



Portfolio Holder Report

Portfolio Holder Report - (Add Portfolio Title)

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 Priorities, as detailed in the Bromsgrove District Council Plan 2024 - 2027.

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 Priorities, 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 Council Priorities
- 2) Partnership working
- 3) Key activities and priorities
- 4) Good news stories and awards (if applicable)
- 5) Other

The Council has the following Priorities:

Council Priorities	Organisational priorities
Economic Development	Financial stability
Housing	Sustainability
Environment	Partnerships
Infrastructure	Organisational Culture – the 4Ps
	Budget & Resources



Portfolio Holder Report

1. Update on Council Priorities

Relevant Council Priorities

Economic Development is a key priority for the Council with a strategic focus on supporting our businesses, upskilling the workforce, enabling growth and innovation, supporting entrepreneurship and job creation and developing vibrant towns and district centres.

The priority projects for the portfolio are delivery of the Centres Strategy and action plan across the eight centres within the district and the delivery of regeneration projects at Windsor Street and the Former Market Hall site.

Infrastructure plays a key role in supporting the delivery of economic development with the effective operation of car parks being part of this.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund has enabled the Council to fund projects supporting a range of Council priorities across the themes of community and place, supporting businesses and people and skills, with funds.

Key activities since last report:

The Economic Development and Regeneration functions of the Council were previously undertaken by North Worcestershire Economic Regeneration (hosted by Wyre Forest District Council) and were brought back in house in June 2024. A new Assistant Director for Regeneration & Property was appointed in August 2024 along with a new Regeneration team.

Regeneration

Former Market Hall

The project aims to regenerate a key brownfield site in Bromsgrove town centre by creating a vibrant new commercial and cultural hub on the former Market Hall site. The commercial building will provide over 18,000 sqft of office/workspace accommodation and approximately 1,450 sqft of café/food and beverage accommodation. The Pavilion will provide just over 2,000 sqft of space for community use.

Kier were appointed to deliver the main construction contract at the end of 2024. Following some site enabling works, construction commenced on site in mid-November 2024 and is due to complete in January 2026.

Windsor Street

This project involves the acquisition, demolition, decontamination and remediation of a key brownfield site, which has been vacant for 5 years.

The demolition contract was awarded to City Demolition in early 2024 for the demolition of existing buildings on site. Demolition works were completed in

Portfolio Holder Report

December 2024. Brownfield Solutions are carrying out remediation work to deal with contaminated soil as well as installing monitoring wells between January and February 2025. Ground water must then be monitored for a period of six months. Following this, ground water remediation will commence in September until March 2026 and the site will then be ready for redevelopment.

Town Centre Public Realm

Delivery of LUF public realm initiative in both High Street South and Chapel Street as detailed below. These public realm improvements show a real transformation in areas that were dilapidated and continue a palette of materials and street furniture throughout the high street showing uniformity and providing a sense of place. This links with the drive for inward investment into the high street and the neighbouring regeneration schemes for Windsor Street and former Market Hall Site.

Chapel Street (Before & After)



High Street South (Before & After)



Economic Development

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Delivery of the UKSPF investment plan has continued. 2024/25 saw the launch of the People & Skills projects. These projects focussed on supporting young people into employment, education or training; supporting economically inactive people and those with complex barriers to employment to move closer to the jobs market; and grants to upskill

Portfolio Holder Report

residents who are in employment to enable them to progress in their careers.

Towns and Centres

Centres Enhancement Grant

Grants for shopfront improvements and utilising empty properties on the high street or outlying centres was launched with UKSPF funding. Enquiries received from over 25 businesses with grant offers made to 17 businesses.

Taste of Bromsgrove Foodie Month

Taste Bromsgrove funded through the Talk of the town Visa award and UKSPF took place from the 5th May until the 31st May 2024 giving residents and visitors the option to sample bespoke set menus and offers from Bromsgrove eateries at competitive prices, during a hospitality shoulder season.

Taste of Bromsgrove Food Festival

The Council and Visit Worcestershire, commissioned a one-day food festival under the 'Taste of Bromsgrove' branding, with the purpose of showcasing Bromsgrove's food and beverage traders and to encourage the public to support local businesses.

Funded by UKSPF, the event was to build on the buzz that was created during the "A Taste of Bromsgrove" food and drink initiative launched in May 2024 and to support the Taste Worcestershire campaign launch in October 2024.

While showcasing Bromsgrove's independent food and drink scene, the event also set out to encourage community engagement and local tourism.

The event location was selected to showcase the new public realm space and regeneration works on the south side of Bromsgrove high street.





Portfolio Holder Report

Parking

On Street and Off-Street Parking falls within this Portfolio and covers the provision of council owned car parks, the associated maintenance/improvement of these facilities together with the fees associated with their use. In addition to this where Parking is undertaken illegally i.e. in contravention of a Traffic Regulation Order then this enforcement also falls within the Portfolio. The following represents the key activities undertaken since the last report across Parking.

Parking Charges

In June 2024, for the first time in over 10 years, a review of parking charges was undertaken. The review introduced generally increased fees by around 20% but also included a range of concessions including free parking for the first 30 minutes of use, free parking after 6pm and free parking for Blue Badge Holders.

Strategic Parking Review

In February 2024 Cabinet agreed for officers to commission a review of car parking across Council Owned Car Parks as well as how on street and off-street enforcement was undertaken. The review looked at current and future supply and demand for car parking, how enforcement may be improved through the actions of various stakeholders including the Council, and how the proportion of time spent on patrols outside of the Town Centre could be improved. The report bringing the review to Cabinet is scheduled for 12th February 2025.

Anticipated Activities/Key Milestones For Next Period

Regeneration

Former Market Hall

Key milestones will be monitored in line with the construction programme to ensure that construction is completed by January 2026. An agent will be appointed to market the commercial buildings with an aim to secure tenants ahead of completion of the build. The operational strategy and management model for the Pavilion building will be developed with an options appraisal coming forward for decision in the new municipal year. The Council will also be submitting a bid to secure £2.45m of residual funding from Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership to support the construction budget.

Windsor Street

The remediation strategy will be delivered and an options paper will be brought forward to determine the future use of the site and how it will be



Portfolio Holder Report

developed so that a plan is in place when the site is ready for development in March 2026.

Economic Development

Economic Strategy

An Economic Development Strategy for the District will be developed to further shape the future actions of the Council and how it works with partners to deliver economic growth.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Preparation of the new UKSPF investment plan for the period 2025/26. Consultation with Members has commenced through the Cabinet Advisory Group. The investment plan, which will form the basis of the report to Government, will come forward for approval in March 2025.

Towns and Centres

A strategic framework will be developed to provide an anchor for future decisions relating to the town centre. The aims of the framework will be to:

- a) Develop a vision and narrative describing the future ambitions for Bromsgrove Town Centre and what this means for residents, businesses and visitors
- b) Take a strategic view of sites within the town centre and how they work together in support of the vision
- c) Consider the needs of residents, businesses and visitors in relation to transport and access and the impact on air quality
- d) Reflect on the findings of the strategic car park review in light of the vision and future land uses and further develop the recommendations
- e) Inform the Local Plan
- f) Clarify the approach to conservation
- g) Inform the investment plan for the Town Centre

Revised Centres Strategy

The current strategy covers the period 2023-2026 therefore work will take place to assess the performance of the high street and outlying centres over the last three years, identify with partners key priorities and themes going forward with a robust action plan that can be managed and monitored. The



Portfolio Holder Report

Bromsgrove Town Centre element will align with the Town Centre Strategic Framework described above.

High Street Business Support

Subject to the UKSPF Investment Plan, officers will will design a grant programme to enhance the offer of the high street and continue to support existing businesses.

Business Improvement District

A feasibility study for a proposed business improvement district for Bromsgrove Town Centre will be undertaken and work will take place with existing networks to establish a BID steering group. The feasibility stage will take approximately 3 months. If it is feasible to move forward, the process to set up the BID will take up to 18 months.

Enhanced Shopwatch Scheme

We will establish a Shopwatch committee to drive forward membership and protocols for Shopwatch which can be rolled out to outlying centres. The roll out is dependent on individual shops taking up the offer to be involved. We will be working closely with Parish Councils and Ward Members to promote this to local businesses with an initial focus on Bromsgrove High Street and Rubery as a greater number of issues are occurring in these areas. We will also explore the use of other elements of the Disc System such as online reporting to the Police.

Communication & Marketing

Improved communication with stakeholders and businesses through network events, newsletters and joined up approach with Bromsgrove Market.

Parking

Strategic Parking Review

The agreed actions from the Strategic Parking Review will require in the majority of cases various stakeholders to work in Partnership, as such key milestones will need to be created and reported on, in order to further enhance service delivery of the provision and management of our car parks and also the provision of enforcement both on and off street.



Portfolio Holder Report

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:

The Bromsgrove Partnership acts as the local partnership group for the UKSPF. Their role is to advise regarding the strategic fit and deliverability of the investment plan.

Many of the projects funded through UKSPF have been delivered in partnership with other areas of the County. This relates particularly to business support programmes where the schemes can benefit from economies of scale.

Town Centre Management Meetings occur 6 weekly to pro-actively determine priorities, address operational and strategic issues. The group consists of internal service areas, members and key partners including West Mercia Police, Worcestershire Regulatory Services and Bromsgrove Youth Hub/Street Pastors.

The Town Centre Manager works closely with Parish Councils and Ward Members as key partners in the development and delivery of the Towns and Centres Strategy and action plan.

Regular meetings of Bromsgrove Pubwatch occur on a monthly basis facilitated by the Centres Manager with collaboration from West Mercia Police and WRS.

Throughout the year the Centres Manager meets with community groups such as Friends of St John, Bromsgrove Festival and Bromsgrove Indie Club. This is to ensure key messages for the high street are communicated, that there is a joined up approach for High Street initiatives where possible and support for the groups when organising events.

Regular communication and 6 weekly walkarounds with West Mercia Police Community Support Officers to address high street issues.

Attendance at Visit Worcestershire events with Worcestershire County Council colleagues.

Key activities since last report:

Delivery of 6 business support programmes in partnership with the county and district councils.



Portfolio Holder Report

Delivery of a programme of support to young people to help them into employment, education or training delivered in partnership with the county and district councils.

Anticipated Activities/Key Milestones and Priorities For Next Period

The Bromsgrove Partnership will continue to act as the local partnership group for the UKSPF with future partnership activity to be determined following approval of the UKSPF Investment Plan 2025-26. It is anticipated that projects will continue to be delivered over a wider geography, in partnership with other areas.

The development of the Bromsgrove Town Centre Strategic Framework and the Economic Development Strategy will take place in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders to embed the ownership and buy in of the identified priorities and implementation plan.

3. Good News Stories and Awards (if applicable)

Economic Development

The Council were awarded approximately £720,000 of Brownfield Land Relief Funding to support with the costs of decontamination of the Windsor Road site.

The Council secured £73,000 of funding from GBS LEP for business growth support. This funding is delivering support to manufacturing businesses to enable them to improve their productivity and adopt new processes.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Volunteer it Yourself is a project where young people gain work experience, trade skills and qualifications whilst improving community facilities. The project was chosen to be included in the national evaluation of UKSPF as an example of how funding can be used to increase life chances. The project was also featured in the local newspaper

Between April 2022 and September 2024 UKSPF has delivered the following:

Communities & Place

180,000 sqm green space improved
100 low or zero carbon infrastructure installed
17,000 sqm of public realm improved
65 cultural events

Portfolio Holder Report

1062 households received cost of living support
20 organisations received grants
266 organisation received non-financial support
1228 volunteering opportunities supported

Supporting Local Business

320 businesses supported
23 jobs created

People & Skills

161 people supported to gain employment
96 people supported to participate in education
67 people gaining a qualification, licence and skills
102 people taking part in work experience programmes

Towns and Centres

Business Award Winner 2024 presented to Mark Eastwood (Bromsgrove Pubwatch) to recognise a project or piece of work that has supported the reduction of anti-social behaviour within a local community.



Parking Charges:

The review of Parking Charges introduced a number of concessions to attract and sustain the public use of our car parks, these included free parking for the first 30 minutes of use, free parking after 6pm and free parking for Blue Badge Holders.