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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 10TH APRIL 2024

AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

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

AGENDA

WELCOME

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

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

3. **To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21st February 2024** (Pages 7 - 28)
4. **To receive any announcements from the Chairman and/or Head of Paid Service**
5. **To receive any announcements from the Leader**
6. **To receive comments, questions or petitions from members of the public**

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

7. **Urgent Decisions**
8. **Political Balance** (Pages 29 - 34)
9. **To receive and consider a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services** (Pages 35 - 50)

Up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item; no longer than 10 minutes for presentation of the report and then up to 3 minutes for each question to be put and answered.

10. **Recommendations from the Cabinet** (Pages 51 - 52)

To consider the recommendations from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13th March 2024.

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

- (i) Cost of Living Funding Proposal (Pages 53 - 58)
- (ii) Quarter 3 2023-24 – Financial and Performance Report (Pages 59 - 104)

12. **To note the minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 21st February and 13th March 2024** (Pages 105 - 122)

13. **Questions on Notice** (Pages 123 - 124)

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

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

A single supplementary question may be asked by each Councillor scheduled to ask a question on notice at this meeting. The supplementary question must be based on the original question or the answer provided to that question.

14. **Motions on Notice**

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

15. **To consider any urgent business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting**

16. **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:-

<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Paragraph(s)</u>
17	3

17. **Quarter 3 2023-24 – Financial and Performance Report** (Pages 125 - 126)

Sue Hanley
Chief Executive

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

2nd April 2024

If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
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Please note that this is a public meeting and will be live streamed for general access via the Council's YouTube channel.

You are able to see and hear the livestream of the meeting from the Committee Pages of the website, alongside the agenda for the meeting.

[Link to the Live Stream of the Meeting](#)

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 the meeting if they have common cold symptoms or any of the following common symptoms of Covid-19 on the day of the meeting; a high temperature, a new and continuous cough or a loss of smell and / or taste.

Notes:

Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when Council might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded and for any such items the live stream will be suspended and that part of the meeting will not be recorded.



INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

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

at www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

21ST FEBRUARY 2024, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Officers: Mrs S. Hanley. Mr P. Carpenter, Mr G. Revans, Mrs C. Felton, Ms. N Cummings and Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill and Ms J. Gresham

88\23 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Bailes, J. Elledge, R. Lambert and D. Stewart.

89\23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors K. May and S. Baxter referred to blue badge parking (at minute number 96/23) and clarified that although they each displayed a blue badge on their car it related to a family member.

Councillor H.D.N. Rone-Clark declared an interest in the second Motion on Notice relating to Out of Hours services (minute number 102/23) as he worked for the local NHS Trust.

Councillor J. Robinson declared that he volunteered at the Artrix, which was referred to in the Medium Term Financial Plan (minute number 96/23).

90\23 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 24TH JANUARY 2024**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 24th January 2024 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 24th January 2024 be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- In minute number 84/23, Planning Enforcement Policy, to include reference to Councillor K. Taylor stating he was prepared to

submit the Planning Enforcement Policy to the Planning Committee for consideration, subject to seeking advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services about whether this was appropriate, and

- In minute number 86/23 - Reference to Councillor D. Nicholls to be changed to Councillor D. Nicholl.

91\23

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Chairman

The Chairman made the following announcements:

“On 9th February 2024 the Government created some new peers. One of those ennobled was Charles Banner. Charles was brought up in Barnt Green and his proud mother, an ex-parish Councillor, still lives in the village. Charles has taken the name Lord Banner of Barnt Green in Worcestershire. This is a great honour for Barnt Green and we would like to offer congratulations to Lord Banner.” The Chairman thanked Councillor C. Hotham for bringing this to the Council’s attention and the Council joined in a round of applause in congratulating Lord Banner.

The Chairman also reminded Members that there was a comedy night due to take place on Friday 1st March at Bromsgrove Golf Centre in aid of the Chairman’s charity – Age UK. She suggested that if people could not attend the night, they might like to donate instead by means of raffle prizes or cash for the charity Age UK.

Head of Paid Service

There were no announcements from the Head of Paid Service.

92\23

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader did not have any announcements for this meeting.

93\23

TO RECEIVE COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no comments, questions or petitions from members of the public.

94\23

URGENT DECISIONS

The Chairman advised that there had been no urgent decisions since the last meeting of the Council.

95\23

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS 2024/25

The Council considered recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel for the level of members' allowances for the financial year 2024-25.

Councillor C. Hotham proposed the recommendations in the report, which were seconded by Councillor K. May.

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Hotham reminded the Council that the Panel was independent and operated at 'arms' length'. He suggested that the purpose of the allowances was to provide some recompense to Councillors who worked hard on behalf of their communities.

RESOLVED that

The recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel for 2024-25 be accepted as follows:

- 1) A Basic Allowance for 2024-25 of £5,518, representing an 16.6% increase
- 2) A range of Special Responsibility Allowances as set out in Appendix 1
- 3) That travel allowances for 2024-25 continue to be paid in accordance with the HMRC mileage allowance
- 4) That subsistence allowances for 2024-25 remain unchanged
- 5) That the Dependent Carer's Allowance remains unchanged
- 6) That travel and subsistence payments made by Parish Councils to councillors (where they are paid) are made in accordance with the provisions set out in the report.

96\23

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 14TH FEBRUARY 2024 (TO FOLLOW)

Recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 14th February 2024 were presented for the Council's consideration.

Governance Systems Review

Councillor C. Hotham introduced and proposed the recommendations which had originated from the Governance Systems Task and the Constitution Review Working Groups, and he thanked both for their work on the proposals. Councillor P. McDonald seconded the

recommendations and referred to them fulfilling the wishes of the Council.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The proposed amendments to the Committee Terms of Reference, at Part 5 of the Constitution, in respect of special provisions as to the Chairmen of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Board, be approved; and
- 2) The proposed amendments to the Council Procedure Rules, at Part 8 of the Council's Constitution, in relation to the appointments of the Chairman of the Council and the Chairmen of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Board, be approved.

Carbon Reduction Strategy – Annual Review

Councillor S. Colella presented the report and proposed the recommendations. In doing so he thanked the officers who had brought forward the report. He reported it was important that the Council continued to pursue net zero and welcomed the support of members, officers and fellow Cabinet members in this regard.

Councillor Colella reported that a focus on positive performance would be supported through the use of a dashboard to help monitor progress in the forthcoming year.

Councillor S. Baxter seconded the recommendations.

During consideration of the item the following were the main points raised:

- In response to a suggestion that the Council research using a tool to measure the carbon footprint of the District and carry out roadshows to promote carbon reduction, Councillor Colella reported that the Council was looking at the potential to use an appropriate tool to give a consistent measure of progress. It was also intended to use the services of Act on Energy as the Council's preferred contractor for engagement with the public.
- A member asked when District heating would be delivered. Councillor Colella responded that officers had been urged to accelerate this. The Council was seeking business partners to support this initiative.
- Whether there was scope to include a target for tree planting as trees contributed to reduction in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Councillor Colella reported that the biodiversity action plan would be coming forward to the Council and trees were an important part of it. The Council would seek to work with

partners such as the County Council to maximise opportunities beyond using Council land.

- A member suggested that the Council should seek to influence the actions taken by others across the District as the Council was responsible for only part of the carbon emissions. Councillor Colella agreed that the Council had a part to play in leading the community in the actions it could take. The action plan included a piece of work to review the Council's procurement arrangements to ensure that the companies it engaged with met the Council's requirements in terms of reaching net zero.
- A member queried how the action plan requirement to ensure that new developments included biodiversity net gain would be agreed and enforced. It was noted that current live developments were addressed by the planning department. The Environment Act 2021 set out clear guidance and responsibilities for local planning authorities to develop biodiversity action plans. The National Planning Policy Framework required Councils to ensure that a developer should 'bring betterment' to a development but if this could not be achieved on site it must be delivered elsewhere.
- A member suggested that reference in the action plan to a Working Group monitoring progress against targets would discourage those members not directly involved from contributing and that it would be more appropriate for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to carry out this work. Councillor Colella commented that he would welcome involvement of all Councillors. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Board could set its own agenda and the Chairman of the Board, Councillor P. McDonald, commented that he would welcome the issue being considered there. The usual practice of inviting all interested members to attend and take part would be continued.
- A member commented that carbon reduction and biodiversity were interlinked and both should be cross cutting issues for the Council.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The findings of this annual review of the Carbon Reduction Strategy be endorsed
- 2) The proposal to align Carbon Reduction Strategy measures to the Climate Action Scorecard into an accessible performance dashboard be accepted.

Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

Councillor S. R Peters declared an Other Disclosable interest in this item as he was involved in the management of Wythall Village Hall which benefitted from discretionary relief.

Councillor C. Hotham, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling, introduced the report and proposed the recommendation.

The Discretionary Rate Relief Policy was periodically reviewed. Recent changes to legislation had removed a 6-month limit on backdating claims for relief applications and gave flexibility to Councils. The Council's policy had been amended in the light of this change. It was proposed that backdating would only be considered for the current year where the application was made or decided within 6 months of the year end and in other specific circumstances.

Councillor K. May seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED that the amended Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief policy be approved and adopted from 1st April 2024.

Pay Policy 2024/25

Councillor C. Hotham, Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling, presented the report and proposed the recommendation.

The Council was required to consider and approve the policy on an annual basis. Councillor Hotham set out the main elements of the policy. The pay of the lowest paid employee was £22,366 per annum and the Chief Executive's pay was 6.3 times the pay of the lowest paid employee. The Council was responsible for setting the policy relating to recruitment, pay, employment conditions and severance. The Appointments Committee was responsible for recommending to Council the Head of Paid Service, the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer appointments.

Councillor K. May seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED that the Pay Policy 2024/25 be approved.

Medium Term Financial Plan (including Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision and Investment Strategy) (Tranche 2)

Councillor C Hotham, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling, introduced the report and proposed the recommendations. In doing so he thanked the Finance Team for their work in preparing the budget and the Budget and Finance Working Group for its input.

Budget setting was a two-tranche process and when the Council agreed the first tranche in January 2024, a deficit of £172k had been predicted for 2024/25. However, since then the Government settlement had been confirmed, the Council had been permitted to increase Council Tax by an additional 1%, planning fees could also be increased and the Council's share of business rates was due to increase. Adjustments to projections for the impact of the pay award also increased the amount available in the budget. However, £649k of budget pressures had been identified, including:

- £33k for food standards staff
- £66k for changes to parking enforcement
- £85k for resourcing changes to planning and other enforcement work
- Revenue implications from the Play Audit of £500k by 2026/27
- £71k for the housing strategy monitoring implementation of the renter reform requirements
- £40k additional democratic services resource to support the Council's new governance arrangements
- £372K North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration restructure
- £30k Business rates adjustment
- £33k for Members' allowances
- £10k reinstatement of grant to the Citizens' Advice Bureau
- £54k as a cautious approach to the pay award
- £50k one off amount for the planned review of car parking
- £150k capital regeneration seed fund
- £1k implications arising from the £25k per year identified for landlord obligations at the Artrix, which would increase to £5k during the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Further grant funding from the Government announced in January 2024 had enabled the proposal to be made for a balanced budget without the use of reserves. The proposals also included provision for a ward fund for members to be piloted, investment in bus shelters, and free blue badge parking.

Councillor K. May seconded the recommendations. In doing so she referred to three strands in the budget: investment in the Council's infrastructure, the ward budgets and supporting growth. An earmarked reserve would seed fund approved district wide capital regeneration priorities. Changes to the parking charges were aimed to attract and retain increased footfall in the town centre. The ward budget proposal would allow individual ward members to invest in the areas they were closest to. There were pressures, such as increased investment in the Private Sector Housing team and Worcestershire Regulatory Services, which were in response to increased Government expectations. In her view risks to the Medium Term Financial Plan remained including the outstanding accounts and maintaining control over employee costs.

During consideration of the report the main views expressed were:

- It was difficult to justify an increase to Council tax during hard times, but there had been welcome cross party working to arrive at the proposals.
- The employment of additional staff to deliver services would benefit residents.
- The reinstatement of blue badge holders having free parking was welcomed by a number of members.
- Free parking after 6pm and for up to 30 minutes was welcomed although other increases in parking charges were regretted. It

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was noted that the Council had last reviewed its car parking charges in 2011 and in conducting the current review it had engaged with stakeholders including businesses and this had resulted in the proposed changes to the structure of charges.

- Investment in recreation grounds was welcome through funding the outcomes from the play audit. It was suggested that the Council should pursue installing water fountains in its parks to counteract the tendency to purchase soft fizzy drinks.
- Local members should support improvements to recreation grounds in their wards to encourage greater use of them.
- The Ward fund addressed a perception that investment did not spread beyond the urban areas; it would enable local members to pump prime community initiatives. Whilst the view was expressed that it might have been structured in a different way, it had the potential to support improvements in localities.
- The proposed additional resource for private sector housing enforcement was welcome to support addressing rogue landlords.
- The resources for bus shelters and accompanying plan was welcomed.
- The commitment for additional funding to support the Artrix building was also welcomed. Councillor R.J. Hunter expressed the view that further resources should be put in place to support the volunteers who were enabling the Artrix to continue. In response to a request from the Chairman, Councillor Hunter reported that he believed the Liberal Democrat Group had a mandate from the Artrix Holding Trust to seek additional resources from the Council.
- In response to a question, Councillor S. Baxter confirmed that the deadline to use the Levelling Up Fund contributions for the Market Hall and Windsor Street projects was September 2025 and the Council was on track to meet this for both. The Leader, Councillor K. May, added that the Council's 10% contribution to the Market Hall was due to be committed in the final weeks of the project. Currently it did not appear that further Levelling Up Funding would be available, although UK Shared Prosperity Funds should be available for bids in due course.
- In response to a question Councillor C Hotham clarified that the capital receipt of £1.8m referred to the sale of properties at Burcot Lane.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the Medium Term Financial Plan (including Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision and Investment Strategy) (Tranche 2) was subject to a named vote.

Members voting FOR the recommendations in the Medium Term Financial Plan (including Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision and Investment Strategy) (Tranche 2):

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Councillors Cllrs S. Ammar, A. Bailes, S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, A. M. Dale, D.J.A. Forsythe, E.M.S. Gray, D. Hopkins, C. A. Hotham, H.J. Jones, B. Kumar, M. Marshall, K.J. May, P.M. McDonald, B.M. McEldowney, S.T. Nock, S.R. Peters, H.D.N. Rone-Clarke, J.D. Stanley, K. Taylor, S.A. Webb and P.J. Whittaker (22)

Members voting AGAINST the recommendations in the Medium Term Financial Plan (including Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision and Investment Strategy) (Tranche 2)

No Councillors (0)

Members voting to ABSTAIN in the vote the recommendations in the Medium Term Financial Plan (including Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision and Investment Strategy) (Tranche 2)

Councillors S.M. Evans, R.J. Hunter, D.J. Nicholl, J.W. Robinson and S.J. Robinson (5).

The vote on the Medium Term Financial Plan (including Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision and Investment Strategy) (Tranche 2) was declared carried.

RESOLVED the approval of

- 1) The Tranche 2 growth proposals.
- 2) The additional funding to the Council as per the final Local Government Settlement on 5th February 2024, including the estimated levels for 2024/5 and 2025/6.
- 3) The Tranche 2 savings proposals, including an increase of Council Tax of 2.99%.
- 4) The updated five year Capital Programme 2024/5 to 2028/29 along with its ongoing revenue costs.
- 5) The levels of Earmarked Reserve being carried forward into future years.
- 6) That a new Earmarked Reserve for Ward Budgets be set up and £234k allocated to it.
- 7) That a new Regeneration Reserve to seed fund projects linked to district wide capital regeneration priorities be set up for £150,000.
- 8) The level of General Fund balances following additions from the 2024/5 Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 9) Members take account of any feedback from the Tranche 2 consultation process undertaken.

Termination of shared service arrangement: North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration

Councillor S.J. Baxter, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration, proposed the recommendation relating to the termination of the shared service arrangement for North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration.

In 2023 the Host authority for the shared service, Wyre Forest District Council, had indicated it wished to withdraw from the shared arrangement. The Council was proposing to set up a new shared Service between Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils to support economic development which was a priority for the District and sought confirmation of the additional budget for this. A shared service enabled both Councils to employ those with the best skill set to support continued focus on developing the local economy.

Councillor K.J. May seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED that an additional budget of £72,836 be approved for the new structure.

Parking Enforcement Service Level Agreement

Councillor S.J. Baxter introduced the report and proposed the recommendations. Wychavon District Council had delivered the Council's parking services and over the years this had evolved in a piecemeal way. A full review had last been undertaken in 2013 and it was now timely to carry out a full review of the District's requirements.

Councillor Baxter thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Board for its review of the Service Level Agreement. Although the charges from Wychavon District Council had recently been increased, the Council paid for services received, so for example costs had reduced when it had been difficult to recruit to vacancies in the service.

The proposed strategic review of parking services would include on and off street parking enforcement, and would support preparation of a business case for the future of the service. This was likely to present options such as extending the SLA, commissioning a provider through tendering for a service or delivering the service in-house. It was likely that the review would take 18 months to complete.

Councillor K.J. May seconded the recommendations and in doing so thanked the officers involved for their work so far.

During discussion of the recommendations the following were the main issues discussed:

- the review should examine public transport as some areas of the District did not have an alternative to using the car.
- how the issue of parking outside schools would be handled under the Service Level Agreement; Councillor Baxter responded that local members' knowledge about issues in their ward would be sought as part of the review.
- It was agreed that the review should go to Overview and Scrutiny Board for consideration prior to a decision being made.

RESOLVED that

- 1) An increased budget of £60K for Car Parking be included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan from April 2024.
- 2) A one-off budget of £50K be included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan to fund the proposed work.

97\23

ALTERNATIVE BUDGETS (TO FOLLOW)

The Chairman advised that no alternative budgets had been submitted for consideration.

98\23

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 21ST FEBRUARY 2024 (TO FOLLOW)

Council Tax Resolutions 2024/25

Councillor C. Hotham, Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling, introduced the Council Tax resolutions which had been considered at the Cabinet meeting held immediately prior to the Council meeting and proposed the recommendations.

Council was informed that the report sought the formal approval of the Council Tax resolutions for 2024/2025. The report took into account the spending requirements of Bromsgrove District Council, Worcestershire County Council (WCC), the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia, Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority and the Parish Councils.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor K.J. May.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the Council Tax Resolutions 2024/2025 were subject to a named vote.

Members voting FOR the recommendations in the Council Tax Resolutions 2024/2025:

Councillors Cllrs S. Ammar, A. Bailes, S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, A. M. Dale, S. M. Evans, D.J.A. Forsythe, E.M.S. Gray, D. Hopkins, C. A. Hotham, R.J. Hunter, H.J. Jones, B. Kumar, M. Marshall, K.J. May, P.M. McDonald, B.M. McEldowney, D.J. Nicholl, S.T. Nock, S.R. Peters,

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H.D.N. Rone-Clarke, J.W. Robinson, S.J. Robinson J.D. Stanley, K. Taylor, S.A. Webb and P.J. Whittaker (27)

Members voting AGAINST the recommendations in the Council Tax Resolutions 2024/2025:

No Councillors (0)

Members voting to ABSTAIN in the vote for the recommendations in the Council Tax 2024/2025:

No Councillors (0)

The vote for the Council Tax Resolutions 2024/2025 was declared carried.

RESOLVED that Council approve:

- 1) The calculation for the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2024/25 (excluding Parish precepts) as **£9,499,346.19**.
- 2) That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2024/25 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - (a) £46,946,051.69 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act (taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils) (*i.e., Gross expenditure*)
 - (b) £37,446,705.50 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act. (*i.e., Gross income*)
 - (c) £10,723,413.69 being the amount by which the aggregate of 1.2.2(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 1.2.2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
 - (d) £282.21 being the amount at 1.2.2 (c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1.1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
 - (e) £1,224,067.50 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in

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Section 34 (1) of the Act (as per the attached **Schedule 3**).

- (f) £250.00 being the amount at 1.2.2 (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 1.2.2 (e) above by Item T (1.1 (a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.
- (g) The amounts shown in Column 3 of **Schedule 1**. These are the basic amounts of the council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of the Council's area shown in Column 1 of the schedule respectively to which special items relate, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act. (District and Parish combined at Band D).
- (h) The amounts shown in Column 5 of **Schedule 1** being the amount given by multiplying the amounts at 2.2.2(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;
- 3) It be noted that for the year 2024/25, Worcestershire County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia and Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwelling in the Council's area as indicated below:

	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Worcestershire County Council	1,025.95	1,196.94	1,367.93	1,538.92	1,880.90	2,222.88	2,564.87	3,077.84
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	185.00	215.83	246.67	277.50	339.17	400.83	462.50	555.00
Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority	64.81	75.62	86.42	97.22	118.82	140.43	162.03	194.44

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- 4) That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 1.2.2(h) and 1.2.3 above, that Bromsgrove District Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 hereby sets the amounts shown in **Schedule 2** as the amounts of Council Tax for 2024/25. for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.
- 5) That the Interim Director of Finance be authorised to make payments under Section 90(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the Collection Fund by ten equal instalments between April 2023 to March 2024 as detailed below:

	Precept	Deficit on Collection Fund	Total to pay
	£	£	£
Worcestershire County Council	58,475,420	(277,545.53)	58,197,874.47
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	10,544,361.75	(50,083.00)	10,494,278.75
Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority	3,694,136.35	(17,875.34)	3,676,261.01

- 6) That the Interim Director of Finance be authorised to make transfers under Section 97 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the Collection Fund to the General Fund the sum of £10,671,802.35 being the Council's own demand on the Collection Fund (£9,499,346.19) and Parish Precepts (£1,224,067.50) and the distribution of the Deficit on the Collection Fund (-£51,611.34).
- 7) That the Interim Director of Finance be authorised to make payments from the General Fund to Parish Councils the sums listed on **Schedule 3** by two equal instalments on 1 April 2024 and 1 October 2024 in respect of the precept levied on the Council.
- 8) That the above resolutions to be signed by the Chief Executive for use in legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the recovery of unpaid Council Taxes.
- 9) Notices of the making of the said Council Taxes signed by the Chief Executive are given by advertisement in the local press under Section 38(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

99\23

TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 14TH FEBRUARY 2024 (TO FOLLOW)

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 14th February 2024 were noted.

The meeting adjourned at 8.43pm and reconvened at 8.57 pm.

100\23

KEY DECISIONS - FINANCIAL THRESHOLD (REPORT TO FOLLOW)

The Council considered a report which set out proposals to increase the threshold at which 'key decisions' would be required to be made on procurement matters. Changes in procurement legislation which were due to come into force on 1st April 2024 had prompted a review of the threshold and having considered an initial report about this in July, the Council asked for further details before a decision could be taken.

Councillor C. Hotham proposed the recommendation. He explained that if the threshold was not increased there would be a need for the Council to employ additional resources to support the procurement processes.

Councillor S. Nock seconded the recommendations.

In response to a query about where the report about procurement spend under £50,000 would be considered, Councillor Hotham confirmed that he anticipated a quarterly report to Overview and Scrutiny.

RESOLVED that

The Key Decision threshold is raised to £200K.

101\23

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chairman advised that one Question on Notice had been received for this meeting.

Question submitted by Councillor D. Hopkins

"Would the Leader of the Council be able to provide an update with regards to the progress made in lobbying Worcestershire County Council and Birmingham City Council on the full restoration of the 144 Bus Service?"

Councillor K. May responded that "This was raised at Council on 25th October 2023. As a result, the Council called upon myself to continue to lobby the County Council to ensure that the full route previously covered by the 144 bus is restored, because whilst the 20 bus route had been in place for some time it was currently failing to meet the needs of residents.

I did therefore write to County Councillor Mike Rouse, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at Worcestershire County Council, who thanked the Council for raising this. In his response he said that due to the success of the new 20 route it allowed the County to support the extension to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which is what passengers who use the service asked them for the most. Users also wanted improved frequencies and Sunday running, and this has been delivered. Customer satisfaction from those who use it is high and they value the service to the hospital. If the buses had to travel into Birmingham City Centre and back again, the frequency would have to be reduced to allow for this additional time. The County are regularly reviewing services and responding to the market demands as it changes. It may well be that travel behaviours change in the future, and the County can reconsider this option.

So, whilst our request to reinstate the 144 bus route cannot be supported by the County at this moment in time, they wish to work in partnership with us in the future.”

In addition, the Leader reported that she had spoken to local members where the number 20 bus service ran, and they reported that residents fed back that they preferred the bus as it was reliable and clean.

Birmingham City Council did not contribute financially to the service and the Council would continue to liaise with the County Council which was responsible for funding the current route.

Councillor Hopkins asked a supplementary question, “for those who still feel the 20 bus service didn’t represent their needs or requirements, how do they raise it with the County Council?”

The Leader responded that Councillors and residents could contact the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at the County Council, Councillor M. Rouse. Councillor May also offered to arrange to meet with Councillor Rouse and interested District Councillors to discuss the situation, potentially meeting in Bromsgrove.

102\23

MOTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chairman reported that three Motions on Notice had been submitted for the meeting.

Options for a Relief Road

The Council considered the following Motion on Notice submitted by Councillor R. Hunter:

“Council notes the loss of the proposed route for the western relief road as a result of planning permission being given for housing development. Council believes a detailed study into alternative options for a relief road is now urgently required in order that chronic traffic congestion can be

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addressed. Council further believes that Bromsgrove District Council should commission its own independent study, as part of the development of the next local plan and calls on officers to produce a business case for the Cabinet to consider within the next six months.”

In proposing the Motion Councillor Hunter referred to the increasing concern from residents in Bromsgrove about the level of congestion in the town. Although some of this had been caused by temporary work on the roads, he considered it demonstrated a lack of resilience in the road infrastructure in the town. He did not consider that anticipated modal shift to public transport and cycling would be achieved, for example as there was a lack of availability of public transport in Bromsgrove. He suggested that new road infrastructure could be constructed in a more sustainable way than it might in the past and it was now an appropriate time to consider the options available to relieve traffic in the town centre to inform future debate.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor J. Robinson.

During debate on the Motion the view was expressed that the Strategic Transport Assessment would address this issue. A separate report was not necessary as it would duplicate work being undertaken in the Assessment at taxpayers' expense.

Councillor P.M. McDonald proposed, and Councillor H.D.N. Rone-Clark seconded an amendment that consideration of the Motion be deferred until the outcome of the Strategic Transport Assessment was known.

During consideration of the amendment, the view was expressed that the Assessment would not address the issues that the proposed study would consider, such as the viability of routes for a relief road. The study was therefore needed to inform debate about the potential options available and deferral was not appropriate.

Another member referred to the Strategic Planning Steering Group meeting in November where members had been briefed about the Strategic Transport Assessment. There would be the opportunity to attend future meetings about the modelling being used and to influence the content. In their view this meant that a separate study was not needed.

A member expressed the view that the nature of transport would be changing over time and the most effective way to address future needs was to participate in the Strategic Transport Assessment rather than keep the possibility of a separate study by deferring discussion of it.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

During further consideration of the Motion, the view was expressed that a stand-alone report justifying a solution without looking at the bigger picture was unlikely to be successful. Wider options should be part of

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the approach to take into account sustainable transport and public transport so that this was in place for consideration of future development sites. A member suggested that current works on the road infrastructure would not improve the traffic situation in Bromsgrove. Residents on the west side of the town would still have to go through the centre to cross the town and this meant consideration should be given to a study which would give options for addressing this issue.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 18.3 Councillor J. Robinson asked for a recorded name vote and votes were recorded as follows:

Members voting FOR the proposal to commission a study about a relief road:

Councillors S.M. Evans, R.J. Hunter, D.J. Nicholl, J.W. Robinson and S.A. Robinson (5)

Members voting AGAINST the proposal:

Councillors S. Ammar, A. Bailes, S. Baxter, S.R. Colella, A.M. Dale, D.J.A Forsythe, E.M.S. Gray, D. Hopkins, C. Hotham, B. Kumar, M. Marshall, K.J. May, P.M. McDonald, S.T. Nock, S.R. Peters, H.D.N. Rone-Clarke, J.D. Stanley, K. Taylor, S.A. Webb and P.J. Whittaker (20)

Members ABSTAINING from the vote:

Cllr B.M. McEldowney (1)

(Councillor H. Jones left the room during consideration of the Motion and prior to the vote so was not included in the recorded vote).

On being put to the vote the Motion was declared lost.

Out of Hours Service

The Council considered the following Motion on Notice submitted by Councillor Stewart, which was proposed by Councillor Rone-Clark in his absence:

“Out of hour GP services play an important role in reducing the pressure on Accident and Emergency Departments. Currently arrangements in Worcestershire mean that patients, a significant number being children or elderly, have to travel to Redditch, Worcester or Kidderminster for appointments. Services are provided locally in smaller towns, namely Malvern and Evesham. There is not an out of hours Primary Care Centre in Bromsgrove District. Facilities at The Princess of Wales Hospital could be used to provide this service locally for Bromsgrove residents.

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We therefore call upon the Leader of the Council to write to Hereford and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board to ask them to address this inequality of provision of care.”

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Rone-Clark referred to discussions at a recent Overview and Scrutiny meeting about the lack of accessible primary care for Bromsgrove residents. He referred to primary care playing an important part in preventing the escalation of care and treatment needs.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor B. Kumar. He referred to the increase in the population in Bromsgrove, in particular an ageing population and the potential for long term illness which could be treated effectively in primary care. The current difficulty patients experienced in accessing GP services meant they used the Out of Hours service by telephone and online (NHS 111) and were often referred from that to the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch. This added travel issues and cost to the patient’s experience. There were often delays in seeing health professionals at the hospital which compounded frailty issues. There had been an out of hours service at the Princess of Wales Hospital in Bromsgrove until the Covid pandemic, so the infrastructure was available. Councillor Kumar referred to a recent Health Overview and Scrutiny meeting at the County Council where the Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board had reported that there would be new funding available for out of hours services. He suggested that the Council should put together a case for the reintroduction of out of hours services in Bromsgrove.

The Leader referred to excellent access to GP services in parts of the district but it was not consistent. She supported the Motion and reported that the procurement of the Out of Hours Service was due to begin this year with the new contract starting in July 2025.

RESOLVED that

Out of hour GP services play an important role in reducing the pressure on Accident and Emergency Departments. Currently arrangements in Worcestershire mean that patients, a significant number being children or elderly, have to travel to Redditch, Worcester or Kidderminster for appointments. Services are provided locally in smaller towns, namely Malvern and Evesham. There is not an out of hours Primary Care Centre in Bromsgrove District. Facilities at The Princess of Wales Hospital could be used to provide this service locally for Bromsgrove residents.

We therefore call upon the Leader of the Council to write to Hereford and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board to ask them to address this inequality of provision of care.

Awareness of Private Sector Housing Support

The Council considered the following Motion on Notice submitted by Councillor J. Robinson:

“Bromsgrove District Council’s private sector housing team plays a vital role in protecting tenants from poor quality housing. However too many residents in need of help are unaware that the service exists.

Council resolves to run a full awareness campaign about the help available to those in substandard housing as soon as possible so nobody in our community is left to suffer in poor quality housing.”

Councillor Robinson proposed the Motion and referred to the excellent support that officers in the Private Sector Housing Team provided for residents and landlords of private sector housing and to Councillors who were dealing with such issues in their wards. He suggested that although there were many good landlords, some did not ensure their properties were at an appropriate standard. Many landlords and members of the public were not aware of the support available and a dedicated publicity campaign was necessary to encourage residents and landlords to approach the Team for help at an early stage.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor S. Robinson.

Councillor M. Marshall proposed an amendment to the final sentence of the Motion, replacing the words ‘to run a full awareness campaign’ with ‘to build on the current awareness campaign’. Help was already available and the Council had committed to extending work on its housing strategy as demonstrated by including additional resource in the budget for 2024/2025.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor S. Webb, who referred to an awareness campaign already being undertaken and details of the services available would be included in the information circulated with Council Tax bills. She suggested that the Renters Reform Bill currently going through Parliament and expected to achieve Royal Assent in the Autumn would place additional enforcement duties on the Council, and it would be a suitable time to undertake an additional campaign of awareness for the Private Sector Housing Team and the services it would provide to both renters and landlords.

The amendment to the Motion was accepted by the proposer and became the substantive Motion.

During consideration of the Motion members expressed their appreciation for the work carried out by the Private Sector Housing Team and noted that officers were working on a presentation for Councillors on housing services which would include details about the role of Bromsgrove District Housing Trust. The view was expressed that once the Renters Reform Bill became law then the Council could tailor

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the publicity campaign appropriately. It was suggested however that if there was a delay in the Renters Reform Bill becoming law a full campaign should still go ahead.

RESOLVED that

Bromsgrove District Council's private sector housing team plays a vital role in protecting tenants from poor quality housing. However too many residents in need of help are unaware that the service exists.

Council resolves to build on the current awareness campaign about the help available to those in substandard housing as soon as possible so nobody in our community is left to suffer in poor quality housing.

The meeting closed at 9.06 p.m.

Chairman

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Council
2024

10th April

Political Balance Report

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Charlie Hotham	
Portfolio Holder Consulted			
Relevant Head of Service		Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	
Report Author Claire Felton	Job Title: Head of Legal, Democratic ad Property Services Contact c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: (01527) 64252	email:	
Wards Affected		All	
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		N/A	
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		An Effective and Sustainable Council	
Non-Key Decision			
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.			

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is asked to RESOLVE that:-

- 1) **for the remainder of the 2023/24 Municipal Year, the Committees set out in the table in Appendix 1 of the report be appointed and that the representation of the different political groups on the Council on those Committees be as set out in that table until the next Annual Meeting of the Council, or until the next review of political representation under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, whichever is the earlier.**
- 2) **Members be appointed to the Committees and as substitute members in accordance with nominations to be made by Group Leaders.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The political balance is reported for Members' consideration at Annual Council meetings.
- 2.2 Further reports in respect of the political balance may be presented for Council's consideration during the municipal year should there be a change to the political composition of the authority.

2.3 This report has been prepared following changes to the political balance of the Council in February 2024.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

3.1 The rules of political proportionality mean that the political balance of the Council needs to be reflected in the political composition of individual Boards and Committees. In addition, the total number of seats allocated to each group must reflect the political balance of the Council.

3.2 The proposed allocation of seats on each Board/Committee is done on a strict mathematical basis.

3.3 The political balance calculations have been reviewed following a change to the membership of one of the political groups at the Council.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no specific financial implications.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Sections 15 -17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 place a duty on Councils to allocate the seats on certain committees in proportion to the size of the political groups on the Council.

5.2 The definition of a Political Group for these purposes is that it has a minimum of 2 members. The current composition of the Council is 11 Conservative group members, 8 Labour Group members, 6 2023 Independent group members, 5 Liberal Democrat group members and 1 non-aligned member.

5.3 A review of the political balance must take place as soon as is reasonably possible after a change occurs to the Council's political balance.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

6.1 This review of the Council's political balance is required following changes to political group membership at the authority. The review will help to ensure that the Council remains effective and sustainable.

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 Given there is a legal duty on Councils to allocate the seats on certain Committees in proportion to the size of the political groups on the Council, Members do need to agree the political balance.

7.2 There is a risk that if a political balance is not agreed for the Council this could cause reputational damage.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Political Balance

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Lead Portfolio Holder	Councillor Charlie Hotham, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling	
Lead Director / Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	March 2024
Financial Services	Pete Carpenter, Interim Section 151 Officer	March 2024
Legal Services	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	March 2024

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APPENDIX 1 POLITICAL BALANCE CALCULATION February 2024

The figures in *italics* are the mathematical calculations.

Committee	Cons 11 <i>35.48% of total</i>	Lab 8 <i>25.81% of total</i>	Lib Dems Dem 5 <i>16.13% of total</i>	2023 Independents 6 <i>19.35% of total</i>	Non-aligned 1 <i>3.23% of total</i>	Total
Overview and Scrutiny Board	4 <i>3.90</i>	3 <i>2.84</i>	2 <i>1.77</i>	2 <i>2.13</i>	0 <i>0.36</i>	11 11 members on Board <i>11</i>
Licensing Committee	4 <i>3.90</i>	3 <i>2.84</i>	2 <i>1.77</i> * Take 1	2 <i>2.13</i> * Take 3	0 <i>0.36</i>	11 11 members on Cttee <i>11</i>
Planning Committee	4 <i>3.90</i>	3 <i>2.84</i>	2 <i>1.77</i>	2 <i>2.13</i>	0 <i>0.36</i>	11 11 members on Cttee <i>11</i>
Audit, Stds & Gov'ce Committee	4 <i>3.90</i> * Take 3	3 <i>2.84</i>	2 <i>1.77</i>	2 <i>2.13</i>	0 <i>0.36</i> * Take 1	11 11 members on Cttee <i>11</i>
Electoral Matters Cttee	2 <i>2.48</i>	2 <i>1.81</i>	1 <i>1.13</i>	1 <i>1.35</i>	0 <i>0.23</i> * Take 1	6 7 members on Cttee <i>7</i>
Appeals	2 <i>1.77</i>	1 <i>1.29</i>	1 <i>0.81</i>	1 <i>0.97</i>	0 <i>0.16</i>	5 5 members on Cttee <i>5</i>
Appointment s	2 <i>1.77</i>	1 <i>1.29</i>	1 <i>0.81</i>	1 <i>0.97</i>	0 <i>0.16</i>	5 5 members on Cttee <i>5</i>
Statutory Officers	2 <i>1.77</i>	1 <i>1.29</i>	1 <i>0.81</i>	1 <i>0.97</i>	0 <i>0.16</i>	5 5 members on Cttee <i>5</i>
Entitled to TOTAL seats allocated initially	23 24	17 17	11 12	13 12	2 0	66 65
<i>Exact Mathematical Entitlement</i>	<i>23.42</i>	<i>17.03</i>	<i>10.65</i>	<i>12.77</i>	<i>2.13</i>	66
Final seat allocation	23	17	11	13	2	66

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Portfolio Holder Report

Portfolio Holder Report – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services

Introduction and Overview:

At Bromsgrove District Council Portfolio Holders provide an annual update to Council on services within their portfolio remit. These services are delivered in accordance with the Council’s Strategic Purposes, as detailed in the Bromsgrove District Council Plan 2019 – 2023.

This report provides an outline of services and activities within the remit of this particular Portfolio Holder. Information is included in relation to the Council’s Strategic Purposes, relevant key activities, partnership working, projects and programmes and news stories.

A version of this report, focusing on each Portfolio Holder’s remit in turn, will be considered at each meeting of Council (except for the Annual Council meeting).

Whilst services will be contributing information into this report it is worth noting that not all sections of the report will be relevant to all service areas. In this circumstance, some sections may not be completed by all services.

The report will be structured as follows:

- 1) Update on Strategic Purposes
- 2) Partnership working
- 3) Key activities and priorities
- 4) Good news stories and awards (if applicable)
- 5) Other

The Council has the following Strategic Purposes and Priorities:

Strategic Purposes	Council Priorities
Run and grow a successful business	Economic development and regeneration
Work and financial independence	Skills for the future
Living independent, active and healthy lives	Improving health & well being
Affordable and sustainable homes	A balanced housing market
Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Reducing crime & disorder
The Green Thread runs through the Council Plan	Internal priorities
	Financial stability
	High quality services
	Sustainability



Portfolio Holder Report

1. Update on Strategic Purposes

Relevant Strategic Purpose – Supports All Strategic Purposes and the Council Priority of Sustainability

Democratic Services

The Democratic Services are an enabling service with an integral role in Council governance. The work of the Democratic Services team, facilitating Council and Committee meetings and managing the decision-making process, enables decisions to be taken that support all of the authority's strategic purposes and priorities. The work of Democratic Services is also crucial to the Council's internal priority of service sustainability because, if the decision-making process was to be disrupted, this could also delay delivery of important Council plans and activities.

Electoral Services

The Electoral Services team is both an enabling and customer facing service. The team maintains the Electoral Roll on behalf of the Electoral Registration Officer and carries out elections at all levels from Parishes to Westminster Parliamentary (General) on behalf of the Returning Officer. Electoral Services also deals with a number of different electoral reviews including community governance, polling and boundary reviews.

Finance and Customer Services

Finance and Customer Services is made up of a number of teams:

Corporate finance set the Council's financial agenda. They are responsible for the Council's financial regulations/controls and compliance to them, Supporting Members, the Chief Executive and CMT, setting and delivering the budget, closing the Council's Accounts, in year monitoring of the Council's financial position to stakeholders.

Management Accountancy is the primary source of financial support to Budget managers and Heads of Service. They are responsible for the delivery of the operational budget, the monthly/quarterly monitoring, and the closure of accounts in liaison with budget managers and other Council staff.

Exchequer Services delivers the Council's Payment and Income Services along with running the GPC Card (procurement Card) system and Insurance.

Payroll Services is a small team which work closely with HR and finance and run the monthly payrolls for Bromsgrove, Redditch, Rubicon and Wyre Forest Councils.

Revenue Services is responsible for the annual collection of £60m of non-domestic rates; £116m council tax, £27m in sundry income and is



Portfolio Holder Report

responsible for collection of £2.4m in overpaid housing benefit across both Redditch and Bromsgrove.

The principal functions of the Benefits Service are to maximise benefit awareness and take-up and to assess benefit claims promptly and accurately.

Customer Services provided a comprehensive service to the council, mainly face-to-face enquiries on both reception and cashiers.

Human Resources

The Human Resources and Organisational Development primary function is to provide a HR advisory service, organisational development, training and health and safety, providing advice and support to the organisation in respect of; recruitment, employment issues, pay and grading, training, workforce planning and health and safety advice. HR focuses on the people within the business and on every aspect of the employment relationship.

Information Communication and Technology

The different areas of ICT include:

- helpdesk support, technical project implementation, infrastructure and business
- application support, small systems development and automation, service requests,
- website design and support, graphical information systems support (including street naming and numbering) and information management.

Legal Services

The Legal Services team is another enabling service with a similarly important role in Council governance. The work of the Legal Services team is crucial to ensuring that there is compliance with legal requirements and regulations, including in respect of the standards regime, through the provision of Council services. The team co-ordinates the Council's procurement arrangements in line with this approach. Legal Services Officers also have a crucial role advising Members and Officers on legal matters, which is important for a robust decision-making process at the Council.

Property Services

The Property Services team are an Enabling Service and are involved in helping to manage the Council's physical assets on behalf of the authority. This includes a role managing the condition of the Parkside offices and other buildings owned by the Council.

Key activities since last report: Page 37



Portfolio Holder Report

Democratic and Legal Services

Since the last update in respect of the work of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling in October 2022, a review has been completed by the Audit Task Group of the reasons why the Council was issued with a Section 24 Notice by the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton. The Audit Task Group comprised a cross party group of Councillors who gathered evidence from a range of sources and made recommendations to the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee in March 2023 that were designed to improve processes and to ensure the sustainability of Council services moving forward. The review was completed in the space of a month and-a-half, with 8 meetings held during this time.

The outcomes of the Audit Task Group's review were reported to and approved by the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee in March 2023. The recommendations were subsequently reported to and approved by Members at a meeting of the Cabinet held in June 2023. The findings of the Audit Task Group review also fed into the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) for the Council, completed in March 2023.

Following the CPC, and at the request of Members, the Governance Systems Task Group investigation was undertaken in August 2023. Again, this Task Group comprised a cross-party group of Members who gathered evidence from a range of sources whilst reviewing the most appropriate governance model for the Council moving forward. In total, 5 meetings of the Task Group were held over a period of one month. The outcomes of the review were reported for Members' consideration at an extraordinary meeting of Council held in September 2023. All of the group's recommendations were approved at this meeting.

Since this review was completed, the Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG), has been reviewing and recommending changes to the Council's constitution, including changes proposed by the Task Group. This work has also occurred in a context in which the CPC suggested that the Council would benefit from a review of the constitution and therefore a comprehensive review of the Council's constitution has been launched. Sections of the constitution that have been reviewed so far include:

- Proposed terms of reference for the new Cabinet Advisory Groups (CAGs) proposed by the Task Group.
- A proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cross party working.
- Rules in respect of Members who could be appointed Chairman of the Council, including a proposal that wherever possible this should be a Councillor not from a political group represented on the Cabinet.



Portfolio Holder Report

- Rules in respect of the Chairmen of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Board, including a proposal that wherever possible these should be Councillors not from a political group represented on the Cabinet.
- The introduction of supplementary Questions on Notice at Council meetings on a trial basis. Supplementary questions must relate to the original Question on Notice or the answer provided to that question.

These proposed changes to the constitution have all been reported through the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Cabinet prior to referral on to Council for approval. The Overview and Scrutiny Board has also received regular updates at every meeting held in 2023/24 since the Governance Systems Task Group review concluded in respect of progress with the implementation of the group's recommendations.

Another requirement that has emerged from the constitution review process over the last 18 months has been a requirement to undertake live streaming of Council meetings. At the request of Members, arrangements have been put in place to enable all full Council meetings to be live streamed. In addition, where possible, Planning Committee meetings have also been live streamed, as it is recognised that meetings of this Committee tend to attract public interest and some residents may be unable to attend these meetings in person.

Other significant areas of work over the past 12 months have included the Member induction and training programme for 2023/24, following the local elections held in May 2023. A significant programme of Member training was provided as part of the induction process, in line with the arrangements requested by the Member Development Steering Group, which co-ordinates Member training. At the request of the Member Development Steering Group, much of this training was delivered jointly with Redditch Borough Council, which helped to reduce the associated financial costs.

As part of the induction process, training was provided to Members in relation to the following subjects:

- The Code of Conduct and the Standards Regime (this has comprised multiple sessions, including training for Parish Councillors)
- The Planning process, including membership of the Planning Committee
- Licensing processes, including serving as members of a Licensing Sub-Committee
- The role of Audit, Standards and Governance Committee members
- Overview and Scrutiny Training
- Safeguarding Training



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- Data Protection Training
- Local Government Finance Training
- Modern.gov App and ICT training (including training in respect of how to use Microsoft Teams)
- Chairing Skills Training
- Emergency Planning Training
- Carbon Literacy Training
- Member Safety Training
- Procurement training

In addition to this programme, Councillors in specific roles, such as the Chairmen of Committees, were invited to consider participating in specialist training programmes provided by the Local Government Association (LGA). Participation in these training courses offered those Members an opportunity to learn from experts in those fields and to network with Councillors from other local authorities in similar positions. New Councillors were also informed about training provided by the LGA which was specifically designed to support new Members.

All Members elected in May 2023 were provided with an induction pack which included useful information, such as key contact details for Council staff and the calendar of meetings for the 2023/24 municipal year. This was prepared and distributed by the Democratic Services team, in line with requirements set out by the Member Development Steering Group.

The Member Development Steering Group has continued to meet throughout the 2023/24 municipal year to review the outcomes of the training. Based on feedback received by Members of the group from their colleagues, changes have been suggested to the induction process in future years.

In line with targets detailed in the Council's Carbon Reduction Plan, Democratic Services have been working with other officers to try to reduce the amount of paper generated for Council and Committee meetings. This has involved providing training to Officers across the authority with respect to how to use the modern.gov app to access and annotate Committee papers. Many Officers have subsequently opted to go paperless at Council and Committee meetings. In addition, following provision of similar training to Members, some Councillors have opted to go paperless and / or to reduce the amount of paper copies of agenda packs that they receive for meetings. Further modern.gov training will be offered to Members in 2024/25 and can be made available to Members on a one-to-one basis on request.



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In addition to facilitating Council and Committee meetings at the authority, Democratic Services also provide advice and training to Council staff. As part of this process, during 2023 a lot of training has been provided to staff in respect of requirements in terms of decisions taken by Officers. As a consequence, compliance with these rules has improved significantly and greater clarity in reports has emerged in respect of the decisions being taken by Officers at the Council.

The Legal Services team have continued to deliver training to Council staff during the year in respect of the Council's procurement arrangements. In addition, for the first time, the team also delivered interactive procurement training to Members in March 2024.

The Democratic Services team is a small team, which delivers a shared service to Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils. The team has managed an increasing number of additional meetings during the 2023/24 municipal year, involving a fairly significant workload. This was recognised by the Governance Systems Task Group, which proposed that an additional Democratic Services Officer should be employed by Bromsgrove District Council.

One member of the Democratic Services team has recently completed the Certificate in Democratic Services Knowledge, which is a training programme delivered by the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO), the professional body for the sector. Another member of the team is mid-way through studying for the certificate. This training should help to upskill the team moving forward.

Electoral Services

In May 2023 elections were held in all District Wards and Parishes. All wards were contested but only one Parish went to a poll on election day. A number of legislative requirements were implemented for these elections including the major change of the specific need for electors to produce photographic ID at the polling station. The elections went very smoothly and no problems arose from introduction of voter ID. The turnout was 34% which is broadly the same as 2019. Votes cast in 2023 was 27,072 compared to 27,219 in 2019.

Electoral Services carried out the statutory polling districts, places and stations review in 2023. This was quite light touch as the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) had selected Bromsgrove District Council for an Electoral Review which will require another polling districts, places and stations review on it's completion.



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A Parish Liaison meeting has been created for Parish Clerks to discuss items with council officers that fall outside the work of the Worcestershire Association of Local Councils.

In January 2024, Council approved the Council's proposed Council Size Submission as part LGBCE Preliminary Stage Boundary Review for Bromsgrove District. This followed detailed discussion of the report and subject at a meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 7th December 2023, when the draft report, produced by the Senior Electoral Services Officer and the Principal Democratic Services Officer, was endorsed.

The Senior Electoral Services Officer has achieved the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) Diploma in Electoral Administration. One member of the team achieved the AEA Certificate of Electoral Administration, and another is currently studying for this.

Finance and Customer Services

Since the last meeting there has been significant activity in finance and customer services. Unlike most other areas in the portfolio, work in this area is heavily scrutinised by Cabinet, Finance and Budget Working Group and Council.

We have seen the 2023/24 and the 2024/5 budgets, both two stage processes, debated through the Chamber. Overall, the 2023/4 three year budget had a £637k deficit position. Most of this gap was due to a 7% pay award however a significant portion of the increase was mitigated by significant pension fund savings. The 2024/5 budget has moved to a "break even" position with a £27k surplus over the three year planning period. Both budgets had significant number of assumptions and were based on One Year Local Government Financial Settlements. 2023/4 saw a 2% increase in the Council Tax and in 2024/5 this rose to 3%. The overall "band D" Council Tax increases by 4.7% year on year to a level of £2,195.85. The Council's portion of this is £250.00.

Capital budgets have remained at similar levels over the two planning period due to the fact that both are dominated by Levelling Up Fund activity and the ongoing replacement of our Refuse Fleet. Over the upcoming five year period £22.7m of Capital investment is planned of which £5.9m is externally funded.

Reserves at March 2027 are estimated at £5.7m for the General Fund and £5.7m for the Earmarked Reserves.

As part of the Budget process we have:



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- Set the Council's Treasury Management, Asset, Minimum Revenue Provision and Investment Strategies. These strategies are a statutory requirement then reported at a half year and year end.
- Set Discretionary policies for Council Tax and Business Rates to help those most in need.
- Updated the Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts and Premiums Policy to make it financially advantageous for empty Homes to be bought back into use.
- Updated the Council Tax Support Scheme from the fundamental changes implemented in the 2022/3 budget process to ensure this reaches as many residents as is possible.

We have delivered combined quarterly finance and performance monitoring report to Cabinet over both years. The most significant factor in the financial monitoring has been 7% pay awards in both years, both of which have been mitigated in the subsequent years budgets. However, it has led to significant "in year" overspends in both years. It should be noted that for the first time Officers carried out their monitoring returns "on system" for Quarters 2 and 3 in 2023/4. This is a significant move forward in terms of upskilling users and their ongoing use of the financial system.

The most significant issue facing the Council financially is moving out of the Section 24 Statement that was issued in October 2022 and extended in October 2023. A "root and branch" review of why the Section 24 Statement occurred was undertaken by a Task Group of the Audit Standards and Governance Committee in February 2023. The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee in March 2023 recommended the findings of the Task Group as did Cabinet and Council. These findings are now being implemented.

Overall, the Council are now very close to agreeing the Opening balances from the old system "efin" to the new system "TechOne". Once this has happened the 2020/21 Accounts will be submitted for Audit.

As part of the "root and branch" findings, Audit, Standards and Governance Committee are meeting six times a year and a report is presented to each meeting that sets out progress on all the finance deliverables. In addition over the period of this report, Risk Management has moved from No to a Moderate Assurance Internal Audit Rating. Part of this improvement has included quarterly reporting to the Audit Committee.

It should be noted that there are significant issues across Local Government in relation to Auditing of the Accounts with over 700 Audits up to 2022/23 still outstanding as at February 2024. The Government are looking to implement a backstop date of 30th September for the clearance of these



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Audits which will mean many Councils, including Bromsgrove, could end up with multiple years of unaudited accounts.

Revenues continue to proactively collect circa £100m of Tax income that funds services across the County.

Human Resources

A new Workforce Strategy was launched in November 2022. The strategy had three main themes:

- Workforce planning and development.
- Staff engagement.
- The health, safety and wellbeing of staff.

This launch was referred to in one of the Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations, which took place in March 2023, that the Council embed the 2022-2026 Workforce Strategy and develop an action plan which needs to be implemented at pace.

A Workforce Strategy Officer Board meets monthly which measures delivery against the Workforce Strategy and its associated action plan, whose deliver is over a three year period. This Board also oversees the Council's Cultural and Agile Strategies and their implementation.

We moved to a new online recruitment platform Talentlink with the support of WM Employers in late 2022. We then moved from Talentlink to Tribepad (Recruitment Applicant Tracking System) in February 2024.

Our agency provider moved to WMTemps/Opus in April 2023. All agency appointments now run through Opus, who provide management information on usage. In the Q3 Monitoring report, staff turnover was reported at 8.8% which is significantly below the national turnover rate of 15.6%.

The Corporate Apprenticeship programme, which was supported by a budget bid in the 23/4 budget, was launched in the summer of 2023. This programme provides support for those service areas wishing to introduce apprenticeships, but which do not have the budget available to cover the salary costs.

Information Communication and Technology

Since the last Cabinet Member report we have:

- Implemented KnowBe4 Cyber Security Training platform
- Gained PSN Cyber Security Certification
- Implementation of Power BI for Corporate Monitoring
- Open Revenues System upgraded to latest version.



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- Gained Gold standard for quality of Gazetteer Address Information
- Began implementing Artificial Intelligence and Automation within departments.

Property Services

During the year, the Property Services team have undertaken works at the Council's Parkside offices which were designed to enhance the building. This has included upgrading the lighting in the building to LED lights, which are more energy efficient than traditional lights. The Property Services team have also worked on the installation of new solar panels at Parkside.

Outside the Parkside offices, the Property Services team have been involved in the following works to enhance assets owned by the Council:

- Resurfacing footpaths in Bromsgrove churchyard (St John's).
- Substantial repairs to the veranda and decoration of the external façade of Amphlett Hall.
- Undertaking works on the Artrix building to help bring this back into operational use.
- Finished works on upgrading the public toilets at Rubery in Spring 2023.

Anticipated Activities/Key Milestones For Next Period

Democratic and Legal Services

The Council's constitution will continue to be reviewed over the following 12 months to ensure that the content is transparent and remains compliant with relevant legislation. Key sections of the Council's constitution that are due to be reviewed over the next few months include the following:

- The Officer Scheme of Delegations, to ensure that any additional delegations agreed by Cabinet and Council during the 2023/24 municipal year have been added and that job titles are updated where appropriate. The latest version of the Officer Scheme of Delegations will be reported for Members' consideration at the Annual Council meeting in May 2024 in line with standard practice.
- The layout of the Committee Terms of Reference will be changed. It is proposed that in future this should be divided into Part A, detailing the terms of reference for 'internal Committees', such as the Overview and Scrutiny Board, and Part B, detailing the terms of reference for joint bodies with which the Council has some involvement alongside partner authorities, such as the Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Board. The new proposed Committee Terms of Reference will be reported to the CRWG in due course, prior to consideration by Council.



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- The Financial Procedure Rules and the Contract Procedure Rules will be updated during 2024. Alterations will be required to these sections of the Council's constitution as legislative changes are due to come into effect during the year which will have implications for public sector procurement processes.

Whilst there will not be any local District Council elections in May 2024, the Member Development Steering Group have agreed a training programme for Members for the 2024/25 municipal year. In developing this training programme, feedback from Members during the 2023/24 municipal year has been taken on board. For example, Officers booked to deliver training have been instructed to make sure that the training they deliver is interactive and does not involve 'death by PowerPoint'.

Looking forward to the future, the Member Development Steering Group has already proposed changes to the Member Induction Programme, which will be applied after the next local District Council elections in May 2027. This has included the proposal that Members should be offered the choice in future as to whether to receive their induction packs in paper or electronic form. In advance of this development, useful documents from the Members' Induction pack have already been made available for Members to access electronically in the 'Your Library' section of the private modern.gov app.

Another additional area of work to emerge will be the Cabinet Advisory Group (CAG) meetings. The CAGs were proposed by the Governance Systems Task Group in 2023. Dates have been included in the 2024/25 calendar of meetings to ensure that these meetings can go ahead where required.

During the next 12 months the modern.gov report management system is due to be launched at the Council. This will involve report authors drafting and submitting reports through the report management system and should result in improvements to the standard of reports received for Members' consideration at Council and Committee meetings. The Democratic Services team have received training in respect of the administrative functions associated with this system and are currently working with the software provider on the development of a User Manual for this process. Full training will be provided to report authors once this part of the system is launched.

Forthcoming legislation in respect of public sector procurement rules will require changes to be made to the Council's Procurement processes. In addition to updating relevant sections of the Council's constitution, the work of the Legal Services team will be crucial to embedding these changes and to providing training to staff to ensure compliance moving forward.

The Governance Systems Task Group review recognised that some of the proposals detailed within the report would result in an increase to the workload of the Democratic Services team. Following agreement of the group's proposals and approval of a budget bid at the Council meeting held in February 2024, an additional Democratic Services Officer is due to be



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recruited to help facilitate some of this extra workload. At the time of writing, this post is being advertised via the Council's recruitment processes.

A member of the Democratic Services team is due to complete the ADSO Certificate in Democratic Services Knowledge over the next 12 months. In addition, a further member of the team is due to start studying for the certificate in April 2024.

Electoral Services

In May 2024, there are the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner elections being held. All polling stations will be open on 2nd May 2024 and the Count will be held on the 3rd May 2024.

At these elections new postal voting handling rules will commence and the impact of these will be reviewed after the election.

Also, in May after the elections, new rules regarding the franchise of European Union electors will begin. Officers will be delivering presentations to Councillors regarding the implications of this change.

Later in 2024 (or early 2025) there will be a General Election. This can be announced at short notice which may give officers only seven weeks to organise the poll. Officers are in constant contact with suppliers regarding the requirements of this election.

Parish Liaison meetings are working on full guidance for parish by-elections.

Finance and Customer Services

The key deliverables are:

- Signing off the Opening Balances.
- Submission of the 2020/21 Accounts.
- Draft 2021/22 Accounts (no Audit adjustments) ready June 2024.
- Draft 2022/23 Accounts (no Audit adjustments) ready August 2024.
- Value for Money Opinion for 2023/4 Accounts approved November 2024.
- Outturn Report for 2021/2 through to 2023/4 reported to Cabinet in July 2024.
- Delivery of quarterly finance and Performance Monitoring report.
- Upgrading of the existing TechOne financial system from version 23A to version 24A in the early summer 2024.
- Delivery of Tranche 1 of the 2025/6 budget in October 2024.
- Delivery of the 2025/6 final budget (and associated Appendices) in February 2025.

Human Resources

The key deliverables are:



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- Implementation of the Council's Workforce Strategy Action Plan
- Review, with finance, of the Council's establishment.
- Embedding the new Tribepad recruitment system.
- Supporting departments in their upcoming restructures.
- Delivering the Corporate Training programme

Information Communication and Technology

The key deliverables are:

- Re-Obtain PSN and Cyber Essentials Security Accreditations.
- Procure a Cyber Security Information and Event Management System.
- Roll out new GIS strategy.
- Implement Windows 11.
- Rollout New Laptops to all Members and Staff.
- Deliver new BDC Web Site.
- Deliver new Staff Intranet..
- Continue to implement Artificial Intelligence and Automation throughout the departments.

Property Services

The Property Services team are due to work on a range of areas over the next 12 months. This will include:

- Refurbishing the landscaped "mess" room at Bromsgrove Cemetery
- Replacement of the Vehicle wash ramp at Aston Fields
- Upgrading the toilets at Catshill Cemetery to a usable condition.
- Complete Burcot transfers and sales so units are occupied.
- Assess additional opportunities for the Housing Company.



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2. Partnership Working:

The Council works with a range of partner organisations to meet the needs of residents and businesses in the District. The following section details work delivered within the remit of this Portfolio Holder.

Partnership working examples:

Democratic and Legal Services

The Governance Systems Task Group review undertaken in 2023 received support from a representative of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS). This support, arranged through the LGA, ensured that the group received independent, expert advice for the duration of the investigation, and this benefited the outcomes of the review.

Staff members sit on the Independent Remuneration Panel for Worcestershire. The coming year will involve the agenda management for the panel which is on a rotational basis.

Electoral Services

Staff members attend the West Mercia Electoral Administrators group which meets on a monthly basis. This group discusses all items regarding registration and elections across the region. It is considered to be a useful forum within which to exchange ideas in regard to electoral events.

Finance and Customer Services

The Council's Internal Audit Service is delivered via the Worcestershire Internal Audit Service which covers all District Councils in Worcestershire apart from Wyre Forest. The Director of Resources meets every 2 months with the other Directors of Finance across Worcestershire.

Human Resources

The Council are part of a West Midlands Human Resources Group, which is hosted by WM Employers, whom the Council are a shareholder.

3. Good News Stories and Awards (if applicable)

Local Government Boundary Commission for England Preliminary Stage Boundary Review for Bromsgrove – Council Size Submission:

The LGBCE considered the Council's submission in February 2024 and endorsed the Council's proposal to continue to have 31 Councillors at Bromsgrove District Council. In reporting back to the Council, it was noted that the Commissioners have also commended the Committee and the officers responsible for producing "Page 49 Comprehensive and well-



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considered submission.” The LGBCE has reported that they intend to use this as an example in future in their ‘best practice by authorities’ reference pack.

Staff

The Electoral Services Manager has been elected as the Board Member for the West Midlands to the Association of Electoral Administrators.

Information Communication and Technology

We Gained Gold standard for quality of Gazetteer Address Information

Recommendations from the Cabinet Meeting held on 13th March 2024

Cost of Living Funding Proposal

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:

- 1) £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:
 - (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

Quarter 3 2023-24 – Financial and Performance Report

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:

- 1) The Updated WRS 2023/4 Charges be approved.

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2024**

13 March

Cost of Living Funding Proposal

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Karen May
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		
Report Author	Job Title: Judith Willis Contact email: Judith.willis@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 64252	
Wards Affected		All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		Work and financial independence Living independent, active & healthy lives
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet **RECOMMEND** 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**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2020/21 the Council allocated £50,000 within the budget to support Community Hubs. This allocation was then further made in 2021/22 and 2022/23 providing a total budget of £150,000. This budget is currently sat in earmarked reserves.
- 2.2 The budget was approved by Cabinet in February 2020 as a revenue bid to support the development of community hubs in libraries. This was an initiative being taken forward by Worcestershire County

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Council. It was explained that discussions had taken place regarding the libraries and the part they played in the District in particular with at risk and vulnerable residents. The piece of work was part of a bigger piece of work led by the County Council and would provide connectivity between rural and urban centres.

- 2.3 Following a new direction of travel by the County Council with the introduction of the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Model, this budget was never provided to the County Council. The funding has remained within reserves with a further £50,000 allocated in years 2021/22 and 2022/23

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The purpose of the budget allocation was to support the development of community hubs in libraries.
- 3.2 As the initiative of community hubs was not progressed as originally proposed, consideration is asked to be given to awarding this funding towards a Cost-of-Living initiative. This would be to support residents who need extra support to manage with the recent increases in daily costs including food, rents, mortgages and utility costs. The proposal would retain a link to Bromsgrove libraries, with the ability to provide outreach work at these and other community locations.
- 3.3 In respect of the impact of the cost-of-living situation nationally for residents, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation:
- a) low-income mortgage holders are struggling with their mortgages and almost half of them are now in arrears with at least one bill and 54% of those are in arrears with three bills or more
 - b) 57% of low-income householders have faced food insecurity in the last six months
 - c) 73% of low-income households have gone without an essential, such as a shower or cleaning items including clothes.
- 3.4 In respect of the impact on housing locally, intelligence from local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations is that:
- a) mortgage holders who are coming to the end of their fixed terms, are facing increases from £200 a month through to £1,200 a month. Some of these individuals simply do not have that additional money to pay out on their mortgage. This will result in more homelessness, people moving, children having to move, increased mental health issues and as 40% of relationship breakdown is caused by financial challenges, then more relationship breakdown.

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b) the fact that interest rates have been so low for so many years, has caused people to believe that this would always be the case and so many have committed their "spare" income in other areas.

c) the level of house prices compared to average income is now so high that mortgage models are beyond historically accepted safe norms to allow people to even get on the housing ladder.

d) If mortgages continue to rise people who are privately renting are likely to be impacted with evictions because landlords cannot afford their increased mortgage costs.

3.5 The VCS are further reporting that they have seen an increase in food parcels and that with the increases in mortgage & utilities etc means that those working are also accessing VCS services more. This is evidenced by Citizens Advice, who have seen a 75% increase in clients seen in 2022/23 compared with 2019. Act on Energy have also reported that they are seeing unprecedented need to provide additional support to their energy advice that covers budget/money/and debt advice.

3.6 In response to the Cost-of-Living situation, the Council recognised that it could not tackle the impact on the District on its own and that other statutory and voluntary agencies had a part to play. Consequently, a multi-agency Cost of Living Group was established. This Group agreed to undertake a Cost-of-Living Survey with Bromsgrove residents and this took place last Spring and Autumn. Key highlights from the survey results were:

a) it clearly showed that this is not a crisis that is just hitting people on benefits or lower paid, but rather a broad range of people.

b) many people are being significantly affected and whilst some easing of pressure can be achieved by better management of household budgets etc but for many this is not enough.

c) people who own their house are in trouble and most are in work, so the answer is not about getting people into jobs. It is a concern that people are borrowing on credit cards with the high percentage running out of options. This is not a crisis hitting those on benefits/lower waged, it is a crisis hitting a broad range of people.

3.7 The Cost-of-Living Group has considered what additional services would be best provided to residents to support them in the crisis and to improve their outcomes. The Group have determined that there is a need for additional debt worker advice that works across agencies and with all partners, as well as providing outreach work within communities. Integral to this would be a piece of work to integrate debt

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advice across organisations, it would also inform work that Citizens Advice will be exploring later this year around the effectiveness of developing different types of outreach work alongside growing their volunteer base. The debt advisor roles would focus on the areas outlined below. This proposal would be a trial for 14 months with a view to it informing a lottery bid by the 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.

- (a) Specialist housing adviser who would deliver housing advice directly; support Citizen Advice volunteers in delivering more in depth housing advice including contacting landlords; provide more affordability checks for BDHT; lead on proactive communications to help raise awareness amongst private tenants about their rights and sources of funding/help that may be available for them. (Cost £52k per annum)
- (b) Voluntary sector money adviser to help residents improve their well-being when facing financial difficulties offering financial education, debt management, budgeting, benefits and entitlements, crisis intervention, emotional support and referrals. (Cost £32,500 per annum)
- (c) Enhancing the support of the Financial Inclusion Team with a focus on making residents aware of the many cost of living schemes available and providing a mobile service accessible locations such as: BDHT, Citizens Advise, libraries, VCS organisations and event, and crucially with local employers. (Cost £42k per annum)

There will be an emphasis on providing outreach services such as at libraries and in community premises. This will include liaising with the Parish Councils. The services will also be provided to meet the needs of residents, so potentially beyond the traditional Monday to Friday, 9 – 5.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The budget of £150,000 is within the Council's Earmarked Reserves and is available to support this initiative. Any underspend on the Scheme would be put back in to reserves.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council needs to ensure that it has a transparent and fair scheme, ensuring that we comply with the 2015 Local Government Transparency Code. The Council has the power to incur expenditure

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which in its opinion is in the interest of and will bring direct benefit to its area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants. The direct benefit accruing must also be commensurate with the expenditure to be incurred.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 6.1 This proposal will support the following Strategic Purposes:
- Work and financial independence
 - Living independent, active & healthy lives

Climate Change Implications

- 6.2 The proposals have not direct impact on climate change. However, cost of living support to residents may include advise on energy costs and lead to energy efficiency improvements in residents homes.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.3 The proposed services will be available to all residents but there will be a targeted approach to reach those most adversely affected.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There is a risk that the proposals for delivering additional services to those affected by the cost-of-living situation will not reach the intended audience and/or provide quality outcomes. This will be mitigated by the establishment of a funding agreement with clear outcome measures that will be monitored half yearly. This will be reported to the Cost-of-Living Group alongside regular service updates.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Karen May, Portfolio Holder for Partnerships	31 January 2024
Lead Director / Head of Service	Guy Revans, Interim Director	31 January 2024
Financial Services	Pete Carpenter, Director	31 January 2024
Legal Services	Claire Felton, Head of Legal & Property Services	31 January 2024

Quarter 3 2023-24 – Financial and Performance Report

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Hotham – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Bernard Ofori-Atta Deborah Poole
Report Authors	Head of Finance and Customer Services bernard.ofori-atta@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy d.poole@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
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 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- The current overspend position in relation to Revenue and Capital Budgets for the period April to September and the full year revenue overspend position of £221k after applying £351k from the Utilities Reserve as approved at Quarter 1 be noted.
- There is an updated procurements position set out in the appendix, and those items over £200k should be included on the forward plan.
- The Q2 Performance data for the Period April to December 2023 be noted.

The Cabinet is asked to **RECOMMEND** that:

- The Updated WRS 2023/4 Charges are approved.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report presents at Quarter 3 (April – December) 2023/24
- the Council’s forecast outturn revenue monitoring position for 2023/24 based on data to the end of Quarter 3.
 - Procurement pipeline projects.
 - The organisations performance against the strategic priorities outlined in the Council Plan Addendum, including operational

measures to demonstrate how the council is delivering its services to customers.

3. DETAILED PERFORMANCE

Financial Performance

- 3.1 As part of the monitoring process a detailed review has been undertaken to ensure that issues are considered, and significant savings and cost pressures are addressed. This report sets out, based on the position at the end of Quarter 3, the projected revenue outturn for the 2023/24 financial year and explains key variances against budget.
- 3.2 The £13.8m full year revenue budget included in the table below is the budget that was approved by Council in February 2023. The table also includes the forecast outturn position for the year.

	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Forecast	2023/24 Forecast
Business Transformation and Organisational Development	1,745,422	1,518,712	(226,710)
Community and Housing GF Services	1,058,122	636,933	(421,188)
Corporate Financing	1,455,265	1,455,265	0
Corporate Services	1,378,418	1,555,756	177,338
Environmental Services	3,598,710	3,971,278	372,569
Financial and Customer Services	1,214,717	1,487,524	272,808
Legal, Democratic and Property Services	1,727,443	1,701,077	(26,366)
Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services	1,384,643	1,809,362	424,720
Regulatory Client	259,337	258,701	(636)
Grand Total	13,822,076	14,394,609	572,533
Utilities Reserve		(351,000)	(351,000)
Overall Total	13,822,076	14,043,609	221,533

Budget Variances

- 3.3 During August and September 2023, budget managers were invited to budget monitoring training which focused on how to predict their financial position for the 2023/24 financial year, as well as how to input that forecast into the TechOne financial system. This is the second time that budget managers have been asked to directly input their forecast financial positions into the system since the implementation of TechOne. Budget managers have been supported by the Finance Team throughout this process as part of an effort to embed the process of regular financial monitoring and increase accountability of budget managers in managing their finances. A detailed review of the financial position input to TechOne has been undertaken by the Finance management team with some adjustments to assumptions reflected. This has included updating forecasts where they have been inadvertently omitted, updating signage, reviewing the forecast position

per nominal code and verifying the salary costs including pay award included in the financial position.

3.4 Overall, the Council is currently forecasting a revenue overspend for 2023/24 in the region of £572k, before the application of £351k from the Utilities Reserve as approved at Quarter 1. This forecast overspend is predominantly due to:

- the implications of the 2023/24 pay award - £1,925 level per pay point plus on costs has been offered by the Employers and was agreed on 1st November 2023. This will be paid in the December payroll and backdated to 1st April 2023.
- temporary and interim staff requirements - whilst there are several vacancies within teams across the Council, some posts are being covered by temporary staff and this has therefore resulted in some cost pressures.
- the impact of homelessness and the cost of temporary accommodation costs.
- higher than expected subscriptions, professional fees, and employee costs in Corporate Services.
- high than expected employee and fleet hire costs in Environmental Services
- higher than expected professional fees and lower than expected income in Planning and Leisure

This overspend is offset in part by:

- a forecast underspend against the utilities budget provision due to utilities inflation running at 70%. In the 2023/24 budget we assumed a 100% increase in budget and set up a reserve for the same amount.
- additional grants receipts and income for Community and Housing.
- lower than expected ICT purchases and additional grant income in Business Transformation and Organisational Development

3.5 As previously reported in the Quarter 2 report, vehicle hire has put a pressure on the revenue budgets this year, as the refurbishment project on the Refuse fleet is requiring vehicles on hire to continue the work. There have also been issues with the fleet unrelated to the refurbishment project that has resulted in higher rental costs as well. Overall, it is anticipated that this will result in a cost pressure in the region of £300k for the year.

3.6 This in-year budget forecast reflects the best information available at the present time, however it is important to note that there are a

number of key factors that may impact upon the financial position which are not yet reflected fully within the forecast, including:

- The present cost of living crisis and the impact that this may have upon demand for council services throughout the winter period, including the impact of homelessness and the cost of bed and breakfast temporary accommodation costs.
- Inflationary increases – general inflation is coming down but is still running at 6.8% and will impact upon transport costs, utilities and contracts in particular.

3.7 The full year effect of a £572k overspend will be mitigated in part by the application of £351k from the Utilities Reserve as approved at Quarter 1. **This leaves a £221k overspend position.** The ongoing 2023/24 pay increases position has been reflected as a budget pressure in the 2024/25 MTFP process. This is a £200k improvement over the Q2 monitoring.

3.8 As previously reported, it is important to note that the Council is yet to close its accounts for the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years. This could therefore result in adjustments to the actual expenditure/income and forecast outturn positions as reported in the table above. Further updates will be provided to Members throughout the financial year (this work is being led by the Audit Standards and Governance Committee).

Additional Funding Requirements

3.9 There are no revenue based additional funding requests in Q2.

3.10 There are however updates to the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Fees and Charges. These were originally agreed in Tranche 1 of the 2024/5 budget but updates are needed in areas where fees are Statutorily set. The full set is set out in Appendix A.

Capital Monitoring

3.11 A capital programme of £10.9m was approved in the Budget for 2023/24 in March 2023. Many of these schemes are already in partial delivery in the 2022/23 financial year. By approving this list, the Council also agreed sums not spent in 2022/23 (and 2021/22 by default if schemes originated earlier than 2022/23 as sums have been carried forward through to the 2021/22 MTFP Report) to be carried forward into 2023/4. The table also splits amounts by funding Source, Council or third party.

Financial Year	Total Budget £000	Council Funded £000	External Funded £000
2021/22	16,511	12,146	4,366
2022/23	8,126	1,485	6,641
2023/24	10,852	1,694	9,158
2024/25	4,921	2,224	2,697
2025/26	3,156	1,558	1,598

3.12 Included in this funding the Council also have the following Grant Funded Schemes which are being delivered in 2023/24:

- The two Levelling Up schemes – Old Fire Station and Market which are funded via £14.5m of Government Funding, and the Council is funding £1.6m of works.
 - The Market Street budget has reduced in overall terms to £10.4m. Following a set of meetings in July and August an initial £12.2m the estimated spend has been value engineered down to £11.4m – a £1m overspend. Application went to planning on the 13th October and response expected in February. There is a significant risk that the project will be delivered at least 6 months late. Under the present funding rules the Council would be liable for funding the project however after negotiation with DLUHC in November and December application for an extension made on 10th January. This extension was approved on the 5th February. Prospective tenderers have been kept “warm” for the process
 - Windsor Street demolition tenders in process although this has been delayed. Project managers MDA have been appointed. There are additional levels of pollution which are being assessed and new Environment Agency rules are needing to be delivered to in terms of removal of this type of polluted materials (which is causing the delay). This is now looking like a prospective overspend of £600k.
 - Public Realm though is projected to be underspent by £700k which mitigates a significant amount of the Market Hall £1m overspend.
- To mitigate any further overspending position, we have the following option which needs to be pursued as this funding is due to the Council:
 - There is £1.5m available from the GBLEP to Bromsgrove to apply to the remainder of the overspend although this would need to go through the appropriate Member approvals. In late November, there is now a joint proposal to split the

overall sum at £2.45m per Council which the Council is actively pursuing its portion.

- UK Shared Prosperity Schemes totalling £2.8m (although it should be noted that these grants funded schemes are a mix of capital and revenue).
- The Burcot Lane development at £10.275m (£904k spend this year) which has now been completed.

3.13 The spend at Quarter 3 is £3.207m (£1.654m Q2) against the overall 2023/24 capital budget totalling £10.851m is detailed in Appendix B. It should be noted that as per the budget decision carry forwards of £2.843m will be added to this figure to take account of slippage from 2022/23.

3.14 The detailed Capital Programmes (21/22 to 2025/26) are set out in **Appendix B**.

Earmarked Reserves and their application

3.15 The position as reported to Council in February 2024 as per the 2024/25 – 2026/27 Medium Term Financial Plan is shown in **Appendix C**.

3.16 As was noted in paragraph 3.7 above, £351k of the Utilities Reserve was approved by Council to mitigate the impact of the increased costs arising from the 2023/24 pay award. However, this still leaves £221k to be funded from the general fund to bring the overall position back to break even.

Procurement

3.17 The Q1 Finance and Performance Report set out the initial set of procurements to be delivered by the Council over the next year. Following this initial report:

- Council on the 21st January approved the increase of the Key Decision Threshold from £50k to £200k.
- On a quarterly basis a report “the Approval to Spend Report” will be provided to Cabinet which sets out the Council’s Procurement Pipeline for approval to be included on the forward plan and an analysis of spending over the past 4 years to identify spending with suppliers over the new £200k limit and all items over the old limit of £50k to ensure this spending is converted to properly contracted expenditure.

- That items from the initial pipeline report at the appropriate Key Decision level, as set out in **Appendix D**, are added to the forward plan.
- 3.18 The table in **Appendix D** sets out those procurements (Capital and Revenue) over £50k which are delegated for approval to Cabinet or Officers over the next year. It is proposed that the 2 contracts over the new £200k in value will be entered onto the forward plan.
- 3.19 As the Council runs a shared service, a number of procurements that impact on Bromsgrove will be procured through Redditch. For reference these are also included in **Appendix E**. There are 10 of these contracts.

Performance Report

- 3.20 The first section of this report shows the organisations performance against the strategic priorities outlined in the Council Plan Addendum. Additional comments and updates have been provided for the success measures to explain progress/activity. The final section of the report includes some operational measures to demonstrate how the council is delivering its services to customers.
- 3.21 The process of performance reporting will develop iteratively; however this document is a snapshot in time and very much a temperature check of the organisation, the layout comprises:
- Strategic Priorities – success measures
 - Operational Measures – by service area
 - Financial Data (separate report on this occasion)
 - Corporate Projects (by exception)
- 3.22 The Council has an approved Council Plan in place that was completed before the Covid-19 outbreak, the Council then developed the Council Plan Addendum to take the potential shift in priorities brought about by the pandemic into consideration. The current key priorities are:
1. Economic Development and Regeneration
 2. Housing Growth
 3. Work and Financial Independence
 4. Improved Health and Wellbeing
 5. Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour
 6. Green Thread
 7. Financial Stability
 8. Organisational Sustainability

9. High Quality Services

3.23 **Appendix F** sets out the Strategic Priorities and Performance Measures in detail. For the 9 priorities there is data contained in the Appendix on:

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

3.24 In addition, **Appendix F** also sets out Operational Service Measures.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The financial implications, are set out within this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

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

Climate Change Implications

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

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

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

Operational Implications

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

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

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

9. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Appendix A – Updated WRS Fees and Charges
- Appendix B – Capital Programme
- Appendix C – Reserves Position
- Appendix D – Exempt Appendix
- Appendix E – Exempt Appendix
- Appendix F - Strategic and Operational Performance Measures

10. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Charlie Hotham,	
Lead Director / Head of Service	Peter Carpenter, Interim Director of Finance	
Financial Services	Bernard Ofori-Atta, Head of Finance and Customer Services	
Legal Services		
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)		

Appendix A – Updated Worcestershire Regulatory Services Fees and Charges

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL	
LICENSING FEES AND CHARGES	
	2024/25
TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE	
Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence	£278.60
Private Hire Vehicle Licence	£258.40
Temporary Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence	£209.00
Temporary Private Hire Vehicle Licence	£193.80
Private Hire Operator Licence (5 year)	£1,262.80
Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Driver Licence (3 year)	£261.80
Knowledge Test	£25.90
Replacement vehicle licence plate	£25.90
Replacement driver's licence	£23.60
Transfer of ownership of a licensed vehicle	£42.70
Criminal Record (DBS) Check	£62.90
ANIMAL ACTIVITY LICENCES	
Hiring out horses, breeding of dogs, providing or arranging the provision of boarding for cats or dogs and	
Application fee	£355.00
Licence fee (1 year)	£199.00
Licence fee (2 years)	£393.00
Licence fee (3 years)	£590.00
Application to vary a licence	£259.00
Veterinary fees (if applicable)	Recovered at cost
Local authority inspection (on request of licence holder)	£177.00
Keeping or training animals for exhibition (only)	
Application fee	£237.00
Licence fee (3 years)	£324.00
Application to vary a licence	£170.00
Veterinary fees (if applicable)	Recovered at cost
Local authority inspection (on request of licence holder)	£177.00
ACUPUNCTURE, COSMETIC PIERCING, SEMI-PERMANENT SKIN COLOURING, TATTOOING, ELECTROLYSIS	
Fee to register a premises	£152.80
Fee to register a practitioner	£100.00
GAMBLING ACT 2005 (inc. SMALL LOTTERIES)	
Small society lotteries	
Fee to register a small society lottery	£40.00
Small society lottery annual maintenance fee	£20.00
Application for the grant of a premises licence	
Betting (excluding tracks)	£1,978.50
Betting Tracks	£1,650.50
Bingo	£2,371.80
Adult Gaming Centres	£1,354.90
Family Entertainment Centres	£1,354.90

Premises licence annual fees	
Betting (excluding tracks)	£407.90
Betting Tracks	£678.60
Bingo	£678.60
Adult Gaming Centres	£678.60
Family Entertainment Centres	£510.10
Application to vary a premises licence	
Betting (excluding tracks)	£1,017.90
Betting Tracks	£847.10
Bingo	£1,189.80
Adult Gaming Centres	£1,000.00
Family Entertainment Centres	£786.50
Application to transfer a premises licence	
Betting (excluding tracks)	£811.20
Betting Tracks	£643.80
Bingo	£812.30
Adult Gaming Centres	£811.20
Family Entertainment Centres	£643.80
Application for a provisional statement	
Betting (excluding tracks)	£1,978.50
Betting Tracks	£1,650.50
Bingo	£2,371.80
Adult Gaming Centres	£1,354.90
Family Entertainment Centres	£1,354.90
Application for the grant of a premises licence (provisional statement holders)	
Betting (excluding tracks)	£833.60
Betting Tracks	£833.60
Bingo	£837.10
Adult Gaming Centres	£837.10
Family Entertainment Centres	£696.60
Application for reinstatement of a premises licence	
Betting (excluding tracks)	£790.90
Betting Tracks	£631.40
Bingo	£790.90
Adult Gaming Centres	£790.90
Family Entertainment Centres	£631.40
Premises licence fees (miscellaneous)	
Copy of a premises licence (all types)	£25.00
Notification of a change in respect of a premises licence (all types)	£50.00
Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permits	
Application for grant of a permit	£150.00
Application for variation of a permit	£100.00
Application for the transfer of a permit	£25.00
Annual permit fee	£50.00
Change of name shown on a permit	£25.00
Request for a copy of a permit	£15.00

Licensed Premises Gaming Machines (Automatic)	
Fee to serve notification	£50.00
Club Gaming Permits	
Application for grant of a permit	£200.00
Application for grant of a permit (Club premises certificate holders)	£100.00
Application for variation of a permit	£100.00
Application for renewal of a permit	£200.00
Application for renewal of a permit (club premises certificate holders)	£100.00
Annual permit fee	£50.00
Request for a copy of a permit	£15.00
Club Machine Permits	
Application for grant of a permit	£200.00
Application for grant of a permit (Club premises certificate holders)	£100.00
Application for variation of a permit	£100.00
Application for renewal of a permit	£200.00
Application for renewal of a permit (club premises certificate holders)	£100.00
Annual permit fee	£50.00
Request for a copy of a permit	£15.00
Family Entertainment Centre Gaming Machine Permit	
Application for grant of a permit	£300.00
Application for renewal of a permit	£300.00
Change of name shown on a permit	£25.00
Request for a copy of a permit	£15.00
Prize Gaming Permits	
Application for grant of a permit	£300.00
Application for renewal of a permit	£300.00
Change of name shown on a permit	£25.00
Request for a copy of a permit	£15.00
Temporary Use Notices	
Fee to serve a Temporary Use Notice	£307.10
Request for a copy of a Temporary Use Notice	£25.00
STREET TRADING	
Annual street trading consent - food - initial	£1,625.80
Annual street trading consent - food - renewal	£1,490.90
Annual street trading consent - non-food - initial	£1,356.10
Annual street trading consent - non-food - renewal	£1,220.10
SCRAP METAL DEALERS LICENCES	
Application for a new site licence	£311.00
Fee per additional site	£160.00
Application for renewal of a site licence	£257.00
Fee per additional site	£170.00
Application for a new collectors licence	£155.00
Application for renewal of a collectors licence	£102.00
Variation of a licence	£70.00
Request for a copy of a licence (if lost or stolen)	£27.00

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ZOO LICENCES	
Application for grant or renewal of a licence	£267.50
Secretary of state inspector and veterinary fees	
DANGEROUS WILD ANIMALS (DWA)	
Application for grant or renewal of a licence	£251.50
Veterinary inspection fees	
SEX ESTABLISHMENTS	
Application for grant or renewal of a licence	£1,091.40
Application for transfer of licence	£535.00
Application for variation of licence	£1,091.40
PAVEMENT LICENCES	
Application for a pavement licence (6 months licence)	£100.00
STREET AMENITY PERMISSIONS	
Application for grant of a new permission	£214.00
Application for renewal of a permission	£58.90
HYPNOTISM	
Application for authorisation	£53.50

LICENSING ACT 2003 - FEES SET BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT - SAME FOR ALL DISTRICT COUNCILS	
Temporary Event Notices	
Fee to serve a Temporary Event Notice (TEN)	£21.00
Copy of a TEN (if lost or stolen)	£10.50
Personal licences	
Application for the grant of a personal licence	£37.00
Fee for a replacement personal licence (if lost or stolen)	£10.50
Fee to notify a change of name or address on a personal licence	£10.50
Applications for new premises licences or club premises certificates	
Applications for the grant of a premises licence or club premises certificate	
Band A (NDRV 0 - 4300)	£100.00
Band B (NDRV 4301 - 33000)	£190.00
Band C (NDRV 33001 - 87000)	£315.00
Band D (NDRV 87001 - 125000)	£450.00
Band E (NDRV 125001 +)	£635.00
Applications for the grant of a premises licence or club premises certificate (where the premises is used exclusively or primarily for the supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises)	
Band A (NDRV 0 - 4300)	£100.00
Band B (NDRV 4301 - 33000)	£190.00
Band C (NDRV 33001 - 87000)	£315.00
Band D (NDRV 87001 - 125000)	£900.00
Band E (NDRV 125001 +)	£1,905.00
Additional fees for grant of a premises licences (for large venues with capacities over 5000)	
5000 - 9999	£1,000.00
10000 - 14999	£2,000.00
15000 - 19999	£4,000.00
20000 - 29999	£8,000.00
30000 - 39999	£16,000.00
40000 - 49999	£24,000.00
50000 - 59999	£32,000.00
60000 - 69999	£40,000.00
70000 - 79999	£48,000.00
80000 - 89999	£56,000.00
Applications to vary premises licences and club premises certificates	
Applications to vary a premises licence or club premises certificate	
Band A (NDRV 0 - 4300)	£100.00
Band B (NDRV 4301 - 33000)	£190.00
Band C (NDRV 33001 - 87000)	£315.00
Band D (NDRV 87001 - 125000)	£450.00
Band E (NDRV 125001 +)	£635.00

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Applications to vary a premises licence (where the premises is used exclusively or primarily for the supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises)	
Band A (NDRV 0 - 4300)	£100.00
Band B (NDRV 4301 - 33000)	£190.00
Band C (NDRV 33001 - 87000)	£315.00
Band D (NDRV 87001 - 125000)	£900.00
Band E (NDRV 125001 +)	£1,905.00
Application for a minor variation of a premises licence or club premises certificate	£89.00
Annual maintenance fees	
Annual premises licence or club premises certificate fee	
Band A (NDRV 0 - 4300)	£70.00
Band B (NDRV 4301 - 33000)	£180.00
Band C (NDRV 33001 - 87000)	£295.00
Band D (NDRV 87001 - 125000)	£320.00
Band E (NDRV 125001 +)	£350.00
Annual premises licence (where the premises is used exclusively or primarily for the supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises)	
Band A (NDRV 0 - 4300)	£70.00
Band B (NDRV 4301 - 33000)	£180.00
Band C (NDRV 33001 - 87000)	£295.00
Band D (NDRV 87001 - 125000)	£640.00
Band E (NDRV 125001 +)	£1,050.00
Additional annual fees premises licences (for large venues with capacities over 5000)	
5000 - 9999	£500.00
10000 - 14999	£1,000.00
15000 - 19999	£2,000.00
20000 - 29999	£4,000.00
30000 - 39999	£8,000.00
40000 - 49999	£12,000.00
50000 - 59999	£16,000.00
60000 - 69999	£20,000.00
70000 - 79999	£24,000.00
80000 - 89999	£28,000.00
Other applications and notifications	
Application to transfer a premises licence	£23.00
Application to vary a premises licence to nominate a premises supervisor	£23.00
Fee to change name or address of the holder of a premises licence	£10.50
Fee to change the name or address of a designated premises supervisor on a premises licence	£10.50
Fee for a replacement premises licence or club premises certificate (if lost or stolen)	£10.50
Fee to notify licensing authority of a property interest in a premises	£21.00
Notification of change or club name or alteration to club rules	£10.50
Notification of change of registered address of club	£10.50
Interim authority notice following death, incapacity or insolvency of licence holder	£23.00
Application for grant of a provisional statement	£315.00
Pavement Licenses	
Every 6 months	£100.00

Description of Charge		Proposed Charge 2024-25		
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES				
Stray Dogs	Fine (statutory)	£25.00	WRS	
	Out of hours charge	£50.00	WRS	
	Repeat offender penalty	£45.00	WRS	
	Administration Charge	£18.00	WRS	
	Kennelling per dog, per day	£20.00	WRS	
	Kennelling of dangerous dogs - per dog, per day	£28.00	WRS	
	Vets' fees	At Cost	WRS	
	Treatment Costs (wormer, flea treatment etc.)	£13.00	WRS	
	Return charge (during office hours when resource available)	£45.00	WRS	
	Penalty charge for non-compliance of Microchipping regulations (not microchipped or contact details out of date) or Control of Dogs Order 1992 (no owner contact details on collar or tag)	£15.00	WRS	
Trading Certificates	Health/Export	Annual specific export inspection Certificate	£457.00+VAT £100.00+VAT	WRS
	Per hour (minimum 1 hour)		£54.00	WRS
FHRS (Food Hygiene Rating Scheme) re-rating		£190.00	WRS	
Food Advisory Visits		£160.00	WRS	
Private Water Supplies	Risk Assessment per hour (minimum 1 hour)		£63.00 per hour	WRS
	Investigation per hour (minimum 1 hour)		£63.00 per hour	WRS
	Granting an Authorisation per hour (minimum 1 hour)		£63.00 per hour	WRS
	Sampling Visit per hour (minimum 1 hour)		£63.00 per hour	WRS
	Sample analysis per sample taken		£63.00 per hour plus laboratory charges	WRS
	Sample taken during check monitoring		£63.00 per hour plus laboratory charges	WRS
	Sample taken during audit monitoring		£63.00 per hour plus laboratory charges	WRS
	Environmental Information Regulations Request	Charge applied to locate and provide where request concerns 'environmental information' held by WRS (Worcestershire Regulatory Services)		£49.00 (flat fee)
Copies of public registers / other public documents		N/A	WRS	
Copies of food registration forms		N/A	WRS	

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Appendix B – Capital Programme

Description	Department	Funding detail	2019/20 Total £	2020/21 Total £	2021/22 Total £	21/22 Spend £	2022/23 Total £	22/23 Spend £	c/f	2023/24 Total £	23/24 Spend Q3 £	2024/25 Total £	2025/26 Total £
Large Schemes													
Levelling Up Fund													
- Government Funded	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure	Grant Funding			1,600,000	1,600,000	5,329,041	126,902	5,202,139	7,563,360			
Market Hall (LUF)	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure	Levelling Up Fund	0	0	0	0			0		287,527		
Ef - Fire Station	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure	Levelling Up Fund									14,960		
- Council Funded		Borrowing			385,000	281,000	420,133		420,133	805,133			
UK Shared Prosperity Fund									0		70,299		
- Capital Element	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure	Grant Funding					50,000		50,000				
- Revenue Element	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Grant Funding					290,499		290,499				
- Remainder (to be allocated)	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure	Grant Funding					20,000		20,000	680,988		1,784,215	
									0				
									0				
									0				
Schemes Agreed to Continue													
Burcot Lane	Financial & Customer Services	Public works loan board and grant homes england	170,000	830,000	9,275,000	1,125,000	4,973,852	7,914,009	-2,940,157	0	904,850	0	0
	Community & Housing GF Services	Capital Receipts/Borrowi	321,096	100,000	67,376	28,000	0		0	0		0	0
CCTV	Community & Housing GF Services	Grant income WCC	1,087,951	599,910	1,416,101	620,000	913,000	969,792	-56,792	913,000	482,640	913,000	0
Funding for DFGs	Community & Housing GF Services	Long Term Debtors	50,000	30,000	111,221	-5,000	50,000	4,088	45,912	50,000	-19,690	50,000	50,000
Home Repairs Assistance	Community & Housing GF Services	Capital Receipts/Borrowi	110,000	30,000	65,988	12,000	110,000	7,810	102,190	0		0	0
Energy Efficiency Installation	Community & Housing GF Services	Grant finance	5,005	0	5,000	3,000	0		0	0		0	0
Energy Efficiency	Community & Housing GF Services	Capital Receipts/Borrowi	0	8,000	8,000	0	6,500	15,576	-9,076	0		0	0
Cemetery Extension	Environmental Services	Capital Receipts/Borrowi											
Infrastructure at at North Bromsgrove Cemetery Phase	Financial & Customer Services	Capital Receipts	455,000	218,108	0	1,000	0	13,680	-13,680	0		0	0
New Finance Enterprise system	Community & Housing GF Services	Grants & Contributions	300,000	200,000	200,000	296,000	0	700	-700	0		0	0
OLEV ULEV Taxi infrastructure scheme		Borrowing		1,184,000	1,568,000	380,000	356,000	75,292	280,708	441,000	742,788	1,190,000	1,215,000
Fleet Replacemnet new line	Environmental Services	Capital Receipts/Borrowi	0	12,000	250,000	196,000	253,000	123,985	129,015	96,000	212,270	421,000	0
Replacement Parking machines	Environmental Services	Capital Receipts/Borrowi	126,000	94,000	139,000	102,000	144,000	169,034	-25,034	55,000	160,325	60,000	60,000
Wheelie Bin Purchase	Environmental Services	Capital Receipts/Borrowi											

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

13 March 2024

CABINET

Description	Department	Funding detail	2019/20 Total £	2020/21 Total £	2021/22 Total £	21/22 Spend £	2022/23 Total £	22/23 Spend £	c/f	2023/24 Total £	23/24 Spend Q3 £	2024/25 Total £	2025/26 Total £
Footpaths	Environmental Services	Borrowing							0	75,000	22,265	75,000	75,000
Buildings	Legal and Property	Borrowing							0	100,000		100,000	100,000
Bittell road recreation ground	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	S106 B/2011/0741 - Land at Fiery Hill, Barnt Green / 18k balances	0	44,000	18,000	17,000	0		0	0		0	0
Salix	Legal, Democratic and property services	Grants & Contributions	0	0	615,000	65,000	0	533,193	-533,193	0		0	0
Greener Homes	Community & Housing GF Services	Grants & Contributions	0	180,000	476,900	-227,000	0	192,053	-192,053	0	188,087	0	0
Hagley Scouts	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Capital Receipts/Borrowi	100,000	0	0	35,000	0		0	0		0	0
Rubery Redevelopment works													
Bromsgrove Sporting		Loan				4,000		46,133	-46,133				
Car Park Improvements - Woodrush High Schools refurb						8,000			0				
Rubery Redevelopment Works	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Capital Receipts/Borrowi	36,000	0	32,738	0	0	9,550	-9,550	0	1,900	0	0
Sanders Park dda play provision	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	S106 14/0755 Kidderminster Road and S106 13/0422 Meadows first school	10,000	3,550	35,000	0	0		0	0		0	0
New Digital Service	Community & Housing GF Services	Borrowing	0	57,400	33,668	0	33,668		33,668	33,668		0	0
Bus Shelters	Environmental Services	Borrowing	0	0	36,000	0	18,000		18,000	0		0	0
Fleet Management Computer System	Environmental Services	Borrowing	0	0	16,600	0	0		0	0		0	0
Environmental Services Computer System	Environmental Services	Borrowing	0	0	157,200	0	0		0	0		0	0
Cisco Network Update	Business transformation & Organisational Development	Borrowing	0	0	0	0	5,717	18,573	-12,856	11,574		0	34,877
Server Replacement Est(Exact known Q2 2022)	Business transformation & Organisational Development	Borrowing	0	0	0	0	83,250	0	83,250	2,000	79,451	177,500	18,500
Laptop Refresh	Business transformation & Organisational Development	Borrowing	0	0	0	0	5,000	4,961	39	25,000	11,542	150,000	5,000

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

13 March 2024

CABINET

Description	Department	Funding detail	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	21/22	2022/23	22/23	c/f	2023/24	23/24	2024/25	2025/26
			Total £	Total £	Total £	Spend £	Total £	Spend £		Total £	Spend Q3 £	Total £	Total £
Sanders Park	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	S106	0	0	0	0		24,511	-24,511		22,600		
Play Area, POS and Sport Improvements at Lickey End Recreation Ground in accordance with the S106 Agreement	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	S106 19/0137/FUL	0	0	0	0	37,956	6,488	31,468	0		0	0
BDC Combined F/Path & Cycle	Environmental Services	Grants & Contributions	431,000	71,357	0	0	0		0	0		0	0
Barnt Green Millenium Park - Toilet	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	S106 B/2011/0741 - Land at Fiery Hill, Barnt Green / 18k balances	62,000	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0
Total			3,264,052	3,662,325	16,511,792	4,675,000	13,249,616	10,256,330	2,843,286	10,851,723	3,206,520	4,920,715	1,558,377

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

13 March 2024

CABINET

Appendix C – Reserves Position

	Balance at 31/3/23	Transfers in 2023/24	Transfers out 2023/24	Balance at 31/3/24	Transfers in 2024/25	Transfers out 2024/25	Balance at 31/3/25	Transfers in 2025/26	Transfers out 2025/26	Balance at 31/3/26	Transfers in 2026/27	Transfers out 2026/27	Balance at 31/3/27
General Fund Reserve	5,800	100	(917)	4,983	744	(234)	5,493		(8)	5,485		(7)	5,478
General Fund Earmarked Reserves:													
Building Control Partnerships	82			82			82			82			82
Community Services	271		(125)	146		(125)	21			21			21
Economic Regeneration	398	50		448			448			448			448
Election Services	51			51			51			51			51
Environmental Services	49			49			49			49			49
Financial Services	3,195	638		3,833			3,833			3,833			3,833
Housing Schemes	346			346			346			346			346
ICT/Systems	197			197			197			197			197
Leisure/Community Safety	330			330			330			330			330
Local Neighbourhood Partnerships	16			16			16			16			16
Other	0			0			0			0			0
Planning & Regeneration	133			133			133			133			133
Regulatory Services (Partner Share)	46			46			46			46			46
Utilities Reserve	1,053		(351)	702		(702)	0			0			0
Regeneration Reserve					150		150			150			150
Ward Budget Initiative						156	156		(78)	78		(78)	0
Covid-19 (Collection Fund)	1,547		(1,547)	0			0			0			0
Total General Fund	7,714	688	(2,023)	6,379	150	(671)	5,858	0	(78)	5,780	0	(78)	5,702

Appendix F - Strategic and Operational Performance Measures

1. Introduction

The process of performance reporting will develop iteratively, however this document is a snapshot in time and very much a temperature check of the organisation.

2. Background

The performance measures for the current key priorities are shown in the next section.

3. Strategic Priorities and Performance Measures

3.1. Economic Development and Regeneration

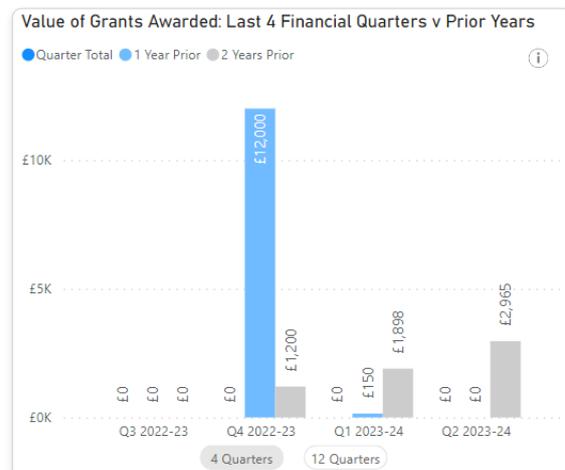
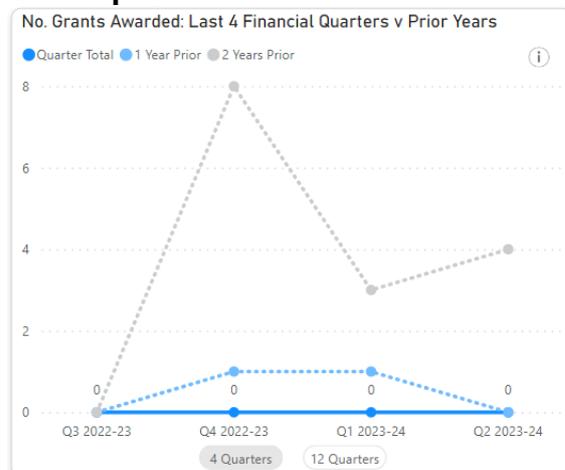
3.1.1 Supporting Businesses to Start and Grow

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

Performance measure:

- Take-up of start-up business grants and creativity grants programme (up to 1 period lag)

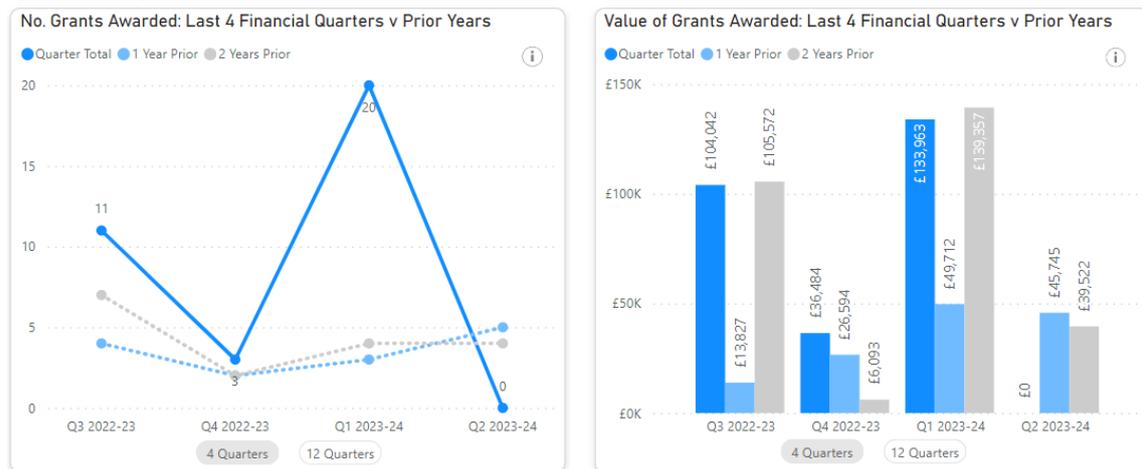
Start-up Grants



Update

The new UKSPF funded start up programme, Enterprising Worcestershire, was launched in September 2023. Following a soft launch in August, there is a pipeline of businesses who have expressed an interest in the grant. The first grant awards are likely to be made late in Q3 or Q4 2023/24.

Growth Grants



Update

All EU funded grant programmes have now closed. The UKSPF funded programmes were launched in September 2023 and there is a pipeline of businesses waiting to access them. It is likely that the first grants will be paid in late quarter 3 or quarter 4.

3.1.2 Regenerating our Town and Local Centres

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

Performance Measure:

Former Market Hall Project

Update

- Planning application submitted October 2023. RIBA Stage 4 in progress.
- Planning committee 9th February.
- Two Stage Tender exercise to appoint PCSA Contractor, tender returns due end of January, successful contractor to be appointed by end of February.
- Target Start onsite date June 2024.

Performance measure:

- Windsor Street Project
 - Regulatory Bodies signed off of updated remediation strategy November 2023.
 - Planning Application to be submitted by end of January 2024
 - Expression of Interest exercise to determine market interest is underway
 - Target for Planning Determination and appointment of Contractor – April 2024. Start of Works onsite May 2024.

3.1.3 Improved Integrated Transport (Bromsgrove)

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

Performance measure:

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

Update

Officers are working with Worcestershire County Council to establish a full pipeline of sustainable schemes. To better inform the list of schemes funding has been secured by WCC for a Local Cycling and Walking infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), planning officers have reviewed the brief for this work and discussed with WCC.

Actions: Will be liaising with WCC appointed consultants. An inception meeting has now been scheduled for 7th February, other work regarding transport infrastructure remains ongoing with WCC

3.2 Housing Growth

During 2023/24 we will accelerate the pace of affordable housing development, wherever possible. We will work to enable the building of market value housing and the creation of additional income for the Council.

Performance measure:

- Number of new homes built - total and affordable (annual measure)



The final data for the 2022/23 is:

- Total Homes Built (including affordable) -199 (net)
- Total affordable homes built - 55 (net)

Performance measure:

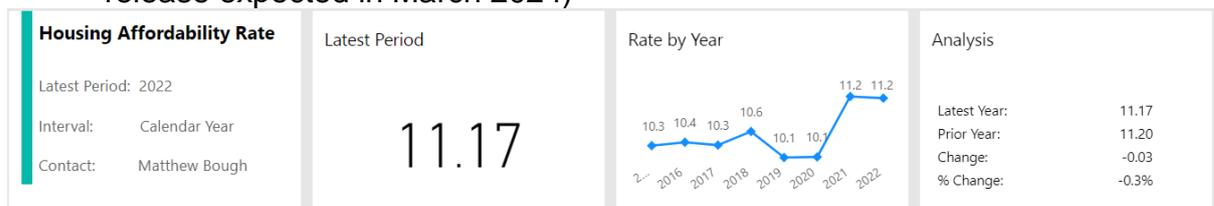
- Affordable Homes Completed (annual measure)



There are 498 affordable housing commitments as of 1 April 2023, reflecting the number of strategic sites which have gained consent but not started construction.

Performance measure:

- Local housing affordability rate (annual, calendar year, 1 year lag, next release expected in March 2024)



Update

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

The affordability measure, using this data, indicated that the ratio in England is currently 9.05. The affordability ratio relates to workplace-based income which uses the median earnings of those employed in Bromsgrove. When looking at the data (year ending Sept 2022) Bromsgrove has a work-based median at £29,285. The median house price in Bromsgrove is relatively high at £327,000. This causes a significant difference in the affordability ratio in Bromsgrove.

House prices over the last year have also risen well above the normal expected rate. This will push more households into needing affordable housing. The council is working with developers to secure the maximum provision of affordable housing on developments and RPs to bring forward affordable housing. A “First Homes” policy with a local connection criteria was approved by Council in October 2022 to ensure these discounted homes are provided for local applicants in the first instance.

Performance measure:

- Number of homeless approaches
- Number of threatened with homelessness preventions
- Number of homeless applicants housed

N.B. These figures do not relate to each other and should be considered on their own.

	Number of homeless approaches	Number of threatened with homelessness preventions	Number of homeless applicants housed
October	24	3	4
November	38	5	7
December	16	2	2
TOTALS	78	10	13

Update

Homelessness pressures have remained similar to the last quarter. The ability to prevent homelessness and obtain housing in the PRS still remains an area that is impacting on homelessness in line with the national picture due to the cost of living and mortgage costs causing landlords to increase rents or evict tenants.

3.3. Work and Financial Independence

In 2023/24, we will continue to find ways to further support, engage, and empower our residents to maintain / achieve financial independence.

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

Performance measure

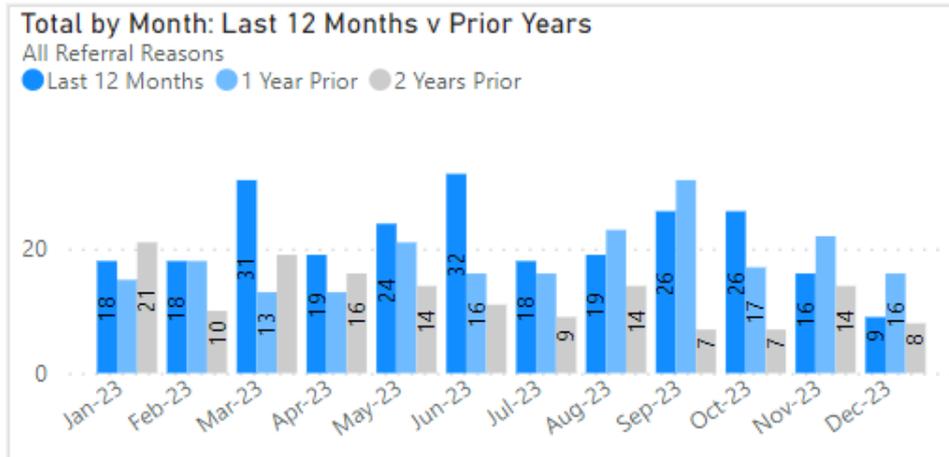
- Number of Financial Independence Team client contacts

This measure records the number of FI Team cases opened.

Update

The top five referral reasons (where a value has been provided) for the last 12 months are:

- 'Under occupancy charge' (50)
- 'Debt' (38)
- 'Rent advance/deposit' (31)
- 'Other' (20)
- 'Budgeting issues' (17)



For Q3, 2023/24, the top 3 referral reasons were:

- 'Rent advance/deposit' (9)
- 'Debt' (8)
- 'Budgeting Issues' (5)

The Financial Inclusion Team continue to assist residents in the current cost of living crisis. We are always looking for the best way to support residents, be this through internal work or signposting to partners to help maximise income and budgets.

Performance measure

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

Update

Although data is shared termly (with a lag) from Worcestershire County Council, this has been inconsistent. Work is ongoing to improve the regularity of the supply of data.

Term	% 2-year-olds accessing funding
Summer 2019/20	76%
Summer 2020/21	71%
Summer 2021/22	74%
Spring 2022/23	61.9%
Summer 2022/23	61.4%
Autumn 2023/24	80.7%

There was a large increase in the take up of funding between the end of the 2022/23 academic year and the start of the 2023/24 academic year.

We receive a list from WCF to contact families who had applied for 2-year-old funding but had not processed their application – due to the delay in receiving this list by the time we contacted families they had already accessed the funding or there were not nursery places available. We used to receive a list from DWP of all eligible children, but due to a change in an information sharing agreement we no longer receive this list to enable us to proactively contact all eligible families. We continue to promote the Childcare Choices on our social media pages and respond to families who contact the service regarding childcare funding. We promote nursery funding at all events and are recently supporting DWP at their childcare events to promote the funding for eligible parents looking to return to work.

This measure will cease to be reported from Q1, 24/25.

3.4. Improved Health and Wellbeing

In 2023/24 we will continue to work with communities to help them identify and develop their strengths. We will look at ways to encourage physical movement into part of people's normal routines. We will look to catalyse an integrated approach to care.

Performance measure

- Deliver improved outcomes from the actions in the Leisure Strategy

Update

The health outcomes programme in line with Leisure and Culture strategy recommendations is ongoing. The service is currently focusing on key priorities and to build and develop its resources within the team. This will start to take more shape as we move into 2024 and increase our delivery outcomes.

Recommendation: Develop an environmental management strategy for parks and environmental services.

- Project lead identified to progress strategy. Working towards April 2025 completion.

Recommendation: Develop a volunteer plan and a clear approach to working with Friends groups tied to its aspirations for Green Flag Award across its priority parks.

- Green flag award unsuccessful for Sanders Park, working on recommendations for improvement for 2024 submission and scheduled awards over the next 4 years. Plan will be created when officers in post. First Draft April 2024.

Recommendation: Develop a rolling programme of applications to the Green Flag Award.

- Working on applications for awards for Sanders Park, Lickey End Park, King Georges Recreation Ground and St Chads Park.

Recommendation: Engage more regularly with potential partners at a county wide level.

- Officers working with partners to maximise potential of offers within parks and open spaces.

Recommendation: Develop a better understanding of the biodiversity value of the district's green assets.

- Biodiversity plan established, focus and priorities, developing a Biodiversity network with Planning, County Council and 3rd Sector. Commencement February 2024.

Recommendation: Develop a clear marketing plan for green spaces that includes new web pages, social media, and targeted work with key audiences.

- Work started on website development and modernisation. Social media use improved to promote, biodiversity, events, and mental health in respect of Parks and Green Spaces.

Recommendation: Carry out a feasibility study to establish a roadmap for the self-management of allotment sites across the district.

- Action plan implemented, work carried out in the background to move this forward, new tenancy agreements with legal, service level agreements for new formed associations, website information, management of day-to-day issues, bills.

Performance measure

- Number of Community Builders in post.

Update:

Two community builders remain in post:

- Sidemoor
- Rubery

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach built on tried and tested methods from sustainable community development practice. The aim of ABCD approaches is to create the conditions that will enable both place and people to flourish, reduce inequalities, improve quality of life that supports communities to thrive and to reduce or delay the need for long term care and support.

The Bromsgrove and Redditch Shared Learning Network continues to meet, supported by Public Health at Worcestershire County Council, which includes community builders, the voluntary and community sector hosts, relevant BDC

and RBC officers. The purpose of the Network is to provide a forum to support and encourage the development of ABCD good practice locally. The community builders are working in partnership not only with local residents but organisations and community groups such as Starting Well Partnership, Social Prescribers, libraries, Act on Energy, Age UK, BDHT and local businesses.

Community Builders are on fixed term contracts, but funding has been confirmed to extend the posts until end of March 2025. The longer-term aim remains for the voluntary sector services to source other funding by evidencing impact through community stories and Ripple Effect Mapping.

Action: As above as well as embedding the understanding of the approach through the district collaboratives and continuing to evidence outcomes and impact on communities.

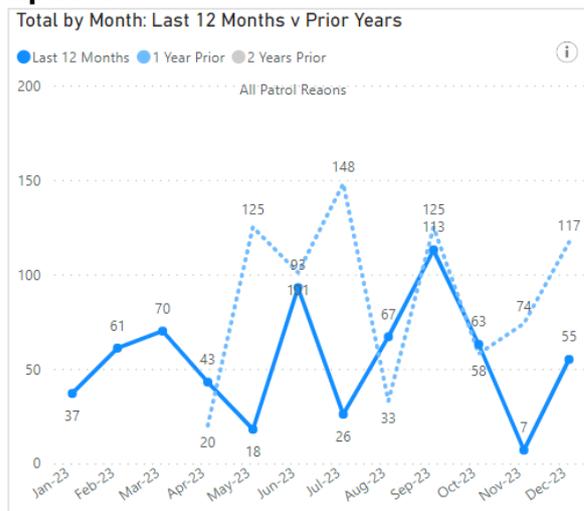
3.5. Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour

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

Performance measure

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

Update



Oct 2023 – Routine youth outreach patrols were conducted in Catshill South, Bromsgrove Central and Sidemoor where young people were engaged, discussing a variety of issues such as crime & ASB, education, careers and healthy choices. Targeted outreach patrols were conducted in Sidemoor and Bromsgrove Central following concerns raised about youth gatherings and risks of ASB and child exploitation.

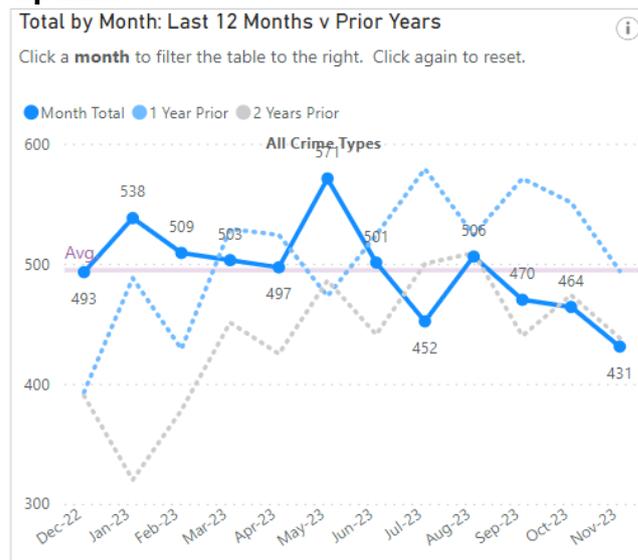
Nov 2023 – Only one patrol was conducted in this month due to staffing issues. Youth workers supported a Street Pastor patrol and engaged with young people out in the night-time economy. One young person (above legal drinking age) was particularly aggressive, and CCTV were called to monitor the situation. Youth workers accompanied other young people (under 18s) who were unconnected to this young person, away from the situation safely. The young person being aggressive did not harm anyone and eventually left the High Street to head home.

Dec 2023 – Routine patrols were conducted in Bromsgrove Central, Sidemoor, Sanders Park, Perryfields and Charford. Again, some patrols did not engage with any young people at all. Those patrols that did engage with young people led to discussions about youth activities and club provision in the town. Youth workers provided signposting to local provision and the timetable for youth outreach patrols. Street pastor patrols were supported by youth workers over the Christmas period. Significant numbers of young people were found in the Town Centre during the hours of the night-time economy. Youth workers engaged with the young people encouraging them to go home and provided signposting to more appropriate, safer provision in the town.

Performance measure

- Levels of crime. (Data extracted from ‘data.police.uk’ below – there is a lag in data reporting)

Update



Crime Type	Total	% of Total	v 1 Mth Prior	v 1 Yr Prior	12 Mth. Avg.
Violence and sexual off...	2,305	38.8%	-5 ↓	-194 ↓	192.1
Shoplifting	674	11.4%	-32 ↓	242 ↑	56.2
Other theft	569	9.6%	-13 ↓	-97 ↓	47.4
Criminal damage and a...	546	9.2%	8 ↑	-24 ↓	45.5
Vehicle crime	542	9.1%	3 ↑	61 ↑	45.2
Public order	446	7.5%	-1 ↓	-188 ↓	37.2
Burglary	400	6.7%	9 ↑	32 ↑	33.3
Other crime	144	2.4%	2 ↑	36 ↑	12.0
Drugs	135	2.3%	3 ↑	7 ↑	11.3
Possession of weapons	68	1.1%	-2 ↓	-11 ↓	5.7
Robbery	54	0.9%	-1 ↓	-7 ↓	4.5
Theft from the person	27	0.5%	-4 ↓	7 ↑	2.3
Bicycle theft	25	0.4%	0 →	-8 ↓	2.1
Total	5,935	100.0%	-33	-144	494.6

At the time of report creation, the Police.UK website included data up to and including November 2023, as shown in the chart above.

N.B. Due to changes in Partnership Analysis support, crime data is currently provided quarterly in arrears. Data for Quarter 2 is below and reporting periods for NWCSF crime data will be adjusted for 2024 onwards.

Across North Worcestershire there was a 10% (n=470) decrease in All Crime during Q2 (Jul-Sept 2023) compared to the previous quarter (Apr-Jun 2023). There was a 15% decrease (n=850) in All Crime compared to the same quarter in the previous year (Q2 Jul-Sept 2022). Overall, each of the NW districts showed a decrease during this quarter (Jul-Sept 2023) compared to the same quarter in the previous year (Jul-Sept 2022) and the largest decrease in All Crime was in Bromsgrove District (22%, n=372).

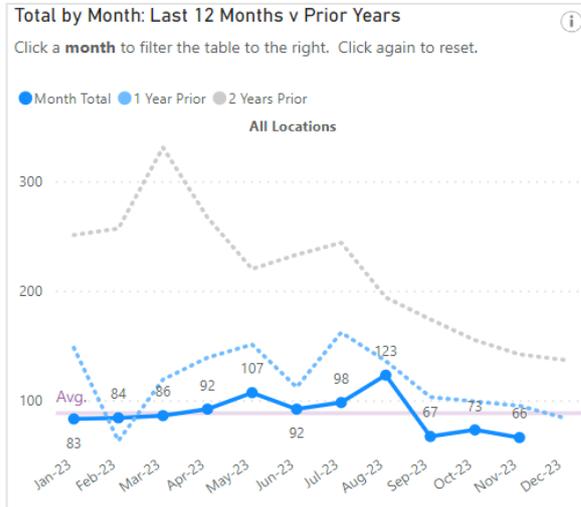
Across North Worcestershire, the offence category showing the greatest increase during Q2 (Jul-Sept 2023) when compared to the same quarter last year (Jul-Sept 2022) was Shoplifting (35%, n=156). This had the largest volume increase and was also documented as increasing in the previous quarter. This suggests an increasing trend, possibly related to the increasing cost of living.

Locally, Sanders Park Ward recorded the largest volume of offences in Q2 (July -Sept 2023) (n=151) and is consistently the ward that records the largest volumes of offences. However, offences in this area did see a decrease of 17% (n=30) compared to the same period last year. Charford Ward followed with the second largest volume of offences (n=103) however this was a decrease in offences compared to Q1 (n=126) Belbroughton and Romsley Ward showed the greatest decrease in offences compared to the same quarter last year (47%, n=86), although the ward remains the third highest ranking area in terms of volume.

Performance measure

- **ASB** (Data extracted from 'data.police.uk' below – there is a lag in data reporting)

Update

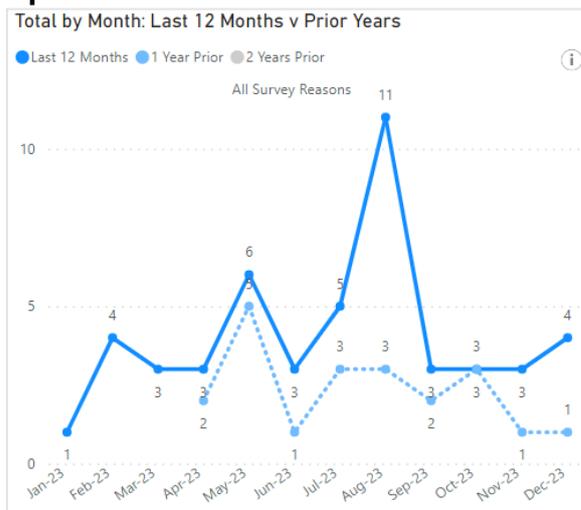


Unfortunately, due to changes in Partnership Analysis support ASB data analysis continues to be unavailable for reporting. NWCSF ASB data reporting will be adjusted for 2024 onwards.

Performance measure

- Number of crime risk surveys carried out

Update



Oct 2023 – Detailed, written crime prevention recommendations provided for developments in Sanders Park for 120 dwellings and in Rubery South for 23 dwellings. Also, a Home Security Assessment was conducted at the home of an elderly resident in Hagley West at the request of the Ward Member. Crime

prevention recommendations were provided, and a bespoke security solution funded by Community Safety to safeguard the source of an essential electricity supply.

Nov 2023 – A multi-agency meeting was called to discuss a neighbourhood dispute in Perryfields. Police SNT and BDHT colleagues involved in the case and due to one party in the dispute possibly having dementia, an adult safeguarding referral was proposed. A domestic abuse Sanctuary assessment was requested for a resident subject to MARAC. However, due to complications with the resident’s housing arrangements the case was ultimately assessed as not suitable for Sanctuary but the police and BDHT continue to monitor the situation and support the residents involved. Detailed written crime prevention were made for a planning application in Bromsgrove Central for a commercial building and pavilion with associated public realm works.

Dec 2023 – At the request of the police and Ward Members site visits and crime risk surveys were conducted in Lowes Hill in relation to ASB in a derelict building; in Bromsgrove Central at the multi-storey car park and at Belbroughton and Romsley regarding suspected drug activity and offensive behaviour in Uffmore Woods. Work with other services, police SNTs and the Woodland Trust continues to identify long term solutions.

3.6 SLM Leisure (Everyone Active)

Update

For SLM Leisure there is a lag in the data; as a result, quarter 2 data and comments can be found below; Q3 information will be available for the Q4 report.

Category	Quarter Total	Same Quarter Previous Yr	Difference
Total no. of visits including EA cards and non-card holders	112,864	110,754	2,110
EA Cards added in this period	1,969	2,163	-194
Total EA Cards to date	70,410	64,150	6,260
No. of Gym members	2,993	2,762	231

Swimming Lessons – children enrolled on scheme	1,497	1,749	-252
Swim Lesson Occupancy	84%	82%	2%
RIDDOR Reportable Events			0

Bromsgrove Leisure Centre	2021/22	+/- %	2022/23	+/- %	2023/24
1st Quarter Apr- Jun	78,285	0%	110,756	41%	107,496
2nd Quarter Jul-Sep	97,510	108%	110,754	14%	112,864
3rd Quarter Oct-Dec	92,559	42%	98,881	7%	0
4th Quarter Jan - Mar	113,610	0%	114,271	1%	0
Totals	381,964	241%	434,662	14%	220,360

Q2 Saw a good recovery and an increase in overall numbers from the previous year. Gym memberships continue to do well as we are quickly approaching 3000 members which is extremely pleasing. We have introduced new activities such as Group Introductions which give our customers an insight to different types of activities. The closure of a local gym also meant that we were able to pick up some extra members.

The Swim Scheme although improving is not yet back to the numbers pre closure. We continue to develop our lesson programme as well as the rest of the pool programme with a goal of increasing both lesson and casual swimming in the centre.

Clip and Climb continue to be popular with us again looking at the programme and we are seeking to add sessions as we go. We are also concentrating on our Spa area at present. This area has underperformed for several reasons and we have just employed a Spa Manager to aid in driving business forward. The re-introduction of spray tanning is the first step as well as looking at opening hours. August did see the ending of the free Ukrainian Memberships. There were 47 free memberships that were contacted in August.

3.7. Green Thread

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

Performance Measure:

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

Update

Nottingham City Council, through their government funding grant to undertake a review of its fleet, has provided external consultancy services to the council. Officers have been working with Nottingham City Council and received a copy of their findings. As a consequence, these have been applied to create a funded Capital replacement programme which is subject to ongoing financial review. It is anticipated that, within the fleet replacement programme, small volumes of the Housing Fleet will switch to all electric based on the feasibility of infrastructure being installed at the Crossgates House/Redditch Depot site. This is part of a review to be shortly commenced by our new partner that is reviewing our car parks and depots to provide Electric Vehicle Charging points.

Performance Measure:

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

Update

Whilst the cost of Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) has seen a severe increases due to external influences such as the war in Ukraine these costs have stabilised. As part of the 'Greening the Fleet' review, which seeks to reduce the Carbon Footprint created by the Council's fleet, finances are being reviewed to allow use of HVO more widely across Environmental Services Fleet.

Performance measure

- Households supported by the Council's energy advice service
-

Period	Households	Period	Households
2019/20 (09/19-03/20 only)	31	Q1 2023/24	137
2020/21	41	Q2 2023/24	145
2021/22	90	Q3 2023/24	202
2022/23 (part year)	385		

Update

In the 3rd quarter of 2023/24 a total of 202 households received energy advice and guidance from Act on Energy. A range of advice and support is provided and in quarter 3 this included a number of referrals to Severn Trent Big Difference Scheme and Step Change Debt Management Service.

3.8. Financial Stability

Council resources will continue to be constrained. We will continue to work on ensuring our people, assets and financial resources are focused on the

priorities and activities that most effectively deliver wellbeing and progress for our population.

Performance measure (included as an earlier section of this Report)

- Financial performance – actuals consistent with budget (overspend mitigated)
- Levelling Up Fund Project delivered within budget.

3.9. Organisational Sustainability

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

Performance measure

- Number of corporate measures accessible through the dashboard.

Update

The organisation continues to move from the current legacy dashboard to a new Power BI dashboard. Power BI is an interactive data visualisation software product with a primary focus on business intelligence. There are currently 33 strategic measures available via the dashboards with 6 new strategic measures expected to be available by the end of quarter 4. Work is also being undertaken on operational measures; the recent accident data has been delivered with a final review due within the next 4 weeks.

Performance measure

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

Update

The current overall percentage of staff able to work in an agile way is 56%.

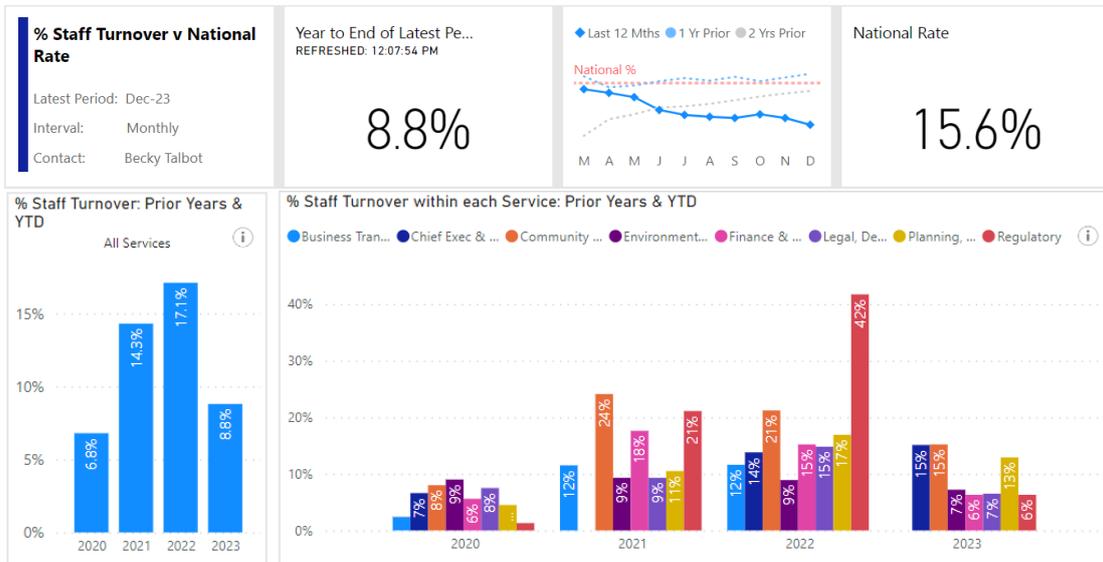
This measure is aligned with the ongoing agile project.

3.10. High Quality Services

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

Performance measure

- **Staff turnover rates in relation to national rates**



Update

Since January 2023, it can be seen there has been a continued improvement in turnover rates which brings the authority under the national average. We have launched a process for exit interviews and hope the first data will be available in April 2024. We will utilise this data to further understand context and undertake necessary actions.

Performance measure

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

The percentage of respondents who say they are satisfied with service delivery is:

Year	Satisfied
2021	47.4%
2022	38.6%

Update

This is an annual measure. Data is extracted from the annual community survey. 2021 was the first year the public were asked about their level of satisfaction with the way the council delivers its services. National satisfaction with LA's, according to the Local Government Chronicle is currently at 40%.

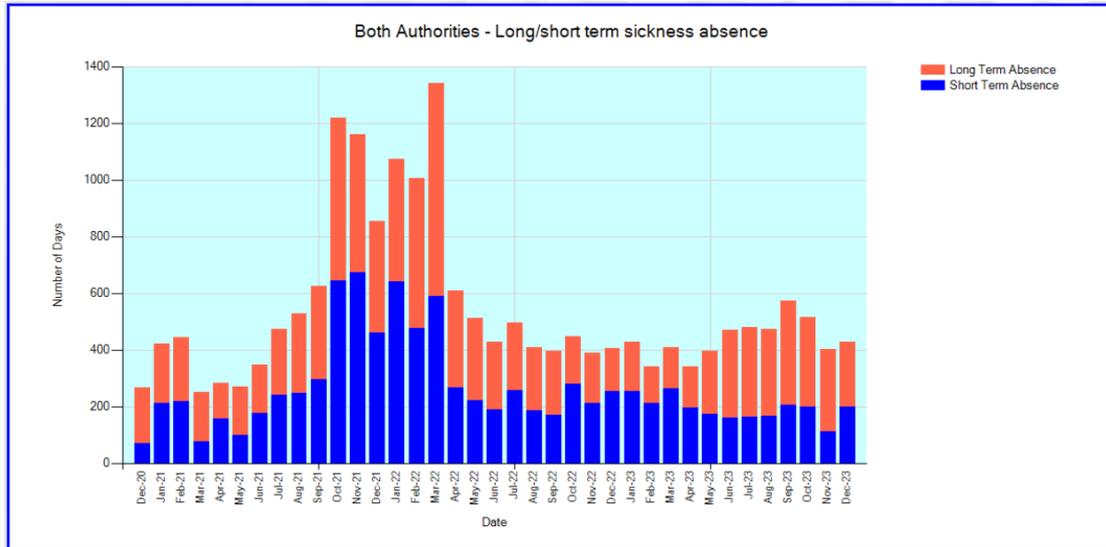
The 2023 survey was carried out in October/November 2023; the results for this survey are expected to be available for the Q4 performance report.

4. Operational Measures

4.1 Business Transformation, Organisational Development & Digital Services

Performance measure

- Sickness absence



Update

We are continuing to undertake a fundamental review of the data source, data capture and data calculation, to utilise the increased functionality of PowerBI which will enhance both the overview and more in-depth analysis for this measure and in turn enable actions from the understanding gained. System issues have hindered the speed of progress; however, progress is being made.

Actions:

- Review data source, to include training where needed.
- Review of the absence reasons reported under in comparison to national data.
- Review of how the data is analysed and presented to managers.

4.2 Environmental Services

Domestic Waste Collection

Performance Measure

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

This is a National Indicator measuring the percentage of household waste arisings which have been sent by the Authority for reuse, recycling, and composting, and is used in the national league tables ranking Local Authority

performance. In 2021/22 Bromsgrove was ranked 173rd, increasing from 175th in 2020/21 (2022/23 rankings not yet published).

During Qtr 1 it was identified that Dry recycling tonnages actually dropped slightly, but mirrored a noticeable drop in Residual Waste Tonnages which is believed to be related to the cost of living on households which has changed spending habits as households try to avoid unnecessary waste due to the cost of food and goods.

Dry Recycling rates remained consistent during Qtr 2, but Garden waste tonnages were higher than usual over the summer due to the damp weather and boosted our performance. Qtr 3 has seen a significant drop in the percentage of waste being recycled/composted, as the Garden Waste Season ended in November. Although we collected 115 tons per month more (on average) dry mixed recycling in Qtr 3 in comparison with Qtr 2, this was still approximately 70 tonnes less than the same Qtr in the previous year and is believed to be further evidence of the change in buying habits as a result of the cost of living.

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2021/22	44.40	49.24	59.99	57.58	49.75	48.45	36.71	50.72	50.87	39.59	33.89	42.89
2022/23	46.69	55.59	57.51	55.97	45.18	46.41	49.69	50.63	46.41	33.70	37.34	43.16
2023/24	50.74	57.40	54.66	48.13	47.01	48.01	51.06	46.29	37.54			

Actions:

Discussions have been had with our neighbouring Worcestershire Authorities about how we can increase our resources collectively to support more proactive engagement with residents to educate on waste reduction and effective use of our services, as we still have regular contamination of our recycling with non-recyclable items. Although this is not progressing as a partnership project across all the Worcestershire Authorities, Bromsgrove and Redditch (with support from the Waste Partnership Strategy Officer) are still looking at how existing resources could be used differently to support more proactive engagement and education with residents.

Work is also on-going to consider the future of waste collection services alongside new legislative requirements that will see the introduction of a weekly food waste collection and potential changes to how we manage both residual waste and dry recycling. New banners were affixed to the side of our refuse collection fleet to highlight the issue of food waste as part of a joint campaign with Worcestershire County Council earlier this financial year, and we also have resources available via our website to support households in using our services and reducing waste:

<https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/lets-waste-less> .

Performance Measure

- Residual Waste per household (kg)

This measures non-recyclable waste thrown away per household and shows a marked reduction per household in Qtr 1 when compared with the previous two years, which is a positive trend for sustainability but may be due to financial pressures on households as much as greater awareness of the environmental benefits of reducing our waste. During Qtr 2, we saw increases linked to the Summer period, that may be linked to more people staying at home rather than taking holidays, as the same trend of increased residual waste was seen across all the Worcestershire LA's. Qtr 3 is consistent with previous years.

Waste Composition Analysis was carried out across the district to sample waste during 2022, and identify what is being thrown away in our residual waste to support discussions on the future of our services, and any communication/education campaigns we may need to implement to support further recycling. In the samples taken, up to 18% of the residual waste put out for collection could have been collected as recycling, and up to 35% of the residual waste was food waste (45% of that was still in its packaging unused). This information is being considered as part of the wider Task and Finish project to consider future options for how we collect our residents waste in the future.

Residual Waste per Household (Kg)

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2021/22	50.01	38.81	39.35	38.16	40.89	45.06	41.50	39.36	35.86	39.86	35.58	49.26
2022/23	42.43	37.22	37.28	31.36	41.03	42.83	34.20	39.64	32.76	41.78	32.59	42.08
2023/24	33.19	35.75	34.51	34.61	46.49	36.9	34.93	37.00	32.75			

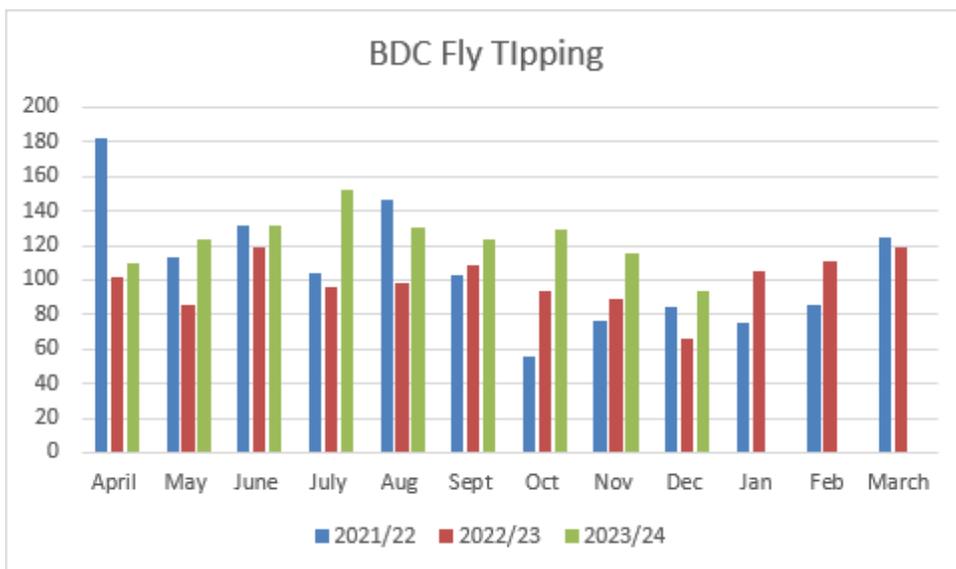
Actions: As per comment on percentage of household waste sent for recycling and reuse

Performance Measure

- Fly Tipping

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

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
2021/22	182	113	131	104	147	103	56	76	84	75	85	125	1281
2022/23	102	85	119	96	98	109	94	89	66	105	111	119	1193
2023/24	110	124	131	152	130	124	129	116	94				1110



Actions:

We have seen a change of behaviour in fly tipping in areas where we have used signage to raise the profile of our enforcement actions, and our Enforcement Officer is currently updating this signage to keep the messaging relevant and highlight that this is an on-going issue to further deter this across the District. Cameras are still being deployed in hotspot areas to identify those responsible, and additional training has been carried out during September on how to effectively use covert cameras and maintain legal compliance for the use of CCTV, which is expected to support more flexible use of our equipment during Qtr 3.

2023/24 has seen increasing numbers of fly-tips, across a wider range of locations than has been seen previously, which is hindering our ability to monitor locations to identify those responsible.

We have had targeted monitoring of hot spot locations with cameras for a combined total of 402 days surveillance for the year to date and issued five fixed penalty notices for smaller offences caught on camera, and these have all now been paid (total received of £730).

We also have two cases currently being taken to court for fly tipping that we are confident of achieving a successful conviction on, and have a number of other cases currently being investigated where we have partial video footage, or evidence from within the fly tip that is being used to identify the origin and who was responsible for it.

Our Enforcement Officer is currently updating our signage to support the work to deter this across the District, and cameras are still being deployed in hotspot areas to identify those responsible. We are currently unable to issue additional fixed penalty notices as we are unable to confirm if payment has been received, which is limiting our ability to escalate issues where appropriate. This is being resolved with the finance team currently and we are

expecting to issue them again where appropriate from August, using an invoice reference linked to the fixed penalty notices to support payments.

4.3 Finance and Customer Services (inc Revenues & Benefits)

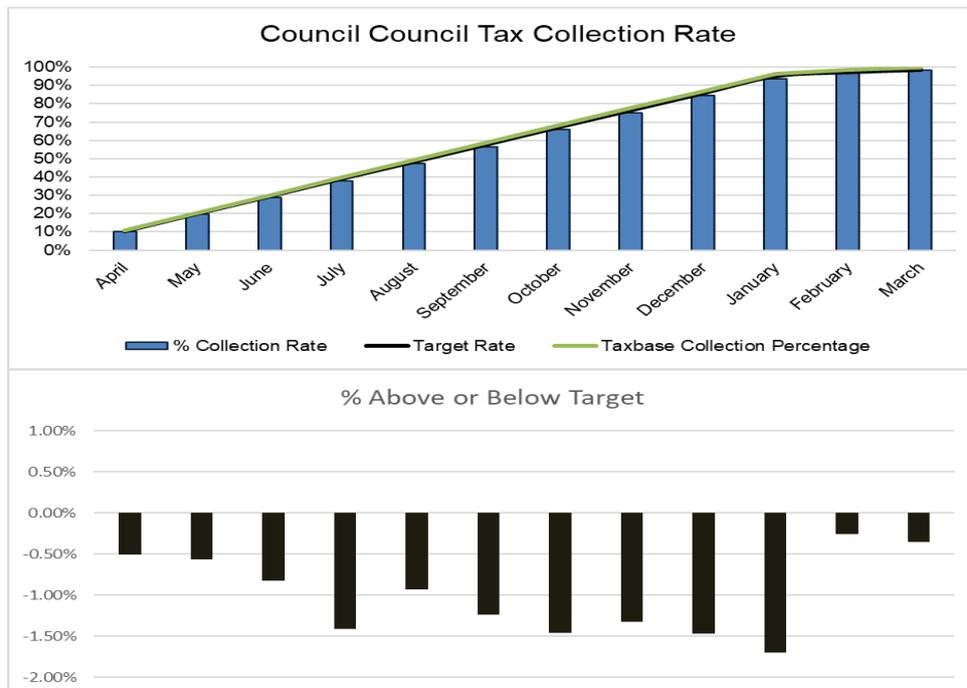
Performance measure

- Council Tax Collection Rate

The data remains as Quarter 4 2022/23 data. Revenues cannot accurately produce the updated information due to batch scheduling having stopped working within Civica-OpenRevenues; this issue is being progressed and is within the escalation process.

The OpenRevenue system includes software titled "Civica Automation" - which is batch scheduling tool that is able to automate linear tasks. There was an issue with one of the process maps in April and the process maps have been switched off by systems admin/internal ICT.

The process map that is switched off is the one which runs the reports which we use to profile collections rates. We have now been without this process map for many months, and ICT/Systems Admin have been unable to rectify this. This remains a priority and currently progressing with ICT and third party system provider.



Performance measure

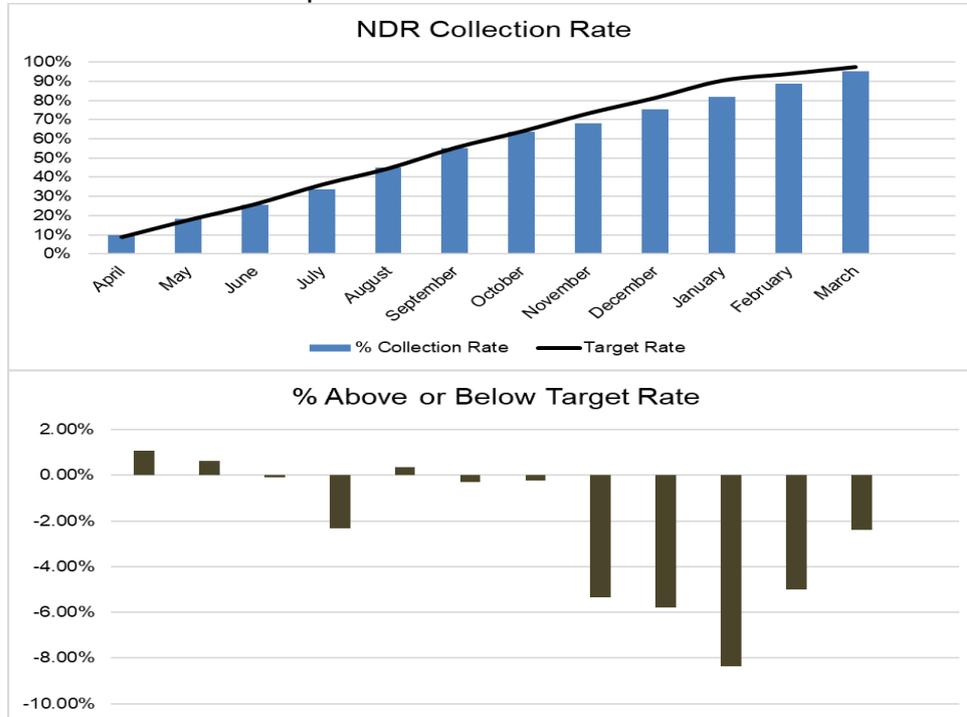
- NDR Collection Rate

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

13 March 2024

The data remains as Quarter 4 2022/23 data. Revenues cannot accurately produce the updated information due to batch scheduling having stopped working within Civica-OpenRevenues; this issue is being progressed and is within the escalation process.



Performance measure

- Revenues Processing

Month	Completed Items	Comp. < 7 Days	Comp. < 14 Days	Comp. < 21 days	Comp. < 28 Days	Comp. > 28 days	Outstanding
Apr-22	2550	527	313	280	718	712	1869
May-22	2337	464	192	172	92	1417	2044
Jun-22	2773	509	268	157	137	1702	2031
Jul-22	2906	552	240	190	362	1562	1605
Aug-22	2345	529	215	208	804	589	1421
Sep-22	5143	1080	483	481	1458	1641	1424
Oct-22	2716	954	297	239	511	715	1798
Nov-22	2807	818	299	249	264	1177	1639
Dec-22	2284	853	292	182	106	851	1536
Jan-23	3121	1185	333	310	198	1095	1228
Feb-23	3271	1652	249	187	327	856	941
Mar-23	4059	2277	748	377	359	298	912
Apr-23	2608	1166	426	238	416	362	740
May-23	2273	1223	227	117	304	402	846
Jun-23	2417	1392	182	163	90	590	1080

Jul-23	2922	1378	290	292	272	690	1005
Aug-23	2969	1517	366	611	190	285	637
Sep-23	2648	1443	594	325	76	210	677

Update

The Covid-19 Business Support Grants, Council Tax Energy Rebates, and Energy Bill Support Scheme – Alternative Funding schemes is no longer impacting on the workload for the Revenue Service. Some reconciliation work remains to be completed for these schemes, but there is no longer any day-to-day processing impact. This has enabled a reduction to the outstanding work items.

It is anticipated that the impact of inflation and rising interest rates will cause an increase in customer contact with regards to the payment of their council tax.

Actions

Available resources will be reviewed to ensure that they are sufficient to meet the ongoing demand on the service.

Performance measure

- Online Customer Interactions

Due to a server migration in early October, the report is not able to be produced due to the settings having to be re-established.

Customer Services

Performance measure

- Revenues Calls (shared service)

Date	Calls Answered	Avg in Queue	Avg Wait (mm:ss)	Avg Logged in	Avg call length (mm:ss)
Oct 2023	3060	0.35	04:22	6.86	07:57
Nov 2023	2637	0.09	03:18	7.37	08:03
Dec 2023	1717	0.12	03:32	6.00	07:43

Update

The service met expectations with regards to answering calls during the quarter with an average queue fewer than 1 person and an average call answering time between 4-6 minutes.

Performance measure

- Number of Web Payments

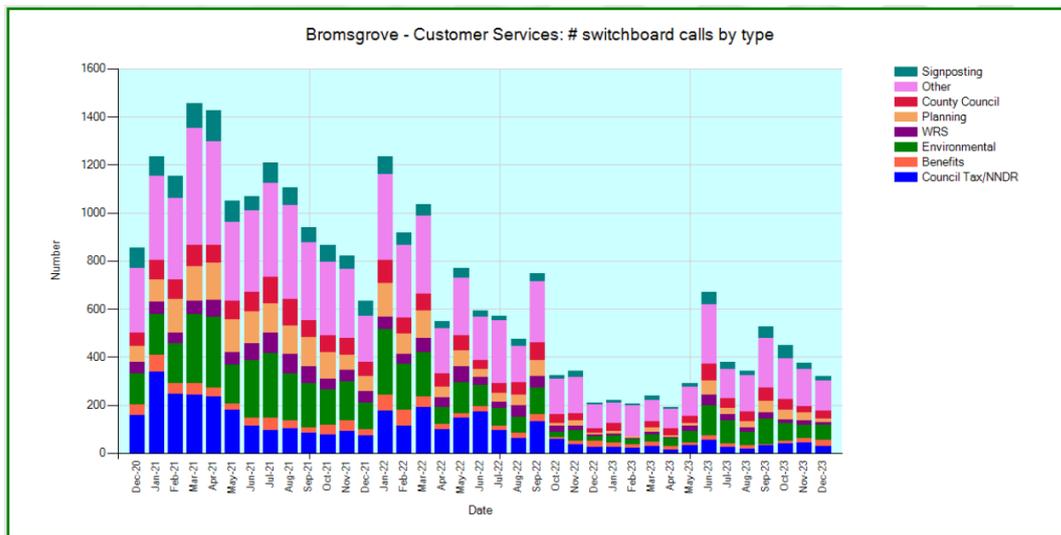
Update

Date	Number of payments
Oct 2023	1260

Nov 2023	1200
Dec 2023	1021

Performance measure

- Customer Service calls (Switchboard)



Date	Calls Answered	Avg in Queue	Avg Wait (mm:ss)	Avg Logged in	Avg call length (mm:ss)
Oct 2023	849	0.03	01:17	1.78	00:58
Nov 2023	798	0.01	00:32	1.93	00:59
Dec 2023	487	0.01	00:52	1.90	00:56

Update

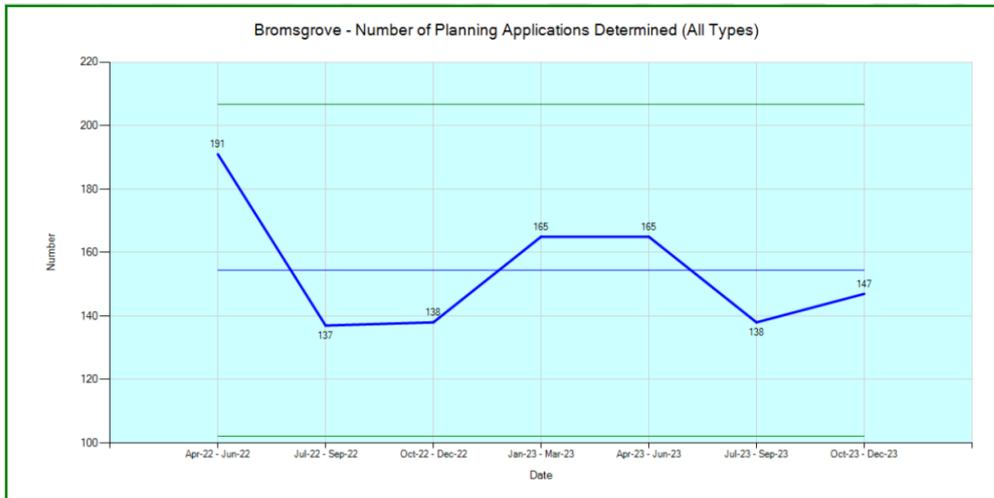
The service met expectations with regards to answering calls during the quarter with an average queue close to zero and an average call answering time under 1 minute

4.4 Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services

The Leisure and Cultural Strategy has been formally endorsed. Its recommendations have been prioritised for delivery and delivery has commenced.

Performance measure

- Total number of planning applications determined in quarter (all types)

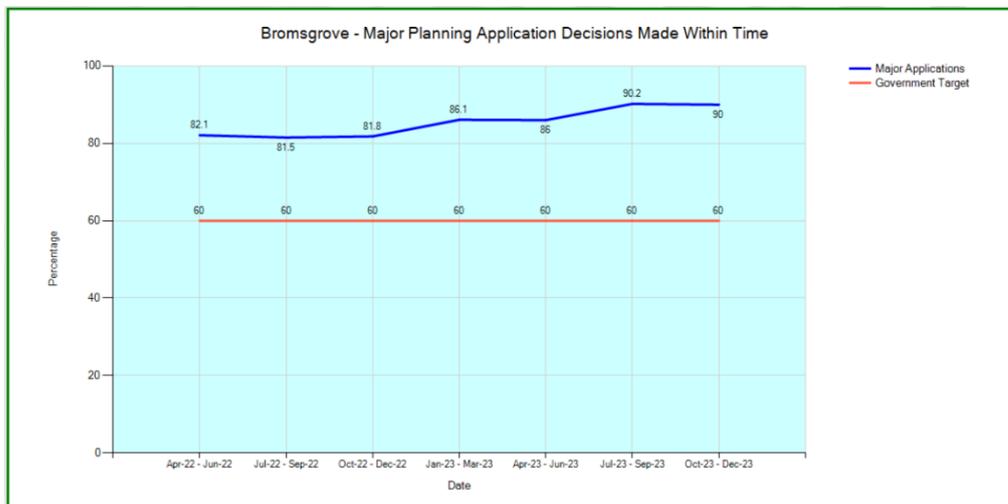


Update

There was a modest rise in determination rates, but these were still below average.

Performance measure

- Speed of decision making for 'major applications' (over a rolling 2-year period) (Governmental targets for determining applications in time (or within an agreed extension of time) on major applications is 60%)

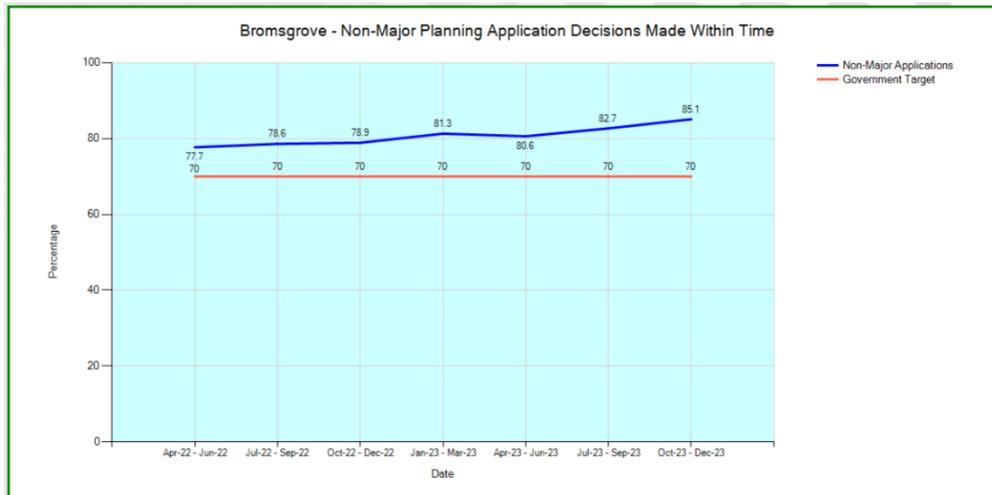


Update

The assessment of speed remains well in excess of government targets.

Performance measure

- Speed of decision making for 'non-major applications' (over a rolling 2-year period) (Governmental targets for determining applications in time (or within an agreed extension of time) on non-major applications is 70%)



Update

The 2-year rolling period for speed showed an improvement relative to the last quarter and remains well in excess of government requirements.

5. Corporate Project Oversight & Monitoring

The table below provides a summary as of 25th January 2024. The focus point being that the overall RAG status is Amber for the majority of projects.

A review of current projects, project sponsors and leaders, has been undertaken to ensure accurate monitoring moving forward.

All Projects (Number)	Overall Status RAG		Time Status RAG		Scope Status RAG		Budget Status RAG	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Red	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Amber	11	68.75%	12	75%	9	56.2%	7	43.7%
Green	5	31.25%	4	25%	7	43.7%	6	37.5%

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 21ST FEBRUARY 2024, AT 1.00 P.M.

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

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr P. Carpenter, Mr. G. Revans,
Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. B Ofori-Atta and Mrs J. Gresham

82/23 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Colella, Taylor and Whittaker.

83/23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

84/23 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 14TH FEBRUARY 2024 (TO FOLLOW)**

The minutes from the Cabinet meeting held on 14th February 2024 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes from the Cabinet meeting held on 14th February 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record.

85/23 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 16TH JANUARY 2024**

The minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 16th January 2024 were submitted for Members' consideration. It was noted that there were no outstanding recommendations from the Board included in the minutes.

RESOLVED to note the minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 16th January 2024.

86/23 **COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTIONS 2024/25**

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Council Tax Resolutions 2024/25 for Cabinet's consideration.

In doing so, Members were informed that the report sought formal approval of the Council Tax Resolutions 2024/25. The report took into account the spending requirements of Bromsgrove District Council, Worcestershire County Council (WCC), the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia (PCC), Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority and the various Parish Councils. It was reported that this report was also due to be considered by Full Council at its meeting on 21st February 2024.

For unparished areas within the District, the overall Council Tax Band D amount was confirmed at £2,163.64 of which Bromsgrove District Council received £250.00, WCC received £1,538.92, the PCC received £277.50, and Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority received £97.22.

The report also included information regarding the Council's and Parish Councils' requirements, the Council's tax amount for its main precepting authorities, the increases for each of the precepting authorities for 2024/25 and the parish precepts for 2024/25.

Following the presentation of the report, Members thanked Finance Officers for their hard work in compiling such a complex report.

Members also briefly discussed the increase in Parish Precepts for 2024/25 and some of the areas that were the potential cause of these increases.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:

- 1) the calculation for the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2024/25 (excluding Parish precepts) as **£9,499,346.19**.
- 2) That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2024/25 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - (a) £46,946,051.69 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act (taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils) (*i.e.*, *Gross expenditure*)

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- (b) £37,446,705.50 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act. (*i.e.*, *Gross income*)
- (c) £10,723,413.69 being the amount by which the aggregate of 1.2.2(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 1.2.2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
- (d) £282.21 being the amount at 1.2.2 (c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1.1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
- (e) £1,224,067.50 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34 (1) of the Act (as per the attached **Schedule 3**).
- (f) £250.00 being the amount at 1.2.2 (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 1.2.2 (e) above by Item T (1.1 (a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.
- (g) The amounts shown in Column 3 of **Schedule 1**. These are the basic amounts of the council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of the Council's area shown in Column 1 of the schedule respectively to which special items relate, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act. (District and Parish combined at Band D).
- (h) The amounts shown in Column 5 of **Schedule 1** being the amount given by multiplying the amounts at 2.2.2(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion

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21st February 2024

is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;

1.2.3 It be noted that for the year 2024/25, Worcestershire County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia and Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwelling in the Council's area as indicated below:

	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Worcestershire County Council	1,025.95	1,196.94	1,367.93	1,538.92	1,880.90	2,222.88	2,564.87	3,077.84
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	185.00	215.83	246.67	277.50	339.17	400.83	462.50	555.00
Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority	64.81	75.62	86.42	97.22	118.82	140.43	162.03	194.44

1.2.4. That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 1.2.2(h) and 1.2.3 above, that Bromsgrove District Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 hereby sets the amounts shown in **Schedule 2** as the amounts of Council Tax for 2024/25. for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

1.2.5. That the Interim Director of Finance be authorised to make payments under Section 90(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the Collection Fund by ten equal instalments between April 2024 to March 2025 as detailed below:

	Precept £	Deficit on Collection Fund £	Total to pay £
Worcestershire County Council	58,475,420	(277,545.53)	58,197,874.47
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	10,544,361.75	(50,083.00)	10,494,278.75
Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority	3,694,136.35	(17,875.34)	3,676,261.01

- 1.2.6 That the Interim Director of Finance be authorised to make transfers under Section 97 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the Collection Fund to the General Fund the sum of £10,671,802.35 being the Council's own demand on the Collection Fund (£9,499,346.19) and Parish Precepts (£1,224,067.50) and the distribution of the Deficit on the Collection Fund (-£51,611.34).
- 1.2.7 That the Interim Director of Finance be authorised to make payments from the General Fund to Parish Councils the sums listed on **Schedule 3** by two equal instalments on 1 April 2024 and 1 October 2024 in respect of the precept levied on the Council.
- 1.2.8. That the above resolutions to be signed by the Chief Executive for use in legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the recovery of unpaid Council Taxes.
- 1.2.9 Notices of the making of the said Council Taxes signed by the Chief Executive are given by advertisement in the local press under Section 38(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

RESOLVED that at its meeting on 17th January 2024 Cabinet approved the calculated Council Tax Base 2024/25 as follows:

- (a) for the whole Council area as 37,997.7 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and
- (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates the amounts as shown in Column 4 of the attached **Schedule 1**.

87/23

TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROPERTY SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING

There was no Urgent Business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 1.26 p.m.
Chairman

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 13TH MARCH 2024, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillor R. J. Hunter and Councillor P. M. McDonald

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr P. Carpenter, Ms J. Willis, , Mrs L. Berry, Mr. M. Dunphy, Ms. M. Worsfold and Mrs J. Gresham

88/23 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

89/23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor S. Webb declared an Other Disclosable Interest as a Trustee of the Citizen's Advice Bureau in relation to Agenda Item Number 7, Minute Number 94/23 – Cost of Living Funding Proposal.

Councillor Webb remained in the meeting for consideration of this item and took part in the vote thereon.

There were no further Declarations of Interest.

90/23 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 21ST FEBRUARY 2024**

The minutes from the Cabinet meeting held on 21st February 2024 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes from the Cabinet meeting held on 21st February 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record.

91/23

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

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was present for consideration of this item. It was noted that there were no outstanding recommendations from the meeting of the Board held on 12th February 2024.

There were however, two reports that had been pre-scrutinised at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting which took place on 11th March 2024. It was agreed that these recommendations would be considered by Cabinet during consideration of the specific reports at agenda items 5 and 6, Minute Numbers 92/23 and 93/23.

RESOLVED that the minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 12th February 2024 be noted.

92/23

BROMSGROVE CENTRES ACTION PLAN REVIEW 2024/25

The Bromsgrove Centres Manager presented the Bromsgrove Centres Action Plan Review 2024/25 for Members' consideration.

In doing so, the following was highlighted:

- The Bromsgrove Centres Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2026 was approved by Members in January 2023.
- The Bromsgrove Centres Action Plan set out Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and success of the plan. These KPIs included budget monitoring, actions and response for 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 Members agreed that this was a positive and encouraging strategy for Bromsgrove Centres and were keen to implement it as soon as possible. Members felt that the events that had been organised were encouraging and had a positive impact on communities across the District and increased footfall within Town Centres across the District.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board presented the recommendation agreed by Members at the meeting of the Board on 11th March 2024. The recommendation was as follows:

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

Cabinet considered the recommendation, and it was agreed that this change could be reflected.

Therefore, it was

RESOLVED that the Bromsgrove District Centres Action Plan 2024/25 be approved.

93/23

LOCAL HERITAGE LIST STRATEGY

The Principal Conservation Officer presented the Local Heritage List Strategy report for the consideration of Cabinet. 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 on the list, however there had been issues faced particularly in the public engagement element of the strategy.

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 and that the Bromsgrove District Plan (2017) acknowledged the importance of adopting a Local List to formerly identify the locally important heritage assets within the District.

Officers reported that the criteria for inclusion on the Local Heritage List had been identified, and included the following:

1. Age
2. Authenticity and Rarity
3. Architectural interest
4. Historic interest
5. Townscape / Villagescape / Landscape interest.

It was stated that in order to be included on the List, candidates needed to satisfy the first criteria stated above and at least one other.

Cabinet was informed that Historic England provided the guidance in respect of Local Heritage Listings. Contained within this guidance was the importance of community engagement within the process.

It was explained that prior to the work on the Lists for Beoley and Dodford, public consultation events were held to gain public feedback on the draft conservation areas for both Beoley and Dodford Conservation Areas. At these events the opportunity was taken to publicise the Local Heritage Lists. It was noted by Officers that the public response had been limited and only a handful of nominations had been received from the public. Officers clarified that this represented around ten responses.

In the original Local Heritage List Strategy, nominations for inclusion on the list were to be considered by an assessment panel who considered the suitability of all the assets nominated against the selection criteria. However, since the original strategy was adopted there had been changes experienced in staffing levels of Conservation Officers working within the Council. Cabinet was informed that the conservation resources had now doubled and had allowed for internal benchmarking of the proposed list to take place. Therefore, the assessment panel's role had become less relevant compared to the public engagement element which was considered extremely important. A further change since the original strategy was adopted, was the increased use of the Council's website and social media resources. 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 opportunities to engage with the local Ward Councillors, Parish Councillors and building owners as part of the new process.

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.

Draft lists for Beoley, Alvechurch, Belbroughton and Dodford had now been prepared. These lists had resulted in 140 properties being added to the draft Local Heritage List. The sites comprised of a diverse range of properties including houses, schools, village halls, places of worship and canal infrastructure. Members were informed that work was underway on the preparation of the draft lists for Bromsgrove Town, Lickey and Blackwell and Wythall.

Going forward, it was proposed that further lists would be prepared for the remaining areas within the District in consultation with the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure. The final sections of the list would be presented to Cabinet for formal adoption as the Local Heritage List for Bromsgrove. It was envisaged that Officers would prepare a number of reports in tranches over the next twelve to eighteen months with each

one covering a number of parishes / areas so that Local Heritage List coverage could be achieved as soon as possible, rather than wait for the whole District to be assessed before the list was finalised.

Following the presentation of the report there was a detailed discussion regarding the updated process. This included the following areas:

- Appeal processes – there would be no appeal process as part of the newly proposed process. Comments would be sought from property owners as part of the consultation process. However, if an owner did not want their property to be included on the list, this would not be deemed a satisfactory reason for it not to appear on the list. This was the same in the statutory property listing process.
- Permitted Development Rights – these rights would still be recognised as these were made by Central Government. Inclusion on the Local Heritage List would be included as a material consideration as part of the planning process just as statutory listing was currently a material consideration.
- Areas of work already completed – it was raised that all of the work already undertaken had been in parished areas of the District. It was felt that work also needed to be undertaken in unparished areas. Officers confirmed that this would be done and that there had been no particular reason as to why work had been carried out in parished areas so far other than the link to the conservation area appraisals that had been completed in these areas. There would certainly be a mix of assessments carried out in both parished and unparished areas over the course of the work. It was noted that there were some areas located within the District that had more interest in the process for example Alvechurch was very engaged, in part because that area had its own neighbourhood plan.

There was a discussion regarding specific areas contained within the strategy, including in respect of non-designated Heritage Assets. It was noted that the ‘balanced judgement’ would be provided when an application was considered by the Planning Committee or in cases when the Committee did not consider an application, this judgement would be provided by the Planning Officers. These judgements would include consideration of the public benefit if a non-designated Heritage Asset were to be affected as part of a planning application. This was already in place as part of the statutory listing process.

Some Members queried the non-inclusion of heritage assets on the list and that non-inclusion did not necessarily mean that there was no heritage value of that property. Officers explained that the fact that the property was still a 'heritage asset' would still be a material consideration in the planning process. However, it provided flexibility in assessing future heritage assets as and when architectural interests inevitably changed over time resulting in properties that were not on the list being added to the list in the future.

Members asked what national intelligence was available in respect of planning applications that were refused by the Local Authority on the grounds of heritage value but were subsequently granted on appeal. Officers were unsure of the exact data in this area but undertook to look into this further.

It was requested that changes to the wording regarding the Chartist Settlement at Dodford be reworded within the strategy for clarity. Officers undertook to make these necessary changes.

The Chairman of the Overview and scrutiny Board presented the recommendations from the Board which were as follows:

- 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.

In presenting the recommendations the Chairman of the Board reiterated the need for Officers to consider unparished areas within the District as part of the work. It was also noted that there was a rich history in Rubery of local heritage properties such as Nailers' and Button Cottages and that local Ward Members could provide useful information in respect of the assets within their wards.

In respect of the second recommendation, Officers suggested that it seemed reasonable that the works would be completed within the eighteen months suggested. However, if there were any delays they would be reported accordingly. It was also confirmed that at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board it had been requested that Officers provided the Board with a quarterly update in respect of progress and

that a project plan would be provided at the Board meeting due to take place in April 2024.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Cabinet approve the revised Local Heritage List Strategy Document.
- 2) Cabinet delegate the authority to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services to publish for consultation draft sections of the Local Heritage List.
- 3) District Ward Councillors be directly involved in the consultation process for the Local Heritage List (LHL) in their respective ward areas.
- 4) the final Local Heritage List (LHL) for Bromsgrove, covering the whole District, be completed and published within the next 18 months.

94/23

COST OF LIVING FUNDING PROPOSAL

The Head of Community and Housing Services presented the Cost of Living Funding proposal for Cabinet's consideration. In doing so, Members' attention was drawn to the following:

- 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 the 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, it was agreed that the needs of local residents needed to be better understood. Therefore, 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 survey highlighted that the crisis was affecting a broad range of residents not just those on benefits or a lower income. It also established that financial management advice might ease the pressure on residents but that this could not be the only solution. It was suggested that there needed to be more information and support provided 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.

In considering the outcomes of the survey, the Cost-of-Living Group determined that there was a need for additional debt advice workers to work across agencies and within local communities for a fourteen month trial period. The focus of the additional workers would be as follows:

- Specialist housing adviser who delivered housing advice directly.
- Voluntary sector money adviser to help residents improve their well-being when faced with financial difficulties.
- Enhancement of the support of the Financial Inclusion Team.

This trial period would also provide the opportunity to inform a lottery bid by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to continue this work in the future. It was clarified that if the lottery bid was successful any monies not spent on the trial project would be put back in to reserves and reallocated.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed the allocation of funds to each new role and 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. There was a suggestion that the outstanding amount could potentially be utilised to support local food banks within the District.

Some Members felt that there was a risk that fourteen months might not be a long enough period of time to embed new roles and also complete a bid for lottery funding. However, Officers however confirmed although this would be a challenge,

discussions had already started with the VCS and therefore this piece of work had effectively already commenced providing the necessary time.

In terms of the Citizens Advice Bureau funding, it was reported that this would certainly help those residents who were struggling with the Child Benefit system which had recently changed and had caused confusion amongst residents.

Some Members felt that some of the allocation should be provided to outreach work to support young people in schools with financial management. However, it was confirmed that this initiative was already taking place in secondary schools across the District and had been for some time.

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:

- (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

95/23

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE QUARTER 3 MONITORING REPORT 2023/24

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Finance and Performance Quarter 3 Monitoring Report 2023/24 to Cabinet. During the presentation the following was highlighted Members' attention:

- Included in the report was Capital Programme monitoring until the end of December 2023, updated Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) statutory increases in fees and charges for 2024/25, the list of contracts above £200,000 and the list of contracts between £50,000 and £200,000 and the Quarter Three Strategic and Operational Performance Measures.
- Currently, the Council was forecasting a revenue overspend for 2023/24 in the region of £572,000, before the application of £351,000 from the Utilities Reserve as approved at Quarter One. This application of the reserve would result in a forecast overspend of £221,000 for 2023/24. It was noted that the forecast

overspend was predominantly due to the implications of the 2023/24 pay award which had been paid to Officers in December 2023 and had been backdated to 1st April 2023. Other impacts included:

- Increased costs in temporary and interim staff requirements.
 - The impact of homelessness and temporary accommodation costs.
 - Higher than expected ICT costs in the Business Transformation service area.
 - Costs of refurbishment of the Council's fleet.
- As detailed above, the overspend would be offset by a forecast underspend against the Utilities Budget provision due to Utilities inflation running at 70 per cent rather than at 100 per cent as assumed in the 2023/24 Budget. In addition, the overspend would be offset by the following:
 - additional grants receipts and income for Community and Housing.
 - lower than expected ICT purchases and additional grant income in Business Transformation and Organisational Development.
 - In terms of capital spend it was noted that at Quarter Three it was £3.207m (£1.654m at Quarter Two) against the overall 2023/24 capital budget totalling £10.851m.

In presenting the performance measures information, specific areas to note were as follows:

- Housing Growth – It was reported that 199 new homes had been built, 55 of which were affordable homes. The Local Housing Affordability rate was reportedly higher than the national rate at 11.17 percent versus the national rate of 9.05 per cent.
- SLM Leisure (Everyone Active) – there had been an increase in membership numbers from the previous years.
- Staff Turnover Rates – there had been a continued improvement in turnover rates of only 8.8 per cent, which meant that the authority was significantly under the national average rate of staff turnover (15.6 per cent). This would

hopefully continue to improve as a result of the implementation of the Workforce Strategy.

Officers reported that this report had been pre-scrutinised at the Finance and Budget Working Group (FBWG) on Friday 8th March 2024. During this meeting there had been a detailed discussion regarding fly-tipping. It had been agreed that the presentation previously given by the Environmental Services Manager in respect of this topic be provided for newer Members. It had also been requested that a piece of work regarding comparison of numbers of fly-tipping incidents in neighbouring, similar sized Councils be carried out. This was of particular interest to Members as it was felt that given the current situation of closure of refuse sites in neighbouring Authorities this could potentially cause an increase in incidents occurring within Bromsgrove District. Cabinet Members expressed that there needed to be more communications around the successful enforcement of fly-tipping incidents, including when Fixed Penalty Notices were issued.

Other areas of discussion at the meeting of the FBWG was the use of Street Pastors and how residents were referred to them, and the inclusion of crime statistics in the performance measures. A further request was made that the graphs included in the report were increased in size.

Cabinet discussed the relevance of some of the performance measures included within the report. It was felt that these needed to be updated as part of the update of priorities which was soon to take place. It was important that these new priorities reflected the needs of the Council and any measures linked to these not only measured data, but also impacts as a result of the measures.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The Updated WRS 2023/4 Charges be approved.

RESOLVED that

- 2) The current overspend position in relation to Revenue and Capital Budgets for the period April to September and the full year revenue overspend position of £221k after applying £351k from the Utilities Reserve as approved at Quarter 1 be noted.
- 3) The updated procurements position be noted and those items over £200,000 be included on the forward plan.

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- 4) The Quarter Two Performance data for the Period April to December 2023 be noted.

96/23

TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROPERTY SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING

There was no Urgent Business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 7.21 p.m.

Chairman

Bromsgrove District Council – 10th April 2024 Member Questions

**1. From Councillor D. Nicholl
Question for the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services**

“Bromsgrove District is home to a rich and diverse range of plants, shrubs, and trees. Does the portfolio holder agree with me that we should be doing everything in our power to protect and enhance the biodiversity in our district, and could they confirm what planning tools they intend to use to ensure this happens?”

**2. From Councillor S. Robinson
Question for the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services**

“As the local planning authority, please could the portfolio holder tell me what role Bromsgrove District Council has in making sure that unregistered land is adequately maintained to prevent issues such as blocked drains or other nuisances?”

**3. From Councillor J. Robinson
Question for the Cabinet Member for Strategic Housing and Health and Wellbeing**

“Residents across Bromsgrove have been asking when the new homes on Burcot Lane will be occupied. Can the portfolio holder please confirm what the hold-up has been and when they expect to see the first homes occupied?”

**4. From Councillor R. Hunter
Question for Environmental Services and Community Safety**

“Could the cabinet member please inform me if there are any laws or regulations to prevent tree felling during bird nesting season and what powers does Bromsgrove District Council have, planning or otherwise, to enforce these?”

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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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