

Bromsgrove District Council

Council Plan Addendum – Priorities 2022/23

Introduction

Bromsgrove District Council is committed to providing residents with effective and efficient services that meet their needs. Since March 2020 and the onset of the Covid19 pandemic, Bromsgrove District Council has worked closely with a wide network of partner agencies to help limit the impact of the virus and to support our residents in all of our communities.

The development of our Covid-19 Recovery and Restoration Plan, approved in 2020, provided a focus on actions to improve for the future beyond Covid19. This plan outlined the major initiatives that the Council would deliver both during the crisis and after it, as our communities begin to recover.

The Covid-19 pandemic has required an unprecedented response from the Council. Even though the requirement to respond to the pandemic may well be ongoing for some time, it is important to look towards recovery and to the long term return to business as usual. Whilst the Council has an approved Council Plan in place it is worth noting that this was completed before the Covid-19 outbreak. This Council Plan addendum takes the potential shift in priorities brought about by the pandemic into consideration and sits alongside the current Council Plan.

By considering what really matters to our residents and the impacts of the pandemic, we have developed nine priorities underpinned by a set of key milestones. This document outlines the Council's plan for the next twelve months. It is designed to provide an intermediary position ahead of a full review of the Council's long term priorities in 2023. This document sits alongside the Bromsgrove District Council Plan 2019 – 2023. The key priorities are:

1. Economic Development and Regeneration
2. Housing Growth
3. Work and Financial Independence
4. Improved Health and Wellbeing
5. Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour
6. Green Thread
7. Financial Stability
8. Organisational Sustainability
9. High Quality Services

This high level strategic document recognises that Bromsgrove District Council cannot deliver all of these priorities on its own. It will need considerable support and input from partner organisations if these priorities are to be successfully achieved. It is for this reason that the Council has determined its role in some of these far reaching projects to be categorised as either:

- **Lead** – to be the lead organisation in the delivery of the activity/project that delivers the priority.
- **Participate** – to be involved with partner agencies who will be leading the activity/project that delivers the priority.
- **Influence** – to work collaboratively with other partner agencies to persuade them to take a particular course of action/undertake a particular project.

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1. Economic Development and Regeneration

We see the opportunities in digital technology and green industries as key to the future of Bromsgrove. We will use this year to build the basis for future support for, and innovation in, these sectors, and for strengthening our town and digital infrastructure.

1.1 Supporting businesses to start and grow

Progress and learning:

Our businesses have demonstrated resilience and flexibility in Covid-19. We will support businesses started during the pandemic and existing businesses that have identified growth opportunities. We will do this via existing business support packages and including sectoral support and helping business access new business grants where available.

Focal point:

- Start-up of creative and digital businesses

Key milestones:

- Continue with grant programme for start-up businesses
- Deliver the recovery through creativity grants programme (April 22-July 22)

Success measures:

- Take-up of start-up business grants and creativity grants programme

1.2 Regenerating our Town and Local Centres

Progress and learning:

The past two years have emphasised the economic and wellbeing importance of **local** centres. Funding has been secured to support the development of sites in Bromsgrove Town Centre and a strategy will be prepared to ensure all of centres in Bromsgrove District will be vibrant and viable.

Focal point:

Progression towards the redevelopment of the former Market Hall site, Windsor Street site and former Dolphin Centre site. Preparation of a Bromsgrove Centres Strategy.

Key milestones:

- Submit a planning application for the former market hall site (Lead)
- Procure a contractor for the former market hall site redevelopment (Lead)
- Investigate the possibility of remediation and demolition works at Windsor Street (Lead)
- Start the remediation works on Windsor Street (Lead)
- Working with partners in all centres to agree future improvements (Lead)

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Success measures:

- Planning application submitted for market hall site by March 2023
- Contractor procured for the former market hall site
- Commencement of remediation works on the Windsor Street site.
- Bromsgrove Centres Strategy agreed by March 2023

1.3 Improved Integrated Transport (Bromsgrove)

Progress and learning:

We know that new innovations can help provide new and more sustainable methods of getting around, helping to provide better satisfaction and efficiency whilst helping to reduce our impact on the environment

Focal point:

Working with Worcestershire County Council and other partners on enabling new, better integrated and more sustainable modes of transport across the district

Key milestones:

- Work with Worcestershire County Council in developing and agreeing a specification for an improved integrated transport network (participate)

Success measures:

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

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2. Housing Growth

During 2022/23 we will accelerate the pace of affordable housing development, where ever possible. We will work to enable the building of market value housing and the creation of additional income for the Council.

Progress and learning:

The Covid-19 experience has shown that the Council is an important player in the local housing sector, but best results happen when we partner with others. It has also shown us that there are solutions for homelessness.

Focal point:

We will develop a clear partnership structure and delivery plan for creative land use and affordable housing. We will find win-win solutions to the tension between housing demand and green belt concerns.

Key milestones:

- Agree a financial and partnership model for housing development (lead)
- Release land for residential development, in line with the Local Plan (lead)
- Produce new draft housing policies as part of the Bromsgrove Plan Review (lead)

Success measures:

- Number of new homes built - total and affordable.
- Increases in Council Tax income.
- Local housing affordability rate.
- Number of homeless approaches.
- Number of threatened with homelessness preventions.
- Number of homeless applicants housed.

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3. Work and Financial Independence

In 2022/23, we will find ways to further support, engage and empower our residents to maintain / achieve financial independence.

Progress and learning:

Our Financial Independence Team will continue to help residents to gain financial independence both through short and long-term solutions. This includes advising our residents on how to manage fuel and utility costs, maximise their income, manage their personal finances, and access other specialist agency support.

The Financial Independence Team also provides access to a range of support measures for our residents (including Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Discretionary Housing Payments, Council Tax Hardship Payments, the Council's Essential Living Fund and Council Tax Support Scheme).

The Council will procure an energy advice service providing residents with information and advice to support them in managing and reducing their energy costs.

Our Starting Well Service will provide parents and prospective parents with comprehensive information about childcare and early years education and support eligible parents in accessing free childcare to support school readiness and to enable parents to work or return to work.

We also work with our partners to support and increase the financial independence of our residents. We will work with Citizens Advice, ensuring that our residents are advised on how to deal with their financial and other related problems. We will work with Community Safety Partners in the provision of youth support interventions, focusing on the impact of Covid, building confidence, raising aspirations, and improving the life chances of young people at risk from crime and anti-social behaviour.

Focal point:

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

Success measures:

- Number of Financial Independence Team client contacts.
- Number of clients accessing Starting Well service.
- Number of young people with positive outcomes as a result of Enhanced Youth Support intervention.
- Number of eligible children accessing nursery funding across the district.
- Number of households provided with energy advice.
- Number of energy rebate payments.

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4. Improved Health and Wellbeing

In 2022/23 we will work with communities to help them identify and develop their strengths. We will look at ways to encourage physical movement into part of people's normal routines. We will look to catalyse an integrated approach to care.

Progress and learning:

Covid-19 helped us see the health and wellbeing importance of community, of activity, and of the health and care system.

Focal points:

- **Community Development:** we will embed an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) model that builds on the assets that are found in local communities and mobilises individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths. Through grant funding, Community Builders within the voluntary sector will be working with local residents and existing organisations to uncover the key community assets and skills of local residents. They will assess how to build a more cohesive community that will ultimately lead to a less isolated, healthier, and more connected community, particularly as we move towards Covid recovery.
A 'Small Sparks' fund is available to facilitate the recruitment of two Community Connectors, employed through New Starts, to build capacity within the initial areas of Catshill and Rubery, to support local delivery in line with the project aims and objectives.
- **Active travel:** we will work with local people and experts to explore how we might establish a local transport infrastructure that encourages physical movement.
- **Integrated care:** we will work with local public service partners to establish an integrated care model, using a blend of professional and community led support to ensure those who most need support are properly cared for.
- **Leisure Strategy:** we will develop a Leisure Strategy for the district.

Key milestones:

- Work with Worcestershire County Council to explore possible initiatives and funding streams for active travel (participate)
- Progress the district collaborative work around community assets and skills alongside other themes which emerge for Bromsgrove (participate)
- Implement new technology opportunities within the Lifeline service (lead)

Success measures:

- Deliver improved outcomes from the actions in the Leisure Strategy (lead)
- Number of Community Builders in post.

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5. Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour

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

Progress and learning:

We know that prevention is better than cure; that the stronger the bonds within and across communities, the lower the crime and nuisance. We also know that the more perspectives that can be brought to a difficult issue like safety the better will be the solutions.

In 2022/23 the outcomes of the trials of CCTV redeployable cameras and the investment from the PCC office to upgrade other cameras should begin to be seen. The redeployable cameras will be embedded into the service with the ability to respond to hot spots of concern and be a tool in reducing crime and disorder across the District.

Covid impacted disproportionately on adolescents. Grant funding was secured to support this cohort in the aftermath of the pandemic through the provision of youth work across the District.

Focal point:

- **Relationships:** we will work to enable stronger networks of relationships within and across communities.
- **Young People:** we will strengthen our youth offer, to prioritise outreach and mentoring approaches, targeting provision directly to young people at risk of perpetrating or becoming a victim of crime alongside supporting mental well-being and personal resilience.

Key milestones:

- Develop a clear and agreed ABCD model (participate)
- Fully deployed youth support model (lead)

Success measures:

- Number of young people engaged through Detached/Outreach youth work
- Levels of crime
- Number of crime risk surveys carried out

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6. Green Thread

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

Progress and learning:

We were able to achieve radical change in response to a pandemic; we can do the same in response to global warming and biodiversity collapse.

Focal point:

- Innovation (lower carbon solutions)
- Travel (less and more sustainable)
- Reducing waste and increasing recycling.

Key milestones:

- To identify alternative fuel requirements for fleet and revise the capital replacement programme for the Council's fleet subject to any budget constraints (lead)
- Respond to Government consultation on secondary legislation on changes for Resources and Waste services (participate)
- Work with the Strategic Waste Partnership to develop a plan to respond to the new requirements of the national Resources and Waste Strategy and Environment Act (participate)
- Development of a Bromsgrove Plan review with revised environmental protection policies (lead)
- Commit to the development of a Climate Change Strategy (lead)

Success measures:

- Have an agreed and funded plan and capital replacement programme for the Council's fleet subject to any budget constraints.
- Have an agreed plan in place to deliver new requirements of national Resources and Waste Strategy and Environment Act
- Introduce vegetable derived diesel into the councils vehicles to reduce carbon emissions subject to any budget constraints.
- Households supported by the Council's energy advice service.

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7. Financial Stability

Council resources will continue to be constrained. We will continue to work on ensuring our people, assets and financial resources are focused on the priorities and activities that most effectively deliver wellbeing and progress for our population.

Progress and learning:

When Covid-19 hit, we moved quickly and successfully to reprioritise and redeploy in support of the crisis. We learned that we could change how we do things, and that priorities do change. We also learned that we can be better at understanding how we, and our partners, currently manage and exploit our assets.

Focal point:

We will work to ensure closer alignment between what we should be doing and the resources made available to do it. We will have a better sense of the assets we have and that we need, and how we can best contain unnecessary costs so that resources can be deployed where needed.

Key milestones:

- Robust Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (lead)
- Asset Management Strategy and Plan (lead)
- Maintained levels of General Fund Balances over medium term.

Success measures:

- Financial performance – actuals consistent with budget.
- Levelling Up Fund Project delivered within budget.

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8. Organisational Sustainability

The Council will work to maximise the use of digital infrastructures, including cloud technologies, to enhance its support for customers. We will encourage residents and businesses to access high speed fibre and wireless technologies to deliver growth in the local economy. Ensuring the Council's infrastructure can securely process the increased demand placed on it by the expanding use of Internet of Things devices will be key to its digital success. Any new delivery models, utilising technology, must deliver improved customer service at a lower cost.

Progress and learning:

Covid-19 helped us to see that new delivery models are possible, delivering better customer service at lower cost.

Focal point:

- **Digital First:** we will ensure that all Council services are designed to exploit digital access and delivery
- **Evidence-based design:** we will ensure all service improvement will be driven by good quality customer insight and data
- **Hybrid working:** we will adopt a hybrid working model, to include agile working and bookable office spaces

Key milestones:

- Development of corporate information management system e.g. performance dashboard (lead)
- Corporate wide use of data and information to design improved services (lead)
- Repurpose unnecessary office space (lead)
- Increase remote/mobile working in services through utilisation of new IT (lead)

Success measures:

- Number of customer transactions processed online.
- Number of corporate measures accessible through the dashboard.
- % of staff able to work in an agile way.

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9. High Quality Services

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

Progress and learning:

During Covid-19, we saw how good quality, flexible and responsive people make all the difference in work and society.

We also saw how personal and community resilience, or the lack of it, can lead to an escalation of public issues.

Focal point:

- **Recruitment:** ensure that our recruitment processes enable us to attract, engage and retain a talented and motivated workforce that is responsive to change.
- **Development:** support our employees to fulfil their potential and ensure that they possess the right skills to meet future needs through access to effective learning and development.
- **Progression:** Undertake succession and workforce planning to predict potential skills gaps, develop and improve the way we work and identify the right people, at the right cost with the right skills both for now and the future.
- **Prevention:** develop a proactive approach to the prevention of vulnerability in the population through improved service delivery.

Key milestones:

- Agree talent and performance plan (lead)
- Achieve minimum level of core management skills in all managers (lead)

Success measures:

- % of Personal Development Reviews undertaken each year.
- % of employees who undertake management training.
- Staff turnover rates in relation to national rates.
- Customer satisfaction with service delivery, measured through the Community Survey.