

**Portfolio Holder Report****Portfolio Holder Report - (Environmental Services and Community Safety)**

*\*Please note that due to the recent change of portfolio responsibilities this report only contains detail regarding Environmental Services.*

**Introduction and Overview**

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

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

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

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

The report will be structured as follows:

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

The Council has the following Strategic Purposes and Priorities:

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

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**1. Update on Strategic Purposes**

**Relevant Strategic Purpose 1: Communities which are safe, well maintained and green**

Environmental Services are one of the most visible representatives of the Council for our residents, providing street cleansing and horticultural work to maintain the appearance of the district, and providing Waste Collection Services to every household to support them with the management of their residual waste, dry recycling, and their garden waste if they wish to sign up to our chargeable “Brown Bin” service.

The Council also operates a Commercial Tanker service to support our residents who do not have access to mains sewerage and provide a high-quality service at an affordable price, which also influences the pricing of private service providers to ensure good value for everyone.

As well as the direct services to deliver these actions, Environmental Services also carry out Enforcement Work to tackle environmental crime and works with partners such as the Worcestershire County Council Highways team and BDHT to support residents and ensure issues reach the right people for resolution.

Through our work with NWWM we manage and enforce the District Council’s responsibilities for Land Drainage and flooding.

**Relevant Strategic Purpose 2: Run and grow a successful business**

Environmental Services operates a successful Commercial Waste Service that supports businesses to manage their waste responsibly and cost effectively. As well as supporting the businesses to flourish, it also links local businesses success back to the local taxpayers, as the income from this service offsets wider costs of providing services to our residents, adding a social value for businesses when they choose to use us to manage their waste.

During Covid 19, this has been further demonstrated by significant flexibility to support our businesses to ensure that they are only paying for the service they require, with no hidden costs, and the flexibility to reflect the changing business pressures they have faced.

**Key activities since last report**

Covid 19 Management of Services has been the focus in 2021/22 so far, with constantly shifting pressures on our services due to staff absences and safe working requirements. This has disrupted staffing across all of our services, but we have prioritised our Domestic Waste Collection Services to households in order to ensure that their waste does not impact on their lives in addition to the other pressures residents have seen in the last 2 years.

At times this has resulted in the Place Team operating with significantly reduced numbers as staff have been moved to support the waste service, but standards have been largely maintained through the flexibility of the team and the knowledge they have of the district.

Although this approach has maintained service provision throughout 2020 and much of 2021, this was identified as unsustainable in the Autumn, and additional investment was sought to support the services as we look ahead to a third year of operating under the pressures and challenges of Covid 19 on our workforce.



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Having been approved, additional agency staff were employed to support the service in late 2021 whilst a recruitment process was started to fill the additional posts and fill the last of our then vacancies. This has now been largely completed, and the Agency Staff have been released as normal service has resumed, whilst a second recruitment process is being followed to fill a remaining driver role that was not appointed to in the previous recruitment process.

Growth of Commercial Services has continued despite the extreme challenges businesses and our services have faced, with many businesses reviewing the benefits of their arrangements with the private sector for management of their waste and recognising the benefits of working with Bromsgrove District Council, and these new partnerships are expected to continue growing in the coming years to further secure the service and support the wider financial pressures on the Council.

Fly Tipping is a significant pressure on our services, and 2021 has seen investment in new camera equipment to support the policing of this offence within our district. We are actively progressing over 30 fly tipping cases for potential prosecution through the courts, as well as issued a number of Fixed Penalty Notices for smaller offences.

Officers have been working with the Energy Savings Trust to provide an outline report of how we can change our vehicle fleet to reduce carbon emissions and save money. We now have this report.

North Worcestershire Water Management (NWWM) have produced a Water Course Maintenance Plan that proposes sharing the workload between our existing Place Teams and an External contractor.

**Anticipated Activities/Key Milestones for Next Period**

**Changes to Waste Collection**

Further detail from Central Government is expected in early 2022 which will set out the new requirements for Local Authorities to provide specific services as part of its Waste Collection arrangements, linked to the Environment Act 2021. These are expected to include the introduction of a new dedicated food waste collection, changes to the status of garden waste services as a discretionary chargeable service, and changes to what we need to do around dry recycling.

This will require significant review of our existing services and resources to consider how we can meet these new requirements and offer up opportunities for new ways of providing services with even greater efficiency, with potential to impact on how the whole of Environmental Services operates across the district.

**HGV Driver training – service resilience**

Additional HGV driver training was started in 2021 to support service delivery but has been delayed due to pressures on the DVLA and the ability to have training carried out safely and securely. This is now starting to progress again and is expected to significantly strengthen the resilience of the service with a larger pool of Drivers available to support the service in future.



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**Fly Tipping**

Fly Tipping enforcement is to continue and hopefully expand in 2022/23, with a Capital Bid having been submitted to support the purchase of additional CCTV equipment for use within the District, and a new Partnership project with Wyre Forest District Council to support private land owners identify and penalise fly tippers dumping on their land with funding from the PCC.

Publicity of actions and outcomes will be a priority to coincide with expected court appearances for cases currently being progressed, and a communication plan will be developed and implemented to raise the profile of this and act as further deterrence.

**Decarbonisation of our fleet**

Following the outline report on our fleet from the Energy Savings Trust we are currently looking to procure the services of a consultant who could offer us the detailed advice needed to progress.

We would be looking for support with vehicle availability, suitability, emerging technology, the right time to invest, grant funding availability, infrastructure and energy suppliers.

With the detailed information we will produce a report later this year that will provide a plan for our vehicle replacement for the next ten years and assist with the Council's aim to be carbon neutral.

**Watercourse maintenance**

Following on from some detailed investigation work and an outline business case provided by Fiona McIntosh (NWWM) a report will be presented to Cabinet in March requesting that the maintenance plan is adopted and that funding to carry out essential watercourse maintenance is allocated.

**2. Partnership Working**

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

**Partnership working examples**

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Waste Partnership (BDC/ RBC/ WFDC/ Wychavon/ Worcester City Council/ MHDC/ WCC/Herefordshire County Council). Strategic and Operational partnership with collective work on Central Government Consultation responses and future service planning, with joint projects and funding to review service delivery in preparation for the changes being implemented by Central Government.

Worcestershire County Council Highways Department & Ringway – Place Team coordination of works.

Police Crime Commissioner & Wyre Forest District Council Enforcement Team During much of 2021 the team have not had a dedicated Enforcement Officer due to long term sickness, and so

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have been working in partnership with the Enforcement Team at Wyre Forest to support our investigations and carry out PACE interviews with suspects. This led to a joint bid to the PCC for funding, which has been successful.

Bromsgrove District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Wyre Forest District Council, and Worcestershire County Council – The service is exploring opportunities around operational service delivery to support resilience and efficiency of future service delivery to residents and support our environmental responsibilities.

Working with Wyre Forest District Council to deliver our land drainage responsibilities.

**Key activities since last report**

Responding to Government consultations on the proposed changes to Waste Collection requirements introduced in the Resources and Waste Strategy, which has then been implemented through the Environment Act 2021, and which is still waiting on further direction in the form of supporting regulations and guidance that will be influenced by consultation.

Successful Partnership bid submitted with Wyre Forest District Council to the PCC for funds to support landowners with fly-tipping on private land. Project expected to start in 2022.

**3. Good News Stories and Awards**

**Go Green for Recycling Week**

In September 2021 BDC joined in with lighting up its buildings Green for national Recycle Week, to remind residents to ‘step up’ their recycling habits and recycle the right things.

Running for eighteen years, Recycle Week is the one week of the year where retailers, brands, waste management companies, trade associations, governments and the media come together to achieve one goal: to inspire the public into recycling more of the right things, more often.

**Council Takes Action to ensure integrity of core waste services**

In October 2021 Bromsgrove District Council took the difficult decision to suspend garden waste services temporarily, to strengthen the delivery of their core waste service.

Whilst this may not seem like a good news story it shows the proactive work that the Council did to protect waste services and look after its staff during what was a difficult period.

**4. Other**

**Staff Health & Wellbeing**

Environmental Staff have been on the front line of service delivery during an exceptionally challenging time (due to the challenges of COVID), and the pressure of maintaining services has been significant.

They have met this challenge consistently, but in addition to the direct impact of Covid on our workforce, we have also identified increasing issues related to our staff’s mental health arising



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from the ongoing uncertainty arising from the pandemic and significant social changes that have impacted on people at home as well as in work.

This has been identified nationally across a wide range of industries as having an impact on staff and delivery of services, and so to support our staff, we have commissioned trained Counsellors to provide support in the Depot for our staff to be able to discuss their issues confidentially and consider how their health can be supported either through our employee assistance programme, their GP, or other agencies that may be able to help prevent these pressures from overwhelming staff.

We are also looking at wider health support to better monitor the physical and mental pressures on staff, so that we can ensure our staff and services are in the best condition to continue delivering high quality services, and this will be rolled out from 2022.