

Portfolio Holder Report

**Portfolio Holder Report – Planning, Licensing and Worcestershire
Regulatory Services (WRS)**

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



1. Update on Council Priorities

Cross Priority activities

Through the processing of planning applications, preparing a local plan, involvement with neighbourhood plans and managing conservation issues, the statutory planning service contributes to the following council priorities:

Environment

Housing

Economy

Town Centres

From a shared Regulatory service perspective, the council has numerous statutory enforcement duties across a range of legislation including food law, infectious diseases, health and safety at work, statutory nuisances and other environmental issues like air quality, contaminated land and environmental permitting. The service also runs the Council's dog warden service.

Licensing is a mix of national statutory and adoptive legislation, with Bromsgrove having decided historically to take on most discretionary areas available to councils. Key areas for the service and the licensing committee are taxis and private hire regimes, alcohol and gambling premises, street trading and pavement licensing, animal activities and many more. As with planning, regulatory services can contribute to all council priorities, albeit the shared service has little role in housing matters.

Some specific aspects are shared below.

Economic Growth:

Regulatory Services: All the work of the shared Regulatory Service, for which the portfolio holder leads, contributes to the success of the local economy. One of the key purposes of regulation, according to local businesses, is "Help me to trade well and ensure my competitors do the same". Ensuring a level playing field for all businesses is a key part of local authority regulation.

This approach is used in the service's approach to discharging the council's duties as a local food safety authority and as an enforcement authority under Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Where possible officers will look to support businesses to achieve compliance and only where there are serious issues, or signs of unwillingness, will a formal approach be followed.

A range of regulatory work contributes to the safety of our local communities and thence the success of business. Licensing of business activities- whether taxis, alcohol and entertainment venues or gambling establishments, helps to ensure that those involved are fit and proper and



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that the businesses are run in a way that does not cause issues for individuals and communities, whilst offering space for those businesses to thrive. Tackling those who flout the law ensures those that want to operate in a fair, safe and equitable way can do so.

Environment

Planning: The Local Plan is about creating and protecting green spaces for visual amenity and various forms of play and recreation. The Development Management process ensures long term protection and management of open space via condition and the section 106 process.

Regulatory Services: A range of activities undertaken by the shared service discharge the council's duties around protecting the environment. The oldest is the long-standing duty to address potential issues of statutory nuisance. This can include diverse sources such as noise but also includes a range of specific issues created from business premises such as odour, dust, and various other effluvia. The service continues to discharge the councils now more limited role in relation to drains, tackling issues with failed or damaged private drainage systems (all controls of the mains drainage system having been in the hands of the statutory undertakings since 2012.)

Air quality is another area of WRS work that has come to the fore in recent years, with the launch of real-time monitoring at various locations in the county including Bromsgrove. Air Quality Action Plans have been updated, and monitoring continues in the remaining Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's) on Worcester Road, Bromsgrove and at the Lickey End Island. The service's Behaviour Change project, looking to help people to better understand the issues around air quality has mainly focused on working with young people. This year there has been significant work around community engagement, starting in schools; we held four school assemblies at Waseley Hills High School in Rubery, near the Gunner Lane air quality monitor. There was a great turnout, with participation from students in Years 7 to 12, more than 100 students per session. Two primary schools and How College Bromsgrove site have also been visited and taken part in activities.

The service has begun the review process for contaminated land strategies across the County with Bromsgrove's updated, approved and published earlier this year.

The service also continues to discharge the council's duties in relation to the Environmental Permitting regime that controls the outputs from industrial activities that are, by their nature, polluting. No significant issues have been identified with Bromsgrove outlets since the last report

Planning & Housing

The Local Plan process identifies housing sites in sustainable locations and develops policies about the securing of affordable housing. This follows through to the Development Management process where it is secured by legal agreement.



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Planning & Employment

The Local Plan is about identifying the amount and location of employment land and then its appropriate protection from development or change of use for other land uses. The implementation of this policy is worked out through the Development Management process.

Planning & Town Centres

The planning processes see town centres as sustainable locations and enhance sustainability by directing development where there can be access to our centres by many modes of transport. Local Plan policies aim to protect our core retail areas and protect and enhance conservation areas.

Key activities since last report:

Planning: There has been a review of the Local Development Scheme, a recent informal local plan consultation period and on-going local plan evidence gathering since the last report.

Currently there is a Planning Advisory Service (PAS) review of the planning committee function, local plan process and our enforcement procedures.

In Development Management there is a heavy workload with increasing numbers of queries about development on green belt land. That said decision-making targets continue to be on course.

Regulatory Services: Major works in default were undertaken to resolve a long-standing drainage issue in Barnt Green. An old septic tank system and soakaway at a residential property had failed, giving rise to discharges of sewage across the property and into the road. The remedial works included the installation of a modern packaged sewage treatment plant with consented discharge into the highway drainage system, avoiding the need for a new soakaway which would have been costly and disruptive and prone to future failure.

Pre-summer guidance was issued to premises where noise complaints had previously been reported advising of noise control measures to be taken to avoid problems. Its purpose was to reduce the number of complaints received and help support the smooth running of events for local businesses whilst maintaining a positive relationship with local communities. In nuisance work, Officers investigated nuisance arising from extensive development works and noise in respect of the fast-growing sport of Padel.

Council agreed to revoke Lickey End and Redditch Road, Bromsgrove AQMAs this year and Orders are currently being drafted to complete this process.

Several Licensing Policy reviews have taken place through the Committee process in the last 12 months. These have included the review of the Gambling Act Statement of Principles which was due for a review after three years.



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Elements of the Bromsgrove Taxi Policy were reviewed to ensure the implementation of the Statutory Taxi Standards that were introduced in 2022 were meeting the needs of the traveling public. In doing so there was an introduction of mandatory refresher training for all drivers on the renewal of their licence to undertake safeguarding training.

Mandatory CCTV in taxis was also reviewed but the Council agreed there was not a need to make this mandatory at present as intelligence shows that currently there is no evidence that points to a mandatory policy being required. Officers will continue to monitor intelligence.

The temporary pavement licensing regime that was introduced under the Business and Planning Act 2020 was made permanent. The policy was consulted on and introduced and has been welcomed by many businesses across Bromsgrove to allow them to use their outside spaces throughout the year.

Finally, Primate Licensing were new regulations that Local authorities were made aware of early this year and a new policy and process for submitting applications was approved by Licensing Committee for implementation in April 2026.

Anticipated Activities/Key Milestones For Next Period

Key activities since last report:

Planning: To progress with preparing for the next stage of plan making with the appropriate officer resource to manage circa 8,000 representations and continual member involvement through the Strategic Planning Steering Group (SPSG) process.

To continue to progress requests for planning consent and pre application advice in a timely manner against the backdrop of having about two years supply of housing land

To resource appropriately the conservation team so that the preparation of local lists for all areas can be progressed together with comments on applications and providing pre application advice.

Regulatory Services: The Licensing Committee work programme currently includes reviewing the current street trading policy. Consumer habits are changing, and businesses are trying to think of novel ideas to best work around regulation to meet these. By making the policy for flexible will allow businesses to trade differently within the boundaries of regulation.

Other areas for consideration on the work programme include Bromsgrove taxi rank provision review, taxi licensing application and renewal process and a pavement licensing policy review towards the end of the year.

Uber continues to be an issue raised by Members so the team have been engaging with Wolverhampton City Council to carry out evening and late night enforcement with WRS Licensing officers and West Mercia Police.

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There are still considerations by central government on how the regulation of cosmetic procedures will fit into local government and the licensing regime. Officers are engaged with the Institute of Licensing and will provide updates as and when required.

Proposals for enhanced air quality monitoring for particulate matter are currently being drawn up to be presented to Cabinet. This will provide greater clarity and additional information on the level of particulate matter pollution in the district.

Work will continue in the coming period on the food hygiene inspection programme for 2025/6. As part of this, the application of the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme provides consumers with an idea of the safest places to eat and helps drive improvements in business standards. More than 95% of local businesses achieve 3 stars or above, showing good compliance and limited risk.

We currently have 2 planning enforcement and one Enviro-crime enforcement files with legal for potential prosecution. An appeal against an abatement notice is also pending.

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.

1. Planning

The Planning Service runs an Agents' Forum. It must work closely with Worcestershire County Council, particularly from a highways perspective and also with other authorities in the same housing market area. An officer forum of all districts in Worcestershire is also attended.

2. Regulatory Services: Illicit Tobacco with Worcestershire County Council Trading Standards:

The WCC Trading Standards team discharges the County Councils duties in relation to illicit tobacco and leads on tackling this on our high streets. The district council has worked with its officers to utilise closure powers under the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 that are not available to WCC resulting in the closure of three premises. Kidderminster Magistrates issued closure orders for 3-months in relation to two outlets and a third remains closed ahead of a further court hearing in December.

**Portfolio Holder Report****3. Regulatory Services: Support for project on high-risk mosquito species**

In its infection control role, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) are also supporting the invasive mosquito surveillance efforts coordinated by the Medical Entomology and Zoonoses Ecology Team (MEZE) at UKHSA. This project has been crucial in detecting invasive mosquitoes (*Aedes albopictus*/tiger mosquito and *Aedes aegypti*) on seven occasions since 2016. This surveillance is significant given the rising number of Dengue virus cases in Europe, exemplified by the detection of three locally acquired cases in Paris last year, necessitating invasive mosquito control measures. WRS' role is in running and submitting mosquito traps as part of the surveillance effort. With rising temperatures, it is anticipated that detections are likely to become more frequent. Early detection and control of these mosquitoes will be increasingly crucial across England to mitigate public health risks associated with mosquito-borne diseases. The monitoring in Bromsgrove takes place at the motorway services, where vehicles pass through from the continent.

4. Regulatory Services: Funeral Directors survey

Since the last report, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) on behalf of its partner authorities initiated a proactive inspection programme of funeral directors across the county, including Bromsgrove. This was on request from the Ministry of Justice to all local authorities and was against the background of district councils having very few regulatory responsibilities or powers in this sector. The programme was proactive and designed as a preventative measure to ensure that Worcestershire's funeral directors were operating to the highest possible standards. It followed on from the reports from Humberside of the actions of one funeral director which caused great concern and a police investigation. The inspection programme successfully provided a comprehensive overview of the funeral services being provided, with businesses demonstrating good standards of care.

Key activities since last report:

Regulatory Services: Only Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils discharge their planning and some elements of environmental enforcement through the shared service. WRS has served 7 Community Protection Warnings which have led to 4 Community Protection Notices (CPNs) for untidy land and health & safety concerns; served one Section 215 Notice under Town and Country Planning Act (to clear junk from a site) and served 31 Fixed Penalty Notices for littering, fly-tipping and breach of CPNs this year in Bromsgrove District.