



Annual Report

2008-2009



Bromsgrove
District Council

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



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1. Introduction from the Leader of the Council



Welcome to the Council's Annual Report for the year 2008/2009.

We are delighted to once again introduce this report. 2008/2009 has been a particularly significant year for the Council. We are now rated a "Fair" council by the Audit Commission, the independent regulator for local government. In previous years, we have talked about the actions we have been taking to improve our governance, our

performance and customer service and it is good to see that these actions are now coming to fruition and recognised by the Audit Commission and by you the customer.

All of our priorities have seen an improvement over the last 12 months.

For the town centre, we have completed the consultation on the town centre issues and options paper. This is the precursor to the area action plan for the town centre, which we expect to be complete by 31 March 2010. The area action plan will provide a master plan for the regeneration of the town centre over the next decade. We are looking to progress certain aspects of the regeneration in advance of the area

action plan and we are sure you are aware of the disappointment across the town, when Parkside School was listed; however, we press on and are now exploring putting the "blue light campus" near New College, which will free up Windsor Street for re-development.

Housing is now a one star service with promising prospects and we are exceeding our affordable housing targets. Our Housing Team have worked particularly hard over the last three years to improve this aspect of the Council and I am very pleased with the much improved working relationship with our preferred registered social landlord partner, BDHT.

Our customer service priority has seen a dramatic improvement in the Customer Service Centre's performance with answer times now averaging 30 seconds and 73% of residents surveyed saying they would recommend it to a friend.

Sense of community: where do we start? This is a particularly strong part of the Council's offer. We have rolled out street theatre across the District, make a substantial financial contribution to the Artrix (£120,000 a year), have an excellent sports development team and work closely with the Police through our neighbourhood wardens and PACT meetings.

Finally, residents have recognised that our streets are cleaner and value our excellent recycling service.

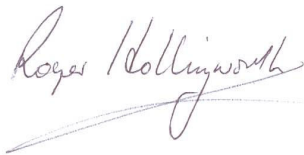
Three years ago, we introduced "Building Pride" as our strap line. There is much we can now be proud of. However, whilst we have come along way in a short space of time, "Fair" means we are average. We hope you will have noticed the cover of our Annual Report has a signpost with Excellent on.

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We are still on a journey. Our customers have high expectations and our vision has always been to deliver excellent services, so we must go on improving.

Delivering this vision in the current economic climate is not going to be easy. Local government finance has not benefited in the same way as education and health have in recent years and we are now about to enter an era of retrenchment, with virtually nil growth. This means we have to make significant savings in order to maintain existing services and to improve. This is why we are pursuing the shared services model with Redditch Borough Council. No change is not an option; we have to find a new business model in order to respond to the expected public finance challenges ahead.

We look forward to reporting to you next year on the formal agreement of this new business model, what savings it is going to deliver and what improvements it is going to make to residents' quality of life as we start our journey from Fair to excellence.



Roger Hollingworth
Leader of the Council



Kevin Dicks
Chief Executive

An electronic version of this plan can be found on our website:

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

2. About Bromsgrove District

Location

Bromsgrove District is in north Worcestershire, covering a large area of approximately 83.9 square miles. Whilst only 14 miles from the centre of Birmingham, the Lickey Hills country park provides an important dividing line between the urban West Midlands Conurbation and the rural landscape of north Worcestershire. Ninety percent of the District is greenbelt which creates difficulties for housing policy. Four radial routes pass through the District, each served by railway lines and major roads, including the M5 running north and south, the M42 running east and west, with further links to the M40 and M6.



Data suggests that 16,643 people travel into the District for work, with 26,112 (29%) of the population travelling out, a net commute out of 9,469.¹ Our main communities are detailed in the map (above). The District has no wards in the top 20% most deprived in England.²

¹ ONS 2001 Census
² DCLG Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007

Population

The population of the District is 92,300³ and the Office for National Statistics predicts that this will increase by 20.5% over the next 23 years to 111,200 in 2031.⁴ The over 65 population totals 17,000 (18.4% of the population)⁵ and this older population is predicted to expand as a proportion of the overall District population significantly over the next 20-25 years, with the over 80s population estimated to increase by 132% by 2031.⁶

There are 37,492 households in the District.⁷ The current review of the Regional Spatial Strategy is likely to require homes for 3,000-7,000 households to be built in the District in the next 25 years and it is also probable that the District will have to take some of Redditch Borough Council's housing allocation.

The black and minority ethnic population (BME) is 6.4%, which is low for the region and nationally. This percentage comprises 1% Irish, 2.6% Asian, 1.2% Mixed, 1.0% Black and 0.6% Chinese.⁸ There are no definitive data sources for the migrant worker population living in Bromsgrove, but indicative figures suggest this is in the region of 0.2%.⁹

³ ONS 2007 Mid-Year Population Estimates
⁴ ONS 2006 Subnational population projections
⁵ ONS 2007 Mid-Year Population Estimates
⁶ ONS 2006 Subnational population projections
⁷ Worcestershire County Council RSS Household Forecasts Report 2008
⁸ ONS 2006 Resident Population Estimates by Ethnic Group
⁹ Worcester County Economic Assessment 2007-2008

Economy

The economic picture of the District is generally positive in spite of the current economic downturn. The mean household income is £38,690, which is the highest in the county (the county average is £35,656).¹⁰ There are three major areas of economic regeneration within the District: the Longbridge site, Bromsgrove town centre and Bromsgrove railway station. In April 2005, parts of Phoenix Venture Holdings (PVH), most significantly MG Rover and PowerTrain entered administration, resulting in the closure of the Longbridge car plant. These parts of the Group employed around 5,850 people in the West Midlands and an estimated £410m was spent with firms based in the West Midlands as part of the supply chain. Whilst unemployment levels naturally increased with the closure, the District's unemployment level subsequently dropped to very low levels (1.8% in April 2008)¹¹, although it has risen to 3.7% at April 2009 as a consequence of the national recession. Bromsgrove town centre needs a major overhaul to encourage local shopping and to be able to compete with neighbouring shopping centres. Bromsgrove station is the third area of concern. The current station facilities are not considered fit for purpose and a feasibility study is currently being carried out on the possible redesign of the station so that it can take bigger trains and more passengers and an increase of at least 300 additional car parking spaces. This would help "future proof" the station against any changes to transport charges that may affect Birmingham city centre. The railway station will be funded by a number of organisations and negotiations between Network

¹⁰ PayCheck 2008

¹¹ WCC County Economic Summary

Rail and all the other partners are currently taking place to put together the funding package. Until the funding package is finalised a specific date of completion cannot be provided.

Sustainable Development

We all need to make a decisive move toward more sustainable development, not just because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is in our own long-term best interests. By thinking about the way in which we do things and becoming more sustainable, we can meet our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is the concept of sustainable development, and must underpin all of our actions. We already have a number of initiatives in place to help improve our sustainability. The Council House is in the process of switching to 100% green electricity, and part of our power comes from solar panels on our roof. We use 100% recycled paper, and encourage recycling in house and in the wider District. We are also signed up to the Worcestershire car sharing scheme.

The Local Strategic Partnership's Better Environment Group has a number of projects underway aiming to reduce our carbon footprint, help conserve and enhance our biodiversity, and reduce pollution. The Council and its partners want to ensure that the serious issue of climate change is addressed, and the Council and the LSP have therefore made climate change a priority. There are several National Indicators around climate change which need to be performance managed and monitored. A budget bid was therefore approved by Full Council to employ a Climate Change Officer (in partnership with Redditch BC) to allow these issues to be considered strategically, provide technical advice on climate

change, environmental and broader sustainability considerations including current and forthcoming legislation, regulations and requirements for local government, and translate this into service areas' need to implement to ensure compliance.

Affordable Housing

One of the biggest issues facing the District is affordable housing: 83.4% of households are owner occupied,¹² the 11th highest figure in England and Wales, and the average house price being £240,867, although this figure is falling in line with the global economic downturn.¹³ The Council is currently operating a planning moratorium with only affordable housing developments being built. The Housing Strategy has a target of 80 units of affordable housing a year for the next three years.

Education, Deprivation and Health

The percentage of the population qualified to NVQ Level 4 is significantly higher than average. GCSE results gained at local authority schools and colleges in Worcestershire in 2008 were amongst the highest in the country (64.4% achieved five or more GCSEs at A*-C).¹⁴ The District ranks 299th out of 354 councils on the national index of multiple deprivation 2007 (where 1 is the most deprived), making the District one of the least deprived nationally.¹⁵ It is also the only district in

Worcestershire to have become less deprived since 2004.¹⁶ Only 640 households are in receipt of benefits in the District, one of the lowest figures in Worcestershire.¹⁷ As a result, identifying the vulnerable within our communities is more difficult than a district with geographic areas of deprivation.

Generally, the District's population is healthier than the regional average. Young people (18-24) have a high risk status being the most likely to smoke, binge drink and not take exercise. Potentially, we could be storing up problems in our young people. A recent Primary Care Trust (PCT) annual report noted that our children's health is good, but there is a need for more child and adolescent mental health services. The PCT retain a concern (shared by the Council's own Community Safety Team) that domestic violence remains "common place". The rate of teenage pregnancies in Bromsgrove in 2006 was 23.6 conceptions per 1,000 females, which is almost half that of the England average of 41.1.¹⁸

Crime and Fear of Crime

At the end of the 2007/08 year, crime had reduced by 32% in the District, surpassing the target of a 17.5% reduction from the 2003/04 baseline results.¹⁹ This was exceptional when compared to the national reduction of just 4%, and the county-wide figure of 24%. Reductions were seen in all British Crime Survey comparator crime types, with the largest decrease being seen in domestic burglary at 53% and the smallest in

¹² ONS 2001 Census

¹³ South Housing Market Assessment April 2007

¹⁴ Worcestershire LEA Key Stage 4 results 2007/08

¹⁵ & ¹⁶ DCLG Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ Worcester County Economic Assessment 2007-2008

¹⁸ DH 2008 Bromsgrove Health Profile

¹⁹ British Crime Survey 2008

criminal damage which only reduced by 12% compared to the baseline year 2003/04.

Fear of crime, however, remains a problem in the District despite the reduction in actual crime in 2007/08. 80% of residents responding to the 2008 West Mercia Crime and Safety Survey indicated that they have been fearful about the possibility of any crimes happening to them in their neighbourhood in the last 12 months, compared to just 56% in the 2007 survey. People were most fearful of house burglary, vandalism or damage to property and having their car broken in to, despite significant reductions in all of these crime types during 2007/08. However, residents most commonly identified the following issues as needing to be addressed first, considering them to be the worst problems in their neighbourhood: speeding traffic; groups of people loitering around in public places and underage drinking.²⁰

Regulatory, Political, Managerial and Financial Context

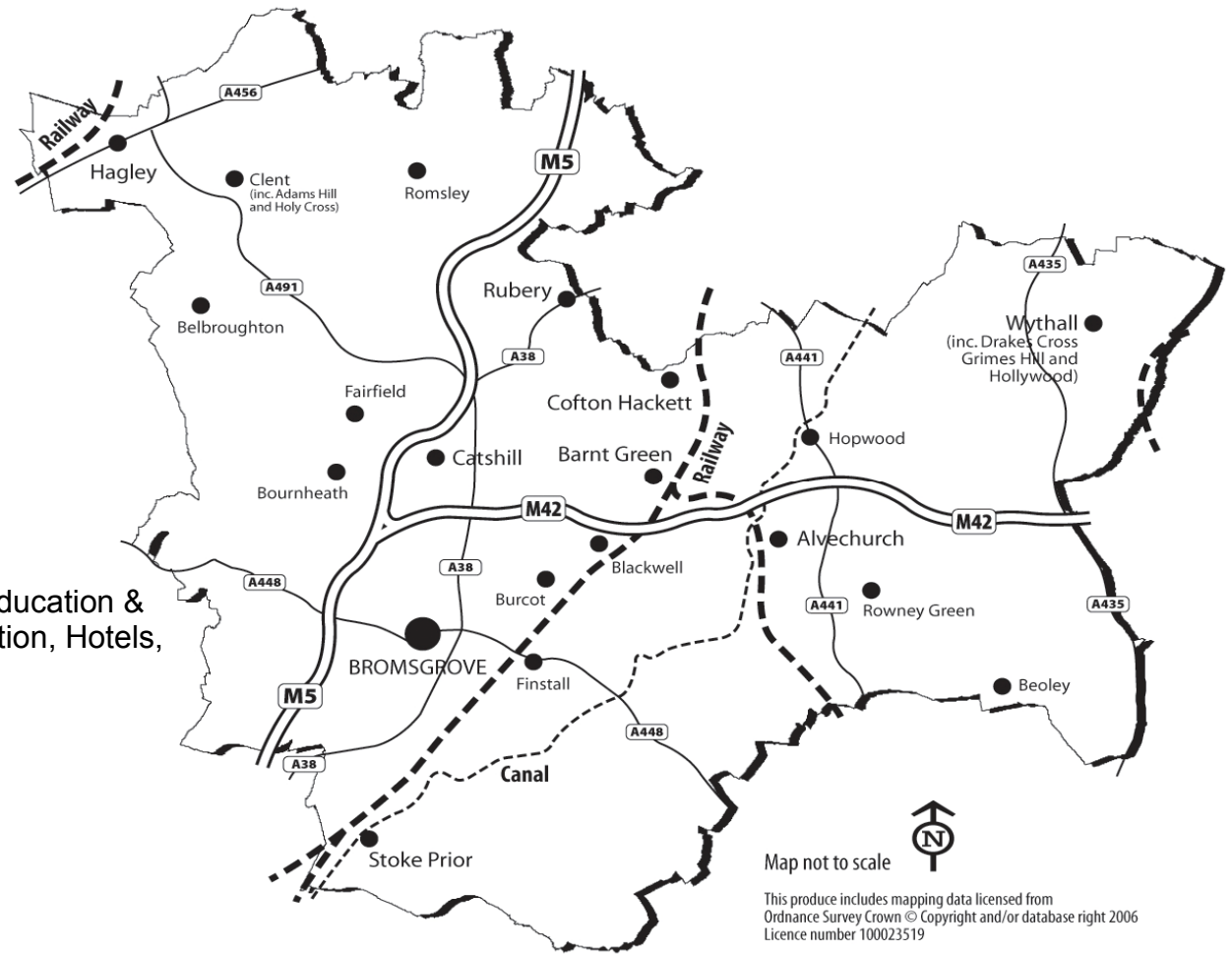
The Council has a majority Conservative administration, with twenty-six Conservatives, six Labour, five Independents, and two Wythall Residents' Association. The Council operates a modernised political structure with the Leader/Cabinet model, supported by four non-Executive Boards: Audit Board, Scrutiny Board, Overview Board and Performance Management Board. There is also a Planning Committee, Standards Committee and Licensing Committee. The Council has a Corporate Management Team (CMT) of 11 including an Acting Joint Chief Executive, Kevin Dicks.

The Council has a net budget of £11.733m (2008/09) and a Government Grant of £4.858m. The Council employs 358 staff.

²⁰ West Mercia Crime and Safety Survey 2008

Table 3 - About Bromsgrove District

Size Area:	83.9 square miles
Population:	92,300
Households:	37,492
Towns and large villages:	Bromsgrove, Hagley, Rubery, Wythall
Main Employment:	Public Administration, Education & Health (25.9%); Distribution, Hotels, & Restaurants (23.1%)
Unemployment:	3.7%
Ethnicity:	6.4%
Deprivation Ranking:	299 out of 354



3 Achievements against our vision, objectives and priorities

A summary of key achievements against our priorities follows.

Council Objective – Regeneration (Priorities: Town Centre and Housing)

- Implemented Local Housing Allowance to give more ownership and accountability to the tenants.
- Developed a framework agreement for Disabled Facilities Grants to ensure contractors give value for money in the price and quality of their service.
- To reflect our success in continuing to meet Government targets on the low use of temporary accommodation and B & B for 16 & 17 yrs olds and developing a range of prevention options focused on young people, we were awarded regional centre of excellence for youth homelessness, and hosted a successful conference sharing good practice with other local authorities.
- We worked with RSL partners in the delivery of 145 additional units of affordable housing in Bromsgrove District.
- Worked with neighbouring authorities to develop and implement Home Choice Plus which is a transparent method of allocating social housing in advance of Government guidelines to implement a scheme by 2010.
- We have increased housing choices by bringing empty properties back into use, assisting landlords to improve quality and supply of accommodation and by supporting

24 households to access private rented housing through the 'Step Up' private tenancy scheme.

- In response to the economic down turn we have set up the local delivery of a mortgage rescue scheme and funded an adviser at CAB specifically to assist homeowners who are experiencing mortgage difficulties.
- Funded the new market stalls in the High Street.
- Funding and design of new high dependency unit toilets in town centre (due to open July 2009).
- Bus route survey of town centre and surrounding areas completed, leading to proposal for a 'hopper' service between the town centre and the railway station.
- Initial design for new railway station completed.
- Funding for community transport scheme for mobility impaired people approved.
- Area action plan issues and options paper consulted on and completed.
- A package of planned building works for the town centre was developed, but the subsequent listing of Parkside school by English Heritage means that plans will have to be revised.

Council Objective – Improvement (Priority: Customer Service)

- Achieved Level 3 of the Local Government Standard for Equality and Diversity 12 months early.
- Achieved primary status in the Member Development Charter.
- 100% training delivery on Equality and Diversity and Code of Conduct for Elected Members.

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- Successful roll-out of local assessment process through the Standards Committee.
- Delivery of successful training programme for parish councillors in Equality and Diversity.
- Successful implementation and roll-out of Legal Case Management System.
- As a result of changes to the General Development Order in Oct 2008, produced a Householders Planning Guide for use at the CSC, as an aid to Planning Surgery and for use on the Website.
- Introduced Public Access to enable customers to view and submission of comments in association with Planning Applications, whilst maintaining performance at above National Levels.
- Customer service centre met all targets for the year, including :
 - The average answer time for telephone calls was 30 seconds however in the second half of the year the team were regularly achieving an answer below 20 seconds.
 - Customers in the CSC waited on average only 7 minutes to see an advisor.
- The Council achieved a CPA rating of “Fair”, jumping a category and having achieved “Poor” only 18 months previously.
- Improved focus on council priorities, which have reduced from 10 to four over the last three years. This focus was reflected in a CPA score for Prioritisation, achieving 3 out of 4.
- The Council completed its Performance Management Strategy, including the implementation of the new National Indicators, Place Survey and a new corporate complaints system. The Council now has a comprehensive performance management system.
- The Council’s project management arrangements were considered “sound” and “on the way to be embedded” by an independent inspection by the Audit Commission. These arrangements included the establishment of a programme board, a project management methodology and project management training for 40 managers.
- Undertook two Customer Panel Surveys, one on quality of life of our residents and the other on customer satisfaction with the Council. This information was fed directly into the 2009/2010 budget round.
- Responded quickly to the “duty to involve” agenda, establishing a budget jury for the 2009/2010 budget round and a “U Decide” event for children and young people, who were given £50,000 to determine how to spend (£10,000 from the District and £40,000 from the County Council).
- Worked in partnership with the Equalities and Diversity Forum on a range of community bids, which helped fund the Council’s first ever Diwali celebrations and put money towards Black History Month (the Council also supports other faith based events like the Christmas Lights switch on, Holocaust Memorial Day and Remembrance Sunday).
- Achieved response rates for its Customer Panel of over 45%, which is a high response rate and improved the statistical validity of these surveys.
- Continued to support the Police through attendance at Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings, attending 80% of these meetings in 2008/2009.

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- Responded to 270 complaints during 2008/2009, all of which were recorded on the new complaints management system. More importantly, the Council is now beginning to use this data to re-think the delivery of services, in particular, improved communications to the public.
- Undertook a substantial body of research for its new Customer Access Strategy, including focus groups with residents, focus groups with older people and benchmarking with other councils.
- Continued to produce its resident's magazine "Together Bromsgrove" and raised £14,145 of advertising income for its three editions.
- Produced high quality information on expenditure and performance, in particular, a wrap around in the local press on its annual report, which received positive feedback from the public and the Council Tax leaflet.
- Continued to make use of the latest web based technology to communicate with its residents, including Twitter and Facebook.
- Commenced a Lean Systems pilot for Disabled Facilities Grants which will be evaluated in 2009/2010.
- Completed a further update of its Sustainable Community Strategy, to include the new Local Area Agreement targets, which was completed and approved by Full Council.
- Improved processing times for benefits and supported the implementation of a new system by the Department of Work and Pensions to fast track benefit claims.
- Increased number of prosecutions for benefit fraud to ensure the Councils funds for benefit payments are allocated to those who are eligible.
- Implemented a purchase order processing system where all orders are submitted on-line and invoices paid automatically on receipt of goods.
- Continued with home visits by the welfare and visiting officers to support residents in completing benefit claims or who need advice and guidance.
- The implementation of Voice Risk Analysis Software allowing us to use new technology to verify information needed in support of a Benefit claim. This is part of a national pilot funded by the Department of Works and Pensions and has allowed us to improve new claim processing times ensuring customers are paid quickly and accurately.
- Completed the implementation of a suite of IT systems to deliver efficiencies and improvements in services.
- Completion of the Food Service Plan including the programme of interventions at all food premises due for inspection during 2008/09 and making public the hygiene scores of pubs, restaurants and other catering businesses through the "Scores on Doors" part of our website.
- Completion of the Health and Safety Service Plan including the programme of inspections planned for 2008/09. This included a project of inspecting all hairdressers, beauty salons and tanning salons and an associated award scheme.
- Completing the actions agreed with the Food Standards Agency following their audit in June 2008.

Council Objective – Sense of Community and Well Being (Priority: Sense of Community)

- Following a community bidding process the Council funded black History month, Diwali and other projects with vulnerable or minority groups within the District.
- Funded an increase in the neighbourhood wardens.
- Granted a budget allocation towards youth participation in Council issues.
- Worked in partnership to save the Multi Agency Resource Centre from closure (now renamed as TRUNK).
- Approved increase in the number of Neighbourhood Partnerships within the District.
- Approved improvements in access to allotment sites.
- Approved funding to improve Houndsfield Lane Caravan Site.
- Organised a Veteran Day's bandstand programme and special event at the Artrix Theatre, as a result of resident feedback.
- Successful bandstand programme in Sanders Park (funded through sponsorship).
- External accreditation of Lifeline Service. 98.50% of Lifeline calls answered within 30 seconds (target is 80%).
- Delivery of Sport Unlimited project funded by Sport England which supports children and young people aged 5-19 years.
- Successful bid to Health Improvement Fund to deliver Families Fit Together, an inter-generational project to encourage residents in particular wards to become more active.
- Development of mobility sessions in rural localities which are accessible for older adults, including sessions in Alvechurch, Hollywood and Central Bromsgrove.
- 'High 5' event around the five themes of the Every Child Matters agenda launched and now an annual event.
- Establishment of six community multi-skills clubs across the District.
- Delivery of two gifted and talented multi-skills academies for children aged 5-9 years.
- Set up of two gymnastics community sessions within the District to enable children to access high quality gymnastics provision.
- Successful Community Investment Fund bids totalling £79,000 to develop sport and active recreation opportunities for young people and adults aged 16 years and over.
- Programme of free community coaching opportunities rotating around the district utilising the multi use games arena (MUGA) facilities developed in 2007/2008.
- 235 new Lifeline installations within Bromsgrove enabling vulnerable people to remain living at home.
- 95.6% of Lifeline customers were satisfied or very satisfied with the installation and demonstration of the equipment.
- Installation of upgraded CCTV cameras within the Town centre and Rubery.
- Successfully delivered the Street theatre programme to include three events in Bromsgrove Town and three additional events in Hagley, Wythall and Rubery.
- Bonfire event delivered in Sanders Park – the second year of a paid event – achieved the improvements to the event from the previous year.

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- New Christmas Light displays and infrastructure for Bromsgrove and Rubery as identified in the annual residents survey.
- Successful Christmas Lights events delivered in Bromsgrove and Rubery and part sponsorship secured for three years up to Christmas 2010.
- Established sponsorship framework to enable the Council to work with private and public sector to maximise our sponsorship initiatives.
- Successfully delivered Black History Month in conjunction with Bromsgrove Black History Society including facilitating the events programme and marketing materials.
- Marketing and production of the annual 'Go4fun' magazine containing summer events programmes and activities distributed to local children for the summer holidays.
- Successfully delivered the Shindig rural and community touring scheme to village halls and community venues throughout Bromsgrove District.
- Successfully delivering the marketing and installation of the new Dolphin Centre Gym including the opening event.
- Successfully took on the management of Fairs throughout Bromsgrove district.
- Secured funding for a full time dedicated Allotment and Football Pitch Officer.
- All unused and overgrown allotment plots have now been cleared and tenanted and Allotment waiting lists have reduced.
- Partnership working with Football Leagues and teams greatly improved.
- Achieved the prestigious Green Flag status for Sanders Park.
- Successful commencement of new full time dedicated play area inspector and BTEC associated training completed.
- Successful delivery of new teenage risky play and MUGA at Alvechurch.
- Successful consultation and delivery of five Big Lottery Play Area Schemes – total value of schemes £200,000.
- Successful consultation and delivery of Capital Schemes of two MUGA's at Catshill and Wythall.
- Achievement of funding from the Environment Agency of £4,000 planting of the Battlefield Brook in Sanders Park to support water voles. The planting was carried out involving volunteers from local schools.
- Awarded Playbuilder funding through the Play Partnership for Lickey End recreation ground and successfully delivered consultation and project including natural play scheme with additional capital for ancillary items and creation of a small wildlife reserve.
- Achieved funding through County by working with Friends of Sanders Park group to improve the lighting along Watt Close entrance to the park.
- Establishment of partners to progress £12,000 funding for improvements to the canalised section of the Battlefield Brook.
- Carried out a service review of the Councils Sports Centres provision which generated £150,000 of savings.
- Undertook the Phase 2 refurbishment of the Dolphin Centre and implemented at a new 54 station health & fitness suite.

- Established a community safety shared service with Redditch Borough Council.

Council Objective Environment (Priorities: Clean Streets and Recycling)

- Funded a climate change officer as a joint post with Redditch Council.
- Purchased a fleet of new refuse vehicles to improve efficiency.
- Shop mobility scheme opening hours have been extended.
- The Council's website has been updated and now allows for reporting of fly-tipping.
- The Council has improved cleanliness and sustained consistently high rates of recycling (44% (unaudited figures) exceeding its statutory recycling and composting target of 20 per cent.
- The Council's customer panel data indicates that satisfaction has since risen.
- Successful implementation of Chargeable Garden Waste Service. Currently 14,673 applications received.
- Implemented flytipping enforcement procedures where appropriate.
- Wireless network installed to ticket machines in car parks to allow remote recording of registrations and machine functionality.
- 74% of complaints were responded to within the 10 day response standard.
- Removing abandoned vehicles, dead animals and fly tips has consistently exceeded target throughout the year.

- Set-up system for telephone payments for green waste collection.
- Reviewed refuse rounds and set-up Uniform system for refuse service.
- Achieved sponsorship for maintaining roundabouts across the District.

4. Summary of audit and inspection findings

During the year the Council had a second Corporate Assessment under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime operated by the Audit Commission. A summary is shown below. A copy of the report is available on the Audit Commission website www.audit-commission.gov.uk as well as the Annual Audit Letter which summarises all audit and inspection activity in the past year. The Council has responded to the recommendations and has incorporated improvement actions to address identified areas for improvement in the Council Plan, the Improvement Plan and departmental Business Plans, all of which can be seen on the Council website www.bromsgrove.gov.uk.

Corporate Assessment (March 2009)

Result: Fair (up from Poor in last assessment in 2007/08).

The Inspectors said:

“Since first comprehensive performance assessment in 2007 the Council has achieved much, often from a very low base, and its overall performance is now 'fair'. The Council has made significant progress in addressing the weakness previously identified. Clear political and managerial leadership and stronger management have led to a greater focus on improvement and priorities and these changes are recognised and valued by the community and partners.”

“The Council, together with its partners, now has clear ambitions for the community which are informed by community needs and aspirations. A framework of plans is in place linking

local and county wide ambitions and these are underpinned by business plans, team plans and individual personal appraisals to ensure a greater focus on delivery.”

“The internal working of the Council has improved with codes of conduct to clarify roles and responsibilities and there is a greater level of trust between councillors and officers.”

“Improved management of performance and service delivery is securing improvement in services. Scrutiny has limited impact with an absence of a robust and constructive challenge by councillors of performance and decisions. Project evaluation and the analysis of complaints are not fully effective.”

“Improvement in performance is notable but this has, in many instances, been from a very low base and overall performance remains below that of other councils.”

“Improved working with partners and local people is enhancing the sense of community. An effective crime and disorder reduction partnership has helped reduce crime levels and a number of initiatives are effectively addressing concerns about the fear of crime. The needs of young people are being addressed but it is less clear what has been delivered to meet the needs of the significant and increasing number of older people.”

“High recycling rates are being sustained. The Council exceeded its statutory recycling and composting target but the overall amount of household waste collected per person remains relatively high, as do collection costs. Street cleanliness has improved and recent unaudited figures indicate improved satisfaction rates.”

The Inspectors made recommendations covering three areas:

1 The Council should strengthen its customer focus so that its actions meet the needs of its community:

- a culture of customer focus should be fully established at all levels within the council.
- strategies, contracts, project specifications and business plans and accompanying action plans need to have clearly identified outcomes that the public would recognise, to deliver the outcomes intended.

2 To ensure the Council maintains its improvement journey and to make the best use of resources and ensure a focus on priorities, the Council should:

- develop further its workforce planning by undertaking a skills audit to identify and address any gaps;
- undertake routine evaluation of all projects, initiatives and partnerships to ensure that the Council's resources make the most impact and deliver the best value for money; and
- strengthen the scrutiny function to ensure robust and constructive challenge of performance, plans and decisions, including their direct and indirect consequences, so that priorities are delivered fully and not unintentionally undermined.

3 Improve external communication by:

- regularly checking that the community understands the Council's messages and information. This will help the public know what services are offered by the Council and allow the Council to highlight what it has achieved.
- providing clear and regular information updates on progress, especially for longer term projects such as the town centre.

The full report can be seen on the Audit Commission website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa

What the Council is doing:

An updated improvement action plan is being developed and will be submitted to Cabinet for approval in July 2009. The Performance Management Board will continue to review progress against this revised action plan.

Use of Resources

In December 2008 the Auditors submitted their latest report and judgements on 'Use of Resources'.

Result: Overall Score 2 (out of 4), the same as last year

The Inspectors said:

"In keeping with the Audit Commission's aim of being a driver for continuous improvement, this assessment has been more

challenging than the previous assessment. Our overall assessment of performance is level 2 which remains unchanged from the previous year. The Council's performance demonstrates that it has been able to make improvements in two areas, those of Internal Control and Value for Money whilst maintaining its scores for the other three.”

What the Council is doing:

Actions are in place to further improve the use of resources, taking the auditors comments and recommendations into account.

5. Summary of achievements against our Improvement Plan

The Council developed its fourth Improvement Plan in July 2008, which was approved by Cabinet on 2nd July 2008. The plan, which runs until June 2009, contains over 300 actions under a number of different improvement outcome headings, including:

- Town centre regeneration
- Housing
- Customer service
- Sense of community
- Clean district
- Value for money
- Financial management and strategy
- Financial and performance reporting
- Customer process
- Improved Council governance
- Spatial Business Project
- Improved partnership working
- Planning
- Learning & development,
- Workforce modernisation
- Employee climate

At the end of March four actions were one month behind schedule and two were more than one month behind schedule. Thirty three of the originally planned actions have been either suspended or had their completion dates significantly extended, due to a variety of reasons. All other actions in the plan were either completed or on schedule. The Improvement plan is currently being revised again for 2009/10. Further details about the Improvement Plan are available on the Councils' website

<http://bromsgrove.whub.org.uk/home/bdc-improvement-plan>

6. The Council's Performance Management framework

The Council's Performance Management Framework seeks to create explicit links between the Community Strategy, Council Plan, Service Business Plans and Team/Personal Development Plans.

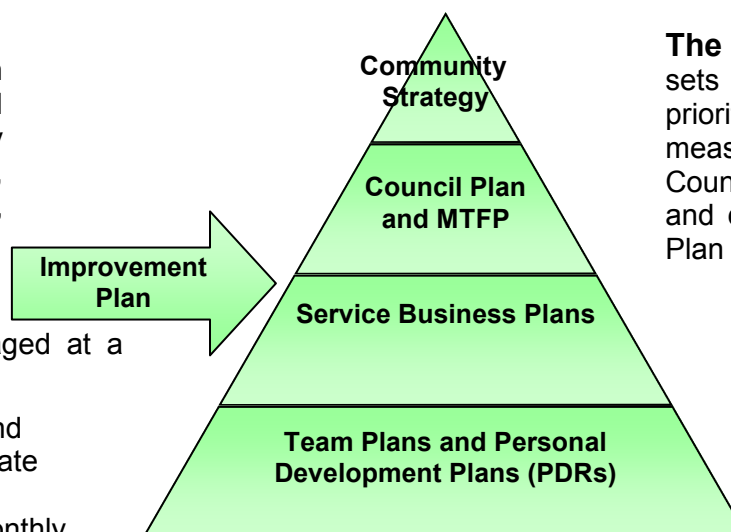
At the top of the framework is **The Community Strategy**. It is a 10-year plan that has been developed by the Bromsgrove Partnership, comprising public, private, voluntary and community organisations, which have been consulted with locally to identify the priorities for the area. The Community Plan represents an 'umbrella' plan from which each organisation prepares its own strategy to deliver aspects of the community plan for which it is responsible. The District's Community Plan is currently being reviewed.

Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan provides a link between the 3 year Council Plan and the 1 year service business plans. It extracts key actions for the year ahead in a GANT chart format, against which progress is reported each month, using a traffic light system.

Performance Management

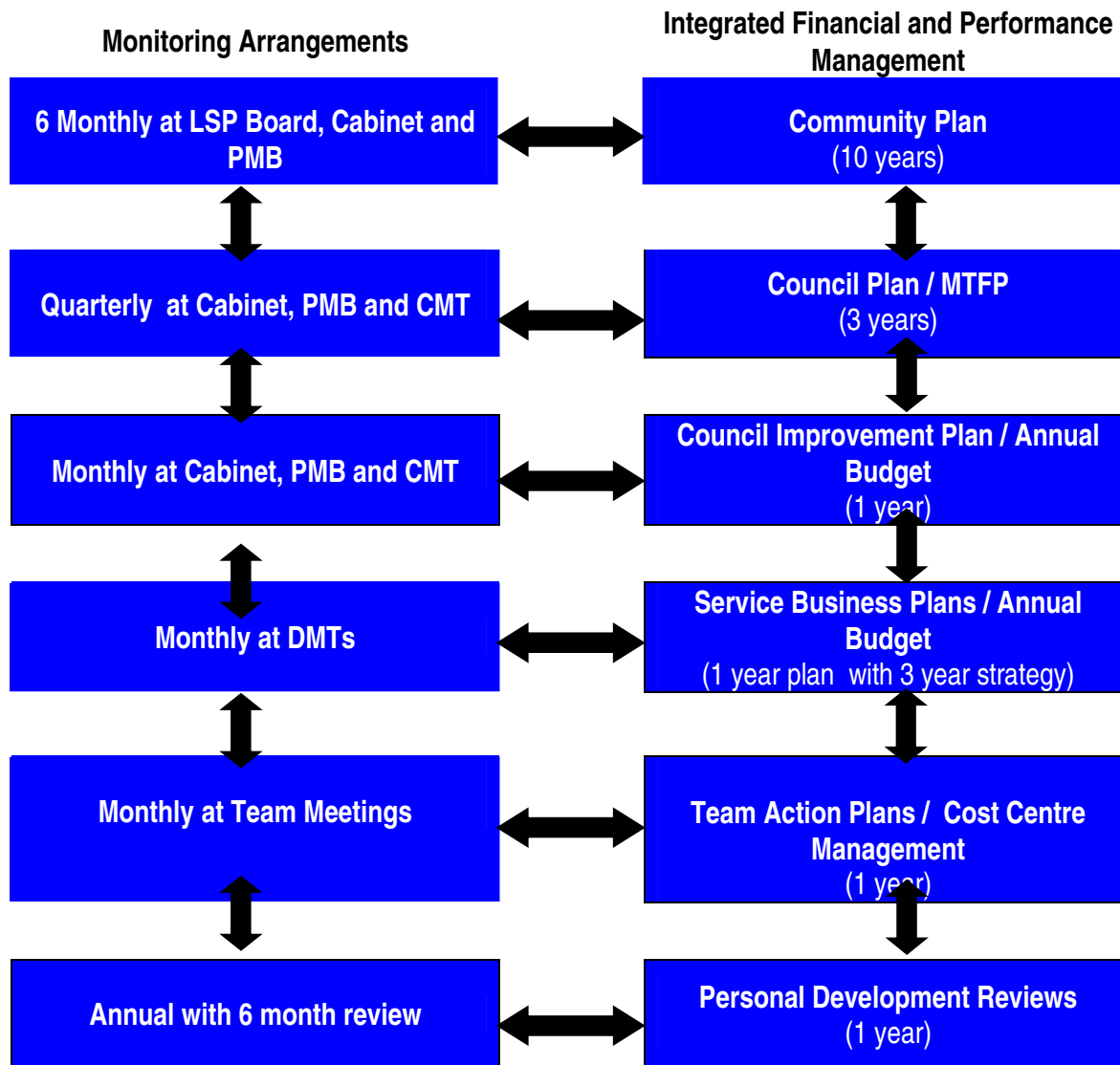
Progress against our plans are monitored and managed at a number of levels (see also overleaf):-

1. Cabinet receives a quarterly integrated financial and performance report and an Improvement Plan update each month.
2. The Performance Management Board receives monthly updates on the corporate performance indicators and the Improvement Plan. Any issues identified are reported to Cabinet.
3. All the above information goes to the Council's Corporate Management Team each month and it also receives quarterly updates against the service business plans.
4. The performance management framework is underpinned by:
 - A Data Quality Strategy and action plan to ensure that the quality of performance data is sound and thus decisions are made based on accurate data.
 - A Performance Management Strategy and action plan to further improve and embed performance management principles and good practice.



The Council Plan is based on consultation and sets out the Council's corporate objectives and priorities for the next 3 years in specific and measurable terms. The Plan also sets out how the Council will contribute to the Community Strategy and drives the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Service Business Plans identify at a departmental level the actions we plan to undertake in order to deliver the Council Plan and Improvement Plan. These are then translated into team plans and individual PDRs, ensuring all staff understand their role in delivering the Council's priorities. Progress against Business Plans are monitored quarterly at Corporate Management Team while staff receive a formal review of their PDR every six months.



The Monitoring Arrangements for each part of the performance management framework are detailed in the table opposite. This was agreed at December 2006 Cabinet.

7 Value for Money Summary

The Use of Resources review in December 2008 included a review of the VFM provided by the Council from which the Council received a scoring of 2 out of 4. This was an improvement on the previous scoring of 1 (below minimum standards) and demonstrates that the Council is now performing adequately and has reached the externally assessed minimum standard.

The new framework for the Use of Resources looks to embed the delivery of Value for Money across all services delivered by the Council. This will be demonstrated by the Council showing that there is a clear focus on achieving Value for Money in the use of all our resources including people and natural resources.

In the last year the Council has made a fundamental change to its approach to Value for Money through the examination and implementation of a shared services model with Redditch Borough Council. The principles of the model are that the two councils continue to be politically independent and focussed on meeting the priorities of their respective areas, but that service delivery is through shared service departments. Progress so far includes: appointing an acting joint chief executive for both councils, sharing of services for elections, community safety and payroll. A full report on longer term opportunities across all service areas is due to go to both Councils in July 2009 for consideration. In addition the Council is working with Worcestershire County Council and

other districts on the 'Worcestershire enhanced two tier' (WETT) initiative to explore the opportunity for shared services.

These two major initiatives are being supported by two officers in the Council with a specific focus on developing the VFM culture; the Procurement Manager who ensures that all purchasing is undertaken in an efficient and modern manner and the Improvement manager who has a focus on project and programme management, lean systems work, as well as developing a VFM dashboard and analysis.

In addition to these two major initiatives the Council has also been delivering a number of other VFM initiatives over the last 12 months, these include:-

- Developing priorities in conjunction with our stakeholders (PCT, voluntary sector) and our customers (Customer Panel, Customer surveys).
- Improvements to the links between funding and priority to ensure the Council realigns financial resource to key areas of priority.
- Establishment of the budget jury to support the Councils consultation process and raise awareness in the community of financial issues.
- Development of budget bids by the Equality and Diversity Forum to fund key areas of need for the more vulnerable members of the community.

- Cash savings delivered from entering into joint contracts and agreements with other councils across Worcestershire.
- Cash savings delivered by staff looking at more efficient ways to procure services (on-line manuals, on-line advertising).
- Value for Money and procurement training delivered to officers and Members.
- Supplier seminars undertaken to raise awareness of how to trade with the Council and to support local businesses.
- Review of waste management arrangements with resulting replacement vehicles being ordered as current fleet too costly
- Delivery of the Capital Programme to within 10% of the budget allocation
- Procurement savings of £80k achieved and sharing of procurement officer with Redditch Council.
- Developed new on-line budget consultation to enable the public to propose their own budget and revised council tax.

A VFM action plan was approved by Cabinet in November 2007 to identify the key areas that were to be addressed to improve our demonstration of VFM. The action plan is monitored quarterly to Corporate Management Team and Members. The plan has continued to be delivered during 2008/09 with the majority of areas being addressed successfully.

A new plan is to be developed with reference to the new framework on Use of Resources in August 2009 to ensure the Council uses its resources in the most efficient and effective way to our residents and customers.




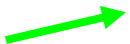


8. Performance results

In April 2008 Central Government introduced a revised set of performance measures, called National Indicators (NIs). These replaced the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) which had been used since 2000. Many of these NIs are new measures and so it is not possible in many cases to show comparisons to previous year's performance. There are 198 NIs, but only a subset of these applies to District Council areas and many of those are reported by other organisations. Further information about NIs and other council's performance can be found at the www.communities.gov.uk/hub website.

Each year the Council identifies performance measures which must reflect our priorities, these are a combination of national indicators plus some local indicators we have developed ourselves. Of these performance measures a subset of the most important ones are managed through reporting each month to the Corporate Management Team as well as Cabinet and Performance Management Board, the remainder are managed by individual Departments and portfolio holders

As a result of these changes this report will now show those corporately reported performance measures

Key:

Ref.	The reference code of the indicator
Description	The official description of the indicator
2007/08	The target and actual performance achieved for the year April 2007 to March 2008 inclusive (where available)
2008/09	The target and actual performance achieved for the year April 2008 to March 2009 inclusive
	Performing above target
	Performing below target within 10%
	Performing below target by more than 10%
Trend	Comparison of performance to the previous year
	Improving performance
	Steady performance
	Declining performance

Summary of performance

Performance against targets

The following table provides information on how performance indicators are performing against targets set by the Council, where the data is available.

Performance against target	2007/08	2008/09
Performing at or above target	77%	72%
Performing below target but within 10% of target	16%	20%
Performing below target by more than 10%.	7%	8%

Note that due to the significant changes in the PI reporting set, as described above, there are a number of PI's which were new in 2008/09 and thus did not have a target. Therefore overall comparisons of performance with previous years should be treated with caution.




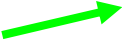

Performance Trends

The following table and graph provides information on how performance indicators are performing against previous year's performance, where comparable data is available.


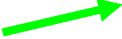








Performance Trends	2007/08	2008/09
Performance Improving	72%	54%
Performance steady	11%	8%
Performance declining	17%	38%

Note that due to the significant changes in the PI reporting set, as described above, there are a number of PI's which were new in 2008/09 for which there were no previous years figures. Therefore overall comparisons of performance with previous years should be treated with caution.







Annual Report 2008/09

Ref	Description	2007/08 Actual	2008/09		Trend
			Target	Actual	
NI 191	Residual Household waste per household	n/a	593.00	586.26	n/a
NI 192	Percentage of household waste re-used, recycled and composted	n/a	45.00	43.25	n/a
NI 195	Improved street & environmental cleanliness - graffiti	n/a	5.00	2.00	n/a
NI 195	Improved street & environmental cleanliness -litter	n/a	13.00	6.00	n/a
NI 195	Improved street & environmental cleanliness - detritus	n/a	20.00	15.00	n/a
NI 195	Improved street & environmental cleanliness - fly posting	n/a	1.00	0.00	n/a
NI 1956	Improved street and environmental cleanliness - fly tipping	n/a	2	2	n/a
	%age of reported abandoned vehicles investigated within 24 hours	100	95	98.8	
	%age of reported abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours	98.78	95	100	
	Percentage of animal/debris cleared within timescales	100	95	100	
	Percentage of fly tips dealt within response time	99.46	95	100	
	Number of missed household waste collections	1,102	1,392	1,136	




Annual Report 2008/09

Ref	Description	2007/08 Actual	2008/09		Trend
			Target	Actual	
	Number of missed recycle waste collections	352	600	281	
	Number of usages of Sports centres	592,133	672,420	627,404	
	Sports development usages	18,213	20,505	21,219	
	Attendance at arts/community events	25,056	17,678	20,642	
	Artrix usage	n/a	41,218	47,864	n/a
	Number of people attending the annual bonfire	n/a	11,339	2,757	n/a
	The number of domestic burglaries	355	359	438	
	The number of violent crimes	1,093	1,052	973	
	The number of robberies	67	56	61	
	The number of vehicle crimes	710	759	744	
	Number of affordable homes delivered	46	80	145	
	Number of households occupying temporary accommodation	16	34	13	
	Average time (weeks) from referral to completion for category 1 DFGs (Disabled Facilities Grants)	n/a	n/a	35.2	n/a
	Average time (weeks) from referral to completion for category 2 DFGs	n/a	n/a	41.76	n/a

Annual Report 2008/09

Ref	Description	2007/08 Actual	2008/09		Trend
			Target	Actual	
	Average time (weeks) from referral to completion for category 3 DFGs	n/a	n/a	57.69	n/a
	Percentage of DFG budget allocated to approved schemes	n/a	n/a	100	n/a
	Percentage of DFG budget spent	n/a	n/a	97	n/a
	Resolution at first point of contact all service streams (%)	94.3	90	99	
	Average speed of answer (telephone calls at the Customer Service Centre) (seconds)	36	30	30	
	Percentage of calls answered (at the Customer Service centre) (%)	84	85	87	
	Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt	97.83	98	99.38	
	Number of complaints received (Council wide)	n/a	n/a	270	n/a
	% of PACT meetings attended by SMT members	n/a	85	80	n/a
	Number of compliments received	n/a	n/a	70	n/a
	The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the Authority conforms ¹	2	2	2	
	The average number of working days lost due to sickness	9.35	8.75	10.66	

Annual Report 2008/09

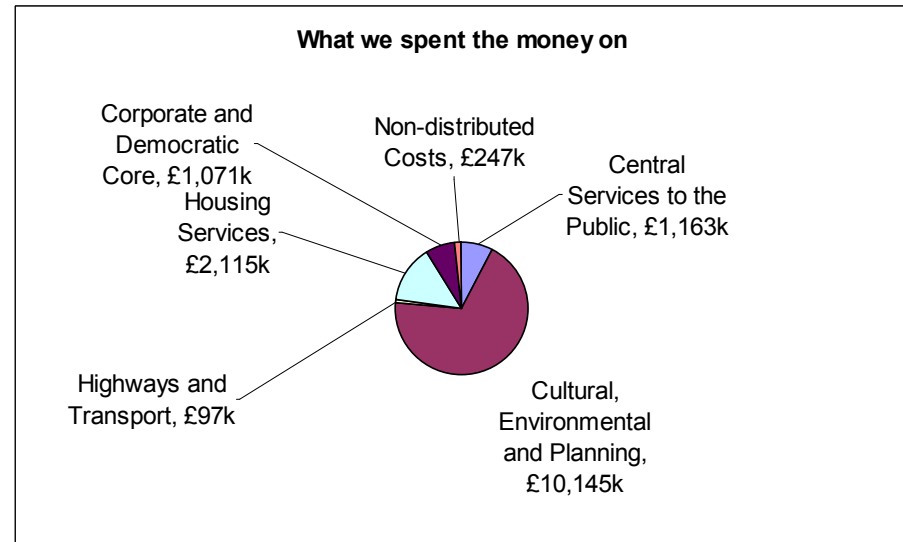
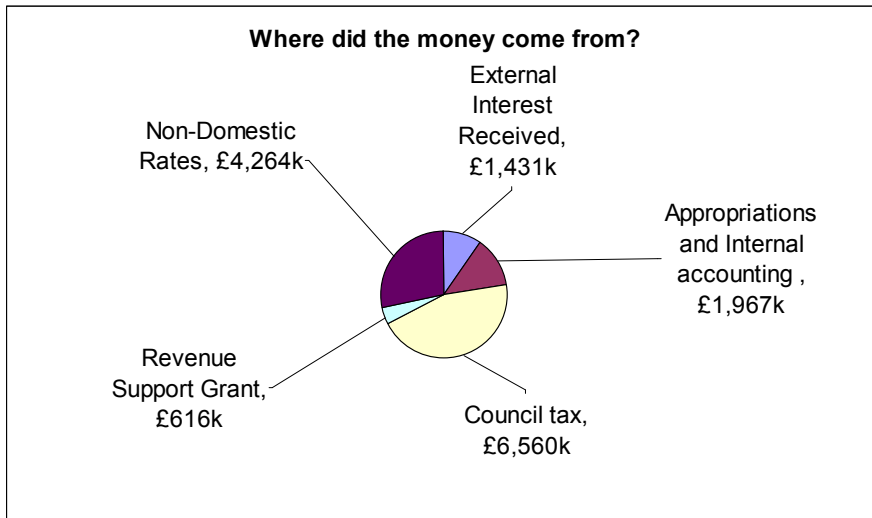
Ref	Description	2007/08 Actual	2008/09		Trend
			Target	Actual	
NI 181	Time taken to process housing and council tax benefit new claims or change events (days)	n/a	16	15.03	n/a
NI 179	VFM - total net value of on-going cash releasing VFM gains since the start of 2008-09 (£'000)	n/a	602	615	n/a
NI 157	The percentage of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks.	95.35	75.00	68.80	
NI 157	The percentage of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks.	92.42	80.00	76.50	
NI 157	The percentage of other planning applications determined within 8 weeks.	93.11	90.00	89.50	

Notes:

- 1 In April 2009 the Council achieved level 3 of the Equality Standard

9. Summary financial Information

The income and Expenditure Account shows the spending and income involved with the day to day running costs of the Councils services, for example employees, premises and supplies. For 2008/09, our net budgeted revenue expenditure was £12.5 million. Due to a significant increase in the investment income received during 2008/09, the Council requires a reduced level of funding from balances of £212k to meet the net position for the year.



10. Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Audit Commission	The regulatory body that has responsibility for examining the work of local authorities
Best Value	A legal duty (Local Government Act 1999) designed to make sure that local authorities continually improve their value for money
Building Pride	The Council's transformation programme designed to make Bromsgrove District Council an excellent local authority.
Corporate Management Team (CMT)	The Council's officer management team made up of the Chief Executive, Executive Director Services, Executive Director Partnerships & Projects, Assistant Chief Executive and the seven heads of service.
Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)	An external assessment by the Audit Commission which makes a judgement on the whole of a Councils performance and provides a single rating of Excellent, Good, Fair, Weak or Poor.
Community Strategy	A long-term vision for the District as a whole. The Strategy co-ordinates the actions of public, private and community organisations in meeting the needs and priorities of local communities. Under the Local Government Act 2000, all local authorities are required to work in partnership with the community, business, voluntary sector and other public sector partners to develop a long-term strategy to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of their local communities.
Annual Report	An annual report which outlines how the Council has performed against what it said it would do. It includes Best Value Performance Indicator results and targets required by law.
Local Area Agreement (LAA)	A form of contract between Central Government and the Worcestershire Local Strategic Partnership for the delivery of a range of outcomes supported by targets. The LAA includes a pump priming grant from Central Government and the payment of a reward grant for successful delivery of some of the targets.
Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)	A family of partnerships and organisations that is working to a common aim - to improve the quality of life in the District and deliver the Community Strategy

Annual Report 2008/09

Term	Definition
Medium Term Financial Plan	A three year budget for the Council's expenditure and income, linked to the Council's objectives and priorities.
Objectives	The broad goals for the Council, within which priorities are set.
Performance Development Review	A formal meeting between a member of staff and their line manager to review past work and agree future work, setting standards and targets
Performance indicators	Yardsticks used to assess our achievements.
Performance Management Framework	Sets out the processes by which Elected Members, Officers and residents can monitor how the Council is performing.
Priorities	The five areas identified by Elected Members where we wish to make significant improvement in how we perform.
Service Business Plans	One year plans that set out what each department intends to deliver over the coming year
Spatial Business Project	A large IT project designed to improve customer service through data integration.
Target(s)	A fixed goal or objective which results in improvements.
Values	The fundamental principles that guide the way we work.
Vision	The ideal of how we would like the District and the Council to be in the future