JOINT WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

June 2014

Bromsgrove District Council
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MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP

(From left to right) Councillors Peter Tomlinson (Vice Chairman), Simon Cronin, Rod Laight (Chairman), Richard Udall, Alan Mason and John Raine.

The Members in the photograph above regularly attended the meetings.

Lead Member	Substitute	Authority
Rod Laight	Pete Lammas	Bromsgrove DC
John Raine	Mike Morgan	Malvern Hills DC
Alan Mason	Gay Hopkins	Redditch BC
Simon Cronin	Paul Denham	Worcester City
Richard Udall	Lynn Duffy	Worcestershire CC
Peter Tomlinson	Alastair Adams	Wychavon DC
Helen Dyke	Tim Ingham	Wyre Forest DC

SUPPORTING OFFICER DETAILS

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Foreword from the Chairman and Vice Chairman

This group came together for the first time in late September 2013. Since then we have met together on 14 further occasions. Our journey together has been taxing, concentrated, at times somewhat frustrating but, in the main, both fulfilling and stimulating. At no time have the divisions which separate us politically played any part whatsoever in our discussions, deliberations or our conclusions. Indeed it became clear from the outset that whatever views individual members of this Task Group may have held about Worcestershire Regulatory Services or whatever their own experiences may have been prior to the review, every single Member was prepared to wipe that individual slate clean and to approach the task with an open and enquiring mind. Working as a team on this Task Group has therefore proved to be very demanding though, for each of us, one of our most worthwhile experiences as Councillors to date.

And it has been some task! We have interviewed 16 people including regulatory professionals, senior Officers from the districts and elected Members representing all the partners in this complex organisation. We have asked for and been given evidence about the performance of WRS in all the areas it covers and we have circulated our own survey amongst elected Members. The overall success of this Joint Scrutiny has been achieved by a team working well together with trust and integrity.

It must be said that all those interviewed by the Task Group have been honest, open and forthright. In particular the Head of Regulatory Services, Steve Jorden, along with his team have been very open and transparent. We have had to listen to and digest a plethora of often divergent views from those sitting on the same Committee. But it would be fair to say that where contrary opinions were put to us they were expressed coherently and with passion. Without exception all those we spoke to believed in Worcestershire Regulatory Services and wanted it to succeed. As our knowledge of the workings of this organisation grew and as we took the pulse, as it were, of all those involved we became ever more certain that the challenge we had taken on was not only timely but vital to the survival of Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

The majority of members of the Task Group took their responsibilities very seriously, though unfortunately the representatives from Wyre Forest District Council were unable to attend the majority of meetings. Similarly in most cases those invited to attend our meetings to be interviewed by us came willingly and in a spirit of co-operation. There was, however, one exception, which again we found most disappointing and that was, when given ample notice, no senior Officer was able to attend from Worcestershire County Council. A written response to our questions was provided by the County Council but this allowed no cross examination. Throughout our work, experience proved that whilst written answers were useful, the real meat then came from our probing of those answers.

We think we speak for all of us on this Task Group when we say that our work though onerous and demanding has been both enlightening and fulfilling. Now that the end is in sight we hope that our recommendations will help underpin the future of WRS. It has achieved so much in such a short space of time it deserves to succeed.

On behalf of all the Task Group Members we would like to thank our two Democratic Services Officers Amanda Scarce and Jess Bayley who have kept us on the straight and narrow, prompted us when we stalled, found the evidence we knew we had heard but had forgotten, nudged us with both advice and insight and generally kept this unique group of disparate individuals good tempered, courteous and above all focused. Thank you both, we could not have done it without you.

Councillor Rod Laight (Bromsgrove District Council)
Chairman (pictured on the right)
Councillor Peter Tomlinson (Wychavon District Council)
Vice Chairman

Summary of Recommendations

After consideration of all the evidence available (both documentary and from the interviews and other consultations) the Task Group have proposed the following recommendations (with full details of the supporting evidence provided in the chapters following this summary):

CHAPTER 1 - WRS PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Recommendation 1
Performance Management Information should continue to be made available for Members' consideration at every meeting of the Joint Committee and be sufficiently high on the agenda to be discussed in detail.
Financial Implications: There are no financial implications for WRS.
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Additional officer time may be required should extra meetings be introduced as suggested under recommendation 9.

Recommendation 2
Twelve months after the new contact centre arrangements for WRS have been introduced, replacing the use of the Worcestershire Hub, the Joint Committee should review the effectiveness of these arrangements for communicating with the public.
Financial Implications: There are no financial implications.
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Additional officer time would be required in order to produce this additional report.

Recommendation 3
The web-pages of each partner authority should be regularly monitored to ensure they are kept up to date, with the inclusion of a prominent and obvious link to the WRS website.
Financial Implications: There are no financial implications to WRS.
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: There would be additional Officers' time from within WRS for the monitoring to take place and to follow up on any extra actions necessary identified during the monitoring process.

Recommendation 4
The purpose, content and circulation of the WRS newsletter should be thoroughly reviewed, with a view to it providing a more systematic and comprehensive account of the work and performance of the shared service, and with the content and format being agreed by the Joint Committee.
Financial Implications: There are no financial implications for WRS.
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: A small amount of additional Officer time will be required to review the content of the newsletter and to present it to meetings of the Joint Committee. However, it is likely that the Officers from WRS who already attend meetings of the Joint Committee could present this item for the consideration of Members.

Recommendation 5
That WRS have a designated member of staff to act as a Member Liaison Officer and as a single point of contact to signpost Member enquiries.
Financial Implications: There are no financial implications as it should be possible for this work to be undertaken by an existing member of WRS staff.
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: There would be additional Officer time required from the member of WRS staff designated to this role.

CHAPTER 2 - FINANCING OF WRS

Recommendation 6
In order to reduce the focus on financial considerations which currently play a major part in influencing partner participation, to the detriment of other equally important aspects of the service, the following should be addressed: (a) A new business model for WRS be developed through the Chief Executives' Panel, building on the proposals already being produced by the Panel. (b) Consideration be given to the option for partner authorities to purchase an "out of hours service".
Financial Implications: Initially there would be no financial implications from carrying out this review. It is acknowledged, however, that the intention behind this recommendation is to identify a financial model that would stabilise the funding of WRS in the long term. Should this financial model vary to the charging mechanism already in place there may be additional costs for certain partners (with reductions in costs for others). The impact of any variances would have to be considered by partner Councils. Each local authority needs to be aware that the option to introduce an out of hours' regulatory service in their area has significant financial implications in term of the Council's financial contribution to the service. Out of hours services are not currently available anywhere in the county and so would require additional expenditure from partners.

Legal Implications: The existing legal agreement includes a Statement of Partner Requirements, which can be agreed with the Joint Committee. Should the charging model be revised the legal agreement would have to be amended to reflect this and it would have to be approved by the Joint Committee and the Partners.
Resource Implications: Initially Officer time would be required to carry out the exploratory work although the group understand that the Chief Executives' Panel have already been investigating this matter.

CHAPTER 3 - GOVERNANCE OF WRS

Recommendation 7
A new strategic decision making board for WRS should replace the Joint Committee, comprising one elected member per partner authority and supported by senior officers. This should be called the WRS Board. (a) Meetings of this Board should take place at the base of WRS. (b) Responsibility for attendance at Board meetings should lie with each authority's representative, and the quorum for meetings proceeding should be set at 5 representatives in attendance. (c) Meetings of the Board should take place bi-monthly. (d) Elected members appointed to the Board should be provided with an induction programme and sufficient ongoing training to enable them to fulfil their role effectively. (e) Members appointed to the Board be expected to serve a minimum of two years to ensure continuity. (f) The Chair of the WRS Board should be elected annually by the members of the Board.
Financial Implications: Initially there would be some financial implications for this proposal, but these are likely to be quite limited. In particular there would be financial implications in respect of additional meetings of the WRS Board and in relation to holding an induction programme and on-going training.
Legal Implications: This proposal fundamentally affects the constitution of the Joint Committee under s101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and s20 of the Local Government Act 2000 as established by the founding legal agreement dated 1 June 2009 and would essentially require a re-negotiation of it by member authorities.
Resource Implications: There would be resource implications in terms of Officer time in preparing additional agendas and minutes for the extra meetings and in planning and delivering suitable training. This could be offset by the fact that Democratic

Services Officers would no longer need to spend time ensuring that the meetings are quorate. There may also be some initial resource implications in relation to convening meetings at the base of WRS (currently Wyatt House in Worcester) as opposed to Bromsgrove Council House where meetings are currently held.

Recommendation 8
The Management Board be disbanded, with the WRS Management Team taking the lead responsibility for operational decision making under the leadership of the Head of Regulatory Services.
Financial Implications: There would be a "one off" financial implication due to having to change the partnership's legal agreement, although this is likely to be limited.
Legal Implications: This recommendation would require changes to the current legal agreement for WRS and each partner would need to approve these changes.
Resource Implications: The Officers currently serving on the Management Board would potentially have greater freedom to concentrate on the service needs within their remits of their own authorities. There are no particular resource implications for WRS staff as operational considerations relating to regulatory services are already within their professional area of expertise.

Recommendation 9
(a) The Head of WRS should be fully accountable to the WRS Board (as the strategic decision making body). (b) The Chief Executive of the host authority to act in a mentoring role as and when necessary.
Financial Implications: There are no financial implications.
Legal Implications: This will require an amendment to the existing legal agreement as the role of the Management Board and the Head of WRS are set out therein.
Resource Implications: There are no resource implications. In fact if the Head of Regulatory Services was to report to a single body this might help to reduce both financial and resource implications for all partners.

CHAPTER 4 - LESSONS LEARNED

Recommendation 10
(a) All decisions made by the WRS Board be formally reported back to all elected members of the partner authorities in a timely manner. (b) Attention should be paid to communicating updates about any planned changes to WRS services to all elected members of partner authorities.. (c) The agendas and minutes of all WRS Board meetings should also be uploaded on to the WRS website in a timely fashion.
Financial Implications: There are no financial implications.
Legal Implications: (a) Minutes of the meetings of the Joint Committee are referred to the participating Councils where further discussion is possible and in some cases agreement required.
Resource Implications: This could potentially require Members appointed to the WRS Board to spend additional time formally reporting back to their Councils about the work of WRS and the Board. In addition, the Democratic Services Officers at each Council would need to spend a limited amount of time uploading the agendas and minutes on to their websites, together with a representative from WRS carrying out this work on the WRS website. This should be fairly easy to achieve as the host authority provides a prepared pack for uploading.

Recommendation 11
The lessons learned from the WRS shared service experience, particularly as detailed in this report, should be heeded by elected members and senior officers when considering any future proposals for shared service arrangements involving multiple partners.
Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications. However, by reviewing the lessons learned from the WRS Shared Service when considering future proposals for shared services elected members and senior Officers could potentially save partner organisations a significant amount of money.
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation.

Resource Implications: Officer time would be required to consider these lessons, though the time required would vary dependent on the shared service being considered.

Recommendation 12
(a) The Joint Scrutiny Protocol should be reviewed in order to take on board the lessons learned during this review. (b) Consideration should be given to the reinstatement of the Worcestershire Overview and Scrutiny Chairs Group as a means of feeding back the monitoring of recommendations from Joint Scrutiny exercises, as and when required.
Financial Implications: There are no financial implications.
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Officer time would be required from representatives of all the Democratic Service teams at each authority in Worcestershire to review this document.

Introduction and Background Information

Background to the Joint Scrutiny

Wychavon District Council originally proposed that Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) should be subject to a joint scrutiny (in July 2012). Each Council within Worcestershire was consulted about the proposal and all had agreed to participate by spring 2013. Draft terms of reference were drawn up by Wychavon District Council and in line with the agreed framework for joint scrutiny in Worcestershire, each Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered and approved these terms of reference by May 2013.

The potential role of Overview and Scrutiny in holding the Joint Committee and WRS officers to account had in fact been considered in the original partnership agreement for the shared service. However, whilst Overview and Scrutiny was clearly recognised as having a legitimate role to play in this regard, it had also been felt unreasonably onerous for the Head of Regulatory Services to have to report to seven different scrutiny committees across the County. Therefore, as part of the original legal agreement, partners had determined that scrutiny should not be undertaken by any one Overview and Scrutiny Committee but, rather, should be carried out jointly. This review has been conducted in accordance with that principle as a collective exercise.

The terms of reference included the following main tasks (full details are provided at Appendix 1):

- To review the final business case for the shared service (as agreed by the participating Councils) against current operation.

- To compare the previous service levels of each participating Council compared with current levels and those outlined in the final business case.

- To establish the performance of the service for participating Councils prior to and since the establishment of the shared service.

- To review levels of customer satisfaction prior to and following establishment of the shared service and how feedback informs practice.

- To consider the governance arrangements between the shared service and the participating Councils to include how changes to the service requested by one or more Councils can be achieved.

It was agreed that the Scrutiny Task Group should comprise one representative from each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees of the partner authorities and for there to be a named substitute for each. It was also agreed that each representative, or their substitute, should be either the Chair or Vice Chair of their Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

At the first meeting of the Scrutiny Task Group the nominated members elected as their Chair, Councillor Rod Laight (being the representative for the

WRS host authority, Bromsgrove District Council). Councillor Peter Tomlinson, from Wychavon District Council, was appointed as Vice Chair.

Evidence gathering

The Task Group gathered evidence through a range of means, including scrutiny of relevant documentation and interviews with various representatives of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee (the elected member decision making body for the shared service), the Management Board (comprising officer representatives from each partner authority who advise the Joint Committee), the WRS management team and officers of the host authority (Bromsgrove District Council). The Group also consulted with parish councillors and other elected members from across the County, who were neither on the Joint Committee nor on the Task Group, to find out about their experiences of working with WRS. The feedback provided through this consultation process has been greatly valued and has helped to inform its conclusions. However, the Task Group would like it to be noted that, since only a very small number of councillors responded, the wider representativeness of the feedback received was difficult to gauge.

Consideration was given at an early stage to the potential for a questionnaire to be circulated to obtain feedback from members of the public and from local businesses about the services they had received from WRS. Whilst the Task Group would undoubtedly have benefited from such additional feedback it was concerned about the difficulties involved in obtaining a suitably large or representative sample of responses from across the County. For this reason it was agreed that it should rely instead on the already available 'complaints and compliments' data held by WRS as a basis for assessing the level of customer satisfaction with the services.

At various stages of the review, updates were provided both to Task Group members and to the Democratic Services teams at participating authorities for use when reporting back to partner Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The lead Member from each authority was also encouraged to inform colleagues about progress with the joint scrutiny review as and when appropriate.

Background to Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS)

The shared Worcestershire Regulatory Service (WRS) was initially conceived as part of the Worcestershire Enhanced Two Tier (WETT) programme in 2009. Each of the seven authorities in Worcestershire expressed an interest at this stage in participating in the shared service. Three key principles underpinned the design of the shared service as follows:

1. Achievement of service improvement and increased effectiveness.
2. Achievement of greater efficiency, cost savings and return on investment.
3. Achievement of a greater degree of sharing of resources for service delivery.

These key principles underpinned thinking in the drafting of the partnership agreement for WRS where it was specifically stated that the shared service had been established "*for the purpose of achieving financial efficiencies, sharing resources and improving delivery of services*".

Wychavon, Worcestershire County and Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils each submitted a bid to host the shared regulatory service. Initially, the County Council was considered best placed to take on this role. However, at the request of the Worcestershire Chief Executives' Panel, an independent external evaluation was requested, from a private sector partner and in September 2009, this concluded that Bromsgrove District Council would be the most appropriate host authority.

The shared WRS service was subsequently launched in 2010. Each of the councils signed up to the current partnership agreement for the service in June of that year. This established the governance arrangements for the service, which included a Joint Committee (of elected members from each partner organisation), a Management Board (of officers from each authority) and a WRS management team (of senior practitioners from the new shared service). The agreement also established arrangements for withdrawal from the service, a scheme of delegated responsibilities and financial arrangements, as well as detailing the arrangements for transferring all regulatory staff from their respective local authorities into the employment of the host authority.

Under the terms of the hosting arrangement, Bromsgrove District Council accepted responsibility for the following:

- Arranging suitable accommodation.
- Administration of the Joint Committee.
- Audit services.
- Data protection and information security.
- HR and personnel services.
- Financial services.
- ICT services (and licensing of ICT systems and equipment).
- Insurance.
- Legal services.
- Pensions and procurement.

(It should be noted that whilst Bromsgrove District Council is the host authority, each partner authority contributes to the overhead costs).

At an early stage partners agreed that the shared service needed to be based at a single location, even though staff would be required to work across the County as necessary. It was also agreed that the base should be a building already in the ownership of one of the partner authorities. A number of such buildings were assessed and Wyatt House in Worcester (owned by Worcester City Council) was eventually identified as offering the most suitable base. Accordingly, WRS entered into a 10 year lease for the premises.

The Role of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS)

WRS covers three key service areas

- Trading Standards
- Licensing
- Environmental Health

(A more detailed list of the constituent activities is provided at Appendix 4).

Key elements of Trading Standards are statutory responsibilities of County Councils in two tier authority areas (and remain so ultimately even under the shared service arrangement). However, WRS also undertakes a number of trading standards-related activities that are discretionary. The main trading standards functions are; fair trading/consumer protection, product safety, food standards, metrology and animal health and welfare.

Environmental Health functions, on the other hand, are primarily a responsibility of district councils, (again even under a shared service arrangement). These include responsibility for food safety/hygiene, nuisance complaints (e.g. noise), air quality and pollution, and health and safety, again with some statutory responsibilities and some discretionary activities.

There are certain licensing functions which, under the terms of the Licensing Acts 2003 and 2005, remain the responsibility of district councils in a shared service environment. Each district council must determine the fees for licenses in its area and each must have a Licencing Committee and Sub-Committee(s) which make (quasi-judicial) decisions about whether to grant licensing applications. Licenses can be provided for a range of services including taxis, alcohol and gambling establishments and a raft of other regimes. The role of WRS in this context is to provide expert advice to each council and to deliver the services required.

On the whole the majority of trading standards, environmental health and licensing services are provided by WRS consistently across the County. However, there are a few services which certain local authorities within the partnership have chosen not to receive (for example Malvern Hills District Council does not receive a pest control service). All service choices are taken into account when calculating the financial contributions made by each local authority to the partnership.

Chapter 1

WRS Performance and Communications

Performance

This particular joint scrutiny review was launched largely as a result of concerns raised by members from Overview and Scrutiny Committees about the limited information apparently available about the performance of WRS. Requests had been made for performance data to be provided alongside equivalent performance data for the services as provided previously under in-house arrangements by each council.

The Task Group learned that, in the original business case, it had been agreed that WRS performance would be measured in accordance with the five relevant national indicators (NIs) set by the then government. However the launch of WRS coincided with a change in national government in 2010 and the scrapping of the national indicator framework. WRS took advantage of this change and of the new discretion on local authority performance measurement, choosing an outcomes-based model in preference to the largely output-based national performance indicators approach. This was agreed by both the Management Board and the Joint Committee.

The Task Group has thus found it difficult to assess performance and particularly to draw comparisons between the periods before and after the launch of WRS because of the absence of a consistent series of data. Indeed, it found there to be a very limited amount of relevant performance information available for the individual partner authorities prior to WRS with the result that it was difficult for the Task Group to address objective three of the terms of reference in any real depth.

The Task Group also learned of the considerable difficulties WRS had encountered in its first four years in putting in place an integrated ICT support system. Although the original business case for WRS had envisaged an early procurement process for an appropriate ICT system to support the new service, this proved a more protracted process than expected and the service has had to rely on at least 20 different legacy ICT systems for several years. Indeed, at the start of this scrutiny review in September 2013 six of those legacy systems still remained in place and were clearly a continuing source of inefficiency.

The Task Group was informed by the Head of Regulatory Services that the subject of how best to meet the ICT requirements of WRS had been extensively discussed within the Management Board and culminated in a decision to procure something bespoke for the new service rather than an “off the shelf” package, even though this was recognised as meaning further delay and greater cost. Four years on the specially tailored ICT system is finally in place and at last, there is the basis for provision of good quality management and performance information.

The Task Group is keen that such information should, from now on, be available at every meeting of the Joint Committee. Moreover, the Task Group think that such performance reports should be placed sufficiently high on the agendas to ensure that elected members have the opportunity to consider them in a diligent and constructive manner.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 1
Performance Management Information should continue to be made available for Members' consideration at every meeting of the Joint Committee and be sufficiently high on the agenda to be discussed in detail.

Communications with the Public

It was proposed in the original business case that the Worcestershire Hub would play a key strategic role in the new service model for WRS by acting as the main communications centre for the public and other service users. This was justified on the basis that the Hub was well equipped to provide *"…a more customer focused and streamlined delivery for the unified regulatory services…*" and the Hub was *"…nationally regarded as an exemplar of best practice…"* in terms of customer access.

However, early in the scrutiny review concerns were raised about shortcomings in the Hub's responsiveness to the public and based on experiences by elected members across the County. Examples are reproduced below:

> *"I have not been happy with recent experiences, primarily in relation to getting hold of WRS."*
>
> *"Communication links with officers can be variable".*
>
> "*The problem I have experienced with WRS is that I have been passed from pillar to post. I have been told "we have never heard of the WRS. We don't know what you mean?" I have been put through to another department… It took me about three hours to contact the person I wanted to speak to and then she had left the office so I had to start all over again the next day*."

The Task Group concluded that such comments were particularly indicative of shortcomings in communications between the Hub and WRS rather than any indictment of WRS itself. Moreover, an analysis of WRS 'complaints and compliments' data for the period June 2011 to September 2013 highlighted the extent to which customers' concerns related more to the manner in which their complaint was referred on for action than to the actions subsequently

taken by WRS. In each of those three years the majority of issues related to a breakdown in communications.

The Task Group learned that WRS staff were aware that the contact arrangements with the Hub were not working satisfactorily enough and that discussions had been held with the Hub's senior management about the capacity to meet the needs of WRS customers. The issue had also been raised at the Joint Committee on 26th September 2013 when members discussed a letter from the Chairman of the Worcestershire Hub Shared Services Management Board in which it had been suggested that additional Customer Service Advisors would need to be recruited to handle regulatory services enquiries and for which an increase in funding would be required. In response, the Head of Regulatory Services had advised the Joint Committee that he did not feel convinced about the additional need and cost and that the alternative would be to bring the customer enquiries work in-house within WRS – where it would be easier to refer matters more directly to the appropriate officer. This indeed is what the Joint Committee decided to do and it is understood that the new customer service arrangements were due to be implemented in May 2014.

Given the history of complaints concerning communications with WRS and the frustration that this has caused, the Task Group considers it important that the effectiveness of the new arrangements are closely monitored in the period ahead. The Task Group also suggest that a full report on the effectiveness of the change in customer contact arrangements should be presented to the Joint Committee in 12 months' time – when the change should have become embedded.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 2
Twelve months after the new contact centre arrangements for WRS have been introduced, replacing the use of the Worcestershire Hub; the Joint Committee should review the effectiveness of these arrangements for communicating with the public.

The Task Group also noted that information on partner councils' websites regarding regulatory services was not always up to date or easily accessible. As part of the investigation, each Task Group member reviewed their own council's website to assess the quality of the information on regulatory services and the ease of linkage with the WRS website. In doing so, the Task Group recognised that most customers seeking information about such services online would be likely to visit their own council's website initially (probably being unaware of the existence of WRS). Whilst in some cases the websites were helpful and the links straight-forward, it was found that the available information was not always as comprehensive or as up-to-date as should be expected.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 3
The webpages of each partner authority should be regularly monitored to ensure they are up to date and with the inclusion of a prominent link to the WRS website.

Internal Communications

The Task Group also considered other mechanisms for communicating information about WRS to interested parties across the County and particularly focused on the WRS Newsletter (which is circulated to all members in Worcestershire on a quarterly basis). This is a potentially informative and valuable means of communication, but in its present format the document tends to be more selective and anecdotal than systematic and comprehensive in presentation of the work and performance of WRS.

The Task Group recognises the challenges involved in communicating effectively the diverse work of a multi-functional service in a manner that is satisfactory both to elected members and to a range of other potentially interested parties. However, the Task Group believe the current format and content of the Newsletter could be much improved and that this would help to promote a better understanding of WRS and its work among the wider body of elected members and other stakeholders. The Task Group suggests that members of the Joint Committee should take a more active part in agreeing the style and content of a quarterly newsletter and that its members should be consulted about each edition before it is published.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 4
The purpose, content and circulation of the WRS newsletter should be thoroughly reviewed, with a view to it providing a more systematic and comprehensive account of the work and performance of the shared service and with the content and format being agreed by the Joint Committee.

Since one of the key concerns raised by elected members across Worcestershire was the difficulty experienced in contacting a representative of WRS directly (despite recent re-circulation to all members of the directory of WRS staff telephone and email contact details) the Task Group considers that it would be useful for a lead member of WRS staff to be specifically assigned the role of 'Member Liaison Officer' to provide a further first point of contact, e.g. for queries and issues where there is uncertainty about who might be best placed to assist. This arrangement is felt to work well for the County Council's Highways Department, where there is an area-based structure of Member Liaison Officers.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 5
That WRS have a designated member of staff to act as a Member Liaison Officer and as a single point of contact to signpost Member enquiries.

Chapter 2

Financing of WRS

As detailed in the background section of this report, one of the key drivers for the shared regulatory service was the potential for efficiencies and cost savings. From the Task Group's interviews with the Head of Regulatory Services, it was learned that WRS had already exceeded the originally anticipated financial savings (which had benefited all the partner councils) yet the overall budget had been further reduced significantly since 2010. For 2014/15, it had been proposed that the WRS budget be further cut (by an additional £646,000 from the 2013-14 figure of £5.626m). Members also learned that the Head of Regulatory Services had advised the Joint Committee of his view that this was the absolute minimum with which WRS could realistically operate if it were to continue to deliver services at current levels. Any further reductions would, in his judgement, impact on service delivery and quality.

More generally and over the life of WRS to date, it appeared to the Task Group that the quest for cost reductions has tended to dominate debate within and between the partner authorities rather than issues of regulatory standards and public protection. Indeed, the Task Group considers finance has been the key driver both for the Management Board and the Joint Committee and has largely come to trump the other objectives that had underpinned the rationale for the shared service in the first place.

In the original partnership agreement it was determined that the budget for WRS should be considered and approved by the Joint Committee by the end of November each year. This would ensure that the partner authorities would be clear about their financial contributions ahead of their own budget setting processes. The Task Group was advised that this arrangement had worked well in the early years of the partnership but that, because of the deterioration in the financial position of partners' budgets, it would probably not be so suitable for future years. Indeed, whilst this joint scrutiny review was taking place, Worcestershire County Council proposed significant reductions in its budget contribution – to be implemented incrementally over a three year period (and which would see the County Council's contribution to WRS decreasing from £1.5m in 2014/15 to £250,000 in 2016/17).

Such a reduction, the Task Group was informed, would have significant implications for the quality and level of services of WRS. Already since 2010, staff numbers have decreased from 154 to117 (in 2013), and the Head of Regulatory Services indicated to the Task Group that, if implemented, the further proposed budget reductions would imply further shrinkage to an estimated 102 in 2014/15 and probably still smaller numbers in subsequent years.

The Task Group was also advised more specifically of the potential implications for trading standards staff. In this respect, the indication is that,

by 2016/17, the level of funding might support just six trading standards officers for the whole of the County (compared with 25 in 2013/14). . Such a contraction clearly raises questions about resilience within WRS to respond to unforeseen challenges or emergencies such as the horse meat scandal of 2013. In this regard the Task Group was interested to learn that, nationally, the Trading Standards Institute has recently commissioned research on the impacts and cost-effectiveness of different trading standards activities to understand better the possible consequences of such funding and staff reductions.

Recognising the potential risks for all partner councils and their communities if funding is reduced to the point where capacity is unduly compromised, the Joint Committee recently agreed that the WRS budget should in future be planned on a three year rolling programme basis to facilitate longer-term planning. In the same context, a new budget matrix has been designed to assist decision-making as to the costs of different service options for partners. This matrix approach, which was also approved by the Joint Committee in September 2013, has been developed from a "zero based" budget exercise and indicates the minimum resources and budget required to meet existing levels of demand and statutory obligations in all relevant functional areas. The matrix also provides risk assessments in relation to key regulatory objectives of protecting vulnerable people, supporting the local economy and improving health and well being.

A further issue that has recently been pursued as a response to the difficult financial context for WRS and its partners is that of seeking a private sector strategic partner. Here the rationale is to look to grow WRS (either or both by acquiring more local authority partners and undertaking more work for others on a contractual basis) and for which, the argument goes, the commercial experience and marketing skills of the private sector would be especially helpful. In November 2013, during the early months of this joint scrutiny, the Joint Committee approved initial 'soft marketing' ahead of a decision to commence a formal procurement process in 2014.

At this early stage, the Task Group has had little information by which to form a view as to the potential of such a private sector strategic partnership in helping WRS in relation to its financial challenges. Accordingly, the Task Group do not draw any conclusion or make recommendations on this issue. However, it is fair to say that the Task Group received mixed feedback on the proposal. Some officers and members on the Joint Committee regarded it as the only viable solution while others stated their concerns that the process was being brought forward too quickly and without sufficient consideration of other options. Concerns were also articulated that a private sector partner's interests might be selective in focusing largely on the more commercial of WRS's services and that if capacity was further reduced as a result of shrinking partner financial contributions, the organisation might likely become less attractive to the private sector in any case. The general view taken by the Task Group was that, whilst a strategic partnership might well help to achieve some early financial stability for WRS, a more fundamental reconsideration of the business model and rebuilding of partner commitment

were probably required if the partnership were to remain viable for the longer term.

In this context, a more significant concern of the Task Group was the possibility of members of the partnership losing confidence in the venture and for financial and other reasons, deciding to withdraw and instead once again provide their own regulatory services. The Task Group's clear view here is that any such development would not just be highly regrettable but at odds with the logic of more integrated public service provision that has been pioneered within Worcestershire.

It could also be quite costly as, under the current governance arrangements, the agreement specifically states that

"… *the Member Authority giving notice of termination (or if there is more than one such Member Authority then each of them in equal shares) shall bear all costs arising out of or in connection with such termination and shall indemnify the remaining Member Authorities against all costs and expenses incurred by them arising out of or in connection with that termination…"*

This would include costs such as those for redundancy or redeployment of staff, termination of any leases or licenses for use of premises or equipment, procurement of alternative accommodation, preparation and disaggregation of relevant data or records and reimbursing staff or administrative overhead costs. Feedback received by the Task Group from various witnesses during the review suggested that awareness of this clause within the original agreement was less widespread amongst partners than perhaps it should have been, since, in the current economic climate at least, most authorities would struggle to afford such costs.

Instead, the Task Group is keen to propose a more constructive option for the future. This would build on the work undertaken recently by the Worcestershire Chief Executives' Panel in developing a budget matrix that indicates costs for different activities and for different levels of provision. In this way, more tailored and costed packages of regulatory services might be offered to partners to suit their local needs and budgets, which could be helpful in building partner confidence in WRS. Indeed, such a bespoke approach might well include enhanced as well as reduced services, for example, the possibility of an 'out of hours' service for partners with concerns about late night noise nuisance problems.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 6
In order to reduce the focus on financial considerations which currently play a major part in influencing partner participation, to the detriment of other equally important aspects of the service, the following should be addressed: (a) A new business model for WRS be developed through the Chief Executives' Panel, building on the proposals already being produced by the Panel. (b) Consideration be given to the option for partner authorities to purchase an "out of hours service"

Chapter 3

Governance of WRS

The partnership agreement for WRS was drawn up by Legal Services Officers representing all seven partner councils in Worcestershire and is divided into two parts; the first section introduces the framework and the second provides details on regulatory services.

In that agreement the main elements of the governance structure for WRS are defined as follows:

- **Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee**, comprising two councillor representatives per authority, is designated as the key strategic decision-making body.
- **The Management Board**, comprising officer representatives from each partner authority is responsible for providing advice on both strategic and operational matters.
- **The WRS Management Team** is responsible for service delivery.

As WRS was the first and only shared regulatory service in a two-tier local government structure, there has been no exemplar framework agreement or constitution available to replicate or learn from. Accordingly, the above governance arrangements were proposed and approved without knowing for sure how well they might work in practice.

Governance Review

Two years on, the Head of Regulatory Services requested that the Chief Executives' Panel conduct a review of those governance arrangements in light of concerns particularly about the Management Board. While the Task Group understand that assurances were given, no governance review had taken place ahead of this joint scrutiny Task Group. However, consultations with stakeholders have highlighted further recognition of the need for such a review and not least because of the possibility now of a private sector strategic partner also becoming involved. Indeed, several consultees alluded to the importance of getting the governance arrangements as effective and efficient as possible to ensure that WRS would be able to present itself as an attractive proposition to commercial organisations. The following comments from representatives of both the Joint Committee and the Management Board underline this viewpoint:

> *"…. there will need to be a full governance review of both the Joint Committee and the Management Board and an alternative solution found. It would be a very different picture with much less Member involvement and would very much be at arm's length."*

"I think that if a strategic partnership with the private sector is pursued further all of the governance arrangements for WRS will need to be reviewed and a different structure put in place."

"The partnership agreement was very constrained and no one was aware at the time of how things would change. The partners now need to make changes to governance to make it more flexible."

The Task Group has been surprised and concerned at the delay in undertaking such a governance review following the request by the Head of Service two years ago and particularly given the level of confusion encountered amongst some members of the Joint Committee about their own role and that of the Management Board (outlined in detail below). However, the Task Group's terms of reference for this scrutiny included (at point 5) an objective '*to consider the governance arrangements between the shared service and the participating councils'* and accordingly the Task Group has paid particular attention to this issue and made a number of key recommendations which are designed to resolve some of the problems it identified.

Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee

In first establishing WRS as a shared service, legal requirements had to be followed (notably, that, under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, there would need to be an elected member decision-making body which resulted in the formation of the Joint Committee). At the time, it was agreed by the Executive Committees/Cabinets of each partner authority that delegated power should be granted to the Joint Committee to consider and make decisions on all the regulatory functions detailed in the agreement on their behalf, albeit that any additional changes to policy should be referred back to the respective Executive Committees/Cabinets.

The particular roles of the Joint Committee, as detailed within the agreement, were as follows:

- To make strategic decisions on behalf of the partnership.
- To oversee the development, implementation and operation of the shared service.
- To establish a framework for the operation of the shared service.
- To appoint sub-committees where necessary.

Under the terms of the agreement, each member authority was required to appoint two members to the Joint Committee each year. In the case of those authorities operating Leader/Cabinet arrangements, at least one of these members has to be a member of the Cabinet/Executive Committee. The agreement also permitted substitute members to attend in place of the lead member when necessary. Some councils have chosen to appoint named substitutes each year (although this is not a requirement).

The agreement states that a minimum of one elected representative from each authority should be present at meetings of the Joint Committee in order for those meetings to be quorate (although, as a Legal Services representative informed the Task Group, this is not a general legal requirement, purely something that the partners for this particular agreement insisted upon). The quorum for the Joint Committee was reviewed in 2013 when Members decided to continue with these same requirements.

Attendance, however, is not without its problems and the Task Group learned that Democratic Services officers frequently have to spend significant amounts of time contacting and "chasing" Joint Committee representatives to ensure quorate meetings. To minimise the resources involved in this respect, the Task Group concluded that the onus should be on each partner authority, rather than the officers of the host authority, to ensure that their representatives would indeed be able to attend or to arrange substitutes.

The Task Group was also concerned about the potential for conflicts of interest to arise between membership of the Joint Committee and membership of a particular authority's Cabinet/Executive Committee in making budgetary decisions (i.e. if the financial pressures of their own local authorities were to influence their voting in relation to the WRS budget). Further potential conflicts of interest were identified in relation to those members of the Joint Committee who were both district and county councillors; and also for the Chair of the Joint Committee in relation to their particular own local authority.

Under current arrangements the Chair of the Joint Committee is appointed on an annual basis from the membership and on a rotating basis. Of concern to the Task Group here, however, was the possibility of a member assuming the chair (because it was 'their turn') but without necessarily having a sufficient understanding of the nature of regulatory services or sufficient time to devote to the responsibility. The Task Group considered the alternative of having an independent chair person – someone who specialised in regulatory functions. However, it was recognised that finding such a suitable and willing person could be difficult and also that this approach might seem inappropriate for an essentially democratic decision making body. Consequently, the Task Group concluded that probably the best approach to choice of chair would be for the Joint Committee membership to elect its chair based on merit rather than rotation.

The Task Group was keen to ensure that the Joint Committee as a whole was able to operate effective as the key decision-making body for WRS and to this end, the Task Group discussed a range of pertinent issues including, duration of appointment for members, size of committee, frequency and location of meetings and training arrangements:

- With regard to duration of appointment, the Task Group considers that members should be expected to serve a minimum term of two years (to develop the necessary understanding and experience of WRS). At present, as indicated, appointments are made on an annual basis and

this has tended to result in frequent turnover of representatives from some authorities. The Task Group believes a minimum term of two years would also help to strengthen commitment and ensure greater continuity in the composition of the Joint Committee, so enabling the level of expertise and experience as a whole to grow.

- Regarding the size of committee, the Task Group believes a committee of fourteen members (two per partner authority) to be unwieldy, especially so as there are usually at least four officers also in attendance in support roles). Indeed, when the Task Group observed a meeting of the Joint Committee, it witnessed how difficult it was for many members to engage fully in such a large 'conference-like' setting and for discussion to develop in any depth on the issues under consideration. Accordingly, the Task Group's clear view is that it would be better to have just one member nominated from each council rather than two as now. This would help to ensure more inclusive debate, it would facilitate deeper discussion and it would facilitate more efficient and effective decision–making and provision of the clear strategic steer that the Head of Regulatory Services and his team look for from the Committee.

- Rather than the current quarterly meetings, the Task Group considers that meetings every other month (i.e. six times per year) would also help to build expertise and commitment in relation to regulatory services. Additional meetings might also mean shorter agendas but create more opportunity to consider the important issues in more depth. Its own experiences as a Task Group illustrate, much time is needed together for rapport and understanding to build between representatives from different local authorities. The Task Group is sure that a leaner Joint Committee, with members meeting more frequently, will greatly help in making the Joint Committee a more effective decision-making body.

- A smaller committee would more easily support the ideal – as the Task Group sees it - of Joint Committee meetings being held at WRS's main office location where the professional staff and other supporting resources are on hand. While no doubt there are some advantages in the current arrangement of holding Joint Committee meetings at the base for the host authority, with just seven members (and supporting officers) the base of WRS would seem a more appropriate setting and one that would of course afford members with the opportunity to see more of the staff and some of the regulatory work first hand. It would also represent a suitably neutral location for all members.

- The issue of training for members of the Joint Committee was also considered – this, too, being seen as vital to the building of a stronger and more competent governance body for WRS. Accordingly, the Task Group asked all the members it interviewed about the amount of training they had received both prior to and during their periods of service on the Committee. Some longer-serving members explained

that in the first year of the shared service, a programme of training had been provided (prior to the first meeting) and that there had been follow-up half day sessions in subsequent months. However, it was understood that members appointed more recently had not received the equivalent induction or training opportunities (some having received little more than a half hour briefing from their authority's representative on the Management Board).

Some relevant comments in this regard were as follows:

> "*I have not received any specific training although I did receive a briefing from the Council's representatives on the Management Board and I have not had a chance to visit Wyatt House.*"
>
> "*I learnt by osmosis and I think it is up to members to be proactive and to find out what the role is themselves.*"
>
> "*I received a briefing from my Council's representative on the Management Board and I spoke with the other councillor from my authority on the Committee as he had served on it for a number of years. I also made a point of arranging to visit Wyatt House and met with the Head of Service and some of the other staff. I found the visit in particular really useful as it helped to explain the role of WRS*."
>
> "*I have an understanding of the workings of a Council and the Committee as I have been a councillor for seven years. Members should make time to educate themselves. Having said that I did receive a two hour briefing from my Council's representative on the Management Board when I started.*"

From all such feedback the Task Group concluded that training provision was less than consistent and together with the policy permitting substitutes (who would typically be attending without any prior training at all), meant that levels of understanding and experience of regulatory services around the Committee table were likely to be, at best, variable and in many cases quite inadequate for the nature of responsibility being exercised.

The shared view of the Task Group is that something akin to the requirements for development control committees should be in place. There, members must undergo at least a basic training programme before they can play any part in development control decision-making. Whilst recognising that the decisions in relation to WRS are not quasi-judicial in the manner of those for development control, the Task Group believe that mandatory training for Joint Committee participation is similarly justified, particularly given the diverse and technical nature of the work and the importance of the governance role and the various decisions that members are entrusted to make here.

Despite the quite specific purposes and roles for the Joint Committee (as described in the original formal agreement and summarised above) the Task Group was also surprised to find some quite significant differences of

understanding and viewpoint between members, particularly about the Committee's relationship with the other key body – the Management Board. In the various interviews with members of the Joint Committee, the Task Group listened to a number of apparently conflicting accounts of the Joint Committee's role. For example, while some understood their primary role as being to make strategic decisions on behalf of the partnership, others talked of it more in terms of providing a 'critical friend' role and holding the Management Board to account, as the following comments illustrate:

> *"The Joint Committee is the democratic arm that considers the work of the Management Board and ensures that the delivery of services is efficient and equitable."*
>
> *"We could be seen as the critical friend of the senior management of the service, holding them to account for strategic decision making as well as monitoring the budget and performance of the service. We are appointed by our Councils with some powers of delegation as laid down in the original partnership agreement."*
>
> *"The Joint Committee is the critical friend of the service as well as the ultimate decision maker for the service. We are also ultimately responsible for the setting of the budget and the management of the finances as well as agreeing to the strategic direction of the service."*
>
> *"The difference is that the Management Board is held in private and Joint Committee meetings are held in public."*
>
> *"The Joint Committee is ultimately in charge of decision making. However the Management Board generates reports and provides advice and therefore has influence over the decisions that are made in a similar manner to Officers influencing decisions at Cabinet."*
>
> *"The role of the Joint Committee is to act as a watching brief to see that the service is being provided and the money spent well"*

Moreover, the Task Group's own doubts about the clarity of understanding among Joint Committee members as to their role were echoed by at least one of the members themselves, as follows:

> *"I do not know if all present members fully understand the governance or the structure. It may be the case that even long-term members do not fully understand it."*

The Task Group is in no doubt that the prevalence of such role ambiguities and uncertainties represents a serious weakness in the governance arrangements for WRS and one that needs to be addressed as a matter of high priority. Of particular concern to the Task Group was the perspective held by more than a few members that regarded their primary objective as being to 'represent' the needs of their own local authority in relation to WRS – with the needs of WRS being very much a secondary consideration. It was

also suggested that the listing on the front page of the agenda papers for Joint Committee meetings of the names of the local authorities with members' names alongside only served to reinforce such a representational mind-set.

> *"I believe that members need to strongly represent the interests of their district when attending meetings of the Joint Committee, though this should be tempered by the fact that WRS is a shared service. One local authority should not be allowed to dictate the direction of the service to all the other partners, regardless of its size and status."*
>
> *"… the primary role of members on the Joint Committee is to protect the interests of their council with the function of WRS being secondary".*

To be fair, other members indicated feeling no conflict between the two roles and argued that they were able to represent the interests of both their Council and WRS equally.

> *"At a Joint Committee meeting I feel I am representing the district's needs and the needs, requirements and future of WRS across Worcestershire. I am very aware that each Council has its own individual needs and requirements but there are many things which we all share."*

A number of the officers that were interviewed also commented on the tendency of some Joint Committee members to prioritise their own local authority considerations over the needs of the partnership and were similarly concerned that this risked undermining the partnership. One such interviewee suggested that "*localism has no place in Regulatory Services*". While recognising the contentious nature of such a statement, the Task Group is clear in the view that, unless and until the full membership of the Joint Committee can demonstrate its prioritisation of a shared interest in WRS over that of individual local authority interests, this will always be a weak and fragile partnership and one that will struggle to sustain itself, let alone grow and flourish.

One further small change that the Task Group feels could help make a significant difference in this respect would be a change of title from one that tends particularly to emphasise the 'representational' role of members in relation to their local authorities (i.e. 'Joint Committee'), to one that more specifically focuses on the shared responsibility for WRS governance (i.e. 'Board'). Accordingly, the Task Group considers that switching to a new title - 'the WRS Board' - could be an important step forward.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 7

A new strategic decision making board for WRS should replace the Joint Committee, comprising one elected member per partner authority and supported by relevant officers. This should be called the WRS Board.

(a) Meetings of this Board should take place at the base of WRS.
(b) Responsibility for attendance at Board meetings should lie with each authority's representative and the quorum for meetings should be set at 5 representatives in attendance.
(c) Meetings of the Board should take place bi-monthly.
(d) Elected members appointed to the Board should be provided with an induction programme and sufficient ongoing training to enable them to fulfil their role effectively.
(e) Members appointed to the Board be expected to serve a minimum of two years to ensure continuity.
(f) The Chair of the WRS Board should be elected annually by the members of the Board.

Management Board

The other key body in the governance structure for WRS - the Management Board - was similarly the subject of careful consideration by the Task Group. As with the Joint Committee, a set of roles for the Management Board were defined in the original partnership agreement, these being as follows:

- To oversee and guide the development of WRS, in particular in relation to operational matters.
- To help develop a shared vision and strategy for the partners that takes into account partners' varying needs and priorities.
- To contribute to the transformation of service delivery.
- To resolve matters of concern to the partnership.
- To advise elected Members and to make recommendations to the Joint Committee (alongside the Head of Regulatory Services).
- To report back to their local authorities on the work of WRS and the decisions of the Joint Committee.

Membership of the Management Board comprises the Head of Regulatory Services together with one senior officer representative from each partner authority. Meetings of this Board are also attended by the lead Finance Officer from the host authority and the two Business Managers from WRS, while chairing is undertaken in (annual) rotation by one of the partner authority representatives.

The Task Group heard various viewpoints on the Management Board but, above all, the good news that, in recent times at least, it was felt to have been working more effectively than in the past. Several members of the Joint

Committee that were interviewed highlighted the value to them of the briefings they themselves had received from the representatives on the Management Board of their own authorities regarding the agendas of business and generally, the Management Board was considered to have contributed helpfully to recent discussions on key matters such as the possibility of a strategic link with a private sector partner. Joint Committee members also valued the corporate management expertise that officers appointed to the Management Board were able to add to deliberations and the useful links their representatives also had with other relevant services, such as the Hub shared service.

The Task Group also learned of several other aspects about the Management Board and its role that were concerning, including the following:

- Most of the officers on the Management Board, as representatives of partner authorities, are not from a regulatory services background and may not, therefore, necessarily have the specialist experience to appreciate fully the requirements of and expectations upon WRS.
- Engagement by the officer representatives tends to be variable and with a small core of officers being particularly influential in shaping thinking and conclusions.
- Some of the officers tend to prioritise their own Council's interests over and above those of the partnership.
- Differences of viewpoint between the Head of Regulatory Services and some of the other officers comprising the Management Board have frequently arisen and been quite difficult to resolve because only the Joint Committee has the authority to direct the Head of Service.
- Officers on the Management Board tend to be inconsistent in reporting back to their councils about developments in relation to WRS and do not always act as "advocates" for the shared service within their authorities.

The Task Group was also concerned about apparent differences of viewpoint as to the appropriate role of the Management Board amongst its officers. In particular, some such officers clearly regard their role legitimately as including the provision of advice on operational matters and the Task Group learned of a worrying tendency by the Board to attempt to micro-manage the Head of Regulatory Services.

The Task Group's clear view is that this is both unhelpful and inappropriate and that WRS itself – with its professionally qualified cadre of managers and staff - should be entrusted with full operational responsibility under the leadership of the Head of Regulatory Services. Two principal benefits here, as identified by the Task Group are as follows:

- WRS officers should be the source of advice to elected members about operational matters based on their professional expertise and experience (as, of course, is the case in most other specialist public service contexts – e.g. children's and adult services, highways and transport and planning).

- Officer leadership from WRS itself would be likely to result in a stronger focus on the needs of the partnership as a whole rather than on those of individual councils.

The Task Group's conclusions go further than this. For it does not see a sufficient case for retaining a Management Board as well as a Joint Committee (WRS Board) within the governance structure for WRS. Instead, the Task Group thinks that the disestablishment of this additional layer of management would greatly simplify, clarify and unify the governance structure. Instead, the Task Group considers a more appropriate role for officer representatives from the partner authorities to be in attendance at the WRS Board (Joint Committee) meetings as non-voting participants – sitting alongside and supporting their respective elected members, and providing additional advice (particularly from the perspective of the partner authorities).

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 8
The Management Board be disbanded, with the WRS Management Team taking the lead responsibility for operational decision making under the leadership of the Head of Regulatory Services.

<u>The WRS Management Team</u>

The Head of Regulatory Services leads the WRS team and should, the Task Group suggests, be formally accountable to the WRS Board (Joint Committee) as the corporate governing body. At present, line management and oversight of his role (including conduct of his annual performance development review) is provided by the Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Council as head of paid service at the host authority. This arrangement generally works well; the Task Group learned and felt it to be entirely appropriate that the Head of Service should enjoy the benefits of chief officer support (from the host authority) and the additional accountability that this involves. The recommendation to disband the Management Board would, be further beneficial in protecting the Head of Service from feeling over-managed and accountable to multiple senior officers.

The Task Group recommends the following:

Recommendation 9
(a) The Head of WRS should be fully accountable to the WRS Board (as the strategic decision making body). (b) The Chief Executive of the host and with the host authority to act in a mentoring role as and when necessary.

Chapter 4

Lessons Learned

The Task Group has undertaken a wide ranging and detailed review of a complex shared service and in the process, inevitably, a number of lessons have been learned of potential value to other shared service arrangements and indeed, for other joint scrutiny exercises. In this chapter the key such lessons are summarised.

Communications between a Shared Service and Partner Authorities

At the launch of the WRS shared service, consideration was given to the most appropriate methods by which the work of the new organisation and the decisions of its Joint Committee might be reported back to partner authorities. A formal protocol was developed for the referral of decisions to partner authorities and this stipulated that the following arrangements should be in place:

- The committee clerk for each meeting should draft and circulate minutes from the meetings within ten working days to Joint Committee and Management Board members as well as to the Democratic Service teams from across the county.
- The minutes should be submitted to the next Executive Committee/ Cabinet meetings at each authority for consideration, both in cases where decisions have been taken under delegated powers and where recommendations have been proposed.
- In cases where the minutes contain a recommendation, the supporting reports should be provided for the consideration of the Executive Committees/Cabinets at each authority.
- The Executive Committee/Cabinet at each authority should make a decision about any recommendations referred for their consideration, the result of which should be referred back to the Democratic Services Officer of the host authority who maintains appropriate records.
- In the event that any recommendations are not approved by all partners the Head of Regulatory Services is required to report this fact back to the next Joint Committee meeting.

Despite the specificity and clarity of these protocols, the Task Group investigation identified that partner authorities were not always complying with the expectations, particularly in relation to the handling of minutes of the meetings of the Joint Committee. While in some cases, minutes were consistently being presented for consideration by the Executive Committee/ Cabinet, in others they were only circulated when there happened to be a particular recommendation within them requiring partner approval. In very few instances, the Task Group learned, was there much, if any, discussion at partner authorities of the issues presented in the minutes of WRS Joint Committee meetings.

One consequence of such variable practices is that the majority of elected members in partner authorities have very limited awareness and understanding of the work of WRS, or of the decisions of its Joint Committee. In discussion with Joint Committee members the shortcomings of the communications process with the wider membership of partner authorities was recognised, as was their personal responsibility, as Joint Committee members, to report back to their respective councils. As one acknowledged:

> "*There is also a need for the Joint Committee member to promote the service back at their Council and ensure that members are kept informed of how the service is developing*".

On the other hand, another member of the Joint Committee argued that it was the responsibility of every elected member in the County, not just those appointed to the Joint Committee, to familiarise themselves with the work of WRS:

> "*There are few problems with internal communications. At some councils, the minutes of each Joint Committee meeting are considered at Executive meetings and copies are also published on every Council's website. It is the responsibility of every member to read these minutes and to familiarise themselves with the subject*".

While some may well subscribe to such a point of view, Task Group members were concerned about the reality that, in practice, the wider body of elected members across the County (i.e. those who had not been involved with the Joint Committee) had very limited knowledge or understanding of WRS and its important public protection functions. Indeed, the Task Group was persuaded that this was a significant enough problem, which needed to be addressed by the following circumstances:

1. Concerns about performance data (e.g. the National Indicators) not being provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committees suggested that scrutiny members had not been aware of the decisions taken by WRS to change their performance monitoring arrangements. At some councils there was also surprise that the partnership agreement for WRS did not allow for scrutiny by local Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
2. When the Scrutiny Task Group consulted with other elected members across the County (and with parish council representatives) several of the responses referred to aspects outside the remit of WRS, demonstrating the level of misunderstanding.
3. Several months after the Joint Committee's decision to explore the potential for a strategic partnership with a private sector partner for WRS, the Head of Regulatory Services presented a series of updating briefings on the subject to different partner authorities, but encountered at one, widespread ignorance of the decision (and dismay at not having been aware of, or consulted on, the matter).

Such apparent failures in communication have underpinned the Task Group's conclusion that more systematic processes need to be put in place to ensure that all decisions made by the Joint Committee (WRS Board) are indeed communicated back to all elected members of partner authorities and that regular updates of WRS and its work are provided to partner councils. The Task Group suggest that a common approach should be followed in all partner authorities, whether this takes the form of written reports to Executive Committees/Cabinets and/or to Overview and Scrutiny Committees and full Council meetings.

It would also help if Democratic Services officers in partner councils took responsibility for drawing their elected members' attentions to the publication of both the agendas and minutes of each meeting of the WRS Board (Joint Committee) and by highlighting the web links to the relevant pages of the WRS website).

Although the website for WRS was updated and refreshed during the time that the scrutiny Task Group was underway, it noted that copies of agendas and minutes from meetings of the Joint Committee were not always uploaded promptly on to the WRS webpages and available for viewing via the websites of partner authorities. Not least for the purposes of transparency, the Task Group considers it important that such documents are indeed made accessible to all at the earliest opportunities (along with other relevant information about WRS and its operation and governance structures).

Such lessons about the importance of good communication and transparency are relevant of course to all shared services and it is to be hoped that the recommendations in this respect will promote like-minded actions in relation to other such partnership arrangements.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 10

(a) All decisions made by the WRS Board be formally reported back to all elected members of the partner authorities in a timely manner.
(b) Attention should be paid to communicating updates about any planned changes to WRS services to all elected members of partner authorities.
(c) The agendas and minutes of all WRS Board meetings should also be uploaded on to the WRS website in a timely fashion.

<u>Sharing Services</u>

In conducting this scrutiny review the Task Group inevitably encountered and debated the many strengths and weaknesses that apply to any shared service arrangement, particularly those involving multiple partners. For example, the opportunity to share resources and skills across several councils and so have better overall capacity and capability was widely recognised as a positive outcome by members and officers alike. Similarly, the financial savings that

could be achieved through this way of working were also universally welcomed, especially in the current climate of public sector austerity.

The following comments illustrate such positive perspectives on multi-partner shared services arrangements:

> *"In my experience smaller district councils often struggle to attract the good, qualified, professional staff needed to deliver regulatory services. Amalgamation with other local authorities has helped us to attract and retain these types of staff".*
>
> *"Because the countywide model inevitably involves working with a larger team and a bigger budget, you can attract the professional and skilled staff you need to deliver the services."*
>
> *"One of the benefits of sharing regulatory services, particularly for district councils, is that it enables those councils to access expertise and resources that might not otherwise have been available. For example, as a result of this shared service, Bromsgrove District Council has been able to directly access officers with expertise in the field of air quality, which has been useful because there are significant problems with air pollution in Bromsgrove district."*

However, the scrutiny consultations also underscored some of the problems often associated with shared service arrangements, particularly where multiple partners are involved. Above all is the potential for shared service operations to seem remote and detached from the councils they serve, at least for most councillors and officers. Indeed, there is a tendency for bodies like WRS to seem to operate more like separate organisations, delivering services on behalf of the councils, akin to contract-based provision rather than as partnerships of the councils and in which there is a common interest and responsibility.

The following comments expressed to the Task Group epitomise such perspectives:

> "*Sometimes we are all partners. Sometimes, usually when something goes wrong, there is a feeling that WRS is acting as a contractor providing services rather than being an integral part of the local government offering*".
>
> "*Some partners have tended to regard WRS as having been outsourced once the shared service was launched. For example, some of the early problems with ICT were exacerbated by the fact that partner organisations were not always willing to engage in discussions about how to resolve the problem*".

Such a sense of distance and detachment between the councils and WRS probably also explains, in part at least, the determination of some partners to impose financial reductions on WRS that to regulatory service professionals at

least seem quite unreasonable and unrealistic, as illustrated in the following comment:

> "*Very disappointingly some partners have come forward seeking very large reductions but without any clear idea of the necessary changes to their services to achieve this*."

Compounding this distancing and detachment problem has been some widespread negativity about WRS arising early on in its life as a result of difficulties encountered by councillors (and the public) in contacting regulatory staff and in getting apparently small and simple problems resolved (e.g. complaints about barking dogs or odour problems). It is to be hoped that the new in-house customer contact arrangements now in place will help overcome such negativity and that WRS's reputation for responsivity will quickly improve. A key lesson is that, under shared service arrangements and particularly one where staff are located elsewhere from the local authority, contact and communication arrangements need to be especially well planned and managed for confidence in the venture to be sustained.

In this context the Task Group was also intrigued as to why, after much initial interest in the Worcestershire initiative from other local authorities, WRS remains the only two-tier regulatory partnership in England. Probably part of the reason has been inertia and fear, particularly on the part of district councils, of surrendering more public service responsibility to their counties and so inadvertently bolstering arguments for unitary council status in the future. Perhaps also a reason has been concern among district councils at the prospect of losing control of some important protective services, notably environmental health and licensing and of councillors feeling that this would weaken their ability to directly address many of the problems routinely raised by local people and businesses. But once again, the key lesson here concerns the quality of the contact and communication arrangements that are put in place between councils and the shared service and the confidence that the partnership body is able to instil among councillors and the general public.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 11
The lessons learned from the WRS shared service experience, particularly as detailed in this report, should be heeded by elected members and senior officers when considering any future proposals for shared services arrangements involving multiple partners.

Joint Scrutiny

This scrutiny is not the first such joint scrutiny review to be undertaken in Worcestershire, although it is the first one involving all seven councils and hosted by one of the district councils. Perhaps because of the increasing number of shared service arrangements now being established within the

County there will be more such joint exercises in the future. Assuming so, the Task Group considers the lessons that it has learned during the process of this joint scrutiny should be of considerable value for others to follow.

The Task Group's review was conducted in accordance with the Framework for Joint Overview and Scrutiny in Worcestershire (which was approved by all councils in 2011). That framework details the principles underlying joint working, processes to be followed and conduct to be expected during such work, resource requirements, meeting arrangements and other matters conducive to effective collaborative working. (A copy of the framework can be viewed at Appendix 2).

As in this case, joint scrutiny reviews are normally hosted by an individual council, usually the one that first proposed the review or the host authority if the subject is a shared service. However, the expectation with all joint scrutiny work is that there should be representation and participation from all the relevant authorities and full co-operation with the process by all parties, for example, in providing evidence and participating in proceedings.

During this joint scrutiny, members of the Task Group sought evidence from a wide range of parties – both elected members and officers from each of the seven partners and of course, from WRS as well. In most instances the Task Group encountered very positive co-operation and generous support, including willingness to travel some distances to attend interviews and preparedness to provide written, as well as verbal, responses to questions. The Task Group wishes to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence during the review for their time and their helpful contributions.

Unfortunately, the Task Group have to report that it did not encounter the same level of co-operation and support from every quarter. It struggled, in particular, to obtain the evidence needed from Worcestershire County Council, particularly regarding the authority's proposed budget reductions for the next three years. Initially, the Task Group sent a letter to the Leader of the Council and to a senior officer (in early February), prior to the authority's setting of its budget. The letter outlined the Task Group's concerns about the implications of budget reductions for the viability of WRS and requested that the Council consider postponing the decision on funding until this joint scrutiny review had been completed. It proved necessary to chase the County Council for a response to this letter and the Task Group subsequently invited a representative to attend one of its meetings (in early April) to respond to various questions. Although a written response was eventually received, the Task Group was disappointed that no-one from the County Council offered to attend the meeting and indeed, the written response itself was quite short and generally less helpful than those received from other witnesses.

The Task Group was also disappointed that not all partners played an equally active part in the joint scrutiny exercise. While most authorities were consistently represented at the meetings, one council, Wyre Forest, was represented at only 5 out of the Task Group's 15 meetings (and this despite the fact that this Council, as with all seven, had designated a substitute as

well as a lead member). While recognising the extra time pressures that participation in such scrutiny exercises creates for members and the various legitimate reasons for absence, the Task Group was nevertheless surprised at the persistent failure to submit apologies or to propose a change in the nomination to ensure due representation from Wyre Forest and the opportunity, with other partners, to shape the final recommendations.

There are lessons here, for sure, for other joint scrutiny exercises and the Task Group considers that in future, particular care should be taken to minimise such missed opportunities for participation. To this end the Task Group suggests that some aspects of the formal framework should be revisited and perhaps amended. In particular, it would be useful to give more consideration to the barriers and constraints likely to affect participation in such Task Groups and to ways of ensuring the desired level of commitment on the part of all members and partner authorities. It would be good to give early priority to reviewing the framework for joint scrutiny and to giving thought to how engagement might be maximised since it is understood that another joint exercise – this on joint arrangements for waste collection and disposal - is about to commence.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 12
(a) The Joint Scrutiny Protocol should be reviewed in order to take on board the lessons learned during this review. (b) Consideration should be given to the reinstatement of the Worcestershire Overview and Scrutiny Chairs Group as a means of feeding back the monitoring of recommendations from Joint Scrutiny exercises, as and when required.

Conclusion

The perspectives of the membership of the Joint Scrutiny Task Group on WRS changed quite markedly during the course of this exercise as the evidence was gathered and as more of the realities of the situation became clear. At the start of the review there was some scepticism among Task Group members about the quality of service being provided by WRS, particularly based on anecdotal evidence from customer complaints and members own experiences of trying to get problems resolved. However, by the conclusion, the Task Group members had developed a much better understanding of the challenges and pressures being experienced by the shared service and of the difficulties and shortcomings in relation to governance. Indeed, the Task Group had developed greater empathy with the situation and this has inspired its desire to see the weaknesses and problems addressed and to ensure a better future for WRS.

Some of the proposals to this end may seem radical. But in the Task Group's analysis, significant changes are called for in a number of respects if WRS is to survive and flourish in the manner expected of it at the outset.

The Task Group recognises that, if the recommendations are accepted by partners, each council is likely to have to relinquish a further measure of control and place more trust in the practitioners in WRS to lead and manage the service in Worcestershire's best interests. The Task Group recognises and supports all the efforts currently being made to improve the viability and prospects for the shared service in difficult financial times, including consideration of the possibilities offered by a private sector partner. However, it also considers that a number of other changes – particularly to the governance framework and to the communication processes between WRS and partner authorities – need to be made as well and with similar priority.

Returning to the old (fragmented) way of providing regulatory services at both district and county levels is, the Task Group is sure, not a sensible or realistic option for Worcestershire - tempting though it might perhaps appear in present times when the challenges of partnership working and of coping with financial pressures seem so daunting. Instead, the Task Group concludes, the way ahead lies in building on the foundations that have already been laid; in learning the lessons of the first few years of WRS and in being prepared to adjust and adapt in light of those lessons. The way forward, the Task Group is sure, is to address the challenges as a partnership with renewed commitment and with confidence. Worcestershire's pioneering work in developing a more integrated regulatory service has indeed already been worthwhile and not just in achieving financial savings but also in ensuring higher quality protection for citizens and businesses across the county and beyond.

Appendix 1

Joint Scrutiny of Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Terms of Reference

Objectives

1. To review the final business case for the Shared Service (as agreed by the participating Councils) against current operation, including:

   - resilience in the model to cope with fluctuations in workload;
   - efficiencies achieved;
   - cash savings and how these have been used;
   - its level of fitness for purpose;
   - the impact of the model on service levels/quality.

2. To compare the previous service levels of each participating Council compared with current levels and those outlined in the final business case.

3. To establish the performance of the service to participating Councils prior to and since the establishment of the shared service.

4. To review levels of customer satisfaction prior to and following establishment of the shared service and how feedback informs practice.

5. To consider the governance arrangements between the shared service and the participating Councils to include how changes to the service requested by one or more Councils can be achieved.

Membership

6. The Team will be made up of one representative from each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees from Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch Borough, Wyre Forest, Worcester City, Worcestershire County Council and Wychavon District Councils.

7. Each authority will also appoint a named substitute, who will be sent details for each meeting and may attend meetings as an observer to keep up to date with the exercise.

8. That at least one of the appointed Members to the Team or their named substitute must comprise either the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Roles

9. Members of the Panel are expected to:

- undertake appropriate reading and research, which may involve consultation, visits and evidence gathering between meetings;
- having agreed a programme of meetings of the Team, to attend as many of them as possible;
- to ask for support, training and development if/when they feel it is necessary;
- to contribute fully to the drafting of any reports.

10. Each member is responsible for reporting back to parent Overview & Scrutiny Committees as appropriate.

11. Officer support will be provided by Bromsgrove District Council as the host authority, for meeting arrangements and scrutiny support, as well as liaison with officers from each authority to provide evidence and practical help (provision of meeting rooms etc)

Arrangements for Meetings

12. The Team will make its own arrangements for meetings.

13. The meetings may be held in public or in private. In considering how it will meet, the Team will balance the desire for transparency and openness with making visitors feel welcome and comfortable, to encourage frank and open discussion.

14. It will not normally be the case that full notes will be made of each meeting. In most cases a short “action list” will be sufficient for the Team’s use.

Deadline: April 2014.

Appendix 2

FRAMEWORK FOR JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN WORCESTERSHIRE

Principles Underlying Joint Working

Any joint scrutiny process needs to ensure:

a) Good quality scrutiny – which adds value and properly investigates issues of concern to participating authorities.
b) Efficiency – avoiding duplication and bureaucracy.
c) Confidence in the outcomes of the joint scrutiny exercise by each participating authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and clear communication of expectations from the outset.
d) Clear working planning and co-ordination.
e) A coherent approach to scrutiny for external partner organisations
f) Clear arrangements for reporting and follow-up to ensure action on recommendations.
g) Reporting arrangements should not create delay through over complexity, and should not create scope for other bodies to block recommendations.
h) Flexibility in how to carry out joint scrutiny.
i) It does not undermine each authority's O&S Committee's remit, or officer support available.

Deciding to Scrutinise Jointly

It is for each authority's O&S Committee to decide if they wish to participate in a joint scrutiny but this needs to be done as efficiently and speedily as possible.

To initiate a joint scrutiny proposal a scoping form should be completed and circulated which will then be subject to agreement of each authority's O&S Committee.

The Worcestershire Scrutiny Officers' Network, in consultation with their respective Chairmen should make proposals for joint scrutiny for considered by the scrutiny chairmen's network (possibly in between meetings) and subsequent recommendation to individual overview and scrutiny committees.

Carrying out Joint Scrutiny

There are a number of ways that joint scrutiny can be carried out.

There may be times when an individual authority wishes to co-opt members from other authorities onto a particular scrutiny.

There may also be times when it is agreed by each O&S committee that one authority takes the lead in scrutinising an issue on behalf of all authorities.

However, it is suggested that in Worcestershire joint scrutiny should usually be carried out by joint time-limited scrutiny task and finish groups, led by the authority from which the scrutiny originated.

Agreeing Membership of Joint Scrutiny Task Group

After O&S Committees agree to participate in a joint scrutiny they then nominate members.

As the task group would not be an official council committee, political balance requirements do not apply.

The number of Members participating in a joint scrutiny will depend on how many authorities are involved but if all Worcestershire authorities take part it is suggested that one member be appointed from each authority.

Agreeing Chairmanship of a Joint Task Group

Nominations for chairing the task group will be sought from all members of the task group.

Where one authority is leading the scrutiny it may be appropriate for the Chairman to be appointed from that authority.

Agreeing Terms of Reference/Scope of the Scrutiny

Each participating authorities' Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be asked to agree terms of reference for the scrutiny as per the scoping and proposal form.

Conduct of the Scrutiny

Meetings of the joint task group will be arranged by the supporting scrutiny officer(s).

The task group should strive to conduct their business in a consensual, open, responsible and transparent way across the political divides and seek to avoid expressing views based purely on political considerations.

Equal Participation

It is important for all members to be equal participants in the process and for officer support to be available on an equal basis.

Meeting Venues

To be decided by the Review Panel as appropriate to the particular review.

Approval of Report's Recommendations

The joint task group would agree their report and recommendations, normally by consensus. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would then be asked to endorse the report, and could submit their own comments to their Executives.

Time constraints for recommendations need to be fully considered at the scoping stage.

Publicising Outcomes from Joint Scrutiny/Sharing Findings

Once the scrutiny report is agreed by the overview and Scrutiny Committees it should be circulated to Executive members, witnesses and any others involved, by the scrutiny officers supporting the scrutiny.

It could also be put on the website of all the participating authorities.

Resourcing and Supporting Joint Scrutiny

It is intended that joint scrutiny will be supported within the existing resources available to all seven authorities for scrutiny.

Scrutiny officer support for each joint scrutiny should be agreed at the outset. Whilst the authority leading the joint scrutiny would normally provide support for it, ways of sharing the workload should be explored at the scoping stage.

Any expenses for members of a joint scrutiny should be paid by that member's authority in line with that authority's allowance scheme.

Tracking the Outcomes of the Scrutiny

The Review Panel will decide upon arrangements for tracking the implementation of recommendations.

Individual O&S Committees may wish to adopt their own methods for joint scrutiny recommendation tracking.

It is suggested that recommendation tracking for joint scrutinies should be part of the watching brief of the Joint Chairmen's meeting.

Appendix 3

SUMMARY OF MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE

Meeting Date	Summary
26th September 2013	Appointment of Chair / Vice Chair, endorsement of terms of reference and work planning (including setting future meeting dates).
10th October 2013	The Task Group reviewed the content of the original business case for WRS and one of the WRS newsletters. Members also provided some initial feedback on behalf of colleagues at participating local authorities about Members' experiences of working with WRS.
22nd October 2013	Interview with Steve Jorden, Head of Regulatory Services, and consideration of feedback on WRS experiences from other elected Members and Parish Councillors.
12th November 2013	Consideration of WRS Partnership Agreement and Shared Services Joint Committee Protocol and consideration of further feedback as detailed above.
21st November 2013	Observed Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee meeting prior to interview with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee.
4th December 2013	Consideration of written responses to questions put to the Chair of the Management Board together with work planning, including questions for future witnesses.
18th December 2013	Interview with Steve Jorden, Head of Regulatory Services, and WRS senior managers.
16th January 2014	Interview with a member of the Management Board – Ruth Mullen (Ivor Pumfrey was unable to attend).
29th January 2014	Interview with Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive of the Host Authority, and Jayne Pickering, Executive Director, Finance and Resources, Bromsgrove District Council.
6th February 2014	Visit to Wyatt House.
20th February 2014	Interview with Clare Flanagan, Principal Solicitor of the Host Authority, and Ivor Pumfrey, Chair of the Management Board.
19th March 2014	Complaints and compliments data analysed and review of the investigation so far.
26th March 2014	Interview with a number of Members of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee.
20th April 2014	Agree draft recommendations and report format.
28th May 2014	Agree the draft report.

ATTENDANCE RECORD

	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	
	Lead	Sub
Bromsgrove	11	1
Malvern Hills	13	0
Redditch	7	4
Worcester City	12	0
WCC	10	0
Wychavon	13	3
Wyre Forest	0	5

Appendix 4

LIST OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY WRS

The following services are delivered by WRS:

- Air quality.
- Animal health and welfare (including dog warden service).
- Consumer and business advice.
- Contaminated land.
- Environmental packaging
- Environmental permitting (pollution control).
- Fair trading / anti rogue trader activities.
- Food safety.
- Food standards (labelling and composition).
- Health and safety.
- Health promotion.
- Infectious diseases.
- Licensing.
- Metrology.
- Nuisance investigations.
- Pest Control.
- Product safety.
- Public health (burials, drainage, water supplies etc.)
- Under age sales.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Task Group would like to give particular thanks to Steve Jorden and members of the WRS team, especially Mark Kay and Simon Wilkes, who provided evidence, both in person and in writing, throughout the review.

Thanks also go to the following Officers:

Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils

Kevin Dicks	Joint Chief Executive
Jayne Pickering	Executive Director, Finance and Resources
Clare Flanagan	Principal Solicitor
Pauline Ross	Democratic Services Officer (responsible for clerking meetings of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee)

Management Board

Ivor Pumfrey	Malvern Hills District Council
Ruth Mullen	Worcester City Council

Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee - Councillors

Lucy Hodgson	Chair - Worcestershire County Council
Mark Bullivant	Vice Chair - Bromsgrove District Council
Kit Taylor	Bromsgrove District Council
Bronwen Behan	Malvern Hills District Council
David Hughes	Malvern Hills District Council
Brandon Clayton	Redditch Borough Council
John Fisher	Redditch Borough Council
Lynn Denham	Worcester City Council
Roger Berry	Worcester City Council
Anthony Blagg	Worcestershire County Council
Ron Davis	Wychavon District Council
Ken Jennings	Wychavon District Council
Marcus Hart	Wyre Forest District Council

Appendix 6

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At each meeting Members were asked to declare any interests. The following declarations were received:

Councillor Cronin, Worcester City Council, declared an other disclosable interest as the publican at The Plough Inn, Broadheath, Worcester.

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