

## **Bromsgrove District Council**

### **Portfolio Holder Report for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships**

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**Aligned to: “Run and grow a Successful Business”**

#### **BROMSGROVE PARTNERSHIP**

##### **Background**

The Bromsgrove Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for the District.

An LSP is a voluntary partnership which brings together different organisations from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Instead of each organisation working separately in isolation, the Bromsgrove Partnership provides a forum for local organisations to come together and address issues that are important to those living, working and visiting Bromsgrove District in a more effective and cohesive way.



Bromsgrove Partnership's vision is:

*“We will make Bromsgrove District the place to live, do business and to visit.”*

Bromsgrove Partnership operates a Strategic Board with Theme and Sub Groups underneath. As the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holder, I sit on the Board and the Economic Development Theme Group.

##### **Bromsgrove Partnership Board**

The Board is currently chaired by Police Inspector David King from West Mercia Police and the Vice-Chair is Rachel Jones, Chief Executive at Act on Energy. Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive, and I both sit on the Board representing the District Council. Other agencies represented include:

- Act on Energy (Board Vice-Chair and Better Environment Theme Group Chair)
- Age UK Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest (Ageing Well Sub Group Chair)
- Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN)
- Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT)

- County Association of Local Councils (CALC)
- Heart of Worcestershire (HoW) College
- Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS)
- NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group (RBCCG)
- West Mercia Police
- Worcestershire County Council
- Young Solutions (Community Wellbeing Theme Group Chair)



At the last Board meeting we discussed Bromsgrove District Data which focussed on the issues hidden within Bromsgrove's figures. Bromsgrove District Council and Partner agencies are well aware that although the overall statistics for Bromsgrove is generally good, it masks hidden issues. Through Bromsgrove Partnership Board, we're collating data from various sources to provide a more comprehensive picture as data is key to enable us to both prove and address issues.

At recent meetings we also heard from our partner, BDHT, as they agreed to lead the partnership initiative which later became known as Sunrise. The Sunrise project supports complex, vulnerable and chaotic households in Charford and Sidemoor with the aim of improving outcomes for those individuals and families. It continues to be successful by achieving outcomes for local residents which in turn has reduced demand on other services which is excellent news and I'm very supportive of this work.

As well as considering the additional collated Bromsgrove District Data at the next meeting, we will also be discussing the potential of an asset based community development approach such as the [Wigan Deal](#), and discussing if there is any merit in adopting a similar citizen-led approach in Bromsgrove District with our partners via the Bromsgrove Partnership.

### **Economic Development Theme Group**



The Economic Development Theme Group is chaired by a local Business representative and it enables the public sector (e.g. BDC, NWedR and DWP) and private sector representatives to come together to ensure businesses have a voice and inform local decision making. There are currently seven business representatives on the Group along with three voluntary sector representatives invited on by the Theme Group Chair. Meetings are hosted by Bromsgrove Basepoint Centre.

Instead of the usual meeting in November, we instead held a facilitated workshop to: (a) consider together what the Bromsgrove Economic Priorities (short/medium/long term) should be and reviewing the contents of the draft North Worcestershire Growth Strategy; and (b) what the future role of the Theme Group should be going forward.

Simon Marks, UK Chief Executive and Partner at Arcadis, was our facilitator. Simon is also the Chair of the GBSLEP (Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership) Enterprise Zone Executive Board and Chair of the GBSLEP Place Board. The feedback that Simon has finalised will be discussed at the next Theme Group meeting to assist us to agree next steps in terms of the theme group going forward.

## **NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY**

The North Worcestershire Economic Strategy covers a five year period 2019-2024 and sets out some of the key economic indicators across the North Worcestershire geography as well as the attributes that make the area attractive for businesses and visitors supporting local economic growth.

The strategy is built on four pillars of economic growth – talent, infrastructure, technology and creativity – as these are common to all three North Worcestershire partners. The strategy then goes on to set out what the key growth priorities and interventions are and these reflect the collective geography’s potential as well as the individual identity that each of the partner district and borough has.

Taking a North Worcestershire wide approach, which covers the districts of Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest and the borough of Redditch, the strategy recognises the North Worcestershire functional economic geography and the principle that ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.’

A North Worcestershire wide strategy provides stronger evidence of the North’s combined strengths and opportunities to generate economic growth. It also offers a coherent narrative that demonstrates alignment with the Local Industrial Strategies and provides the evidence base for investments from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other central government and LEP funding programmes.

The strategy includes Bromsgrove specific evidence, priorities and key interventions under the themes of places, businesses and people. As the political, economic and financial landscape changes, new interventions will be added as new opportunities arise.

The report was presented at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> January and Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> January.

## **BUSINESS SUPPORT**

North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) provide support for start-up business and established businesses.



The support focuses on helping the entrepreneur acquire the necessary skills to run a successful business. They also co-fund two programmes: Enterprise for

Success and Enterprising Worcestershire, which provide support from the pre-start stage up to three years of trading. In 2019, 74 entrepreneurs have received advisor support which has resulted in 22 new businesses starting. In addition ten grants totalling £11,877 have been awarded to new businesses.

Established businesses in Bromsgrove can access a wide range of support. Programmes cover such issues as access to finance, cyber security, product development and energy efficiency. Businesses can also access grants for relocation, capital expenditure and marketing. In 2019, 22 businesses have accessed grants with a total value of £304,347.

The support programmes have been delivered with support from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull (GBS) Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) Growth Hub and Worcestershire Business Central (Worcestershire LEP's Growth Hub).

## **EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS**

Employment and skills support focuses on a wide ranging agenda and delivery through partnership working.

The Opening Doors to Business Programme for schools for Bromsgrove provides details of companies open to visits from schools to see their operation from the inside. All Bromsgrove schools are engaged with the Continuum Consortium that facilitates participation.

The North Worcestershire Employment and Skills Board (NWESB) has 11 private sector members including four from Bromsgrove.

Work with the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) continues with all Bromsgrove schools, apart from Haybridge, now having an enterprise adviser. Encounters with employers and employees are scoring 80% plus on the Gatsby measures, but personal guidance requires improvement.

The North Worcestershire Employment and Skills Board (NWESB) has provided funding for the Worcestershire Education and Business Partnership data base. This

now includes 450 employers with a Bromsgrove post code who are willing to provide work experience and aligned activities.

The annual Worcestershire Skills show has been widely promoted in schools and attracted 418 visitors in March 2019. Most however visited independently after school hours.

An Apprenticeship event was held at Six Ways in the Autumn and attracted 360 visitors with a Bromsgrove address. Two additional apprenticeship drop-in sessions were conducted in Bromsgrove library during late summer.

Bromsgrove has seen an increased interest in apprenticeships during 2019 with 520 starts by Quarter Three (Oct-Dec 2019), up from 470 at the same time in 2018. Of these, business administration accounted for 170, engineering and manufacturing 110, health and public services 100, retail and commercial 60.

The Higher Level Skills Match Programme is a partnership between Aston and Birmingham City Universities providing local businesses with undergraduate and graduate interns. Bromsgrove currently has 7 companies participating in the programme.

The Earn to Learn programme is designed to demonstrate the link between subjects studied and career aspiration. It is funded by the NWESB, delivered by Young Enterprise and includes 100 pupils.

Stem Challenge is a programme focused on Key Stage 2 pupils. It is designed to encourage the engineers of tomorrow. A total of 7 Bromsgrove schools have signed up, the best performance in north Worcestershire.

### **Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) and Worcestershire LEP (WLEP)**

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are business led organisations tasked with stimulating local economic growth. Bromsgrove District Council is a member of GBSLEP and WLEP.

I am a Board member of the GBSLEP and also a substitute Board member at the Worcestershire LEP. Current priorities for both LEPs include the preparation of Local Industrial Strategies (LIS), the implementation of the Local Growth Fund and developing a pipeline of projects for future funding programmes.

Following the national review of LEPs in 2018, a key recommendation of the report is for LEPs to address the issue of overlapping boundaries and reconfigure them on the basis of functioning economic geography. In that respect, both LEPs have submitted their proposals to the Government in December and I will update the council on the outcome of the conversations with the government in due course.

## **REGENERATION**

### **Former Market Hall site – Meanwhile Uses**

The Former Market Hall / Hanover Street Car Park site has been a long standing identified regeneration opportunity for Bromsgrove Town Centre. The first phase of the development site has been a success with the delivery of a new Waitrose store to the town. However, the second phase of the site has proved more challenging to deliver. The developer appointed to deliver a development on the entire site (Hinton Group) was unable to provide a commercially viable scheme for the second phase based on the agreement they had in place with Bromsgrove District Council. As a result, the development agreement with the developer was not renewed / extended and the site reverted back to Bromsgrove District Council control.

Hoardings have remained around the site for a number of years, creating an unsightly view in the heart on the town centre. To prevent this key gateway site in the town centre from continuing to be an unattractive and untidy vista to locals and visitors, work has been underway to assess options for *meanwhile uses* for the site whilst work to consider the more permanent development options to be delivered at the site is undertaken. A report seeking Cabinet and Council approval for the implementation of meanwhile uses has been presented at their respective meetings in January 2020.

### **Bromsgrove Town Centre Regeneration**

A tender has been advertised for a multi-disciplinary team to assess options and recommend preferred schemes (feasible, deliverable and viable) for permanent uses of the former Market Hall site and the former Dolphin Centre site and car park. It is envisaged that the professional team will be appointed in January 2020 and complete the work (designs, viability appraisal and soft market testing for the preferred options) by September 2020. The design team will carry out comprehensive engagement with key stakeholders, businesses and residents.

## **BROMSGROVE TOWN CENTRE**

The Bromsgrove Town Centre Management Group has worked closely with a number of partners over the past year including Bromsgrove Pubwatch to adapt to the changing face of the town centre. Nationally the key message is that town centres and High Streets are becoming a place for leisure and cultural experiences and that is becoming increasingly evident in the town centre with the opening and growth of this sector.

We are proud to be home to many thriving and vibrant independent businesses. Over the past two years, with targeted investment and support, Worcester Road

businesses have celebrated two successful street party events and most recently established the Bromsgrove Indie Club to further promote our strong independent sector.

The key priority for the town remains the night-time economy which has seen a boost with new venues opening and existing businesses undertaking improvement and expansion schemes. The Bromsgrove Town Centre Management Group continues to work closely with the Bromsgrove Pubwatch to develop a coherent and co-ordinated plan to ensure visitors have a safe and enjoyable time. This priority remains for 2020 with additional initiatives planned to further strengthen the Policing and operation of our night-time and licenced economy.

The cultural and leisure offer is being further developed with a new approach to events for the town centre. Building on an already successful programme of events including the Christmas Light Switch On we will be investing in new events and establishing a new and exciting creative collaborative to attract new artists and experiences.

Void properties also remain a priority for the partnership. It is a challenging time nationally with major High Street names closing. Working with private property owners we hope to explore the opportunities to introduce pop up shops and meanwhile uses to the town centre.

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*Key Priority* – the night time economy and working with the licensed sector to ensure venues meet their licensee responsibilities, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and grow a vibrant and safe night time economy.

**Initiatives:**

**Bromsgrove town centre Pubwatch;** co-chaired by the Bromsgrove Centres Manager; forum meets monthly with key partners – West Mercia Police, WRS Licensing, Safer Bromsgrove, Public Health and local members to discuss licensed sector issues and opportunities. The Pubwatch is a constituted group with a bank account and venues pay a membership fee to join.

**Banned from One, Banned from All;** following an incident Pubwatch initiate a banning vote based on the incident. Once the vote is cast and the person(s) banned, they are banned from all Pubwatch member venues for the ban period. At present there are 47 persons on the banned list.

**DISC;** an online platform where members of Pubwatch and key partners can exchange information, intelligence, crime and incident reports and news. DISC also carries details and images of banned persons from the town venues.

**Taxi Marshal Scheme;** 4<sup>th</sup> year of running a taxi marshal scheme over the Festive period. Based in Worcester Road. 2 x SIA accredited taxi marshals assist visitors to get home safely and effectively. Monitor taxi ranks to restrict the public parking in the bays. Every Friday and Saturday 11.00pm-5.00am including Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

**Bromsgrove Indie Club;** following targeted support and assistance for businesses in Worcester Road they have formed the Bromsgrove Indie Club; constituted group with a bank account to become self-financing.

**Worcester Road Street Party;** held for the first time in 2018 the 2019 event saw a huge step forward in respect of vendors and entertainment. Led by the Indie Club and supported by us the road was closed. The event was led by the Indie Club and supported by the council

**Public Realm Audit;** a full public realm audit has been undertaken to look at redundant, poor quality, missing street furniture and signage. In 2020 a working group will begin to recommend and implement removal, replacement or refurbishment of items.

**Radio Link;** 40 retailers and venues a member of the digital radio link system to exchange information and intelligence across the sectors; linked into the Police, Bromsgrove Centres Manager, Street Pastors, CCTV.

**Bromsgrove Town Centre Management Group;** meets every 6 weeks; key partners to problem solve and be pro-active in addressing issues. Priority is the night time economy and in the New Year the group will be developing a year-long plan to target resources to support the growth of the sector and reduce crime and ASB.

## Outlying Centres

NWEDR continue to support the centres in Bromsgrove District by investing funding and resources into public realm improvements, development and growth of the events and cultural programmes and working with Worcestershire County Council and Bromsgrove District Council on highway programmes and developments.





Catshill in Bloom was launched this year to complement the Catshill Seed and Plant Swap and Get Catshill Growing initiatives. A bid to Bromsgrove and Redditch Network was successful in securing £1,000 towards equipment for Catshill in Bloom. The campaign has brought together the local businesses and community to positively improve the public realm in the centre with lots of projects scheduled for next year.

The support and resources invested has seen the centres businesses come together as a community and strengthen the relationship with local Parish Council's and key partners to develop coherent and co-ordinated plans to improve the centres.

The growth of events and the recognition of the importance of marketing and events to promote centres has been a key focus over the past year with successful and growing Christmas Light Switch On events and meetings scheduled to take place to begin expanding the events offer throughout the year for all centres.

### **Bromsgrove Town Centre Vision 2040**

Officers have been tasked with commissioning work on the future of Bromsgrove's Town Centre. This will examine the current challenges and constraints facing the town centre, review examples of successful interventions in comparable town centres across the country and develop a long term vision. The work will inform the Local Plan review and incorporate a car parking strategy. The tender will be advertised in February 2020 with the final report completed by September 2020.

### **Local Centres Strategy 2020-2024**

The existing strategy and action plan come to an end in 2020. Officers have been tasked with preparing a new strategy and action plan. This will involve comprehensive engagement with key stakeholders, businesses and residents in all local centres.

### **Car parking operational Strategy**

Officers have been tasked with producing an plan for investment for the town centre car parks this will include a car park condition and improvement program, new parking machines with cashless payment options, a review of the current pay on foot system and investment in electric vehicle charging points.

## **MARKETS**

### **Audit Report**

In April 2019 the Markets were subject to an audit review which received a limited assurance rating. The report highlighted a number of key issues/risks which officers have now addressed and processes/procedures implemented. Following on from this

work a further review took place in December 2019 (we are now waiting for the outcome of this review)

The fees and charges for 2020 have also been reviewed as part of the audit process

### **Market Improvements**

Following a review of the Market infrastructure with the support of our Health and Safety officer, several issues were noted which required some essential remedial work to be undertaken.

- Worn and missing anchor points – these are now in the process of being installed by Kelbec and will be completed by 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020.
- Underground Electrical sockets which are suffering from water ingress –Our Electrical contractors will be relocating the sockets above ground in secure bollards. This will be due to commence in spring 2020.
- Gazebo canopies and sheeting have now reached the end of their life expectancy and are leaking water which is damaging trader's goods – working with our finance team we are looking at a replacement programme via a Revenue Bid.

### **Income Report**

The market shows signs of an average growth of approx. 8% between June and December 2019, which is shown below in the comparison table below.

	2018 No. of Market Days p/m	*Tues per month (Main Rent Day)	2018 Income	2019 No. of Market Days p/m	*Tues per month (Main Rent Day)	2019 Income	Difference	%
Apr	No Data available			13	5	7655.05	n/a	n/a
May	(Under CJ events)			13	4	6133.63	n/a	n/a
June	14	4	6637.04	13	4	6133.47	-503.57	-7.5
July	13	5	6885.00	13	5	7425.37	+540.37	+7.8
Aug	13	4	5909.00	14	4	6593.70	+684.70	+11.6
Sept	13	4	6790.00	12	4	7143.77	+353.77	+5.2
Oct	13	5	6129.50	13	5	7661.87	+1532.37	+24.9
Nov	13	4	6532.50	14	4	7412.37	+879.87	+13.5
Dec	13	4	6497.50	14	5	6604.27	+106.77	+1.6

## Notes

- 2 market days were lost of the 14 in June 2018, as the market was still under CJ event management.
- \*Tuesdays are shown as this is the main day when the majority of income is received. This is from 3 day traders who pay in advance for the week.
- It is worth noting the national picture of retail in the High streets and markets shows a decline, so it is encouraging to see that Bromsgrove Market is showing positive growth during 2019.