they described as a left over from being part of Trussell Trust organisation, although the forms completed are considerably reduced in information gathered.)

The organisations that take referrals say that it is to control the operation and to manage food distribution in an equitable fashion. However, after further discussion they reveal that they also use the information to try to help the resident by providing other help; by signposting to that help or encouraging them to take further help and guidance from sources close to the organisation. There were observably advertised occasions to get help with fuel poverty or gain access to organisations that support applications for funds they may be entitled to claim. Some of the foodbanks also provide speakers who help residents with budgeting skills.

In terms of specific focus, the Basement Project caters primarily for under 26-year-olds, which help their families incidentally.

Two of the foodbank organisations visited have contact with local schools. Catshill Baptist Foodbank link to Catshill schools who supply food from, for example, the Harvest Festival. The Basement Project reach out to many but not all schools; they mainly find contact with schools closer to Bromsgrove Town Centre. They have not, for example, had links with Waseley Hills High School, Rubery, for some time and did not identify the primary schools in that area in discussion at all. They have some historical links with Woodrush School in Wythall but did not mention any primary schools in that area. No mention was made of schools in Romsley, Hagley, Barnt Green or Alvechurch.

QUESTIONS THAT AROSE DURING THE INVESTIGATION:

- 1) How equally is the funding in support of children and families shared across the Bromsgrove District? It appears that one or two of the foodbank organisations, which do not cover the whole of the district, are able to receive external funding. Some of this may be because they have bank accounts, which is a prerequisite to receiving such funding and can account for how it is spent in line with the requirements of the funding.

This leads to recommendation 2: That all organisations providing foodbanks receive the appropriate and necessary support and resources from Bromsgrove District Council, which is proportionate and equivalent to their size and what they require. In the transition period, if the organisation is growing, appropriate support and funding needs to be allocated.

- 2) There is a question of mistaken assumption that the destitute and working poor are not found in all areas of the district. There is no evidence that areas such as Belbroughton, Hagley or Rubery in Worcestershire have a foodbank or community shop at all. Some residents may be travelling across the county boundary to find help. This is unknown as we did not survey residents. In effect we know that in Rubery, Worcestershire residents are signposted across the county boundary to Birmingham South area for help.

This leads to recommendation 4: That the Council endeavour to investigate, under the auspices of existing arrangements available to the Council, such as the Partnership, whether communities in areas of the district that do not currently have foodbanks require this provision, and that the Council makes best effort to create a food bank in Rubery where a need has already been identified as there is no known foodbank currently operating in the Bromsgrove District side of Rubery.

- 3) Each area where there is a foodbank or community shop has some enthusiastic people who volunteer to help their community. However, do they reach everyone in need in that area? Some are missed due to where they are located and/or timings of opening hours and/or that the method of operation puts barriers in the way such as gathering referrals. We have testimony from the task group in their surgery in the council district of those that fail to get help on occasion due to the need to obtain an agency referral. Referrers can be Bromsgrove District Council (including Councillors), Doctors, Clergy and other identified bodies such as BDHT.

This leads to recommendation 3: That the Council develop a consistent universal understanding/guidelines of what level of recording of users' personal information is required for the needs of the community engaged in the foodbank service without breaching the GDPR legislation. That the Council recognise there might be specific recording requirements as conditions attached to accessing specific funding streams may require this.

FINDINGS

The Task Group met on 22 and 29 February 2024 to complete the assessment of information and evidence gathered. On 22 February 2024 we also had the support of Officers: Judith Willis and Della McCarthy. We thank both Judith and Della for the patience and support in adding to the enquiry undertaken.

We found a wonderful example of human kindness wherever we went. The atmosphere was welcoming and genuine in their efforts to support the community. They were all unique, which is to be expected, as the widespread communities across the District are also unique.

Area of concern the Task Group wish to Highlight.

During the assessment of the evidence and information gathered some additional concerns arose about the current Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) funding for foodbanks. The Task Group felt this aspect needed further clarification to fully understand the allocation of BDC funding.

It was explained that foodbanks are not funded directly from BDC funds. Instead, BDC distributes funding received from Government grants such as the Government's Household Support Fund when such funding streams become available.

We felt that it remains imperative that we understand what criteria BDC uses when grant funding is distributed, including how foodbanks are assessed for suitability for receiving grant funding. We would like to understand how much funding grants BDC currently distributes to foodbanks and to which organisations.

Are there any criteria for receiving grant funding? How is the effectiveness of financial support measured? Is there any value for money measurement which is used to ensure grant funding is well spent?

In the development of the wording for the recommendations we also discussed these further concerns. We recognised that this aspect of concern came outside and in addition to the remit and primary focus of the task group. (Outlined above).

This additional highlighted concern links to recommendation 2: That all organisations providing foodbanks receive the appropriate and necessary support and resources from Bromsgrove District Council, which is proportionate and equivalent to their size and what they require. In the transition period, if the organisation is growing, appropriate support and funding needs to be allocated.

However, further work is required to establish if appropriate procurement policies are followed, and money is spent wisely in support of an equitable level of support across the whole district. This might be achieved with a further conversation with Officers of the Council in Overview and Scrutiny.

On 29 February 2024 one final meeting concluded the wording of the recommendations to meet the objectives of the task undertaken and that this would allow gaps to be addressed and Officers authorised to pursue these as soon as possible.

In particular, communication to the residents of the whole of the Bromsgrove District on the webpage with links which should ensure all and every location available to them can be signposted. Councillors of the Task Group Team also saw that the organisations would most likely benefit from the development of a network, to be facilitated by Officers, to develop links across the district which help all organisations to share the gathered food and essentials where an emergency occurs to meet the needs of residents as effectively as possible. It also supports organisations because they might find a source of advice as they develop their operations.

This is found in the recommendation 5: That the Council continues to develop opportunities to enable foodbank organisations to come together as part of a network to support each other and to promote the sustainability of the help being provided to the community across the district. That the Council makes clear that joining the network is a pre-requisite if applying for Council funding, should this become available in future.

The issues identified in whether there will or will not be funding will not entirely be within the grip of BDC and therefore some imaginative thought by both the organisations and the Council will be required to help residents and make access to support as simple as possible will be a challenge going forward.

Appendix 1

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DECISION TO ESTABLISH THE TASK GROUP

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 16th OCTOBER 2023

The following was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 16th October 2023 (Minute No. 41/23 – Community Shop Provision in the District):

“RESOLVED that a Task Group be established to investigate the topic of Community Supermarket / Food Bank provision in the District.”

Appendix 2

WITNESSES

The Task Group considered evidence from the following sources before making its recommendations.

The Task Group would like to thank all the foodbanks who have hosted the group and allowed the group to find out more about their work. The Task Group would like to offer special thanks the organisers of these food banks for their dedication in helping provide a vital service to the residents of Bromsgrove:

Keith Wiseman, Alvechurch Community Larder
Reverend Simon Gudger, Catshill Baptist Food Bank
Pastor Steve Crosthwaite, Hollywood Christian Life Centre
Marion Kenyon, NewStarts
Caleb Mallard, The Basement Project
Anthony Theophanous, Sidemoor Community Project

The following officers provided support to Members throughout the investigation:

Judith Willis, Head of Community and Housing Services
Della McCarthy, Bromsgrove and Redditch Partnership Manager

Supporting evidence, including the summary of the visits undertaken, can be found under the relevant chapters within the main body of this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council:

Presentation to Overview and Scrutiny Board, Overview and Effectiveness of Community Supermarkets and Foodbanks in Bromsgrove, 16 October 2023 (Minute No. 41/23 Community Shop Provision in the District – Overview)

<https://moderngovwebpublic.bromsgrove.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=292&MIId=4140&Ver=4>

External:

Pratt, Alison., Food Banks in the UK, *House of Commons Library (Number 8585)*, 22 November 2023

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8585/CBP-8585.pdf>

CABINET LEADER'S WORK PROGRAMME

1 MAY 2024 TO 31 AUGUST 2024
(Published as at 2nd April 2024)

This Work Programme gives details of items on which key decisions are likely to be taken in the coming four months by the Council's Cabinet

The Work Programme gives details of items on which key decisions are likely to be taken by the Council's Cabinet, or full Council, in the coming four months. **Key Decisions** are those executive decisions which are likely to:

- (i) result in the Council incurring expenditure, foregoing income or the making of savings in excess of £200,000 or which are otherwise significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (ii) be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the district;

If you wish to make representations on the proposed decision you are encouraged to get in touch with the relevant report author as soon as possible before the proposed date of the decision. Contact details are provided, alternatively you may write to the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services, Parkside, Market Street, B61 8DA or e-mail: democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

The Cabinet's meetings are normally held every four weeks at 6pm on Wednesday evenings at Parkside. They are open to the public, except when confidential information is being discussed. If you wish to attend for a particular matter, it is advisable to check with the Democratic Services Team on (01527 64252 ext 3031) to make sure it is going ahead as planned. If you have any queries Democratic Services Officers will be happy to advise you. The full Council meets in accordance with the Councils Calendar of Meetings. Meetings commence at 6pm.

CABINET MEMBERSHIP

Councillor K J May	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships
Councillor s. Baxter	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration
Councillor S. Colella	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Climate Change
Councillor C. Hotham	Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling
Councillor K. Taylor	Cabinet Member for Planning, Licensing and Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Councillor S. Webb	Cabinet Member for Health and Well Being and Strategic Housing
Councillor P. Whittaker	Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Community Safety

Decision including Whether it is a key Decision	Decision Taker Date of Decision	Details of Exempt information (if any) and information explaining why items have been postponed (where available)	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Bromsgrove Play Audit and Investment Strategy Key: Yes	Cabinet Not before 26th Jun 2024		Report of the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services	Ishrat Karimi Fini, Cultural Services and Parks Manager Tel: 07713 085872 Councillor S. R. Colella
District Heat Network Revisions Key: Yes	Cabinet Not before 26th Jun 2024		Report of the Head of Community and Housing Services	Judith Willis, Head of Community and Housing Services Tel: 01527 64252 Ext 3284 Councillor C. A. Hotham, Councillor S. R. Colella
Finance and Performance Outturn Report 2023/24 Key: No	Cabinet 26 Jun 2024 Council 17 Jul 2024		Report of the Interim Section 151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive	Peter Carpenter, Interim Section 151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Tel: 01527 64252 Councillor C. A. Hotham

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Decision including Whether it is a key Decision	Decision Taker Date of Decision	Details of Exempt information (if any) and information explaining why items have been postponed (where available)	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Recommissioning of the Promoting Independent Living Service (Home Improvement Agency) Key: Yes	Cabinet 26 Jun 2024 Council 17 Jul 2024		Report of the Head of Community and Housing Services	Matthew Bough, Housing Development and Enabling Manager Tel: 01527 64252 Councillor S. A. Webb
Audit, Governance and Standards Committee Annual Report 2023/24 Key: Yes	Council Not before 17th Jul 2024		Report of the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	Mateusz Sliwinski, Democratic Services Officer Councillor D. J. Nicholl
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24 Key: Yes	Council Not before 17th Jul 2024		Report of the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	Mateusz Sliwinski, Democratic Services Officer Councillor P. M. McDonald

Decision including Whether it is a key Decision	Decision Taker Date of Decision	Details of Exempt information (if any) and information explaining why items have been postponed (where available)	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Carbon Reduction Strategy and Implementation Plan - Annual Review Key: No	Cabinet 20 Nov 2024 Council 4 Dec 2024		Report of the Head of Community and Housing Services	Matthew Eccles, Climate Change Manager Councillor S. R. Colella

Explanation of Items on the Cabinet Work Programme

1. Bromsgrove Play Audit and Investment Strategy

A review of all play areas in the District, including an accessibility assessment and identification of gaps in provision. The play audit will consider how future play provision could be designed to improve the overall accessibility of play provision and address any gaps.

2. District Heat Network Revisions

Due to technological changes to how District Heat Networks operate, to consider a revised delivery model to that initially agreed by Council.

3. Finance and Performance Outturn Report 2023/24

The report to update members on the Council's 2023/24 outturn (achieved) financial and performance position in 2023-24.

4. Recommissioning of the Promoting Independent Living Service (Home Improvement Agency)

Report seeking approval for recommissioning for the home improvement agency service.

5. Carbon Reduction Strategy and Implementation Plan - Annual Review

Annual review of progress in delivering the Carbon Reduction Strategy.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

WORK PROGRAMME

2023-2024

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board considers and agrees the work programme and updates it accordingly.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Date of Meeting	Subject	Additional Information
22 nd April 2024	Overview and Scrutiny Board – Annual Report 2023-2024	Chairman of the Board
	Foodbank and Community Shop Provision Task Group – Final Report	Chairman of the Task Group
	Impact of Heatwaves Short Sharp Review – Terms of Reference	Chairman of the Short, Sharp Review Group
	Governance Systems Review – Implementation Progress Update (Standing Item)	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – update from Representative	Council’s Representative on HOSC
	Cabinet Leader’s Work Programme	
	Agile Working – Update on Implementation	Guy Revans, Interim Executive Director
	Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) – Overview Report	Matthew Bough, Strategic Housing Services Manager
	Local Heritage List for Bromsgrove District – Action Plan Update	Mike Dunphy, Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager
	Parking Enforcement Consultancy	Simon Parry, Interim Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services
	Reprofiling of Capital Fleet Replacement Budget – Domestic Waste Fleet	Matthew Austin, Environmental Services Manager
	Interim Update on the Transfer of EDU from Wyre Forest to Bromsgrove/Redditch Councils	Guy Revans, Interim Executive Director
25 th June 2024	Bromsgrove Play Audit and Investment Strategy – pre-scrutiny (TBC)	Ishrat Karimi-Fini, Cultural Services and Parks Manager
	District Heat Network Revisions – pre-scrutiny (TBC)	Judith Willis, Head of Community and Housing Services

Agenda Item 13

	Council Biodiversity Policy – Overview Report	Matthew Eccles, Climate Change Manager
	Impact of Heatwaves Short Sharp Review – Final Report	Chairman of the Short Sharp Review Group
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – update from Representative	Council’s Representative on HOSC
	Governance Systems Review – Implementation Progress Update (Standing Item)	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services
	Cabinet Leader’s Work Programme	
Reports for further meetings:	Local Heritage List (Quarterly Updates Board – next update in July 2024)	Mike Dunphy, Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager
	Food Waste Recycling – (Update date depended on progress of Government legislation)	Guy Revans, Interim Executive Director
	Carbon Reduction Strategy and Implementation Plan – Annual Review – pre-scrutiny Update (currently due for O&S on 19 th November 2024)	Matthew Eccles, Climate Change Manager

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Parking Enforcement Consultancy

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor S. Baxter, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Simon Parry, Interim Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services
Report Author: Simon Parry	Job Title: Interim Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services Contact email: simon.parry@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 64252 extn. 3201
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green Run and grow a successful business
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. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee RESOLVE that:-

- 1) **The contents of the report be noted.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) operates 11 fee charging car parks and 3 free car parks and has also taken responsibility for the enforcement of On-Street Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) since Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) was introduced within BDC on 30 May 2013.
- 2.2 The Council has employed Wychavon District Council to undertake Civil Parking Enforcement for over 10 years. The services covered by this include the delivery of On and Off street parking enforcement and the associated full administration including appeals and adjudication, general administration of queries from a range of stakeholders,

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reporting issues related to Worcestershire County Council's responsibilities around signage and markings, DVLA Audits, Issuing Parking Dispensations, administration of Permit system, Shopmobility Management, Regular checks and stocking of tickets to Pay and Display Machines and Disabled Blue Badge Inspections.

- 2.3 With the Service Level Agreement (SLA) having expired, Full Council considered a new SLA at its meeting on 21st February 2024. It was agreed that, as part of its considerations into the provision of these services, a Strategic Review of requirements for parking services including enforcement be undertaken. This review would encompass not only Bromsgrove Town Centre parking related issues but also the wider district, in order to provide a business case based on options that would consider arrangements of a longer-term SLA with WDC, tendering all or part of the service, in house delivery of the service or other options to be brought back to Cabinet for further consideration. In order to undertake this, work a £50k budget was established.
- 2.4 Officers are currently finalising the brief for the Strategic Review, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Leader of the Council. The associated costs are also being refined before the necessary call off agreement from the Procurement Framework is finalised and the final contract is agreed.
- 2.5 Once the relevant documentation is complete for the Review contract, the work will commence. It is anticipated to start at the beginning of May 2024 and will run for a period of 3 months with a final report issued around September 2024 on the findings and associated options.
- 2.6 The brief includes the following key deliverables
- 2.6.1 A review of existing parking requirements including supply and demand for now and in the future. This will review all site on a site-by-site basis with options to address existing parking issues. This will be linked to the wider Worcestershire Transport Strategy because of regeneration objectives to increase town centre living and footfall to support retention of the existing traders. This will also include Leisure Centre users and a review of the Shop Mobility service.
- 2.6.2 A review of car park management arrangements with solutions identified to reduce the need for off street parking enforcement including an outline of costs, together with operational and enforcement issues. Included will also be recommended time and day of restrictions to address existing parking issues and assess enforcement requirements for identified parking management design options.

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2.6.3 Review of On-Street Enforcement will be carried out to address member and resident concerns around coverage of activities. A review of concentration of enforcement and hotspots for law breaking/nuisance will be undertaken, focusing on repeat offences. A variety of thematic options will be recommended, emphasising the comprehensive approach the study has taken to reviewing car parking supply, usage, location and the land use planning and transport agendas that are shaping it.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 A budget of £50k was identified and agreed at Council on 21st February 2024.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The contract for the service provider to undertake these works will be signed in due course, on final agreement of the terms and conditions.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

5.1 **Communities which are safe, well maintained, and green** – By undertaking On-Street enforcement of all TROs implemented by Worcestershire County Council (WCC), will ensure the safety of road users and pedestrians. Traffic flows are maintained thereby avoiding unnecessary congestion. Enforcement outside schools enables children and parents to enter and leave school safely.

5.2 **Run and grow a successful business** – by ensuring our car parks are maintained and operated correctly will promote businesses, with their customers have parking space available when visiting the town.

Climate Change Implications

5.3 There are no direct Climate change implications as a consequence of these works.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

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- 6.1 There are no Equalities and Diversity implications arising from this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 The purpose of these works is to conduct a Strategic Review of requirements for parking services including enforcement be undertaken. The outcome of this and subsequent report and options will influence the operational delivery of parking services in the District in the future.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The commissioning of this report does not contain risks at this stage. The identification of issues resulting from this will be considered as part of a separate report in the future.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 EXEMPT - Appendix 1 – Contract Value

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9. **REPORT SIGN OFF**

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Sue Baxter, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration	12/04/2024
Lead Director / Head of Service	Simon Parry, Interim Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services	11/04/2024
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer	11/04/2024
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings, Principal Solicitor	11/04/2024
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	N/A	
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	N/A	

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

11TH MARCH 2024, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), S. T. Nock (Vice-Chairman), A. Bailes, R. Bailes, A. M. Dale, E. M. S. Gray, R. J. Hunter, B. Kumar, J. Robinson (Substitute), M. Marshall (Substitute) and D. J. A. Forsythe (Substitute)

Observers:

Councillor S. J. Baxter (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration),

Councillor C. A. Hotham (Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling),

Councillor P. J. Whittaker (Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Community Safety (including Car Parking))

Officers: Mr. G. Revans, Ms J. Willis, Mrs. C. Felton (on Microsoft Teams), Mr. M. Dunphy (on Microsoft Teams), Mrs L. Berry (on Microsoft Teams), Ms. B. Houghton (on Microsoft Teams), Ms. M. Worsfold (on Microsoft Teams), and Mr. M. Sliwinski.

84/23

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. D. Stanley, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, and S. A. Robinson, who were substituted at the meeting by Councillors D. J. A. Forsythe, M. Marshall, and J. W. Robinson respectively.

85/23

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest nor declarations of party whip.

86/23

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 12TH FEBRUARY 2024

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 12th February 2024 were considered.

It was requested by a Member that, in relation to the minute record for item 72/23 – Libraries Unlocked – Worcestershire County Council Presentation, the following verbatim record of questions asked by Members and responses provided, be appended to the minutes record for the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Board on 12th February 2024:

Question: *“You talked about positive customer response [to Libraries Unlocked]. How did you go about getting that information? How many people were surveyed? I would also like to know how you are going to work through the detail of the future of the Libraries Unlocked as you will be aware that Alvechurch Library is under PFI arrangement and any change in the opening hours would be a cost to the County Council and [the Libraries Unlocked] will actually mean a decrease in some of the groups that are very successful and very well respected in the area”*

Response: *“You are absolutely right about Alvechurch and whilst I cannot provide a definitive yes or no in terms of Libraries Unlocked, bearing in mind the PFI limitations of what we can do, it feels it is more likely to be a no in terms of Libraries Unlocked perspective. As part of the business case that we did to identify the 12 potential libraries going forward (for implementation of phase two of Libraries Unlocked), there was a return on investment for each library where we introduce Libraries Unlocked as there is a capital investment to introduce the new technology. We have to assess the return based around staffing reductions, then obviously taking into account increasing revenue, costs, usage, etc. [The libraries are] examined in turn to make sure that return on investment is still valid. It may well be that at Alvechurch there is no return on investment because of the PFI aspects, but we have not finalised [return on investment assessment] yet.” [Response was also provided about customer satisfaction: that a survey of Libraries Unlocked customers was undertaken in October 2022. Officers undertook to provide a response to Members about the results of this survey in a separate communication once information were retrieved.]*

Question: *“...My concern at the moment through is the staff, because when they go to work, they are trying to be really positive. They are superb. They are not just librarians. They are knowledge managers. And what they are finding is they get into work, and they have builders or surveyors come in working around them. I mean, it is an appalling way to treat people.”*

Response: *“We have run staff engagement sessions, staff awareness sessions as part of implementing libraries unlocked and so staff are aware of the situation. We have also held on to so many vacancies. We are pleased that up to this point there have been no need for any staff redundancies or anybody losing their job and we would look to continue with that approach throughout any further implementation of Libraries Unlocked. We have run staff consultations and we have had some positive response to Libraries Unlocked from staff and they are formally consulted at each library if we think that Libraries Unlocked is going to be implemented at that library. The decision on whether Libraries Unlocked is to be implemented has not yet been made in Alvechurch, Wythall or Hagley, and it has for Rubery and Bromsgrove (Town) libraries where the scheme will be going ahead.*

Question: *“What does scale-up mean?”*

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11th March 2024

Response: *“It means we are able to keep libraries open if we need to make more efficiencies. It is a way of keeping libraries open but still delivering further efficiencies should we need to. There are no plans but if there is a requirement to deliver savings, then we have a way of doing it which protects libraries from closing.”*

Question: *“My next question is relating to free meeting room hire by partners. What does partners mean and why are you doing it for free?”*

Response: *“We have a wide range of partners that we work with across our library network from your local voluntary sector organisation that will run things for children, knit and natter group, through to formalised sessions with youth workers. So there is a full range and we have purposely offered free meeting space within libraries unlocked hours to encourage people to use the space. We can review that over time in terms of whether it is well used. We do charge for meeting rooms in libraries. We are proposing to not put a fee on meeting rooms’ hire during libraries unlocked hours. There would still be an expectation in terms of how the meeting rooms are used during those hours.”*

During the consideration of this item, the Board moved into exempt session to discuss specific points within the exempt minutes record of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting which took place on 12th February 2024. It was thus:

RESOLVED: that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the remainder of consideration of the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it/they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of scheme 12A to the Act, as amended, the relevant paragraph of that part, in each case, being as set out below and that it is in the public interest to do so:-

Item No	Paragraph
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3	3 and 4
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Following discussion of the exempt matters, the Board moved to go back into the public session. It was then:

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment in the pre-ambule above, the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 12th February 2024 be agreed as a true and correct record.

(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 of exempt matters 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) and which

related to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority).

87/23

GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS REVIEW - IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS UPDATE

The Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services provided an update on the work that was being undertaken to implement the recommendations arising from the Governance Systems Task Group review that was completed in September 2023. It was reported that since Council approved the group's recommendations on 20th September 2023, the Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) had already made a number of recommendations which were approved by Members at meetings of full Council. This included approval of Cabinet Advisory Group (CAG) terms of reference, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Cross Party Working, and certain amendments to the Committee Terms of Reference and Council Procedure Rules.

The next meeting of the CRWG was due to take place on 12th March 2024. Any recommendations arising from that meeting which relate to the outcomes of the Governance Systems Task Group report would be reported for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its April meeting.

Members queried when guidance would be released with respect of the Cabinet Advisory Group (CAG). It was noted that this would be released in advance of the new municipal year. A Member also requested that Terms of Reference for the CAG be provided. It was explained that this was previously provided and would be recirculated to Members.

RESOLVED that the update in respect of progress with the implementation of actions arising from the Governance Systems Task Group be noted.

88/23

LOCAL HERITAGE LIST STRATEGY - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Principal Conservation Officer presented the Local Heritage List Strategy report. During the presentation it was highlighted that this report provided an update on progress of the Local Heritage List Strategy adopted in 2016. It was noted that there had been progress in compiling the list, however, there had been issues faced, particularly with the public engagement element of the Strategy. The report therefore asked for an updated version of the Strategy to be approved.

Members' attention was drawn to the summary of the Local Heritage List Strategy contained within the report which included information regarding the value of heritage assets to local communities. It was noted that Bromsgrove District Plan (2017) acknowledged the importance of

adopting a Local List to formally identify the locally important heritage assets within the District.

Officers reported that criteria for inclusion on the Local Heritage List had been identified, and included Age, Authenticity and Rarity, Architectural Interest, Historic Interest, and Townscape / Villagescape / Landscape Interest. Of these criteria, an asset needed to satisfy the first criterion (Age) and at least one of the other four criteria in order to be included on the List.

Historic England provided guidance in respect of Local Heritage Listings. This guidance underscored the importance of community engagement within local heritage listing process. It was explained that prior to the work on the Local Heritage lists for Beoley and Dodford, public consultation events were held to gain public feedback on the draft conservation areas for both Beoley and Dodford. At these events, the Local Heritage Lists were publicised. It was noted by Officers that public response had been limited, however, with only a handful of nominations received from the public. Officers clarified that there were around ten responses in total.

It was reported that in the original Local Heritage List Strategy, nominations for inclusion on the list were to be assessed by an assessment panel which would consider the suitability of the nominated asset against the selection criteria. However, since the original strategy had been adopted, the resource available to the Conservation Team had doubled. This enabled internal benchmarking of the proposed lists to take place. Therefore, the assessment panel's role had become less relevant compared to the public engagement element, which continued to be considered extremely important. Due to this, it was proposed that the assessment panel be discontinued in favour of a more detailed public engagement.

A further change since the original strategy was adopted in 2016 was the increased use of the Council's website and social media resources for promotion. Officers explained that this extra resource would be utilised to increase public engagement as part of the proposed update to the process. In addition, there would also be engagement opportunities for local Ward Councillors, Parish Councillors and building owners as part of the new process.

One area highlighted was that a degree of confusion might have been caused when the public was originally being asked to nominate buildings or structures for the Local Heritage List, possibly because there was insufficient explanation of the difference between national and local listing, and what might qualify a building for inclusion on the Local Heritage List. It was hoped that by producing draft lists, which will include details of how the criteria were being met for each proposed structure, residents would be encouraged to suggest other buildings or comment on those proposed for inclusion.

The Principal Conservation Officer stated that heritage assets identified on the local list would be recognised by the Authority as having heritage significance, and would therefore merit consideration in planning matters. When considering planning applications which impact on heritage assets on the local list, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) would be required to take a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset, in determining the application.

In terms of how the draft lists would be presented, Officers stated that there would be a half page summary of the heritage asset, which included a brief description, the assessment of criteria and a location map of the site.

It was noted that draft lists had been prepared in respect of Beoley, Alvechurch, Belbroughton and Dodford. These lists added 140 properties to the draft Local Heritage List, and covered a diverse range of properties including houses, schools, village halls, places of worship and canal infrastructure. Work was now underway to prepare draft lists on Bromsgrove, Lickey and Blackwell and Wythall.

Following the presentation of the report, detailed discussion took place on the following aspects:

- Advantages of having a local heritage list – Officers stated that a local heritage list was not compulsory and not all authorities had such a list. However, there were advantages to having the list in that local heritage could be formally identified and its significance taken into account in planning applications affecting the building or the site in question.
- Involvement of Ward Members in identification of local heritage assets – Members expressed disappointment that to date there had been no direct involvement of Ward Councillors in preparing the draft lists. It was argued that Councillors had direct knowledge of their areas and were able to suggest heritage assets to Officers. It was agreed as a recommendation to Cabinet that Ward Councillors be directly involved in the consultation process for the Local Heritage List (LHL) in their respective ward areas. This recommendation was put to the vote and carried.
- Timeframe for finalization of Bromsgrove's Local Heritage List (LHL) –Members were of the view that that a final and formalised Local Heritage List would provide an important tool when considering planning applications and would also be a way of promoting heritage assets and thereby attracting visitors to the area. It was agreed for recommendation that a suitable timescale for completing works on the final local heritage list was eighteen months. This recommendation was put to the vote and carried. The Board also agreed that Officers should provide the Board with a quarterly update in respect of progress in compiling the

final LHL. A project plan for delivering the final LHL would be provided at the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny in April 2024.

- Heritage asset designations – It was explained that non-designated heritage assets (NDHA) were buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of their heritage interest but which did not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets listing (as defined in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)). As such the NDHA did not carry a heritage asset status in planning applications and was a lower-level recognition of a heritage asset than a Local Heritage List (LHL). In turn, locally listed buildings would include structures which would not quite meet the criteria for being nationally listed (and given legal protection), but which are still of architectural or historical importance in their local area.
- Heritage assets in unparished areas of the District – It was reiterated by Members that unparished areas within the District also needed to be given due consideration as part of the work on the Local Heritage List (LHL). The Chairman pointed to the example of Rubery ward, which had a rich history of local heritage properties such as Nailers' and Button Cottages. Members reiterated that local Ward Members could provide useful information in respect of the assets within their wards.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) That District Ward Councillors be directly involved in the consultation process for the Local Heritage List (LHL) in their respective ward areas.
- 2) That the final Local Heritage List (LHL) for Bromsgrove, covering the whole district, be completed and published within the next 18 months.

89/23

BROMSGROVE CENTRES ACTION PLAN REVIEW 2024-25 - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Bromsgrove Centres Manager presented the Bromsgrove Centres Action Plan Review 2024/25 for Members' consideration. It was highlighted that the Bromsgrove Centres Strategy and Action Plan for 2023-2026 was approved by Members in January 2023. The Action Plan set out Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and success of the Strategy and Action Plan. These KPIs included budget monitoring, and actions, and responses in respect of certain projects. Outstanding actions from the previous action plan would be carried forward and continued in the 2024/25 municipal year.

Following the presentation of the report there was a detailed discussion regarding aspects of the Bromsgrove Centres Action Plan. This included the following areas:

- Village Centres outside of Bromsgrove Town – Members reiterated that wards such as Alvechurch, Barnt Green and Rubery also had vibrant high streets. Members asked questions with respect of what initiatives had been planned in those Village Centres. Officers confirmed that initiatives such as Shopwatch scheme could be replicated in the outlying Centres. It was further stated that the Action Plan included specific actions with respect of Village Centres including Rubery, Alvechurch, Aston Fields, Catshill, Hagley and Wythall.
- The Board agreed that it be recommended to Cabinet that the action plan be named as Bromsgrove District Centres Action Plan to emphasise that it was intended to target all wards in Bromsgrove. On being put to the vote this recommendation was carried.
- Shopwatch Scheme and reporting of shoplifting to the Police – It was reported that the Shopwatch scheme would be launched in March / April 2024. Collaboration with Redditch Business Improvement District was embedded within the Scheme to ensure a linked approach in deterring shoplifting and anti-social behaviour in retail outlets across Bromsgrove and Redditch. The Scheme was supported by the Police, Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils, and the Community Safety Team. Some Members raised concerns that the Scheme was unlikely to be effective unless the Police increased its level of support and responsiveness that it provided to retailers. Officers responded that the Shopwatch Scheme was being launched on request of the retailers in Bromsgrove Town Centre. The Scheme would provide businesses with access to the Disc Platform, a digital reporting platform which shops and businesses could use to report shoplifting incidents. This would be important as it would allow retailers to log evidence of the incident. It was hoped that this would contribute to better response and prosecution of shoplifting.
- Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in Bromsgrove Town Centre – Some Members expressed disappointment that despite a TRO being in force in the Town Centre, it was ineffective due to lack of bollards blocking the entrance to the Town Centre at Church Street. This meant vehicles were still able to access the pedestrian zone outside of loading hours. The Bromsgrove Centres Manager responded that feedback was being awaited from Worcestershire County Council. It was stated that amendments to TRO would require a consultation on delivery times and other requirements with businesses.

- Shop frontages enforcement – It was explained that the Council had taken steps to encourage businesses to improve the appearance of shop frontages. Through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), shop frontage improvement grants were provided to the Council. As part of this, an additional member of staff had been in place to support the Bromsgrove Centres Manager in writing to businesses advising them of the grants available to help with improving shop frontages. For premises, where a poor quality of appearance was identified and which had not responded to communications from the Council, there were further possible enforcement options, including powers available to issue Community Protection Warnings (CPW), which could be upgraded to Community Protection Notice (CPN), if no action was being taken by the premises. The use of powers under Section 215 (s215) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 were also available, which provided a local planning authority (LPA) with the power, in certain circumstances, to take steps to improve the condition of buildings.
- Implementation of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) public realm grant improvements – Members requested information on specific projects including timeframe within which repairs to flower baskets could be carried out in Rubery Centre. It was responded that approval would be required from Worcestershire County Council for this, however, the Officer undertook to provide information about the timeframe for this project.
- Bromsgrove Youth and Community Hub – It was noted that this initiative was operated by the voluntary sector. It was requested that Officers provide information on how much funding the Council provided to this initiative.
- Vacant Units on Bromsgrove High Street – It was reported that the number of vacant units were reported in November each year. The figure for Bromsgrove High Street was 15 vacant units as of November 2023. However, the more up-to-date figure was available for March 2024 which showed this decreased to 13 vacant units.
- Strategies to attract investment to Bromsgrove Centres – It was reported that Bromsgrove Centres Manager had been in direct contact with landlords and letting agents about opportunities to fill vacant units and attract business investment to Bromsgrove.

RECOMMENDED

- 1) that the action plan be named 'Bromsgrove District Centres Action Plan' to emphasise that it is targeting centres in all wards of the District.

- 2) the Bromsgrove Centres Action Plan 2024/25 attached at Appendix 2 be approved.

90/23

REVIEW OF THE WORK OF NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP 2023-24

The Community Safety Manager provided a detailed presentation updating Members on the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP) in Bromsgrove District. It was highlighted that Bromsgrove Council's representation on the NWCSP consisted of the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety, the Council's Chief Executive as Chair of NWCSP, and the Head of Community and Housing Services who acts as the Responsible Authority representative on the Partnership. The Community Safety Manager provided co-ordination support to NWCSP and manages the Council's Community Safety Service

It was explained that local authorities had a statutory duty to scrutinise the work of its local Community Safety Partnership, under Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006. There was also a direct role for the Council in holding the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to account through the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel (PCP).

The following information were highlighted for Members' consideration in the presentation:

- The NWCSP had a duty to produce a three-year rolling plan outlining how the Partnership intends to address key crime and community safety priorities, as identified through an annual strategic assessment based on research, evidence and intelligence from national, regional and local sources.
- The current priorities of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership Plan 2021-24 were: Reducing Violence and Abuse, Reducing Theft and Acquisitive Crime, Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour, Damage and Nuisance, Protecting Vulnerable Communities. In addition, there were two cross cutting themes that the Partnership focused on across the four priorities, and these were Reducing the Harm caused by Drug and Alcohol Misuse and Reducing Re-Offending.
- The North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership Plan 2021-24 was currently being reviewed. A new community safety action plan for North Worcestershire CSP for 2024 to 2027 was being developed in draft and was to be agreed by NWCSP in April / May 2024.
- As part of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) CCTV Capital Fund, there had been significant funding allocated to develop and upgrade CCTV across the West Mercia force area. NWCSP first received an allocation of £195,000 for improvements to the area's CCTV scheme. This funding was used across the three Local Authorities (Bromsgrove, Redditch, Wyre Forest) to

modernise the CCTV infrastructure. As a result of this upgrade the whole CCTV scheme now had enhanced digital capability, improved image quality and a greater capacity to expand the scheme and/or link up to other digital systems across the region.

- Between 2020-22, the PCC allocated an additional £130,000 of capital funding towards CCTV that was used for continued enhancement of the capability and capacity of the CCTV scheme. The funding provided improvements to technological aspects of the Monitoring Centre. It also enabled recommendation from a Council Task and Finish Group to provide redeployable cameras to be funded and they are being used to respond to emerging areas of concern across the three areas in North Worcestershire. A further £20,000 funding was provided in 2022-23 but no further allocation for CCTV capital funding for 2023-24.
- Following a request by Overview and Scrutiny last year, an update on the use of anti-social behaviour tools and powers in the district was provided. It was reported that a total of 16 Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) were issued in the period 2023-24. The Community Safety Team issued 7 of these. The Police in conjunction with relevant Housing Associations issued 4 warnings and a Housing Association independently issued another 2 CPWs. Environmental Services issued 2 CPWs in relation to waste and unsightly property and Planning issued 1 CPW in relation to a derelict building.
- Only two formal Community Protection Notices followed the earlier issue of the CPWs and these were served by the Police during the same reporting period. This was reported as positive and mirrors the national experience that early use of CPW measures can deter escalation of ASB and prevent the need for more serious enforcement action.
- Details were provided of the various national and local campaigns which were supported by the Community Safety Team throughout 2023/24 to promote key safety messages and the work of NWCSP.
- Details of the NWCSP Core Funding spend for 2023-24, amounting to total of £139,250, were provided, in addition to Safer Bromsgrove – Tasking Fund 2023-24 which totaled £11,014.
- It was noted that the Community Safety Team within the Council had two College of Policing qualified Design Out Crime Officers (DOCO) who could review planning applications, making appropriate crime prevention and security recommendations with the aim of making future building developments less vulnerable to crime and disorder.

Following the presentation, a number of matters were discussed by Members.

Members enquired about the White Ribbon Domestic Abuse Campaign. It was explained that the Annual White Ribbon Domestic Abuse Campaign took place in the form of 16 days of action from 25th

November to 10th December 2023. During the 16 days, the Community Safety Team interacted directly with the public, hosting a Domestic Abuse Awareness stall on Bromsgrove High Street on 5th December and supporting various Domestic Abuse campaigns on social media sharing information and content from local and national support services and agencies. Officers were asked to explore the possibility of the Council signing up to the Women's Night Safety Charter.

Members highlighted that most of the community safety projects and initiatives set out in the report covered areas around Bromsgrove Town Centre and there were not many projects that operated in outlying wards. Questions were raised whether more community projects could be provided in outlying wards. Officers responded that efforts were being made to support local projects in the outermost areas; however, it often proved difficult to find suitable providers to undertake the projects in those areas. An example was provided of the Youth Services Funding which is commissioned by the Community Safety Team on behalf of Worcestershire County Council and through which £87,000 was provided to youth organisations in Bromsgrove. It was reported that in many areas of the district, no providers had submitted applications for this funding. Officers further explained that elected members had a significant role in raising awareness about the lack of specific provision in their communities. For example, in Hagley, a District Councillor raised a concern directly with the Community Safety Team about lack of youth club provision and in response to the publicity given to this issue a youth club provider was subsequently found.

Some Members raised concerns about lack of community safety outreach work in outlying wards in the district. It was responded by Officers that outreach work was undertaken by voluntary and community sector (VCS). Specific comments were made on the Asset Based Community Development in Rubery and a lack of suitably qualified youth outreach worker in the Rubery wards. Members were informed that elected Members were able to submit a request for outreach workers to the Community Safety Team.

Members raised concerns about pockets of anti-social behaviour (ASB) hotspots in Bromsgrove Town Centre, particularly around empty properties. A particular issue was highlighted with an empty property at Blackmore Lane which had been subject to arson. In this context, Members asked what the Council could do to encourage empty buildings back to life. The Officers commented that the Council had a role in identifying buildings causing risk to community safety and where this was identified the Council tried to work with the landowner(s) to bring properties back into use. The Council also had powers to intervene in limited circumstances where the properties were unsafe and adversely affected the community.

It was requested that ward Members be involved and notified by the Community Safety Team of actions taken in ASB hotspots such as the Nimmings Wood National Trust Car Park.

Questions were asked about the NWCSP funded knife arch. It was explained that this was a walkthrough metal detector which was placed at Bromsgrove Train Station to tackle potential knife crime including activity related to county lines. It was further explained that the knife arch use by NWCSP throughout 2023 with various operations and knife surrender campaigns. During the Knife Crime Awareness week in May 2023, members of the public were encouraged to hand-in unwanted knives to prevent them from getting into the wrong hands and being used in crime.

Members enquired about a Community Protection Notice (CPN) case study with respect of long-standing nuisance from off-road motorcycles. It was explained that this was an enforcement action which resulted in the issuance of CPN. Subsequently, substantial works to secure the land by the landowner were carried out, supported by the local authority and partners, which saw a dramatic reduction in the nuisance. However, there remained a few determined offenders who continued to gain access to the land creating nuisance to the residents living opposite. Due to the prior CPN process being largely successful in reducing the nuisance that residents experienced, they felt more confident to provide intelligence about the remaining offenders. As a result, the Council was able to issue seven Community Protection Warnings (CPW) to the registered keepers of vehicles transporting the off-road motorcycles to the site.

Some Members questioned what evidence there was of crime reduction that was a direct result of investment in CCTV through the CCTV Capital Fund. Some Members expressed the view that while CCTV was of sufficient quality to identify perpetrators, which was deemed to be of sufficient quality to identify perpetrators, there were issues with the agencies, including the Police, to use CCTV footage as evidence when prosecuting the perpetrators. Officers explained that there were strict Codes of Practice that public bodies needed to follow when utilising surveillance CCTV footage, including as evidence of crime. Members were invited to visit the CCTV Monitoring Centre located at Redditch Town Hall to observe the capability of the system. It was reiterated by a Member reiterated that not enough was done to ensure that CCTV was used to its full capability to prosecute offenders and felt disappointed that the Police was not invited to the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety was invited to speak. The Portfolio Holder thanked the Community Safety Manager for the detailed presentation on the NWCSP and thanked the Community Safety Team for their work. The Portfolio Holder highlighted the great range of initiatives that the NWCSP was involved in and the difference this was making to community safety in Bromsgrove.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership be noted.

91/23

COST OF LIVING FUNDING PROPOSAL - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Head of Community and Housing Services presented the Cost of Living Funding proposal. In doing so, the following was highlighted:

- In 2020-21 the Council allocated £50,000 to support the Community Hubs initiative. Further allocations were made in 2021-22 and 2022-23 equalling a total budget of £150,000. It was confirmed that this budget was currently sat in earmarked reserves.
- In February 2020 the budget was approved by Cabinet as a revenue bid to support the development of Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Community Hubs in Libraries initiative across the District.
- Following a new direction of travel by WCC, this budget was never provided to the County Council. Therefore, the £150,000 funding remained within reserves.
- Due to the Cost of Living crisis, the report was asking for the funding to be directed to a Cost-of-Living initiative. This proposal followed a multi-agency Cost of Living Group was established with partners such as WCC, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) and other partners. Following discussions at this group, two surveys were carried out, in order to better understand the specific needs of local communities.
- The findings from the surveys highlighted that the cost-of-living crisis was affecting a broad range of residents not just those who were in receipt of state benefits or on lower income. The surveys also established that financial management advice might ease pressure on residents but that this could not be the only solution. It was suggested that more information was needed to provide support to mortgage holders who were struggling with their mortgages, those who had faced food insecurity in the last six months, and those residents who had gone without essentials, such as shower or cleaning items including clothes.
- Section 3.7 of the report included a proposal for allocating £150,000 earmarked reserve for one-off investments of a Citizen's Advice specialist housing adviser at £52,000, voluntary sector money adviser at £32,000, and enhancing the support of the Council's Financial Inclusion at £42,000. This would be for a 14-month period.

Following the presentation of the report, Members asked questions and discussed matters as set out below:

- It was queried why the amount outlined in the report equated to only £126,000 rather than the full amount of £150,000. It was confirmed that the amounts contained within the report were per annum and as the trial period took place over fourteen months the

outstanding amount of £24,000 would cover the final two months of the roles.

- Members commented that there were a number of voluntary and community organisations in the district, for example foodbanks, which were already providing budgetary advice to those residents accessing their provision. This was often done alongside the main work of those voluntary organisations. Officers responded that feedback received from the Bromsgrove's voluntary and community sector (VCS) was that a voluntary sector money adviser would greatly assist these organisations in providing budgetary advice to those residents who access these community services. The voluntary sector money adviser would be able to attend community support settings to provide specialist advice on aspects such as debt management, budgeting, benefits and entitlements, crisis intervention, emotional support and referrals. The voluntary organisations would be able to put forward proposals if they feel they and their users would benefit from this support.
- Members highlighted that there was a need for specialist housing advisers in many wards and queried how one specialist housing adviser would be able to cover all the wards in the district. It was responded that the specialist housing adviser would sit within Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) and the post holder would be expected to engage with voluntary sector organisations to identify residents in need of support. It was highlighted that the post holder would be in addition to the existing voluntary sector provision already available across the district.
- Members were informed that the emphasis of the roles would be on providing outreach services such as at libraries and in community settings. This would include liaison with the Parish Councils. As part of the Cost-of-Living Group, the posts were expected to join up across agencies and with all partners. The proposal in the report would be a trial for 14 months with a view to it informing a lottery bid by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to further sustain the work. If the lottery bid was successful any monies not spent on the project would be put back in to reserves.
- It was hoped the investments outlined in the report would help with timely processing of Household Support Fund (HSF) applications by the Citizen's Advice Bureau and the Council.
- It was clarified that the agreement in respect of the £71,000 for the housing strategy monitoring implementation of the renter reform requirements, agreed at the full Council meeting on 14th February 2024 as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (Tranche 2) report, concerned an increase from 1.4 to 2.5 FTE Private Sector Housing Officers. This was to account for the increased statutory duties that are being placed on Private Sector Housing Teams considering recent damp and mould issues raised nationally.

- Funding proposed as part of this report was for a different type of housing support officer who would work within CAB and provide specialist housing advice to residents.

RECOMMENDED that:

£150,000 contained within earmarked reserves be allocated as a one-off investment to support the estimated costs of the following cost of living initiatives as set in section 3.7:

- (a) Citizen's Advice specialist housing adviser - £52k
- (b) Voluntary sector money adviser - £32k
- (c) Enhancing the support of the Council's Financial Inclusion Team - £42k

92/23

IMPACT OF HEATWAVES SHORT SHARP REVIEW - MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The membership of the short, sharp review was confirmed. It was agreed that the Review Group would elect a chairman at its first meeting. The terms of reference would also be agreed by the task group at its first meeting.

RESOLVED that Councillors S. Ammar, R. Bailes, B. Kumar, M. Marshall, B. McEldowney, and J. Robinson be appointed to the Impact of Heatwaves Short Sharp Review Group.

93/23

FOOD BANK AND COMMUNITY SUPERMARKET PROVISION TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

94/23

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the Finance and Budget Working Group update and in doing so noted that the last meeting of the Group took place on 8th March 2024. It was reported that at the meeting Members were informed of a continued improvement in staff turnover rates, which stood at only 8.8 per cent. The Council was significantly under the national average rate of staff turnover (15.6 per cent). The Chairman reported that the Group was also updated on the outstanding statements of accounts which the Council had yet to submit to the external auditor. The other issues discussed at the meeting included the Dolphin Centre redevelopment and the key decision threshold.

With reference to the Council's refuse fleet refurbishment, it was noted that there had been a reappraisal of costs. The Interim Executive Director explained that the company hired to undertake the refurbishment had struggled to refurbish the vehicles in time and there was now a backlog of vehicles waiting to be refurbished. It was reported that it was more viable in this context to purchase new vehicles rather

than undertake refurbishment works. It was agreed that a briefing note on this subject would be submitted to the next Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting.

RESOLVED that the Finance and Budget Working Group Update be noted.

95/23

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

The Council's Representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. Kumar, updated the Board on the matters discussed by HOSC on 19th February 2024. Members were provided with a written copy of the update provided by Councillor B. Kumar and the following points were highlighted for Members' consideration.

It was reported that over 5.5 million appointments had been delivered in General Practice across Herefordshire and Worcestershire in the last year of data. This was 19 per cent more appointments per year than before the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Representative highlighted that no information was provided on how many of the appointments within last year were face-to-face and how many telephone consultations. It was noted that patient satisfaction rates with GP services in Worcestershire were low compared to neighbouring counties / metropolitan boroughs and were continuing to decline in Worcestershire.

It was highlighted that a particular issue in Worcestershire was people being unable to get GP appointments being referred to 111. It was noted that there was no data available on how many GP patients who called 111 landing in A&E. The Representative highlighted that the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Primary Care Access Recovery Plan had two main ambitions: to tackle the '8am rush' and to enable patients to know on the day they contact their practice how their request will be managed.

The Representative highlighted that another issue discussed at the meeting was that pharmacists were now allowed to issue prescriptions for health matters such as high blood pressure, contraceptive pill or shingles.

During discussion of the report, a question was raised as to why in Worcestershire 40 per cent of people who live in affluent areas find it difficult to access GP appointments as compared to 51 per cent of people in deprived areas. It was noted that the reasons behind these might be due to better digital accessibility in more affluent areas as well as variance between individual GP practices that might affect the outcome.

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

96/23

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Work Programme be noted.

97/23

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The following items were agreed to be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Board work programme:

- Food Waste Recycling – progress update to be provided at a date to be determined in the new municipal year.
- District Heat Network Revisions – pre-scrutiny – This report would be scrutinised before presentation to Cabinet.

It was also requested that the work programme be updated with items as discussed earlier in the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be updated as per the pre-amble above.

The meeting closed at 9.10 p.m.

Chairman

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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