

**Open**

# **Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

## **Agenda**

**6pm**  
**Thursday, 3rd July 2014**  
**Council Chamber**  
**Wyre Forest House**  
**Finepoint Way**  
**Kidderminster**



## **Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

### **Members of Committee:**

**Chairman: Councillor E Davies**  
**Vice-Chairman: J Phillips**

**Councillor J Greener**  
**Councillor V Higgs**  
**Councillor M Price**  
**Councillor M Rayner**  
**Councillor A Sewell**

**Councillor P V Hayward**  
**Councillor L Hyde**  
**Councillor T L Onslow**  
**Councillor C Rogers**  
**Councillor M Wrench**

**Would Members please note that, to ensure continuity in scrutiny, substitutes should only be appointed for the Scrutiny Committee in exceptional circumstances.**

### **Information for Members of the Public:**

**Part I** of the Agenda includes items for discussion in public. You have the right to inspect copies of Minutes and reports on this Agenda as well as the background documents used in the preparation of these reports.

**Part II** of the Agenda (if applicable) deals with items of “Exempt Information” for which it is anticipated that the public may be excluded from the meeting and neither reports nor background papers are open to public inspection.

### **Declaration of Interests by Members – interests of members in contracts and other matters**

Declarations of Interest are a standard item on every Council and Committee agenda and each Member must provide a full record of their interests in the Public Register.

In addition, alongside the Register of Interest, the Members Code of Conduct (“the Code”) requires the Declaration of Interests at meetings. Members have to decide first whether or not they have a disclosable interest in the matter under discussion.

Please see the Members’ Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of this constitution for full details.

### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) / Other Disclosable Interest (ODI)**

DPI’s and ODI’s are interests defined in the Code of Conduct that has been adopted by the District.

If you have a DPI (as defined in the Code) in a matter being considered at a meeting of the Council (as defined in the Code), the Council’s Standing Orders require you to leave the room where the meeting is held, for the duration of any discussion or voting on that matter.

If you have an ODI (as defined in the Code) you will need to consider whether you need to leave the room during the consideration of the matter.

### **Co-opted Members**

Scrutiny Committees may wish to appoint Co-Opted Members to sit on their meetings in order to add value to the scrutiny process. To appoint a Co-Opted Member, a Committee must first agree to appoint either a specific person or to approach a relevant organisation to request that they put forward a suitable representative (e.g. the local Police Authority). Co-Optees are non voting by default but Committees can decide to appoint voting rights to a Co-Optee. The Co-Option of the Member will last no longer than the remainder of the municipal year.

Scrutiny Committees can at any meeting agree to terminate the Co-Option of a Co-Opted Member with immediate effect. Where an organisation is appointed to put forward a Co-Opted Member, they are able to send a substitute in exceptional circumstances, provided that they notify Democratic Services in advance. Co-Opted Members must sign up to the Members Code of Conduct before attending their first meeting, failure to sign will mean that they are unable to participate. This also applies to substitute Co-Opted Members, who will need to allow sufficient time before a meeting in order to sign the Code of Conduct.

The following will apply:

- i) The total number of voting co-opted members on any Scrutiny Committee will not exceed 25% at any one time.
- ii) The total number of voting Co-opted Members on any Review Panel will not be limited.
- iii) Those Co-opted Members with voting rights will exercise their rights in accordance with the principles of decision making set out in the constitution.

**For Further information:**

**If you have any queries about this Agenda or require any details of background papers, further documents or information, you should contact Louisa Bright, Committee and Member Services Officer, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, DY11 7WF. Telephone: 01562 732763 or email [louisa.bright@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:louisa.bright@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)**

Wyre Forest District Council

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd July 2014

Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster

Part 1

Open to the press and public

| <b>Agenda item</b> | <b>Subject</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Page Number</b> |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>1.</b>          | <b>Apologies for Absence</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                    |
| <b>2.</b>          | <b>Appointment of Substitute Members</b><br><br>To receive the name of any Councillor who is to act as a substitute, notice of which has been given to the Solicitor of the Council, together with the name of the Councillor for whom he/she is acting.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                    |
| <b>3.</b>          | <b>Declarations of Interests by Members</b><br><br>In accordance with the Code of Conduct, to invite Members to declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's) and / or Other Disclosable Interests (ODI's) in the following agenda items and indicate the action that they will be taking when the item is considered.<br><br>Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's Constitution for full details. |                    |
| <b>4.</b>          | <b>Minutes</b><br><br>To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on the 1 <sup>st</sup> May 2014.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 7                  |
| <b>5.</b>          | <b>New Leisure Centre Update</b><br><br>To consider a report from the Cultural Services Manager which summarises the progress made on the new leisure centre                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 11                 |
| <b>6.</b>          | <b>How Are We Doing? Performance Update (Q4)</b><br><br>To consider a report from the Business Improvement Officer which updates Members on the performance of the Council for Quarter 4 (from 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2014 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2014).                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 13                 |
| <b>7.</b>          | <b>Home Choice Plus Allocation Policy Review</b><br><br>To consider a report from the Strategic Housing Services Manager which outlines the proposed changes to the Allocations Policy following amendments made to the legislation governing allocations in the Localism Act 2011 and consultation with members of the public and stakeholders.                                                                                                                                 | 33                 |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 8.  | <b>Climate Change Update</b><br><br>To consider a report from the Principal Health and Sustainability Officer which seeks endorsement of the updated Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy and the associated action plan for 2014/15.                                                                                                                                                                                          | 106 |
| 9.  | <b>Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services Task Group – Final Report</b><br><br>To consider a report and presentation from the Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services Scrutiny Task Group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 132 |
| 10. | <b>Tracking Recommendations 2013-2014</b><br><br>To track the recommendations that were made during the 2013/2014 municipal year.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 188 |
| 11. | <b>Feedback from Cabinet</b><br><br>To note the content of the Cabinet action list, following consideration of the recommendations from its meeting on 13 <sup>th</sup> May 2014.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 203 |
| 12. | <b>Work Programme</b><br><br>To review the work programme for the current municipal year with regard to the Sustainable Community Strategy Theme, Corporate Plan Priority, Annual Priorities and the Forward Plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 204 |
| 13. | <b>Terms of Reference</b><br><br>To receive the Terms of Reference for the Committee.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | -   |
| 14. | <b>Press Involvement</b><br><br>To consider any future items for scrutiny that might require publicity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |     |
| 15. | <b>To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Solicitor of the Council before the commencement of the meeting, which the Chairman by reason of special circumstances considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.</b>                                                                                                                                |     |
| 16. | <b>Exclusion of the Press and Public</b><br><br>To consider passing the following resolution:<br><br>“That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of “exempt information” as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act”. |     |

Part 2

Not open to the Press and Public

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 17. | <b>To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Solicitor of the Council before the commencement of the meeting, which the Chairman by reason of special circumstances considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.</b> |  |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER**

**THURSDAY, 1ST MAY 2014 (6PM)**

---

**Present:**

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), T Ingham (Vice-Chairman), G W Ballinger, C Brewer, N Gale, J Greener, V Higgs, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, A M Sewell and S J Williams.

**Observers**

Councillor A T Hingley.

**OS.113      Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D C H McCann.

**OS.114      Appointment of Substitutes**

Councillor S J Williams was appointed as a substitute for Councillor D C H McCann.

**OS.115      Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**OS.116      Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd April 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**OS.117      New Leisure Centre Update**

The Committee received a report from the Cultural Services Manager which summarised the progress made on the project.

The Cultural Services Manager led Members through the report and the following points were highlighted:

- The exchange of contracts with the St Francis Group relating to the purchase of the Silverwoods site took place on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2014.
- The Planning Committee approved the outline planning permission on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014.
- Sport England had requested to be part of the tendering process, therefore the date of determination of the final application for external funding from the Strategic Facilities Fund had been changed to 17<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

Members were also advised that contact had been made with public transport providers regarding access to the site from all areas of the District an update on the progress of this item would be included in the regular Committee update report.

**Agreed:**

- **The update be noted.**
- **The Cultural Services Manager to include the public transport item on all future update reports.**

**OS.118      Enforced Sale Policy**

The Committee considered a report from the Principal Environmental Health Officer (Housing) on a policy which set out the approach the Council would take when considering whether to recover debt through an enforced sale of property. The policy sets out the criteria to consider and the decision making process.

Councillor T L Onslow entered the meeting at this point, (6.11pm).

The Director of Economic Prosperity and Place led Members through the report and advised that the policy would be a useful tool for the Council to have in order to pursue debts. However, it was noted the Council would only consider using this option if it was a cost effective method.

The Committee discussed the policy and sought clarification on how the figure of £1,000 worth of debts was decided upon. The Director of Economic Prosperity and Place agreed to circulate an explanation to the Committee Members following the meeting.

**Agreed:**

- **The Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to provide an answer to the query raised on the debt figure to Members of the Committee.**

- **Recommend to Cabinet:**

**That the Enforced Sale Policy, as set out at Appendix 1 in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be approved.**

**OS.119      Update on Worcestershire County Council Subsidised Bus Services Consultation**

The Committee received a report from the Policy and Monitoring Officer which provided Members with an update on Worcestershire County Council's consultation on the proposed reduction of subsidised bus services which closed on 17th January 2014. A detailed response to the consultation was submitted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2014.

Members were led through the report and advised that in total over 8,500 responses had been received to the consultation. It was noted that the County Council's Cabinet had agreed at its meeting on 6th February 2014, to review the responses in



detail before making a final decision.

The Chairman asked the County Councillors A Hingley (St. Barnabas) and M Rayner (St. Georges and St. Oswalds), to request a briefing for District Councillors on the outcome of the consultation in due course.

**Agreed:**

- **The update be noted.**
- **County Councillors A Hingley and M Rayner to request a briefing for District Councillors on the outcome of the consultation.**

**OS.120      Update on Review Panels**

The Chairman of the Blue Badge Review Panel, Councillor J Greener, tabled the recommendations from the panel at the meeting. Members were advised the panel had been convened to scrutinise the allocation, procedure and effectiveness of the scheme and to investigate possible misuse / abuse of the Disabled Parking Permits throughout the District.

The Committee received a verbal update from the Chairman of the Parking Enforcement Review Panel, Councillor V Higgs. Members were advised that the Panel had met three times and were reviewing parking enforcement 'hot spots' throughout the District which had been identified by Ward Members. It was noted the review panel would continue into the new municipal year.

**Agreed:**

- **The updates be noted.**
- **The Recommendations from the Blue Badge Review Panel be recommended to Cabinet:**
  1. **A publicity campaign via the Media Team be produced to promote the correct use of permits and to help prevent public misconception of the scheme.**
  2. **The Benefits Fraud Hotline telephone number be published and guarantee of anonymity.**
  3. **The continued efforts by the Kidderminster Hub and Worcestershire County Council to improve the application process and streamlining of issuing permits be endorsed.**
  4. **The Civil Enforcement Officers continue with the work they are doing to combat misuse of permits.**

**OS.121      Work Programme**

**Agreed:** Due to the number of items on the work programme for July 2014, a special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been scheduled for Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014 to consider the development of

**Council's assets (exempt item).**

**OS.122 Press Involvement**

There were no future items for scrutiny that might require publicity.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.13pm.



## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### Briefing Paper

Report of: Kay Higman, Cultural Services Manager  
Date: Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

Open

### New Leisure Centre Update

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 This regular report summarises the progress made on this project and due to the commercial sensitivity of the project the proposed next update will be in September. There is currently minimum reportable activity as we are in the tender process and therefore we propose to report bimonthly and any sensitive items will be taken in exempt.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 Members will be aware of the background to this project as this was the subject of a detailed scrutiny review, members briefing and recent Cabinet report and decisions. The decision to go forward with a new leisure centre and rationalise current provision dates back to January 2012.

#### 3. Key Issues

- 3.1 Exchange of contracts with the St Francis Group regarding purchase of Silverwoods took place on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2014 and completion is due for the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2014. Outline planning permission was granted on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014.
- 3.2 The tender return date has been extended to September 12<sup>th</sup> 2014 following clarification meetings involving Sport England and the Tenderers. Evaluation of the tenders will take place for approximately 4 weeks after tender submission and the award of contract is expected early November 2014.
- 3.3 The project has reached a point where there is minimal reportable activity and therefore it is proposed that the next update will be in September. A presentation of the design from the successful Tenderer will also be arranged for this committee.

#### 4. Public transport bus routes

- 4.1 At the May meeting of the Scrutiny committee it was agreed that an update would be provided regarding potential for bus routes to be established to service the new leisure centre. The Cultural Services Manager met with a representative from Rotala (who operate Diamond, Wessex and Preston

buses). Detail of opening hours, usage figures and location have been provided to Rotala and they are now working on some options for bus routes to service the new leisure centre; the meeting was very positive.

**5. Options**

- 5.1 There are currently no options for this committee to debate at this stage.

**6. Consultation**

- 6.1 A consultation/communication plan is continually being updated and there will be press releases and key communication with the media, staff and the public as appropriate.

**7. Related Decisions**

- 7.1 The budget process is a related decision and the new leisure centre will provide a saving to the Council on current revenue budgets.

**8. Relevant Council Policies/Strategies**

- 8.1 Council's Corporate Plan.

**9. Implications**

- 9.1 There are no additional implications to report.

**10. Equality Impact Needs Assessment**

- 10.1 This has been carried out and reveals no significant impact.

**11. Wards affected**

- 11.1 All.

**12. Appendices**

- 12.1 Nil.

**13. Background Papers**

Nil

**Officer Contact Details:**

Name: Kay Higman  
Title: Cultural Services Manager  
Contact Number: 01562 732902



## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

### Briefing Paper

Report of: Rhiannon Foxall, Business Improvement Officer  
Date: Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July  
Open

### How Are We Doing? Performance Update

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 To update Members on the performance of the Council for Quarter 4 (from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014).

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 Performance management is instrumental in all council activities as it helps us to keep track of how well we are performing and enables any potential issues to be identified at an early stage so remedial action can be taken. It also informs our decision making processes which underpin the delivery of our Corporate Plan 2011-14 (*Engage, Consult, Deliver*).
- 2.2 The Council has a number of processes in place to monitor our performance including:
- Corporate Plan Actions
  - Corporate Risks and associated actions
  - Leading Measures
  - Lagging Measures

#### 3. Progress

- 3.1 **Appendix 1** is an exception report for all of our purposes (People, Place, Housing, Planning, Business, Enabling)
- 3.2 **Appendix 2** is a detailed report of performance against our purpose of 'Planning'.
- 3.3 **Appendix 3** is a detailed report of performance against our purpose of 'Housing'.

#### 4. Key Achievements/Issues

- 4.1 Any overdue items are listed in Appendix 1. However, for many of these, the delays have clear reasons and revised timescales are identified. In some cases, due dates have been changed to reflect

where there have been more significant changes to the timescale of the project.

- 4.2 A key achievement to note is the increase in the number of affordable homes completed. This has more than doubled from 76 in 2012/13 to 165 in 2013/14.
- 4.3 We have also completed 100% of the expected annual dwellings for 2013/14 (375 dwellings).

**5. Options**

- 5.1 That the progress in performance for quarter 4 be noted.

**6. Consultation**

- 6.1 Cabinet Member for Strategy
- 6.2 Corporate Leadership Team

**7. Related Decisions**

- 7.1 None.

**8. Relevant Council Policies/Strategies**

- 8.1 Wyre Forest District Council Corporate Plan 2011 – 2014.
- 8.2 Wyre Forest Forward Programme of Projects 2013/14.

**9. Implications**

- 9.1 Resources: No direct implications from this report.
- 9.2 Equalities: No direct implications from this report.
- 9.3 Partnership working: No direct implications from this report.
- 9.4 Human Rights: No direct implications from this report.
- 9.5 E-Government: No direct implications from this report.

**10. Equality Impact Needs Assessment**

- 10.1 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and it is considered that there are no discernible impacts on the nine protected characteristics as set out by the Equality Act 2010.

**11. Wards affected**

- 11.1 None.

**12. Appendices**

- 12.1 Appendix 1 – All purposes exception report.
- 12.2 Appendix 2 – Full ‘Planning’ report.
- 12.3 Appendix 3 – Full ‘Housing’ report.

**13. Background Papers**

Corporate Plan action information is available on the Council's Performance Management System, Covalent. Alternatively, reports can be requested from the Business Improvement Officer.

**Officer Contact Details:**

|                 |                                                                                              |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name:           | Rhiannon Foxall                                                                              |
| Title:          | Business Improvement Officer                                                                 |
| Contact Number: | Ext. 2786                                                                                    |
| Email:          | <a href="mailto:rhiannon.foxall@wyreforestdc.gov.uk">rhiannon.foxall@wyreforestdc.gov.uk</a> |

## Exception report for all purposes

Those actions that are approaching their due date or are overdue



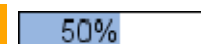
### Enabling others to do what they need to do

WFF 13/14 04 Corporate Support Services/Enabling Review



| Due Date    | Managed By | Latest Note                                                                                                                                                  | Latest Note Date |
|-------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 31-Mar-2014 | Ian Miller | Voluntary redundancies agreed for Hub and due to be implemented in June. Consultation proposals regarding business support are due to implemented in August. | 08-May-2014      |

WFF 13/14 05 Wyre Forest House



| Due Date    | Managed By | Latest Note                                                                                                                                                                                      | Latest Note Date |
|-------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 31-Mar-2014 | Ian Miller | Programme of work for car park to be agreed in May. Electricity supply testing complete. Situation to be monitored. Continuing to seek resolution of heating and cooling system with contractor. | 20-May-2014      |

WFF 13/14 10 Shared Services Review



| Due Date    | Managed By | Latest Note                                                                                                                                          | Latest Note Date |
|-------------|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 31-Mar-2014 | Ian Miller | Decision to make savings internally in respect of revenues, benefits and the Hub. Agreed support for Bromsgrove and Redditch ICT being put in place. | 08-May-2014      |



|              |                         |     |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----|
| WFF 13/14 25 | Organisational Strategy | 50% |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----|



| Due Date    | Managed By        | Latest Note                                                           | Latest Note Date |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 31-Mar-2014 | Caroline Newlands | Revised draft considered at CLT on 8th May. Implementation July 2014. | 20-May-2014      |

### Help me improve my health and well-being

|              |                    |     |
|--------------|--------------------|-----|
| WFF 13/14 07 | New Leisure Centre | 27% |
|--------------|--------------------|-----|



| Due Date    | Managed By   | Latest Note                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Latest Note Date |
|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 01-Apr-2016 | Linda Collis | <p>Exchange of contracts with the St Francis Group regarding purchase of Silverwoods took place on 11th April 2014. A returnable (less Seller's abortive costs) deposit of 5% of the purchase price has been made to the St Francis Group. Outline planning permission was approved by Planning Committee on 8th April 2014 and the completion of the purchase will take place after the judicial review period of 6 weeks has passed from the issue of the decision notice.</p> <p>Further documentation is being submitted to Sport England regarding the application for external funding from the Strategic Facilities Fund. The final application is to be determined in June/July 2014.</p> <p>The tender documents have been issued and clarification meetings with the contractors are underway.</p> | 21-May-2014      |

## Make good development happen

WFF 13/14 01






Make Good Development Happen Review

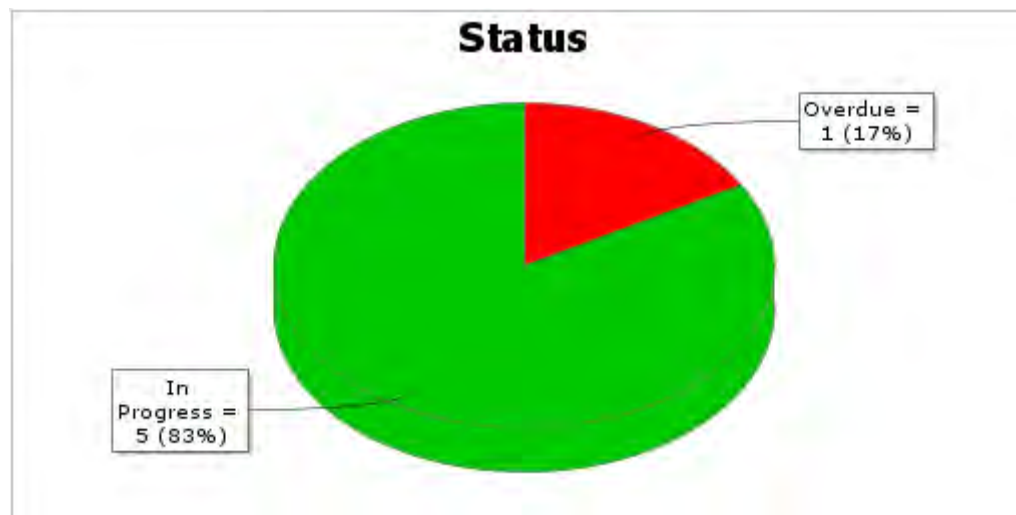
96%



| Due Date    | Managed By  | Latest Note                                                                                                                                                                 | Latest Note Date |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 31-Mar-2014 | Mike Parker | Restructure consultation went out in April with a July implementation date – combined to fit with a wider corporate piece picking up proposals for Green Street and the Hub | 08-May-2014      |

# Make good development happen

| Action Status                                                                     |                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|  | Cancelled                          |
|  | Overdue; Neglected                 |
|  | Unassigned; Check Progress         |
|  | Not Started; In Progress; Assigned |
|  | Completed                          |



WFF 13/14 01

Make Good Development Happen Review

96%



| Due Date    | Managed By  | Latest Note                                                                                                                                                                 | Latest Note Date |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 31-Mar-2014 | Mike Parker | Restructure consultation went out in April with a July implementation date – combined to fit with a wider corporate piece picking up proposals for Green Street and the Hub | 08-May-2014      |

WFF 13/14 15

Bewdley Medical Centre

50%



| Due Date    | Managed By  | Latest Note                                                                                                                                                   | Latest Note Date |
|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 31-Dec-2015 | Mike Parker | Legal work still being progressed; costs of potential car park construction being investigated. On site construction likely to commence late 2014/early 2015. | 12-May-2014      |

WFF 13/14 16

Crown House

80%



| Due Date    | Managed By  | Latest Note                                                           | Latest Note Date |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 31-Dec-2014 | Mike Parker | Next meeting to discuss development agreement scheduled for 16th May. | 12-May-2014      |

WFF 13/14 20

Delivery of Hoobrook Link Road

75%

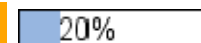


| Due Date | Managed By | Latest Note | Latest Note Date |
|----------|------------|-------------|------------------|
|----------|------------|-------------|------------------|

31-Dec-2017      Mike Parker      Gap funding request (£6m) submitted across both LEP's Strategic Economic Plans. WCC has confirmed use of CPO if required.      12-May-2014

WFF 13/14 30

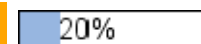
Stourport Canal Basins



| Due Date    | Managed By  | Latest Note                                                                                                   | Latest Note Date |
|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 31-Dec-2016 | Mike Parker | STC4 Steering Group met on 2nd April to discuss alternative development proposals; meeting again on 14th May. | 12-May-2014      |

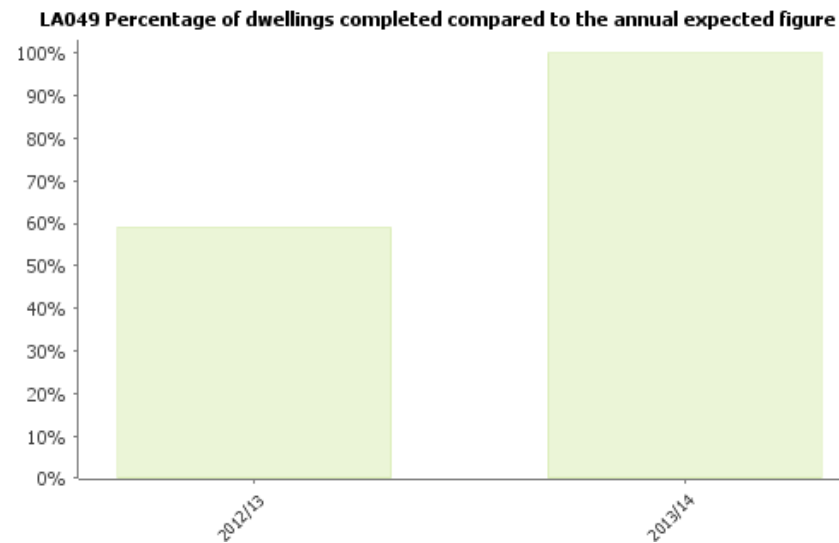
WFF 13/14 31

Eastern Gateway



| Due Date    | Managed By  | Latest Note                                                                            | Latest Note Date |
|-------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 31-Dec-2016 | Mike Parker | Officer meeting 16th May to discuss lack of progress with ASDA and alternative plan B. | 12-May-2014      |

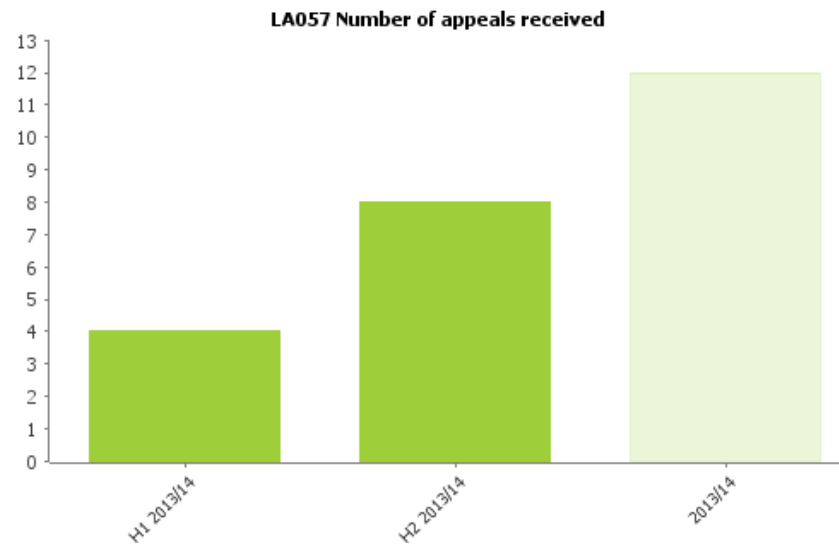
**LA049** Percentage of dwellings completed compared to the annual expected figure



Current Value 100%

Managed By Rebecca Mayman

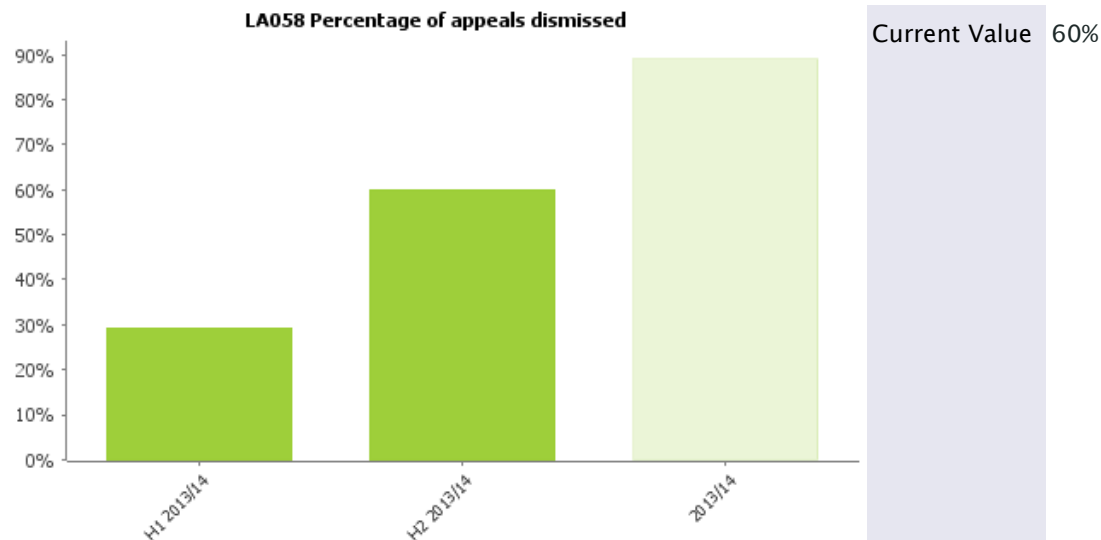
**LA057** Number of appeals received



Current Value 12

Managed By John Baggott

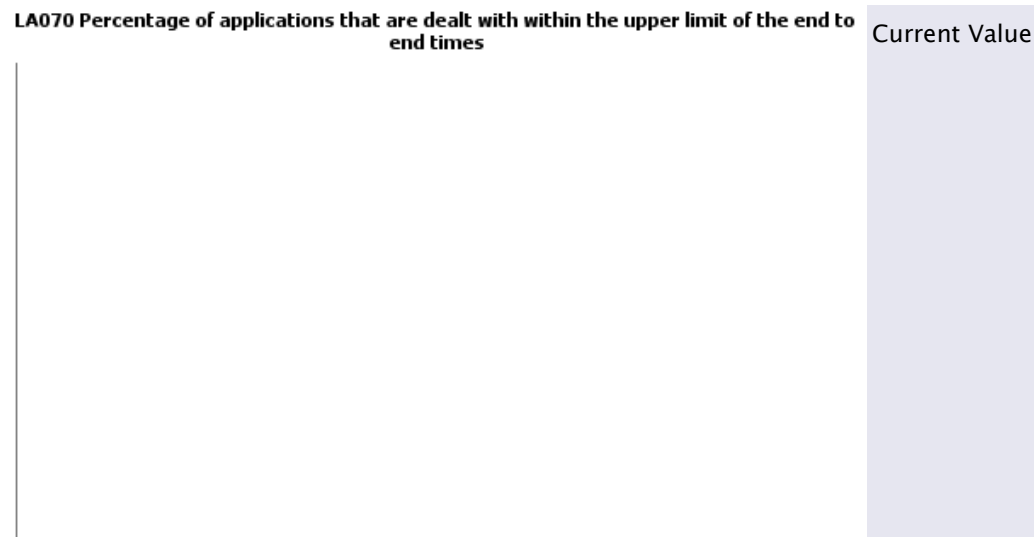
**LA058** Percentage of appeals dismissed



Managed By John Baggott

**LA070** Percentage of applications that are dealt with within the upper limit of the end to end times

Overall figure will be available as soon as the data for major applications has been validated.



Managed By John Baggott

**LA070 a** Percentage of applications that are dealt with within the upper limit of the end to end times (Major)

Data for major applications still being validated.

**LA070a Percentage of applications that are dealt with within the upper limit of the end to end times (Major)**

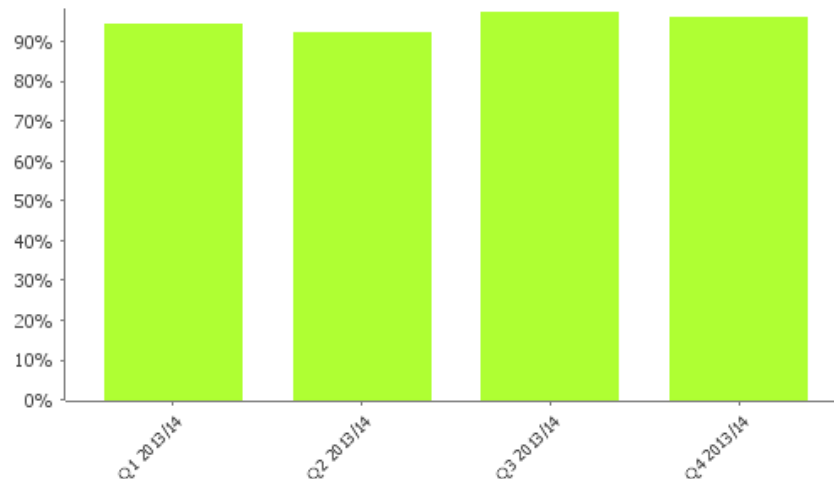


Current Value

Managed By John Baggott

**LA070 b** Percentage of applications that are dealt with within the upper limit of the end to end times (Minor)

**LA070b Percentage of applications that are dealt with within the upper limit of the end to end times (Minor)**



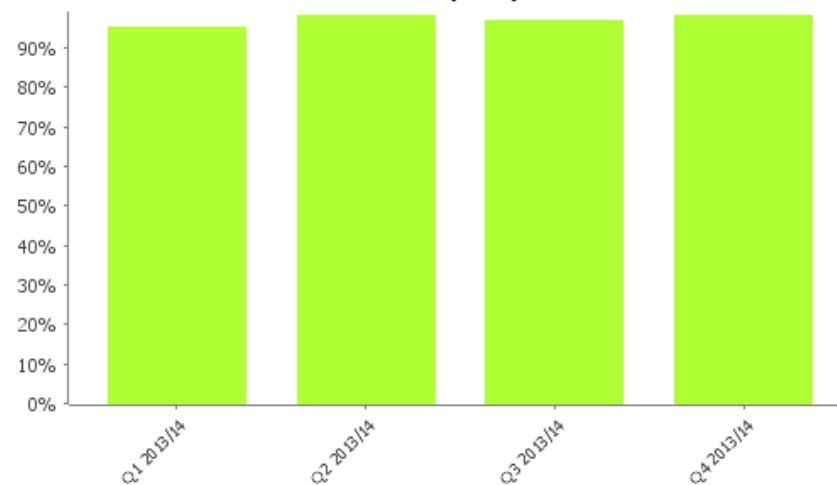
Current Value 96%

Managed By John Baggott



**LA070** Percentage of applications that are dealt with within the upper limit of the end to end times (Other)

**LA070c Percentage of applications that are dealt with within the upper limit of the end to end times (Other)**

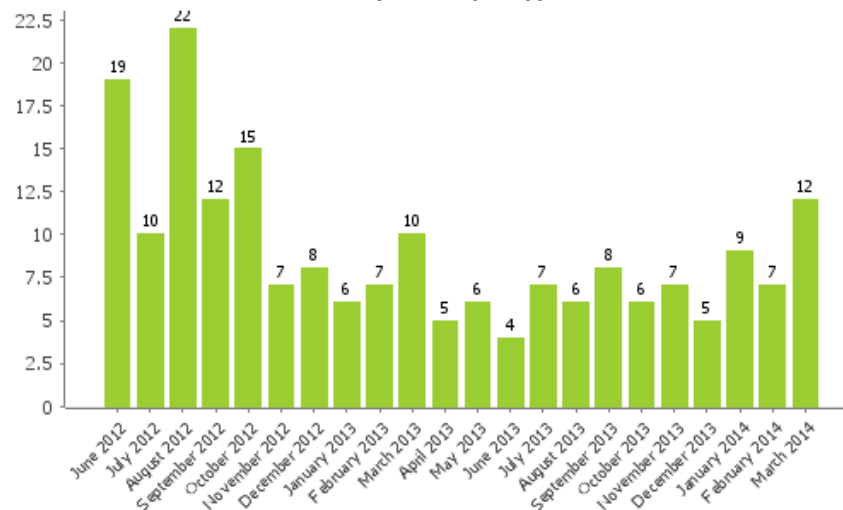


Current Value 98%

Managed By John Baggott

**LE053** Number of requests for pre-application advice

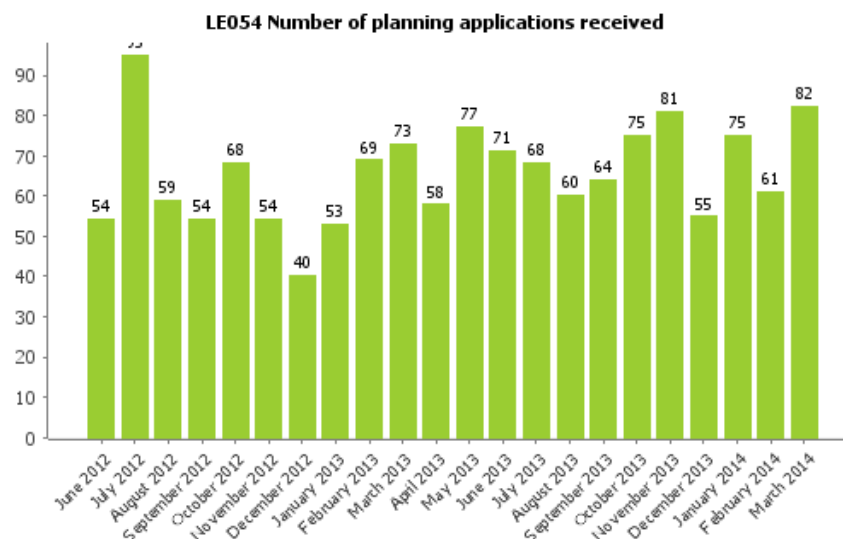
**LE053 Number of requests for pre-application advice**



Current Value 12

Managed By John Baggott

**LE054** Number of planning applications received



Current Value 82

Managed By John Baggott

Listed below are primary actions for other purposes but also impact on this purpose

None

Listed below are primary measures for other purposes but also impact on this purpose

**LA034** Area of new commercial floor space completed through development






**LA039** Number of affordable new homes completed

**Listed below are primary measures for other purposes but also impact on this purpose**

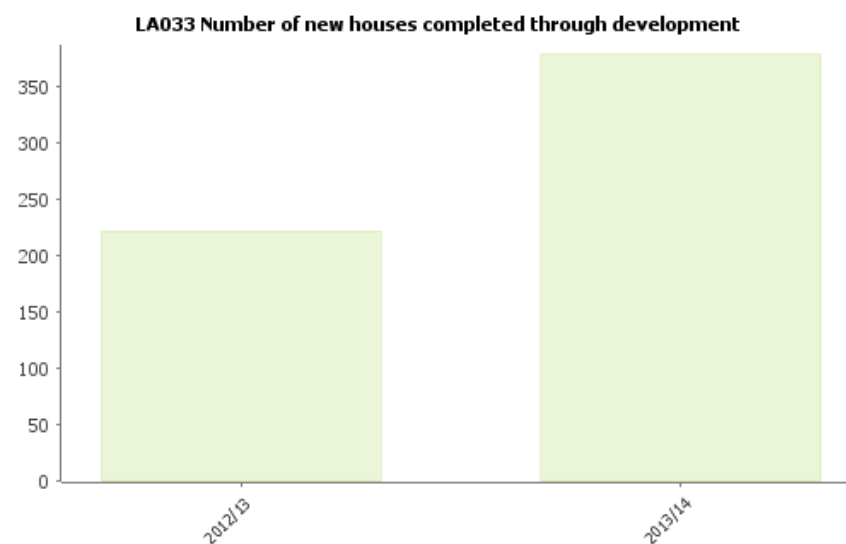
ORPRISK04                      Unable to deliver good quality, affordable homes

# Help me find somewhere to live in my local area



| Action Status                                                                     |                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|  | Cancelled                          |
|  | Overdue; Neglected                 |
|  | Unassigned; Check Progress         |
|  | Not Started; In Progress; Assigned |
|  | Completed                          |

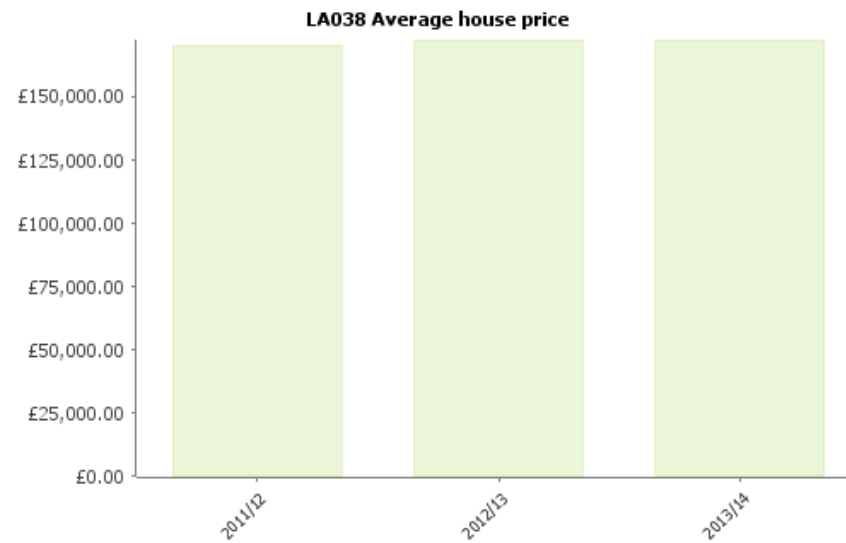
**LA033** Number of new houses completed through development



Current Value 379

Managed By Rebecca Mayman

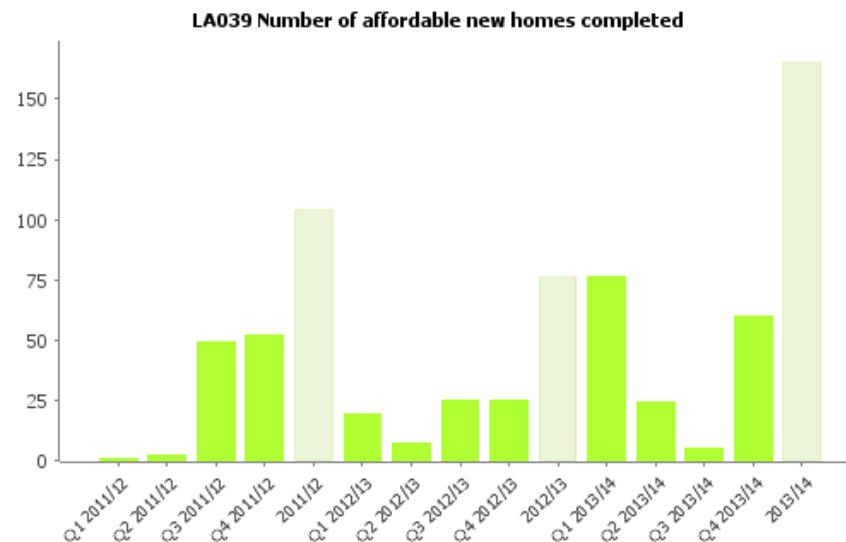
**LA038** Average house price



Current Value £171,876.00

Managed By Kate Bailey

**LA039** Number of affordable new homes completed



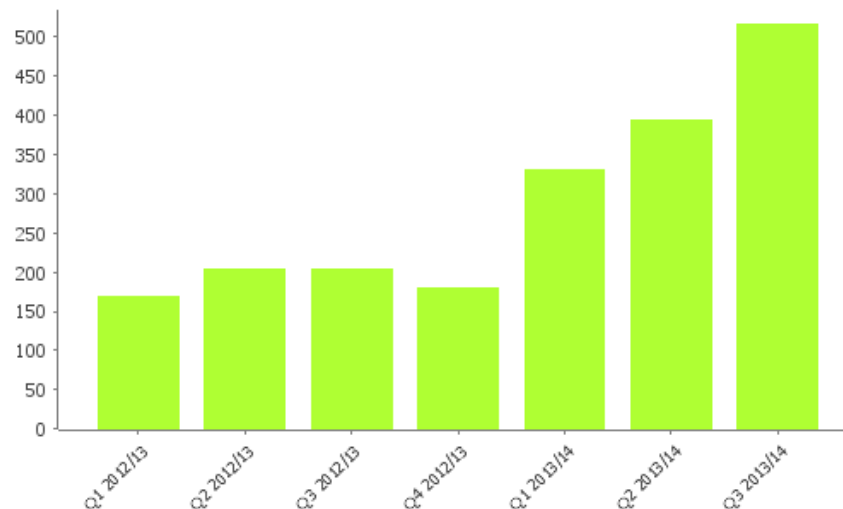
Current Value 60

Managed By Kate Bailey

**LA045** Number of people presenting themselves in need of housing advice

Awaiting latest data from Wyre Forest Community Housing

**LA045 Number of people presenting themselves in need of housing advice**

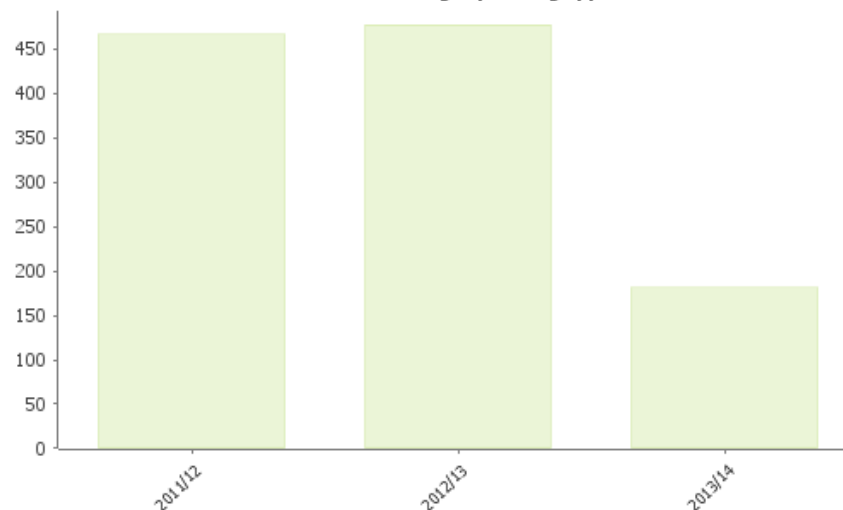


Current Value 516

Managed By Kate Bailey

**LA054** Number of new units of housing in planning applications submitted

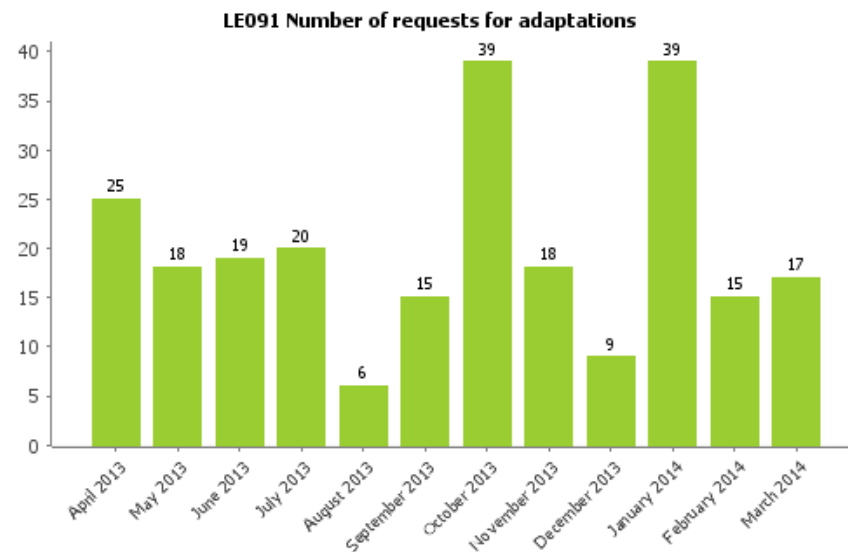
**LA054 Number of new units of housing in planning applications submitted**



Current Value 181

Managed By Rebecca Mayman

LE091 Number of requests for adaptations

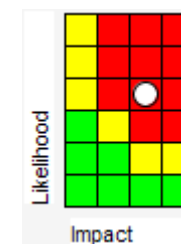


Current Value 17

Managed By Kate Bailey

CORPRISK04

Unable to deliver good quality, affordable homes



RA13/14 06

Continue to implement actions from the Housing Strategy



All actions for 2013/2014 are now complete.



RA13/14 07

To assist a Council scrutiny of the delivery of housing to meet local needs.



Implementation of HRP recommendations underway. Affordable housing SPD to LDF in Sept and then early engagement commences.



RA13/14 08

To procure a new contract for the delivery of  
the Council's Homelessness, Housing  
Adviser Register Service.



TS: Tenders now complete.



**Listed below are primary actions for other purposes but also impact on this purpose**

None

**Listed below are primary measures for other purposes but also impact on this purpose**

**LA044** Number of residents who experience a positive health outcome as a consequence of a housing improvement intervention





## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### Briefing Paper

Report of: Kate Bailey, Strategic Housing Services Manager  
Date: Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

### Open

### Home Choice Plus Allocation Policy Review

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 This reports outlines the proposed changes to the Allocations Policy following amendments made to the legislation governing allocations in the Localism Act 2011 and consultation with members of the public and stakeholders.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 Housing authorities are required by s.166A of the Housing Act 1996 to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating social housing accommodation and they must allocate in accordance with that scheme.
- 2.2 The allocations law provisions of the Localism Act 2011 came into force in England on 18th June 2012 amending Part 6 s169 of the Housing Act 1996. The objectives behind these amendments are to:
- Enable housing authorities to better manage their housing waiting list by giving them the power to determine which applicants qualify for an allocation of social housing. Authorities are now able to operate a more focused list which better reflects local circumstances. These changes can help to manage unrealistic expectations by excluding people who have little or no prospect of being allocated accommodation.
  - Make it easier for existing social tenants to move.
  - Maintain the protection provided by the Statutory Reasonable Preference Criteria – ensuring that priority for social housing is given to those in greatest need.
- 2.3 Part VI Housing Act 1996 specified five categories of applicant who must be awarded 'reasonable preference' and this remains unchanged by the Localism Act 2011 and these are:
- people who are homeless
  - those owed homeless duties
  - people occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or other unsatisfactory housing conditions

- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds
  - People who need to move to a particular locality within the local authority district, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others.
- 2.4 Housing Authorities may only allocate accommodation to people who are defined as 'qualifying persons' (s.160ZA (6)(a)) with the exception for members of the Armed and Reserve Forces. For any classes of persons who do not qualify for social housing we will take into consideration any exceptional circumstances.
- 2.5 The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for armed forces)(England) Regulations 2012 and the Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 sets out how local authorities should respond to the housing needs of ex servicemen.
- 2.6 A new code of guidance has been written replacing all previous guidance on social housing allocations: 'Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England.
- 3. Key Issues**
- 3.1 The Localism Act and subsequent consultation paper on "Providing Social Housing for Local People" focuses on the need to provide housing for local people and to categories of household that the local stakeholders, members and residents think are important as well as housing the reasonable preference groups. The new allocations policy seeks to encompass these points.
- 3.2 Consultation was carried out throughout March and April 2014 with members of the public through the Home Choice Plus (HC+) and Council websites. A special stakeholder meeting was also held for all the Registered Provider (RP) partners who use the allocations policy and HC+ system and 10 different RPs attended. In total we received 650 survey responses in addition to the RP responses on the day of the meeting.
- 3.3 The consultation responses received were broadly supportive of the changes particularly around local connection and housing need. The key changes are outlined below;
- 3.3.1 Only those people with a connection to the partnership will be allowed to join the housing register. Primarily this will be applicants who already live or work in the partnership area or who have a close family member living here.
- 3.3.2 Only those people with a recognized housing need will be allowed to join the housing register. This will include a wider set of households than reasonable preference categories to ensure we still include households seeking shared ownership / sheltered housing on the list.

- 3.3.3 Additional waiting time (6 months) will be given to those in employment, education or training, those volunteering, those acting a “carer” and certain members of the armed forces.
- 3.3.4 We will assess overcrowding in the same way that Housing Benefit assess bedroom eligibility e.g. two children of opposite sex requiring a separate bedroom at 10 years old.
- 3.4 There was an additional request received from one the Local Authority partners to extend the local connection criteria for accessing the Housing Register (for households who have lived for 3 out of the last 5 years to also be allowed on the list) and this has been supported by all the Local Authority officers and it is now proposed that this is incorporated into the Allocations Policy.
- 3.5 Stakeholders raised issues around Equalities legislation, the Local Connection issue mentioned in 3.4 and concerns that more work was likely to be undertaken as a result of the process as more checking would need to be done at offer stage. One of the RPs that attended is already operating a similar policy elsewhere and didn’t feel that the additional work would be too onerous.
- 3.6 The comments from both the stakeholder event and survey have been considered and a new allocations policy developed. The key changes from the existing allocations policy and the new allocations policy are shown in the table Appendix One to this report.

#### **4. Options**

- 4.1 The committee may wish to:
- Recommend to Cabinet that approval be given to the new 2014 allocations policy
  - Recommend to cabinet that approval be given with suggested amendments (please note these would need to be agreed by the other Home Choice partners).

#### **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 Members, Stakeholders including Registered Partners and Households on the Housing Register have all had an opportunity to comment on the changes.

#### **6. Related Decisions**

- 6.1 Not applicable.

#### **7. Relevant Council Policies/Strategies**

- 7.1 Housing Strategy 2011 – 2016.

**8. Implications**

**8.1 Resources:**

8.1.1 The IT system is currently shared with Bromsgrove DC, Stratford DC, Malvern DC, Worcester CC and Wychavon DC. If this allocations policy wasn't agreed then we would need to look at an alternative IT system and policy. This would have cost implications for the council and a further report would be taken to Cabinet.

8.1.2 The costs of any amendments to the system required as a result of this consultation (and proposed changes to the allocations policy) will be covered by the residual budget held by Wychavon District Council (on behalf of all the councils) for the original implementation of the system.

8.2 Equalities: We will review the Equalities Impact Assessment undertaken by Bromsgrove DC on behalf of all of the Councils before making final changes to the policy to ensure that the new policy does not affect the protected characteristic groups.

8.3 Partnership working: Home Choice Plus is a partnership of six councils and 30+ Registered Providers.

8.4 Human Rights: Not applicable.

8.5 E-Government: The system supports e-government principles through use of on line and web based IT.

8.6 Transformation The Home Choice Plus website will also be linked to the new Enhanced Housing Options system which allows a self-service option to obtain basic housing options advice which can be followed up by interview and case work if required.

**9. Wards affected**

9.1 All.

**10. Appendices**

10.1 Appendix 1: Allocations Policy current and proposed changes.

10.2 Appendix 2: Draft Allocations Policy 2014.

**11. Background Papers**

11.1 PDF reports of the full consultation results are available and both these and more detailed responses to the consultation will be put onto the Home Choice Plus website.

**Officer Contact Details:**

Name: Kate Bailey  
Title: Strategic Housing Services Manager  
Contact Number: Tel: 01562 732560  
Email address: [kate.bailey@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:kate.bailey@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)

**Appendix One - Allocations Policy Changes**

| Current allocations policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Proposed allocations policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Survey responses / comments                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Local Connection:</b></p> <p>No current restrictions on local connection as we operate an open waiting list. However banding is driven by whether you have a connection to a District or not.</p> <p>This means we register households from outside the partnership who have no likelihood of being rehoused by us.</p> | <p><b>Local Connection:</b></p> <p>Applicants must have a 2 year local connection to the Home Choice Plus Partnership area, have a close family member who has resided here for 5 years, have resided 3 out of the last 5 years or have been in permanent paid employment in the Partnership area for six months.</p> <p>Those applicants who have a local connection to Wyre Forest, under the 1996 Housing Act, will still have a higher banding than those without a connection to the district. This will ensure those applicants with a connection to Wyre Forest will have preference over those without. There will be some exceptions to the local connection qualification criteria, for example ex service personnel.</p> <p><b>Persons with no local connection to the Partnership:</b> Applicants who do not have a 2 year local connection to the Partnership will not be eligible to join Home Choice Plus. The exceptions to the local connection criteria are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Households accepted as homeless and one of the Local Authorities</li> </ul> | <p>79% of respondents were in favour of this change.</p> <p>One of the Councils requested that we consider 3 out of the last five years previous residency to assist them with policies around s106 sites and rural housing schemes.</p> |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |  |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|  | <p>has accepted a full duty to them under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) which has not yet been discharged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the Local Authorities are satisfied that the applicant needs to live in the area to provide on-going, regular and significant care and support to a relative and friend who lives in the area and their application is supported by the local Adult or Childrens Services team.</li> <li>• One of the Local Authorities (or its agent) have agreed to rehouse the applicant under a reciprocal agreement with their current landlord or local authority</li> <li>• Rehousing or relocation into the Local Authority area is accepted by the Local Authority (or its agent) as being essential due to public protection issues or for other exceptional reasons.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, Members of the UK armed forces stationed abroad will be considered as living in the United Kingdom for the purposes of applying for social housing</p> |  |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>No Housing Need:</b></p> <p>The current waiting list is open to all regardless of whether they have a housing need or not. This means we register a large number of people who aren't assessed as having a housing need that is likely to result in rehousing (e.g. Bronze Plus)</p> | <p><b>No Housing Need:</b></p> <p>These applicants will not be eligible to join the housing register. This will apply where an applicant is not an existing tenant seeking a transfer, eligible for sheltered housing or a household interested in low cost home ownership, and is deemed to have no housing need.</p> | <p>61% of respondents supported this change. Of those that didn't many were asking for groups to be included that already are and won't be affected by the change.</p> <p>As these households will not be allowed to register we will need to ensure they are aware of their rights to request a review of the decision and ensure they can access Housing Options. We will deliver this through access to the Enhanced Housing Options system, access to information and the existing service within the Hub.</p> |
| <p><b>Reduced Banding:</b></p> <p>Households with an income, of more than £60,000 will be placed into the reduced banding.</p>                                                                                                                                                             | <p><b>Reduced Banding:</b></p> <p>Households with an income, of more than £35,000 will be placed into the reduced banding unless they are in receipt of means tested benefits. This will ensure those applicants who do not have the means to access housing in the private sector will have preference.</p>           | <p>75% of respondents supported this change</p> <p>The financial resources of an armed forces applicant will be disregarded where it is a lump sum that was received as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p><b>Bedroom Standard:</b></p> <p>The current policy says that a family are overcrowded if they have two children that are sharing of opposite sex, when the older child reaches 8</p>                                                                                                    | <p><b>Bedroom Standard:</b></p> <p>The current policy says that a family are overcrowded if they have two children that are sharing of opposite sex, when the older child reaches 10</p>                                                                                                                               | <p>52% of respondents were in favour of this change. Although this was a lower % in support we believe the bedroom standard has to be changed to fall in line with the way that housing benefit assessments of a household's bedroom requirements are made or we will get the situation of people being affected by the underoccupation tax</p>                                                                                                                                                                    |

|                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | as soon as they are rehoused. If there were some exceptional circumstances around requiring an additional bedroom these could be taken into consideration providing affordability wasn't an issue..                                                                    |
| <b>Applicants in Employment</b><br><br>Not currently recognised             | <b>Applicants in employment</b><br><br>Where applicants meet the required hours in employment for working tax credits thresholds and have been in employment for six out of the last nine months.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 58% of respondents supported this change.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Applicants Volunteering</b><br><br>Not currently recognised              | <b>Applicants volunteering</b><br><br>Applicants volunteering for a minimum of 20 hours per month and for a continuous period of at least six months, at the point of application, at review and the same at the point of offer will be given additional preference. Volunteering must be for a not for profit organisation registered with the charity commission or otherwise recognised by the Local Authority (or their agent). | 41% of respondents supported this change and 40% opposed. We feel that supporting volunteers is still important and would wish to carry on with this policy change.                                                                                                    |
| <b>Applicants in Education and Training</b><br><br>Not currently recognised | <b>Applicants in Education and Training</b><br><br>This applies to applicants, who have been studying or training, which includes attending higher and further education or by accessing a vocational course of study or engaging in a programme of work related courses. This must be for a                                                                                                                                        | 40% of respondents supported this change and 42% opposed. We feel that supporting applicants who are in education and training is still important as it supports wider economic growth and regeneration objectives and would wish to carry on with this policy change. |



|                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                        | continuous period of at least six months, up to the point of application and the same at point of offer. Training which is compulsory in order to qualify for out of work benefits will not be taken into account in awarding this additional preference.                                    |                                           |
| <b>Applicants who are full time carers</b><br><br>Not currently recognised.                                            | <b>Applicants who are full time carers</b><br><br>This applies to applicants who are unable to satisfy the criteria outlined above, but who care for someone on a full time basis for a period of six months (due to disability or frailty) will also qualify for the additional preference. | 68% of respondents supported this change. |
| <b>Bronze and Bronze Plus</b><br><br>Currently applicants can remain on the waiting list for two years without bidding | <b>Bronze and Bronze Plus</b><br><br>Applicants can remain on the waiting list for one year without bidding                                                                                                                                                                                  | 75% of respondents supported this change. |



# Allocation Scheme



|                                                                          |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Glossary of terms .....</b>                                           | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>1. Introduction .....</b>                                             | <b>8</b>  |
| Aims of the partnership .....                                            | 8         |
| What are Allocations under this Scheme? .....                            | 9         |
| The Legal Framework .....                                                | 11        |
| Service Standards.....                                                   | 12        |
| Choice and Constraints.....                                              | 13        |
| <b>3. Eligibility and Reasonable Preference .....</b>                    | <b>14</b> |
| Who is and who is not eligible under this Scheme. ....                   | 14        |
| Qualification Eligibility Criteria.....                                  | 14        |
| Residency of Choice .....                                                | 15        |
| Housing Need .....                                                       | 15        |
| Age Eligibility Criteria .....                                           | 15        |
| Young people aged between 16 – 18 .....                                  | 15        |
| Persons from abroad .....                                                | 16        |
| Persons with no local connection to the Partnership.....                 | 16        |
| Unacceptable behaviour .....                                             | 17        |
| Armed Forces .....                                                       | 18        |
| The Application of Reasonable Preference.....                            | 19        |
| Determining priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference ..... | 19        |
| <b>4. Registration and Assessment Process .....</b>                      | <b>21</b> |
| How to Apply.....                                                        | 21        |
| Help with registration .....                                             | 21        |
| Definition of Household Types .....                                      | 22        |
| <b>5. The Banding Structure.....</b>                                     | <b>24</b> |
| Priority Band .....                                                      | 26        |
| Gold Plus .....                                                          | 27        |
| Silver Plus .....                                                        | 33        |
| Gold .....                                                               | 33        |
| Silver .....                                                             | 34        |
| Reduced Banding .....                                                    | 34        |
| How will the reduced banding be applied.....                             | 37        |
| Bronze Plus.....                                                         | 38        |
| Bronze .....                                                             | 38        |
| Time Limited Bands .....                                                 | 38        |
| Local Connection for Banding Purposes.....                               | 38        |
| Waiting Time .....                                                       | 39        |
| Change of Circumstances.....                                             | 40        |
| Additional Preference – Community Contribution .....                     | 40        |
| Members of the Armed Forces.....                                         | 41        |
| Looking for available Properties.....                                    | 43        |
| Advertising .....                                                        | 43        |
| How to Bid .....                                                         | 43        |
| When to bid for a Property .....                                         | 44        |
| Number of Properties an applicant can bid for .....                      | 44        |
| Multiple Bidding.....                                                    | 44        |
| Applications from employees, Board Members and Co-optees .....           | 44        |
| Statutory Homeless Households.....                                       | 44        |
| Eligibility for types of dwelling .....                                  | 45        |
| Selection process.....                                                   | 46        |

|                                                                                                   |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Reasons why you may not be offered a property .....                                               | 46        |
| Refusing Offers of Accommodation .....                                                            | 47        |
| Exempt Allocations – Accommodation provided for lettings that are not covered by this Scheme..... | 47        |
| Local Lettings Plans.....                                                                         | 48        |
| Direct Matching for urgent cases with reasonable preference .....                                 | 49        |
| <b>7. Administration of the Scheme.....</b>                                                       | <b>51</b> |
| Delegation of Authority.....                                                                      | 51        |
| Reassessment of Bandings .....                                                                    | 51        |
| Reduced Priorities.....                                                                           | 51        |
| Closing of Applications.....                                                                      | 52        |
| Re-joining the Housing Register .....                                                             | 52        |
| Equality and Diversity .....                                                                      | 52        |
| Confidentiality .....                                                                             | 52        |
| Data protection and information sharing .....                                                     | 53        |
| Information sharing without consent .....                                                         | 53        |
| False statements or withheld information.....                                                     | 53        |
| Monitoring Home Choice Plus.....                                                                  | 54        |
| <b>8. Reviews of decisions .....</b>                                                              | <b>55</b> |
| Information about decisions and reviews .....                                                     | 55        |
| Complaints.....                                                                                   | 55        |
| <b>9. Feedback on let properties .....</b>                                                        | <b>56</b> |
| <b>Appendix 1 Home Choice Plus Advice and Contact Points.....</b>                                 | <b>57</b> |
| <b>Appendix 2 Home Choice Plus Partners' Contact Details.....</b>                                 | <b>59</b> |

## **HOME CHOICE PLUS PARTNERSHIP**

### **List of partners**

#### **Local Authorities**

Bromsgrove District Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Worcester City Council, Wychavon District Council, Wyre Forest District Council

#### **Housing Associations**

Advance Housing Association, Anchor Trust, Beth Johnson Housing Group, Bournville Village Trust, Bromford Group, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust, Cottsway Housing Association, Festival Housing, Fosseyway Housing, Fry Housing Trust, Gloucestershire Housing Association, Hanover Housing Group, Housing 21, Jephson Housing Association, Marches Housing Association, Mercian Housing, Midland Heart Ltd, Nexus Housing (West Midlands), Orbit Heart of England, Pershore Alms Houses, Rooftop Housing Group, Sanctuary Housing Association, Servite Housing Association, South Shropshire Housing Association, Stonham Housing Association, Warwickshire Rural Housing Association, Waterloo Housing Association, Worcester Community Housing, Wyre Forest Community Housing, Wyre Forest Sheltered Housing.

Version 6 16/06/2014

Wyre Forest  
District Council

Bromsgrove  
District Council

Worcester City  
Council

Stratford-on Avon  
District Council

Malvern Hills District  
Council

Wychavon  
District Council

## Glossary of terms

| Term                                                            | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Affordable housing</b>                                       | housing let at a social or affordable rent or a low cost home ownership property let to a specified eligible household whose needs are not met in the market. Also known as social housing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Allocation</b>                                               | an offer of housing from a Housing Association or Local Authority either directly or via a nomination from a Local Authority                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Band start date</b>                                          | the date the household is awarded the banding applicable to their housing need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Banding/bands</b>                                            | the prioritisation of households on the housing register based on their housing need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Bid</b>                                                      | Households' expression of interest in an available / vacant property                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Direct matching</b>                                          | an allocation outside of the Home Choice Policy/Scheme. Please see the policy for more details.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy / Allocations policy</b> | the policy document that determines how housing is allocated to households                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Home Choice Plus Partnership</b>                             | A group of local authorities operating the same Allocation Scheme (known as "the partnership")                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Home Choice Plus Scheme / Allocations Scheme</b>             | the scheme including the software, the policy and the processes involved for allocating housing to households                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Homelessness</b>                                             | The legal definition of homelessness in the Housing Act 1996 Part VII is that a person is homeless if they have no accommodation available to them in the UK or anywhere which would be reasonable for them to continue to occupy. They would also be homeless if they have accommodation but are not able to gain access to it, or if it is a moveable structure but they have nowhere to place it. A person is threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within the next 28 days. |
| <b>Housing Association</b>                                      | for the purposes of this Scheme also includes Registered Providers and refers to social housing providers regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Housing Register</b>                                         | a database/list of households who have applied for affordable housing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Local Authority Agents</b>                                   | organisations that act on behalf of the Local Authority in relation to the Housing Register and Homelessness, under a contractual arrangement usually Housing Associations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Local connection</b>                                         | a household's connection to a local area or authority including residency, family connections and employment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Persons from abroad</b>                                      | people subject to immigration control and any other persons from abroad where the secretary of state makes regulations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Qualification Criteria</b>        | To join the Housing Register the applicant must meet the eligible qualification criteria including connection to the Partnership, Housing Need and Unacceptable Behaviour                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Reasonable preference</b>         | categories of housing need which are defined by the Housing Act 1996, Part Six that are required to be included in an allocations policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Registration / Effective date</b> | the date of registration of the Housing Application                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Shared Ownership</b>              | Affordable housing option where the applicant parts buys and part rents a property. The Registered Provider owns the remaining share of the property.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Statutorily homeless</b>          | This term describes those households who have made a homeless application to a Home Choice Plus local authority or its agent and where the full homeless duty has been accepted. This means the household has been determined to be eligible, homeless, in priority need, unintentionally homeless and having a local connection and has been issued with a written decision which confirms this. |
| <b>Weekly bidding cycle</b>          | the period of time available for households to place bids on properties they are interested in                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |



## 1. Introduction

Home Choice Plus is a scheme used to advertise and/or allocate social rented, low cost home ownership and privately rented properties which has been agreed by the Home Choice Plus Partnership (the Partnership) and operates in the same way across a number of Local Authority areas including;

- **Bromsgrove District Council**
- **Malvern Hills District Council**
- **Stratford-on-Avon District Council**
- **Worcester City Council**
- **Wychavon District Council**
- **Wyre Forest District Council**

Within the Home Choice Plus Scheme is an **allocation policy** which outlines how the Partnership will prioritise households on the Housing Register.

The Districts mentioned above work in partnership with a number of Housing Associations to allocate social housing in a fair and transparent way. **Housing Associations and Registered Providers will have their own Allocations Policies which they will apply when allocating to their properties. This means applicants at the top of the Housing Register on banding and date time may not be rehoused by the Housing Association / Registered Provider if they don't meet the requirements of their allocations policy.**

Collectively the partnership has the following aims;;

### **Aims of the partnership**

- We are committed to working in partnership to offer a choice from a range of housing options for people in housing need.
- We aim to challenge the perception that the way social housing is allocated is unfair by ensuring that Home Choice Plus is easy to understand, transparent and fair.
- We will work to ensure that households are able to access the service we provide.
- We will develop sustainable communities by enabling people to make realistic and informed choices about where they wish to live.
- We will make effective use of all affordable housing stock.
- We will ensure that local people will have an enhanced priority within the banding structure.

- We want to encourage and recognise households who make a positive contribution to their community
- We will assist in achieving mobility across the participating Local Authority areas.
- We will enable a better understanding of the housing demand.
- We will ensure the scheme meets our equalities duties.
- We will publish information that enables households to understand how we assist them through the allocations scheme

Access to Home Choice Plus is via a single register for housing; households only have to register for the scheme once and are then able to bid for vacancies advertised in any of the participating Local Authority areas.

Home Choice Plus enables people with a housing need to look for a home in an area of their choice. Households registered with Home Choice Plus will be banded according to the suitability of their current accommodation to meet their needs and their local connection.

### **What are Allocations under this Scheme?**

The following are allocations of accommodation under this Scheme:

1. The nomination of an applicant or existing tenant to be an Assured or an Assured Shorthold tenant of housing accommodation held by a Housing Association (via a Council's Nomination Rights Agreement with the Housing Association). Often the nomination will be that of a 'Starter Tenant' of a Housing Association whereby the Housing Association will grant an Assured Shorthold Tenancy for a set probationary period (usually 12 months) and provided the tenant successfully completes the probationary period the Housing Association will grant an Assured Tenancy or a fixed term tenancy (please see individual Housing Association / Registered Provider's tenancy policies).

By 'affordable housing' we mean social rent and affordable rent, allocated to specified eligible households whose needs are not met in the market. It should meet the needs of eligible households, including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices.

The ways in which we advise and assist applicants on a whole range of housing options, including access to the private rented sector and low cost home-ownership opportunities, can be found on the Home Choice Plus website [www.homechoiceplus.org.uk](http://www.homechoiceplus.org.uk) and the partner Local Authorities' websites.

A list of Local Authorities' contact points can be found at Appendix 1

The scheme may also be used to advertise intermediate market rent, shared ownership and private rented properties. Please see the eligibility criteria of the relevant landlord for more details regarding allocation of these types of properties.

## **Allocations Policy**

This Allocations Policy describes how you can qualify for the Home Choice Plus scheme and how it prioritises housing applicants to identify their housing need with regard to the legal definition of Reasonable Preference and other categories of housing need that the Steering Group have recognised. .

Whilst all applicants are assessed in accordance with the scheme, the allocation of properties will be subject to the allocation policies of individual Housing Associations where they have one who will assess applicants on the Housing Register according to their stated priorities. They may have different rules about the number of people who can live in a home of a particular size. This will be made clear when a property is advertised. For more information regarding the letting of properties please see the Home Choice Plus Partnership website.

This policy sets out in detail who can or cannot be accepted under the policy and how this assessment is made. It also sets out how applicants can apply for and access housing.

We have designed the Allocations Policy to meet current legal requirements and to promote sustainable communities and balance housing markets.

## **The Legal Framework**

This Allocations Scheme complies with the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and takes into account the relevant code of guidance Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance 2012 which replaced the previous codes of guidance. All of these documents can be obtained through the DCLG website. The Scheme also complies with the Localism Act 2011, Welfare Reform legislation and Equalities Act 2010 where applicable.

This section describes this legal framework.

The 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act) requires local authorities to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with an Allocations Scheme. A summary of the Allocations Scheme must be published and made available free of charge to any person who asks for a copy. A summary of the Allocations Scheme and general principles is available through the Home Choice Plus website [www.homechoiceplus.org.uk](http://www.homechoiceplus.org.uk) and at partner Local Authority and Housing Associations offices.

The Housing Act 1996, (as amended) requires local authorities to give Reasonable Preference in their allocations policies to people with high levels of assessed housing need. This includes homeless people, those who need to move on welfare or medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they moved to a particular locality within the local authority's area.

The Act also requires local authorities to state within the policy its position on offering applicants a choice of housing accommodation, or offering them the opportunity to express preference about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them.

The policy is also drafted and framed to ensure that it is compatible with the Partnership's equality duties including the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote good relations between different racial groups, as well the duty to promote equality between disabled persons and other persons and between men and women. The Partnership has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the policy.

This Policy has considered:

- The partner Local Authorities' statutory obligations and discretion as to who is eligible for housing allocation
- The partner Local Authorities' statutory obligation to provide Reasonable Preference to certain categories of applicants set down by law i.e. those who must be given a greater priority under the Allocations Policy.
- The partner Local Authorities' statutory discretion to grant "additional preference" and/or to determine priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference.
- The general and specific statutory discretions the partners can exercise when allocating housing.

## **Service Standards**

### **We will aim to;**

- Register all eligible applications within 10 working days (where full information is available) Please note some applications can take up to four weeks to assess
- Process all supporting information within 10 working days
- Complete shortlists (match suggested) for properties within 5 working days of advertising cycle ending
- Advise all applicants excluded from the housing register within 5 working days with the reason for the exclusion
- Assist applicants to bid for properties where required
- Respond to applicants letters, client messages and emails within 10 working days
- Respond to telephone calls within 1 working day

### **What we ask of you...**

- Speak to us in a polite and courteous manner
- Provide us with the information we need, so we can help you
- Contact us if you are unable to keep appointments
- Inform us with any changes in your circumstances which may affect the service we provide to you
- If you are unhappy with the service you have received, please contact us
- If you are happy with the service let us know

## **2. Statement on Choice**

### **Choice and Constraints**

We are committed to offering the greatest choice possible in the allocation of housing through the Home Choice Plus scheme. However this is in the context of considerable pressure on allocations within our affordable housing stock and which means we will therefore have qualification criteria covering who is and isn't eligible to join the waiting list.

Whilst keen to encourage and facilitate mobility within housing, the Home Choice Plus Partnership recognises that provision of choice has to be balanced along with local needs. Those without a connection to any Local Authority within the partnership, will not be eligible to go on the housing register unless they meet one of the exceptions criteria.

In determining priority for housing within the banding structure, a higher degree of preference will be awarded to applicants who have the greatest need and have a local connection within a Local Authority area.

Applicants have the opportunity to view details of all properties that are available and to choose to 'bid' for properties for which they are eligible.

Whilst a key objective of the Home Choice Plus scheme is to offer applicants more choice, there will be a number of exceptional situations where this may not be possible, for instance;

- Where the applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme or the vacant property.
- Where a Local Lettings Plan has been agreed and the applicant does not qualify.
- Where there is a legal agreement restricting who can be offered the property.
- Where the applicant is statutory homeless

These exceptional circumstances will be made clear when the property is advertised, unless the exceptional circumstance concerns the individual specifically (who has bid for the property) in which case it will be discussed with the applicant at the point of allocation.

Applicants who bid on and subsequently refuse properties for no reason will be moved into the Reduced Priority Band – for further details please see the relevant section in the Allocations Policy.

The Home Choice Plus Partnership will collect information from applicants about their particular preferences regarding where they want to live. This is to support our work in identifying housing needs and demands within specific parts of districts.

### **3. Eligibility and Reasonable Preference**

#### **Who is and who is not eligible under this Scheme.**

#### **Who can apply to register on the Home Choice Plus scheme?**

Any United Kingdom resident aged 16 years or over can apply to join the scheme by completing an application form. The Home Choice Plus policy does exercise an eligibility criteria and so not all applications will be accepted where there is no close association to the area and/or where there is no housing need (please see information on Bronze Plus and Bronze Banding) . Please see the following sections regarding the eligibility criteria.

Anybody can make joint applications including married couples, civil partners, cohabiting couples, same sex couples, and brothers and sisters. In such cases, it is usual for a joint tenancy to be granted in the event of an offer of accommodation being made. The eligibility of applicants to be on the Housing Register will also be checked at the point of allocation.

#### **Qualification Eligibility Criteria**

Applicants are not eligible to join the Home Choice Plus housing register unless they met the qualifying criteria of a close association outlined below;

In determining whether the household has a close association we will agree a connection exists in the following circumstances;

- Where the local connection arises due to residency the applicant(s) must have lived in the partnership area (by choice) for a minimum period of two years.
- Where the applicant(s) meets any of the statutory homelessness definitions included in the allocations policy including the local connection definitions in s199, Part VII Housing Act 1996.
- Where the local connection arises due to employment and the applicant(s) have been in permanent, paid employment for a minimum period of six months, within one of the Local Authority areas included in the Partnership.
- Where the applicant(s) has a close family member living in the HC+ partnership area and has done so for a minimum period of five years
- Where the applicant has resided in the Partnership area for three out of the last five years
- has a local connection as a result of special circumstances

Local connection for homeless purposes will be assessed having regard to the definition of local connection contained in Section 199 Housing Act 1996 (in the case of homeless applicants) and the various codes of guidance.

In determining permanent employment we will give consideration to the Local Government Association guidelines which state that this is employment other than that of a casual nature.

In determining close family member we mean mother, father, sister, brother or adult child (aged 18 and over).

If an applicant(s) hasn't got a connection that meets the qualification criteria and claims a connection on the basis of special circumstances e.g. a care leaver from the partnership area accommodated elsewhere, then the decision about allowing them on the list must be made by a senior officer or manager.

Where the applicant is a member of the armed forces there are special arrangements – please see further details within this policy.

Applicants with a local connection to the Partnership area will be awarded Gold Plus, Gold or Bronze Plus band depending on their housing need for Districts where they have a connection. For Districts where they do not have a connection, they will be awarded Silver Plus, Silver or Bronze in accordance with their housing need.

### **Residency of Choice**

For the purposes of determining eligibility on residency grounds, living in the Local Authority area will not include the following:

- Occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan where it is not their only or principal home
- Occupation of a holiday letting (which includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation) for the purposes of a holiday.
- Resident of a prison, Bail Hostel or other such accommodation.
- In-Patient of Hospitals/specialist centres where they have a connection elsewhere

### **Housing Need**

Applicant(s) wishing to join the Home Choice Plus Housing Register must have a housing need recognised by the Allocations Scheme. This will include those applicant(s) with reasonable preference, those who are underoccupying social housing stock and those covered by the categories outlined on page 37 under the Bronze Plus / Bronze sections. Applicant(s) not satisfying this criteria will not be registered and will be offered alternative housing options. Applicant(s) will also be offered the right to request a review of this decision.

### **Age Eligibility Criteria**

#### **Young people aged between 16 – 18**

Young people aged between 16 and 18 can apply to Home Choice Plus and will be registered. For young people under the age of 18 years the Housing Association may grant permission to allow the occupation of a property by way of an "Equitable Tenancy" however a Housing Association / Registered Providers will not normally grant a tenancy to anyone under the age of 18 years unless they are also able to provide a guarantor to cover rent. Please refer to individual Housing Association and Registered Providers policies for more details.



### **Persons from abroad**

People from abroad come to the participating Local Authority areas to live, work and study. The majority of foreign nationals arriving in this area will not immediately qualify for social housing and are therefore more likely to rent in the private sector.

A person from abroad (or two or more persons jointly if any of them is an ineligible person) is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation if he is subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, or is excluded from entitlement to housing benefit by section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (c 33) (exclusion from benefits) unless he is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State. Persons who are subject to immigration control and eligible for housing assistance are;

- 1) Refugee status
- 2) Exceptional leave to remain
- 3) Indefinite leave to remain
- 4) Nationals of a country that has ratified the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance (ECSMA) or the European Social Charter provided they are habitually resident in the CTA and are lawfully present in the UK

If you have any further questions regarding your status and if this applies please contact your local authority or their agent or seek independent legal advice.

Households who are living abroad and therefore not habitually resident will not be eligible to register.

This does not apply to a person who is already a secure or introductory tenant, or an assured tenant of housing accommodation allocated to him by a local housing authority.

Applicants who were considered as ineligible due to immigration status can re-apply at any time.

### **Persons with no local connection to the Partnership**

Applicants who have no local connection to the partnership area will not be eligible to join Home Choice Plus.

However the following categories will be exempt and will be eligible to register;

- Households accepted as statutory homeless under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) by a Local Authority (or its agent) in the Home Choice Plus Partnership which has not yet been discharged
- Households where one of the Local Authorities are satisfied that the applicant(s) needs to live in the area to provide ongoing, regular and significant care and support to a relative who lives in the area and their application is supported by the local Adult or Childrens Services team.
- Households where one of the Local Authorities (or its agent) has agreed to rehouse the applicant under a reciprocal agreement with their current landlord or local authority

- Households where rehousing or relocation into the Local Authority area is accepted by the Local Authority (or its agent) as being essential due to public protection issues or for other exceptional reasons.
- Members of the armed forces as outlined in the Allocations Scheme
- Where a Local Letting Plan or s106 restriction applies on a specific site

### **Unacceptable behaviour**

Where the applicant, or a member of their household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant of the relevant authority, they will be ineligible for registration.

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as behaviour which would, if an applicant or member of their household was a secure tenant, entitle a landlord to outright possession under any of the Grounds 1 to 7, Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985.

Unacceptable behaviour can include:

- Owing significant rent arrears and/or failing to comply with a current tenancy condition with a Council, Housing Association or private landlord to such an extent that a Court would grant a possession order.
- Conviction for using the property for an illegal or immoral purpose.
- Causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors for example anti-social behaviour.
- Being convicted for committing certain indictable offences in or near the home and still posing a threat to neighbours or the community.
- Being violent towards a partner or members of the family.
- Allowing the condition of the property to deteriorate.
- Allowing any furniture or fixtures provided by the landlord to deteriorate due to ill treatment.
- Obtaining a tenancy by deception, for example by giving untrue information.
- Paying money to illegally obtain a tenancy.
- Having lost tied accommodation provided in connection with employment due to conduct making it inappropriate for the person to reside there.

In determining whether an applicant is ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour, the Council, or its agent, will consider:

- Has the applicant or a member of the applicant's household been guilty of unacceptable behaviour?
- Was the unacceptable behaviour serious enough to have entitled the Landlord to obtain an order for possession?

- At the time of the application, is the applicant still unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of that behaviour, or the behaviour of a member of their household who wishes to reside with them?

The applicant will be excluded from the housing register and the applicant does have a right to review against this decision. This decision will be taken by the District Council, or its agent. An applicant may be rendered ineligible at anytime during the process should Home Choice Plus become satisfied that they are ineligible.

Applicants classified as being ineligible for any reason can make an application for accommodation in the future if their circumstances have changed for any reason. It is for the Local Authority (or it's agent) to consider behaviour, at the point of application to the housing register, and whether they are now eligible under the Policy.

Each application will be assessed on its merits and a decision regarding eligibility will be made accordingly. Anyone deemed ineligible for the Scheme will be provided with a full written explanation for the decision and will have a right of review of the decision.

Please see the section on Reviews below.

### **Applicants who are not eligible to join the housing register**

At the point of registration all applicants are asked for information about their housing history and legal status to establish eligibility to join the housing register under the relevant legislation and this allocations policy.

Applicants are not assessed for the Scheme or placed into a Band until a decision has been made regarding their eligibility.

### **Armed Forces**

Members of the UK armed forces stationed abroad will be considered as living in the United Kingdom for the purposes of applying for social housing.

The Localism Act 2011 amends the Housing Act 1996 to give local housing authorities in England the power to decide what classes of persons are or are not qualifying persons under section 160ZA(7) of the Housing Act 1996, for an allocation of housing accommodation.

The Secretary of State has the power to prescribe in Regulations criteria that may not be used by local housing authorities in deciding what classes of persons are not qualifying persons (section 160ZA(8)(b)). These Regulations require that local housing authorities do not use local connection (within the meaning of section 199 of the Housing Act 1996) as a criterion in deciding whether the following are not qualifying persons:

(a) persons who are serving in the regular forces or have done so in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of housing accommodation;

(b) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where their spouse or partner's death is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service and the bereaved spouse or civil partner's entitlement to reside in Ministry of Defence

accommodation then ceases;

(c) seriously injured, ill or disabled reservists (or former reservists) whose injury, illness or disability is attributable wholly or partly to their service.

### **The Application of Reasonable Preference**

Home Choice Plus is required by law to assess the relative priority that housing applicants are awarded. This is particularly important when, as is the case with the Home Choice Plus partnership area, the demand for social housing is greater than the availability of homes.

The law, as it applies to local housing authorities, requires that Reasonable Preference for housing must be given to those in the categories set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The statutory Reasonable Preference categories cover:

- All homeless people as defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996
- People who are owed an accommodation duty because they have a priority need but are intentionally homeless (under s190 (2)), because they are not in priority need and not homeless intentionally 193 (2) or because they are threatened with homelessness, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (195 (2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65 (2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section (192 (3).
- People occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing;
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability);
- People who need to move to a particular locality within the district to avoid hardship to themselves or others.

Specific details and examples of how Reasonable Preference and priorities are determined and applied are detailed in section 5: The Banding Structure.

### **Determining priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference**

Home Choice Plus determines priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference by taking into account various factors including:

- The financial resources available to a person to meet their housing costs.
- Any local connection – as defined in s199 Housing Act 1996 (as amended) – that an applicant has with the Home Choice Plus area.
- The length of time the applicant has been waiting within their current band
- Any community contribution made by the household

Households with a reasonable preference can have their banding reduced because of their behaviour or circumstances



## **4. Registration and Assessment Process**

### **How to Apply**

Before anyone can apply for vacancies advertised through the Home Choice Plus scheme they must first register.

Initial registration can be completed;

- online [www.homechoiceplus.org.uk](http://www.homechoiceplus.org.uk)
- by requesting and completing a registration form
- at Home Choice Plus partner offices

An advocate (for example, a family member, friend or support agency) can complete the registration form on behalf of an applicant who is requesting assistance.

If the applicant is not eligible to register they will be notified in writing giving the reason for the decision and informing them of their right to request a review.

All applications once received will be assessed and placed in the appropriate band. Assessment may involve a home visit or interview to discuss housing options.

Where additional information is required to confirm that a higher band is appropriate, the application may be placed in a lower band until the circumstances of the applicant have been confirmed.

Once registered with the Home Choice Plus scheme the applicant will be given a membership number.

Applicants to the scheme are entitled to request details from any of the partners about information that has been used to make a decision on their registration. Partners' contact details can be found at Appendix 2.

### **Help with registration**

Help with registration can be given to applicants by any member of the Home Choice Plus Partnership as well as other organisations such as County Council social care services, health workers, support workers and voluntary bodies.

In particular, help will be provided to applicants who find it hard to fully participate in the scheme.

Support can be offered to assist an applicant to use the system where they are interested and ready to move. Access to the system can be provided through the Worcestershire Hubs, Housing Associations' offices and Local Authorities' offices.

Training can also be offered to a range of local organisations and support workers on a regular basis to enable them to be able to help applicants with accessing the scheme. Staff from the partner Local Authority and Housing Associations will be able to work with anyone that the applicant has requested to act on their behalf, subject to the applicant's written consent.

### Definition of Household Types

An Applicant(s) type determines the size and type of housing they may be eligible for.

|                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Single person (under 60)                      | One person household and with no resident children<br><br>A woman who is less than 25 weeks pregnant                                                                                    |
| Couple                                        | Married, cohabiting, civil partnership and same sex couples without resident children or with a woman who is less than 25 weeks pregnant                                                |
| Family                                        | Single parent or couple (as defined above) with minimum of one dependant child, who lives with parent (s) as the main or principal home<br><br>A woman who is 25 weeks pregnant or more |
| Pensioner / Disability Living Allowance (DLA) | One person household and couples over 60 or person in receipt of DLA / Personal Independence Payment (PIP)                                                                              |
| Other                                         | Any other household group including friends, brother and sister and families with non dependent children                                                                                |

In order to reflect your housing requirement for a particular property type or size the Local Authorities, or their agents, may need to put the applicant into a different category in order to achieve a correct allocation

Example – if the applicant is a single person with a medical need that means they require a larger property for a resident carer, their household type will be amended to “family” or “other” to enable them to bid.



## **The Home Choice Plus process**

- 1** You can register for Home Choice Plus by filling in a housing application either online at [www.homechoiceplus.org.uk](http://www.homechoiceplus.org.uk) or requesting a paper application form from any of the contact points.
- 2** Once we have registered you, we will send you confirmation of the registration number and the band you have been placed in.
- 3** Vacant properties will be advertised each week and applicants are advised to look for suitable vacancies regularly.
- 4** You can make up to 3 bids per week, as long as you match what the advert asks for.
- 5** The applicant with the highest priority and who has been in the relevant band the longest will be considered for the property.
- 6** The successful applicant will be contacted by the Landlord and asked for information such as proof of identity. A viewing will be arranged and if you are accepted an offer will be made.



## 5. The Banding Structure

Home Choice Plus operates a needs-based banding system as described below. Bands are arranged to reflect housing need, with the highest band indicating the greatest need for housing. The scheme consists of eight bands, as summarised below. A more detailed description of the bands and of Reasonable Preference can be found under each band section.

The bands within the policy are based on the reasonable preference criteria set out within the 1996 Housing Act.

Once registered the applicant can only be in one band per Local Authority and the highest banding possible will always be applied according to the policy.

The table below describes the bands into which households will be placed according to their housing circumstances.

### Priority (3 month time limit)

Applicants who are statutorily homeless with a duty to re-house under s193 of Housing Act 1996 (eligible, homeless, priority need, not intentional and with a local connection).

### Gold Plus (6 months time limit) (Local Connection)

- Homeless cases where no statutory duty to re-house (excludes intentional homeless)
- Homeless cases accepted for a full rehousing duty by a Local Authority within the partnership (but not the LA that accepted the duty)
- Occupying property in a serious state of disrepair; factors taken into consideration by the Local Authority or its agent include where the Local Authority could have served an improvement notice for a Category 1 hazard or equivalent (not for overcrowding and space hazards)
- Verified high medical need / disability that is directly affected by the current housing situation and would be immediately improved by moving
- Applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness, through no fault of their own (excludes those in priority band)
- Requiring move-on from supported accommodation
- Tenants who are under-occupying social rent or affordable rent housing in the Home Choice Plus partnership area
- Tenants who are occupying a social housing property in the Home Choice Plus partnership area with major adaptations that they do not need
- Households suffering with serious overcrowding (3 or more bedrooms lacking)
- Two or more criteria in Gold

### Gold (12 months time limit) (Local Connection)

- Households who have been determined to have become homeless intentionally
- Households suffering from harassment (excludes priority band cases)
- Overcrowding or lacking up to and including 2 bedrooms

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Living in exceptional circumstances</li> <li>▪ Households with children under 10 years old and living in upstairs flat</li> <li>▪ Households suffering with some disrepair in their property</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <p><b>Silver Plus (6 months time limit) (No Local Connection)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Homeless cases where there is no statutory duty to re-house (excludes intentional homeless and those in a priority band)</li> <li>▪ Homeless cases accepted for a full rehousing duty by a Local Authority within the partnership (but not the LA that accepted the duty)</li> <li>▪ Properties in a serious state of disrepair; factors taken into consideration by the Local Authority or its agent include where the Local Authority could have served an improvement notice for a Category 1 hazard or equivalent (not for overcrowding and space hazards)</li> <li>▪ Verified high medical need / disability that is directly affected by the current housing situation and would be immediately improved by moving</li> <li>▪ Applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness, through no fault of their own</li> <li>▪ Applicant requires move-on from supported accommodation</li> <li>▪ Tenants who are under-occupying social rent or affordable rent housing in the Home Choice Plus partnership area</li> <li>▪ Tenants who are occupying a social housing property in the Home Choice plus partnership area with major adaptations that they do not need</li> <li>▪ Households suffering with serious overcrowding (3 or more bedrooms lacking)</li> <li>▪ Two or more criteria in silver</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Silver (12 months time limit) (No Local Connection)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Households who have been determined to have become homeless Intentionally</li> <li>▪ Households suffering from harassment (excludes priority band cases)</li> <li>▪ Overcrowding or lacking up to and including 2 bedrooms</li> <li>▪ Living in exceptional circumstances</li> <li>▪ Households with children under 10 years old and living in upstairs flat</li> </ul> <p>Households suffering with some disrepair in their property</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p><b>Reduced Banding (with reasonable preference)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Households with financial resources above defined limits</li> <li>▪ Households who have deliberately worsened their circumstances to qualify for a higher banding</li> <li>▪ Households with housing-related debts owed to a Local Authority or Housing Association</li> <li>▪ Households who have committed acts of anti-social behaviour and other tenancy breaches but not severe enough to have obtained outright possession</li> <li>▪ Households who aren't bidding for properties that are available and suitable for their needs or successfully bid but then refuse properties that are suitable for their needs</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <p><b>Bronze Plus (no time limit) (Local Connection)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Households who do not meet any of the above reasonable preference</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>criteria and with a local connection, and who may have a low housing need including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligible and interested in shared ownership</li> <li>• Eligible and interested in older peoples accommodation</li> <li>• Households with low level medical or welfare issues</li> <li>• Households that are newly forming</li> <li>• Households who are suffering financial hardship</li> <li>• Households who are sharing facilities with other non-related households</li> <li>• Households residing in an institution or supported housing scheme e.g. hospital with no access to settled accommodation</li> <li>• Households who have insecurity of tenure (those in tied accommodation or lodging with family members)</li> <li>• In social housing and seeking a transfer</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Bronze (no time limit) (No Local Connection)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Households who do not meet any of the above reasonable preference criteria and without a local connection, and who may have low housing need</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

## Cumulative Preference in Gold and Silver Bands

Applicants whose circumstances match more than one criterion in the Gold or Silver bands will be awarded 'cumulative preference', which means that they will move up a band. For example, an applicant who met two or more criteria in Gold band would be awarded Gold Plus banding. An applicant who met two or more criteria in Silver band would be awarded Silver Plus banding. If you fit the criteria for two or more reasonable preference categories in Gold you will move into Gold Plus but can't then move to the higher (priority) band unless you are accepted for the rehousing duty under s193 Housing Act 1996. This also applies to applicants with two or more reasonable preference categories in silver band. If they move into Silver Plus and have further reasonable preference categories they can't move up into Gold or Gold Plus unless they have a local connection.

Applicants who have been found to be intentionally homeless, within the Gold and Silver Band, will not qualify for a cumulative preference award.

## The Bandings Explained

### Priority Band

(Awarded for 3 months)

The following criteria will lead to Priority band being awarded:

### Statutory Homeless with a duty to re-house

Priority band is awarded by the Local Authority or their agent where the local authority or its agent has accepted a full duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996

(as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) to provide accommodation for an applicant.

The priority band can only be used in the Local Authority area where the homeless duty exists or in another Local Authority area within the scheme if a referral has been agreed. Within the other Partnership areas the applicant will be in a reasonable preference band, usually Gold Plus where there is a local connection to the District, or Silver Plus where there is no local connection.

### **Gold Plus**

**(Local Connection and High housing need – awarded for 6 months)**

The following criteria will lead to Gold Plus band being awarded:

#### **Homeless cases where no statutory duty to re-house (excludes intentional homeless)**

Gold Plus band is awarded by the local authority or its agent where an applicant is determined under the homelessness legislation to be eligible for assistance, homeless, not in priority need, not homeless intentionally and has a local connection to that Local Authority.

#### **Properties subject to serious disrepair**

Gold Plus band is awarded where an applicant is living in sub-standard accommodation (regardless of the tenure) and (following confirmation or notification by the relevant Officer) it is determined that action is required under the Housing Act 2004. This would be for a Category 1 hazard that is very severe and may have lead to the service of the following notices (only);

- Emergency Remedial Action
- Demolition or Clearance Orders
- Improvement Notices for Category 1 hazard (other than for overcrowding and space)

NB In circumstances where the applicant is in a Local Authority tenancy and the LA can't serve notice upon itself then this category would still be awarded where a notice would be served if the tenure was different.

Where applicants report poor housing conditions, the relevant Officers may inspect the property to consider using their powers to remedy hazards.

Home Choice Plus will need to liaise with the relevant Officer on a regular basis to check that the property circumstances are still in disrepair prior to an offer of accommodation being made.

Where the property disrepair has been remedied the applicant's banding will need to be reassessed.

Where a notice has been served that prohibits occupation or the disrepair is so serious that the relevant Officer advises occupation of the property is not appropriate on health and safety grounds, applicants will be dealt with under the Homelessness legislation.

#### **High Medical Need or Disability**

This band is awarded following an assessment by Home Choice Plus, of the evidence provided by the applicant and/or by the preferred medical advisor in relation to their health and/or disability.

An applicant will normally be expected to complete a medical assessment if they have indicated that there is a medical or disability problem that is made substantially worse by their current housing. Their circumstances will be assessed by a Home Choice Plus officer based on evidence provided by the applicant, and we will consider evidence from all appropriate medical professionals.

This banding will only be awarded if the current accommodation is so unsuitable in relation to their medical, welfare or disability needs that a move is essential. The assessment is not of the applicant's health, but how their health or welfare is affected by their accommodation.

The following are examples of cases that would qualify for this band:

- The applicant's accommodation is directly contributing to the deterioration of the applicant's health; e.g. severe chest condition requiring intermittent hospitalisation as a result of prolonged periods of exposure to damp (i.e. mould spore allergens). The most vulnerable group is that of persons aged 14 and under. The effects of damp must be recognised as severe under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System as assessed by a the relevant Officer.
- A person with a severe disability requiring substantial adaptations to a property which are not provided in their current accommodation and where the property cannot be adapted.
- A person suffering with a severe and enduring mental illness or disorder where the medical condition would be significantly improved by a move to alternative accommodation.

**Households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness through no fault of their own (who have not made a homeless application)**

This status is awarded to all households who are homeless as defined by the Homelessness legislation but have not made a homeless application or don't wish to be considered under the homelessness legislation. and where, following investigation, it is proven that the applicant is threatened with homelessness through no fault of their own.

This banding also applies to households who have made a homeless application and been accepted for rehousing within another area of the Home Choice Plus partnership.

**Tenants who are under – occupying affordable social housing or living in an adapted property where they do not require the adaptations**

It is important that the best possible use is made of existing housing stock and priority will be given where a Local Authority or Housing Association tenant, in the Home Choice Plus area, applies to move to a smaller, or more appropriate type of property.

Some examples would be;

- a) Applicant's currently living in family sized accommodation, either social or affordable rent, who wish to 'downsize' and free up at least one bedroom.
- b) applicants currently living in family sized accommodation, either social or affordable rent, wishing to move to a one bed property or a two bed property designated for older people e.g. Retirement housing, Extra Care or a bungalow
- c) an applicant occupying an adapted property where they do not require the adaptations.

Please note this only applies where a family sized property or a property with substantial adaptations will become available for reletting following the move

### **Move on from Supported Accommodation.**

This status is awarded where an agreement between the Local Authority or its agent and the Supported Housing provider, is in place for applicants to move on from supported accommodation in the Home Choice Plus area.

This status will only be awarded to applicants in supported accommodation or care-leavers where the following criteria have been met:

- The applicant is ready to move to independent settled social housing on the recommendation of the support provider
- An ongoing support package has been assessed and where required, is in place.

In the case of young people moving on from care, applicants are awarded this category in accordance with the 16- and 17-year old Joint Protocol between the Local Authority and the County Council's Children's Services Department (for the five districts within Worcestershire) and the agreement with Warwickshire County Council (in Stratford-on-Avon). Applicants must be a former "Relevant Child" as defined by the Children Act 1989.

The evidence to support this will be provided by the County Council's leaving care service and will consist of confirmation that:

- The care-leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living.
- The care-leaver possesses the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account.
- An ongoing support package has been assessed and where required, is in place.

Applicants are expected to make full use of their priority by placing bids on all suitable properties to enable them to move on to independent accommodation. Home Choice Plus officers may use their discretion to place bids on behalf of the applicant where bids are not being placed or are being inappropriately placed to facilitate

move-on through supported accommodation. This will be done in consultation with the applicant and (if relevant) their support worker.

Children accommodated out of area by Children's Services or Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children under the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council will be awarded a Gold Plus band under move on from supported accommodation and will be granted a local connection with the five District Councils within Worcestershire where they don't have a specific connection to one Local Authority.

### **Serious Overcrowding**

Applicants lacking three or more bedrooms will be awarded Gold Plus band e.g. where the applicant has a four bedroom need and is living in a one bedroom property.

Overcrowding assessments will include all household occupants and the overall size of the property in determining the band, regardless of whether the whole household wish to be rehoused together or not.

Applicants who claim they are overcrowded will have their circumstances assessed against the Home Choice Plus Bedroom Standard. The table below shows the bedroom entitlement for adults and children:

| <b>Home Choice Plus Bedroom Standard</b>                               |                                 |              |              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Household Make-up</b>                                               | <b>Suitable Property Size :</b> |              |              |
|                                                                        | <b>1 Bed</b>                    | <b>2 Bed</b> | <b>3 Bed</b> |
| Single Person                                                          | ✓                               |              |              |
| Childless Couple                                                       | ✓                               |              |              |
| Parent(s) & 1 child                                                    |                                 | ✓            |              |
| 25+ weeks pregnant woman with or without partner and no other children |                                 | ✓            |              |
| Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex aged between 0 and 16             |                                 | ✓            |              |
| Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex over 16                           |                                 |              | ✓            |
| Parent(s) and 2 children of different sex under the age of 10          |                                 | ✓            |              |
| Parent(s) and 2 children of different sex when the oldest reaches 10   |                                 |              | ✓            |
| Parent(s) and 3 children – 2 of same                                   |                                 |              | ✓            |



|                                                                                       |  |  |   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| sex aged between 0 and 16. Plus 1 other child                                         |  |  |   |
| Parent(s) and 3 children - 2 of different sex under the age of 10. Plus 1 other child |  |  | ✓ |

To calculate the property size eligibility for larger households, please use the following guidance:

- 2 children of the same sex are able to share a room until the oldest reaches the age of 16, at which point an additional bedroom will be required.
- 2 children of different sex are able to share a room until the oldest reaches the age of 10, at which point an additional bedroom will be required.

For example:

A family with 2 parents and 3 children of the following age and sex:

- one girl aged 4
- one girl aged 6
- one boy aged 10

are eligible for a 3 bedroom property (one bedroom for the parents, one for the two girls and one for the boy).

A family with 2 parents and 3 children of the following age and sex:

- one girl aged 4
- one girl aged 16
- one boy aged 10

are eligible for a 4 bedroom property (one bedroom for the parents, one for the boy, one for the 4 year old girl and one for the 16 year old girl).

The appropriate Home Choice Plus senior officer within the Local Authority / agent may exercise discretion in deviating from the Bedroom Standard to increase the number of rooms an applicant requires. Examples would include where an extra room is required to accommodate a carer on health grounds, or where the applicant is a registered foster carer.

The bedroom standard allows the policy to determine whether there is underoccupation or overcrowding for the purposes of banding. The HA will determine, through their allocation policy the type and size of property an applicant can occupy.

Gold Plus or Gold (please see below) will also apply to applicants needing to be re-housed on the application if they have no bed spaces available to them.

Evidence of overcrowding must be provided at the point of registration and allocation of accommodation and may be verified by a home visit.



There may be some exceptions to the bedroom requirements including the following;

- where there is a carer included in the household
- where the household contains "a child who cannot share a bedroom". This definition applies to a child who (1) is entitled to the care component of disability living allowance at the highest or middle rate, and (2) by reason of their disability is not reasonably able to share a bedroom with another child.
- where the household has care and supervision responsibilities for other children not normally residing with the household

A carer is someone who, with or without payment, provides help and support to a partner, relative, friend or neighbour, who would not manage without their help. This could be due to age, physical or mental health, addiction, or disability. In all cases the carer must have been identified by the applicant as the person who is primarily responsible for providing them with care and that they need to live with them.

Even if a carer is in receipt of Carer's Allowance this does not necessarily mean that it is necessary for them to reside with the person who is being cared for. An application to include a carer on a housing application will be considered if the need for a carer has been assessed by a relevant specialist organisation e.g. a social care, health professional as needing to provide overnight support by a resident carer. In these circumstances the applicant must provide supporting evidence from other agencies e.g. Social Care or a Health professional.

In some limited circumstances it may be possible to consider cases where the carer is not in receipt of Carer's Allowance but would be eligible. Under these circumstances it will still be necessary for the applicant to demonstrate that the person looked after is in receipt of a relevant care related benefit.

#### **Household with a disabled child**

Where the household includes a disabled child and the child isn't able to share a room with another child because of it's disability then an additional bedroom requirement can be considered. The disabled child would need to be in receipt of the care component of the disability living allowance at the highest or middle rate.

#### **Households with access to other children**

Anyone with access to children will need to demonstrate their involvement in the care and supervision of the child. A senior officer within the Local Authority or their agent will give consideration to factors including regularity of contact, who claims the relevant benefits for the child and any residency orders as well as legislation, codes of guidance and case law in determining which parent has primary responsibility for the children. Please note: the bedroom standard assessment is for determining overcrowding and does not guarantee that an applicant will be offered the exact property size for their household needs. In particular, where their housing need exceeds four bedrooms but there is a limited supply of larger properties within the Home Choice Plus partnership they are unlikely to be offered social housing that exactly meets their needs.

Also households that include other adults rather than children may find it difficult to obtain social housing where they require larger properties normally allocated only to households with children, as priority is usually given for family houses to people with dependant children within the Housing Association / Registered Provider's allocation policies.

There may be other special circumstances subject to emerging case law where the bedroom standard does not apply and this will be determined by a senior officer or manager.

### **Silver Plus**

(No Local Connection and High Housing Need – awarded for 6 months)

The Silver Plus band is awarded for the above Gold Plus preference categories where the applicant has no local connection to that participating Local Authority.

### **Gold**

(Local Connection and Housing Need - valid for 12 months)

The following criteria will lead to Gold band being awarded:

#### **Households who have been determined to have become homeless intentionally.**

Where the local authority or its agent has carried out investigations under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and found the applicant intentionally homeless. Where the applicant's housing need would normally be Gold Plus such as severe overcrowding or serious medical issues they will be awarded Gold Plus. Where the reason for intentionality is one of the five reasons for awarding a reduced banding, the household will be moved into the Reduced Banding category.

#### **Households suffering from harassment**

Applicants who cite harassment as the main reason for making the application will be asked to provide information about all the circumstances surrounding the application and each case will be assessed on its merits. Any enquiries will be made in a sensitive manner so as not to prejudice the safety of the applicant. Any claims of harassment should be substantiated by evidence from a third party e.g. Police, Housing Officer etc. If the harassment is deemed so severe that it is not reasonable to continue to occupy the accommodation, this will be investigated under the Homelessness legislation.

If you are suffering from domestic abuse it is likely that you will be treated as homeless and therefore awarded the appropriate homelessness-related bands.

#### **Overcrowding or lacking required bedrooms**

This applies to households who are overcrowded or lacking up to (and including) two bedrooms. Please see section above (under Gold Plus) regarding how overcrowding is determined.

#### **Living in exceptional circumstances**

This banding on Home Choice Plus should only be awarded in those instances where the applicant's living circumstances are considered to be exceptional given the prevailing housing conditions in the district and where no other banding criteria reflects or addresses the problem(s).

In reaching a decision to award the banding, account must be taken of the suitability of the current accommodation and the location of the accommodation in relation to the applicant's needs.

Examples are given below of potential situations where this banding may be granted – the list is not exhaustive and the decision lies with the Local Authority / agent assessing the application.

- The applicant is adequately housed but needs to give or receive support on the grounds of disability or illness that is substantial and ongoing and it is not possible for the person giving care to use public transport or their own transport to provide assistance.
- The applicant needs to move on welfare grounds e.g. hardship.
- The applicant's household is overcrowded, coupled with medical issues that do not accrue medical priority e.g. ADHD, autism.
- The applicant needs to take up or continue employment, education and/or training that is not available elsewhere and they do not live within reasonable commuting distance

### **Households with Children living in upstairs flats or maisonettes**

This status is awarded to households with children under 10 and living in an above ground floor flat or maisonette. This may be verified by a home visit.

### **Properties suffering from disrepair**

Properties that are suffering from disrepair (regardless of tenure) that is not deemed to be severe or a threat to the health and safety of the occupier will be awarded this band following confirmation or notification from the relevant Officer. Normally disrepair would be assumed to be Category 1 where a hazard awareness notice has been served, and Category 2 where category D (or equivalent) hazards exist (as defined under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, part 1 of the Housing Act 2004) except for overcrowding and space assessment which is assessed separately under the Home Choice Plus overcrowding policy.

Home Choice Plus will need to liaise with the relevant Officer on a regular basis to check that the property circumstances are still in disrepair prior to an offer of accommodation being made.

### **Silver**

(No Local Connection – valid for 12 months)

The Silver band is awarded for the above Gold preference categories where the applicant has no local connection to that participating Local Authority.

### **Reduced Banding**

(Reasonable preference but reduced priority)

This band will be used for households in reasonable preference categories where their priority is reduced for one of the following reasons;

Applicants will be banded according to their current housing need but demoted to the reduced priority band. This decision will be reassessed by the District Council or their agent after a period of six months, or at the applicant's request at any time.

### 1. Financial Resources

Owner occupiers and people with sufficient financial resources available to them to meet their housing needs will be placed in reduced band.

Applicants who have a household income (including benefits) of more than £35,000 per annum and / or savings/capital/assets/equity of £50,000 that will enable them to access and maintain private accommodation will be encouraged and supported to do so through the housing options service. Any household in receipt of a means tested benefit will not be subject to this reduced banding criteria (this does not include Child Benefit).

Applicants will be asked to provide income and asset/savings/capital details at the point of application and if, at that stage, they exceed the threshold their banding will be the reduced (where they have a housing need). The income and assets/capital/savings details will also be considered at the point of offer to ensure the applicant is still on the correct banding.

The financial resources of an armed forces applicant will be disregarded where it is a lump sum that was received as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.

Financial thresholds may also be determined by Registered Social Landlords and applicants should contact individual organisations where they believe income or capital may be an issue at the point they are made an offer of accommodation.

Applicants who are registering for shared ownership purposes only, who have an income above 35k but below 60k will not be adversely affected by the reduced banding category as it doesn't apply to shared ownership schemes.

Where applicant(s) have an exceptional need that can only be met through the provision of affordable housing then the reduced banding won't be applied.

### 2. Deliberately worsening housing circumstances

Where there is evidence that an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances in order to qualify for higher priority on Home Choice Plus, this priority will be reduced. This would include circumstances where an applicant surrendered their tenancy, where it was reasonable to occupy and against the advice of the Housing Advice / Options Officer or where they moved to a property that was smaller than their requirements.

Where there is evidence that an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances in order to qualify for higher priority on Home Choice Plus, this priority will be reduced. This may include the following;

- Unsuitable property choice – e.g. with stairs if need ground floor
- Overcrowding – e.g. moved in with others / moved others in by choice
- Causing disrepair – including not allowing access

- Giving up a suitable tenancy
- Adaptations – apply to move within 5 years and still meets need
- Refused support which could have maintained tenancy

Officer must consider the particular applicants circumstances and particularly issues of vulnerability or where poor advice has been given before reducing the persons banding.

### 3. Housing related debts

Where households have housing related debts these will be assessed by the District Council, or their agent. The officer must establish the debts have arisen from a deliberate act or omission that leads to non-payment.

The applicants will be encouraged to make affordable arrangements to pay and they will be placed within the reduced priority band until an affordable arrangement has been reached with who they owe the money and the applicant is maintaining regular payments. The Local Authority will expect the debtor to demonstrate they have taken reasonable steps to resolve the issue prior to reducing the banding given. For this circumstance to apply the debt must not be more than six years old (as after this the debt cannot be recovered).

The reduced priority band will apply to those with rent arrears, recharges, former tenancy arrears, rent deposit debt etc where the debt is £500 or they owe the equivalent of 6 or more weeks target rent (whichever amount is the smaller). The RSL will need to notify the Local Authority (or its agent) of the arrears and any arrangements made with the applicant. Where the applicant can demonstrate a regular payment history (complying with the agreement) for three months or more and the debt is less than £500 the Local Authority will move them back to the higher banding. The Local Authority will exercise its discretion, depending on individual circumstances where there are mitigating factors or an urgent need to move.

### 4. Anti – social behaviour and other tenancy breaches

Where there has been a breach of tenancy such as anti-social behaviour, or due to the property condition, the applicant will be placed within the reduced priority band. The Local Authority will expect the landlord where the problems occurred, to demonstrate they have taken reasonable steps to resolve the issue prior to reducing the banding given.

The reduced priority band will apply to applicants who are guilty of anti-social behaviour or tenancy breaches where formal legal action has been commenced e.g. injunction, ASBO, CRIMBO or Notice etc. This would include anyone found guilty of sub-letting a social housing tenancy and waste /neglect of the property. The officer must consider any particular support needs the applicant might have and whether this is having an impact on their behaviour before we reduce the applicants banding. The officer should only consider recent tenancy breaches / anti social behaviour.

The officer can reinstate the higher banding where the tenancy breach is resolved or the applicant can demonstrate changed behaviour over a reasonable timescale.

### 5. No bidding or refuses offers of accommodation

Where applicants in the Gold Plus, Silver Plus, Gold and Silver bands have failed to place bids, or have placed successful bids but refused properties, and there is evidence that properties that would meet their needs have been advertised on Home Choice Plus, their banding will be reviewed within the set time period above and they will be placed in the Reduced Banding category.

Where applicants in the Gold Plus, Silver Plus, Gold and Silver bands have failed to place bids, or have placed successful bids but refused properties, and there is evidence that properties that would meet their needs have been advertised on Home Choice Plus, their banding will be reviewed within the set time period above and they will be placed in the Reduced Banding category.

By successful bids we mean where the applicant(s) have been offered the property and invited to view it (where applicable).

The officer must consider the households' vulnerability and any issues that may have affected their behaviour at the time e.g. domestic abuse, mental health problems.

### **How will the reduced banding be applied**

Applicants will be banded according to their current housing need but demoted to the reduced priority band. This decision will be reassessed by the District Council or their agent after a period of six months, or at the applicant's request at any time.



## **Bronze Plus**

(Local Connection)

(Please note this banding will be closed after one year where no bids have been placed)

This applies to all applicants who live, work or have a local connection as defined by s199 Housing Act 1996, to a particular district in the Home Choice Plus partnership and do not meet any of the reasonable preference criteria, as set out above, and have low housing need.

Where the household has a low level housing need due to medical, disability or welfare conditions / issues, the banding will only be awarded where the condition / issue will be improved by a move to alternative accommodation.

Examples of applicant(s) accepted onto the waiting list and awarded Bronze Plus include the following;

- Eligible and interested in shared ownership
- Eligible and interested in older peoples accommodation
- Households with low level medical or welfare issues
- Households that are newly forming
- Households who are suffering financial hardship
- Households who are sharing facilities with other non-related households
- Households residing in an institution or supported housing scheme e.g. hospital with no access to settled accommodation
- Households who have insecurity of tenure (those in tied accommodation or lodging with family members)
- In social housing and seeking a transfer

The Home Choice Plus Allocation Scheme does not recognise insecurity of tenure where the applicant is in an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector unless there is another issue arising such as threat of homelessness or disrepair.

## **Bronze**

(Limited Local Connection - closed after one year where no bids have been placed)

This applies to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria on connection grounds with one of the districts in the Home Choice Plus partnership but no connection to the other partners and do not meet any of the reasonable preference criteria, as set out above, but have a low housing need (please see list in Bronze Plus section above).

## **Time Limited Bands**

All bands are awarded on a time limited basis, i.e. for 3, 6, and 12. At the end of the time limit, if an applicant has not been successfully housed, the Local Authority or its agent will reassess the application and contact the applicant to confirm their circumstances and/or bidding pattern. For applicant(s) in Bronze Plus and Bronze applications will be closed after 12 months if there are no bids. Please see the Reviews / Complaints Section for more information.

## **Local Connection for Banding Purposes**

In order to ensure that Home Choice Plus meets the housing needs of local communities, we will award a higher band to those applicants with a Local Connection to each relevant Local Authority.

Example - Applicant with medical need with local connection to Bromsgrove but no other Local Authority area will be placed in Gold Plus when bidding within Bromsgrove and Silver Plus for all of the other Local Authorities.

To determine the relevant local connection banding of a household, who meet the eligibility criteria for registering on the waiting list, we would use the following;

- has lived in the relevant Local Authority area by choice for a certain time (for six months out of the last 12 months or for three years out of the last five years);
- has close family living in the relevant Local Authority area, who have been permanently resident for at least the previous five years;
- has permanent paid employment in the relevant Local Authority area
- has a local connection as a result of special circumstances

### **Waiting Time**

New applicants are placed into a bronze or bronze plus band, while we assess their housing need and their waiting time will be from the date of registration (the effective date); this will be the date the form is received and date stamped at the office of the Local Authority (or its agent), or on the date the form is received online.

If an applicant is moved up into a higher band (following assessment) then the date they moved into that band will override the registration date (effective date). Please note it can take up to four weeks to assess a banding.

If the applicant remains in or moves down to a Bronze or Bronze plus band then the registration date (effective date) will apply.

### **Removing Applicant from Reduced Band**

Where an applicant is promoted from the Reduced Priority band to a reasonable preference band, the band start date should be back-dated to the date they were originally placed in the Reduced Priority band.

Please note that even once an applicant has been promoted from the Reduced Priority band to a reasonable preference band, housing associations may still refuse to accommodate them due to their own allocations policies and they may therefore continue to be skipped. Applicants demoted to the Reduced Priority band should be encouraged to pursue private rented housing wherever possible and appropriate advice given to assist them to do so.

The decision to promote an applicant from the Reduced Priority band should be undertaken as part of a full review of the applicant's circumstances to ensure that the applicant is awarded the correct banding.



## **Change of Circumstances**

All applicants are required to notify the relevant Home Choice Plus partner, with whom they are registered, immediately of any change to their circumstances which may affect their priority for housing. Applicants will need to provide proof of their change before it is assessed.

Applicants who have had a change of circumstances and have not informed Home Choice Plus may have their application status changed to 'application pending' whilst an investigation takes place in order to determine eligibility. The applicants' banding will be reassessed at the point that they submit the change of circumstances (not at the point when the circumstances change) and this will then determine their band start date. If an applicant does not respond to contact from Home Choice Plus within one month, their application will be closed.

Applicants should notify the Home Choice Plus Partner of any change in their circumstances. For example:

- A change of address, for themselves or any other person on their application
- Any additions to the family or any other person they would wish to join the application
- Any member of the family or any other person on the application who has left the accommodation
- Any confirmed pregnancy
- Changes of name
- Changes in financial circumstances, including change of employment
- Accommodation issues
- Medical or other housing needs

Most changes of circumstances can be completed online but evidence will still be required.

## **Additional Preference – Community Contribution**

We want to encourage applicants who can, to work and/ or volunteer so we can raise levels of aspiration and ambition to promote sustainable communities. The following criterion applies to either the applicant or joint applicant. The responsibility will be on the applicant or joint applicant to provide the evidence to be awarded this banding.

We will award an additional waiting time of six months if any of the following circumstances apply (please note households only qualify for one six months waiting time period regardless of how many of the below are relevant).

We will verify all claims of community contribution at the point of registration, at review and at the offer stage.

### **Applicants in Employment**

This applies where applicants meet the required hours in employment for working tax credits thresholds and have been in employment for six out of the last nine months.

### **Applicants Volunteering**

This applies to applicants volunteering for a minimum of 20 hours per month and for a continuous period of at least six months, at the point of application, at review and the same at the point of offer.

Volunteering must be for a not for profit organisation registered with the charity commission or otherwise recognised by the Local Authority (or their agent).

### **Applicants in Education and Training**

This applies to applicants, who have been studying or training, which includes attending higher and further education or who are accessing a vocational course of study or engaging in a programme of work related courses. This must be for a continuous period of at least six months, up to the point of application and the same at point of offer.

Training which is compulsory in order to qualify for out of work benefits will not be taken into account in awarding this additional preference.

### **Applicants who are full time carers**

This applies to applicants who are unable to satisfy the criteria outlined above, but who care for someone on a full time basis and have done so for a minimum period of six months (before applying) and are in receipt of carers allowance (due to disability or frailty).

### **Applicants with a disability**

We recognise that it may not be possible for some applicants to achieve any of the community contribution due to severe disability (e.g. where you are awarded the support element of Employment Support Allowance or higher rate Disability Living Allowance / Personal Independence Payment) and in these circumstances additional waiting time will be awarded.

### **Members of the Armed Forces**

By Armed Forces, we mean the “regular forces” and the “reserved forces” as defined by section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006(a). The “regular forces” means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army or the Royal Air Force. The “reserve forces” means the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Navy Reserve, the Marine Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Territorial Army, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Members of the Armed Forces who have been served with a cessation to occupy accommodation will be given housing advice and the appropriate banding and, if required, considered under the Homeless legislation (Housing Act 1996, Part VII and other relevant legislation).

The Home Choice Plus partnership recognise the contribution made by members of the armed forces and we support the principles of the Worcestershire Community Covenant and the Warwickshire Community Covenant.

The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preferences for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 require Local Authorities to give additional preference to a person with an urgent housing need and are in one of the reasonable preference categories.

**The regulations are;**

that local housing authorities must frame their allocation scheme to give additional preference to the following persons if they fall within one or more of the statutory reasonable preference categories and are in urgent housing need:

- a) serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service
- b) former members of the regular forces
- c) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
- d) existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service

If an “Armed Forces” applicant is able to meet the local connection criteria (or is exempt from this) and does not have sufficient resource to meet their own housing need, the Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy will award the applicant an additional six months in waiting time at the point that need has been assessed or date of registration (if need hasn’t changed over time). This only applies to members of the armed forces who have been discharged within the last five years.

## 6. Applying for a Property and Lettings

### Looking for available Properties

Once applicants have been registered with Home Choice Plus and been notified of their registration number, they can start to look for a property of their choice.

### Advertising

All Housing Association landlords are committed to advertising their available properties as widely as possible. Properties will be advertised on a weekly basis in the following ways.

- Website – available to anyone with access to the internet. The website enables applicants to view all available properties on line at [www.homechoiceplus.org.uk](http://www.homechoiceplus.org.uk)
- Property Line - A local number for each area will be available for applicants to call to hear what properties are available. This service is particularly beneficial to disabled applicants, those who are blind or partially sighted, and for those who are unable to read
- Hub, Landlord and Local Authority Offices – computers will be available to view and bid for available properties. Staff will be on hand to assist where needed
- Community Outlet – newsletters will be displayed in many community outlets for example libraries, parish councils, supermarkets etc.

Adverts will provide information about the location, property type and size, rent level, and eligibility criteria.

### How to Bid

Applicants can bid for properties in a number of ways. They will need to have ready their membership number, memorable date and the property reference number they wish to place a bid on.

- **On the Internet**  
[www.homechoiceplus.org.uk](http://www.homechoiceplus.org.uk)
- **On the Telephone**  
Automated Bidding Line Number 0845 270 0557 a 24-hour automated service.
- **By Mobile Phone**  
You can text your Bid from your Mobile Phone to 07784 486 644
- **In Person**  
At any of the Contact Points as listed in Appendix 1

## **When to bid for a Property**

Vacant properties will be advertised from each Tuesday morning. Applicants can bid any time during that week until 12 midnight on the following Monday. This is called the weekly bidding cycle. The time that a bid is placed during the week does not make a difference to the shortlist position – it is not a ‘first come first served’ system.

## **Number of Properties an applicant can bid for**

Applicants can make 3 bids each week as long as they match what the advert criteria asks for. Bids must be on separate properties that they are eligible for. Applicants can withdraw their bid if they change their mind and re-bid on a different property at any time throughout the bidding cycle.

## **Multiple Bidding**

Applicants will be able to bid for a maximum of three vacancies during any given advertising period. If an applicant appears at the top of more than one shortlist in a bidding cycle, they will be contacted to discuss which property they wish to consider. The selected Housing Association will then ‘Match Suggest’ the applicant and further Housing Associations will then skip this applicant if they are at the top of their shortlist(s). If the Housing Association who has Match Suggested the applicant subsequently decides not to offer them the property, the Provider will inform the applicant of the reasons for this directly, but the applicant will retain their banding and be able to continue bidding. Please see the section on “Reasons why an applicant may not be offered a property”.

## **Applications from employees, Board Members and Co-optees**

Staff, Board Members and Co-optees will be treated and assessed as any other applicant to the Housing Register.

## **Statutory Homeless Households**

Applicants placed into the Priority Band on Home Choice Plus will have been accepted as statutorily homeless (where the full rehousing duty is owed) by a Local Authority in the Partnership area under s193 in Housing Act 1996 (eligible, homeless, priority need and not intentionally homeless, with a local connection).

The allocation of this banding comes with certain requirements under the Home Choice Plus scheme. We require applicants to try to secure suitable accommodation as soon as possible once they have received their rehousing (s.184, Housing Act Part VII) acceptance letter and therefore would expect them to be bidding for as many suitable properties as available (up to three bids per week)

Failure to bid each and every week on all suitable properties (up to a maximum of 3) may result in the Local Authority or its agent, placing bids on an applicant's behalf to make sure its duty to the applicant as a homeless household is fulfilled. They may also remove bids that an applicant has placed if they are not suitable e.g. where a victim of domestic abuse selects a property near to the perpetrator.

Please note that if applicants choose to only bid on one property when there are three suitable properties advertised, the local authority or its agent may bid on the two remaining properties to ensure that the applicant is re-housed as soon as possible.

All bids in this banding must be on suitable properties (e.g. suitable size, location and type) and must be within the local authority area where the homeless duty applies to meet the requirements of the policy.

When a successful bid is made for a property the applicant will be notified of this and, subject to rights of review under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, this will constitute an offer of housing under Part VI as a discharge of the Council's homelessness duty.

Should the applicant be rejected by the Housing Association under its own allocations criteria, the homelessness duty will not be discharged and they will remain eligible for a further offer.

### **Eligibility for types of dwelling**

Housing Association / Registered provider partners will use their individual policies to determine an applicant's eligibility for a size and type of dwelling. Broadly the Housing Association will use the overcrowding standard to determine the appropriate size of property. However, in exceptional circumstances they may deviate from the overcrowding definition to advertise and allocate their housing stock.

Examples are:

- Where applicants require larger accommodation on health grounds. This will be considered on a case by case basis, taking into account the advice of a qualified medical advisor – this will be determined at the point of registration (please see section on overcrowding within the banding).
- Pregnant households will be recognised as a family by Home Choice Plus at 25 weeks, this will allow the applicants to apply for family sized accommodation.
- Where the applicant has been approved as a foster carer / to adopt by Children's Services, and so will need a larger property than normally required by the household (please see section on overcrowding within the banding).
- Where the applicant or a member of the household needs the support of a carer who will need to sleep in the home and cannot reasonably be expected to share a bedroom with another member of the household. See paragraph below for more information about including a carer in a housing application (please see section on overcrowding within the banding).
- Where the landlord or Local Authority wants to deliberately under-occupy a property and a Local Letting Plan is in place
- Where there is little or no demand for a particular vacancy and it is therefore difficult to let (at the point of advertising the property)
- Where no suitable applicants can be identified to make the best use of larger accommodation.

### Selection process

Applicants must note that individual Housing Associations will apply their own allocation policies and the suitability of the property will be considered by the Housing Association, in accordance with its allocation policy, at the point of allocation.

All eligible bids for each property are placed in order of housing need. Priority is decided first by band and then by date within the band and then by effective date.

A bid for a property will not be considered if the applicant's household does not meet the size, age or disability requirements for that property unless there are exceptional circumstances which need to be taken into account.

Partner landlords advertising properties will select and may interview the top applicant/s before an offer is made.

A property will not always be offered to the applicant at the top of the shortlist if there are reasons why this applicant is not eligible or would not be suitable. Please see the 'Reasons why you may not be offered a property' section below for more details.

Successful applicants may be given the opportunity to view the property prior to tenancy sign-up.

If the applicant chooses to refuse the property, the reasons for the refusal will be recorded by the partner landlord advertising the property and their banding may be reassessed.

**If an applicant is matched to a property they will not be able to bid for other properties until they have decided to either accept or refuse the offer.**

If the applicant is at the top of the shortlist the local authority or landlord will check the application to ensure the banding is correct and there aren't any other factors that would limit offers of accommodation e.g. change of circumstances.

### Reasons why you may not be offered a property

**Housing Associations may choose not to allocate you a property due to their own allocations policy, please see the Home Choice Plus website or contact individual Housing Associations for more information.**

### Restrictions on offers through the advert

Landlords may apply restrictions in order to identify suitable applicants in particular circumstances and these will always be specified in the advert. Where a property is advertised with certain restrictions, the letting will be made to the bidder who meets the criteria with the earliest band start date in the highest band as with usual lettings.

Some properties may be restricted for bidding as follows;

- Under agreements pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) imposing conditions on who is able to bid – normally a restriction to households with a local connection
- Housing Associations may adopt specific lettings criteria in relation to particular developments or areas in order to address identified problems and



to create sustainable and balanced communities. In these circumstances a local lettings policy would apply.

- Partner Housing Associations will also be entitled to advertise properties with preference given to their existing tenants in order to facilitate transfers.

### **Refusing Offers of Accommodation**

Households are expected to take reasonable care when bidding for a property to ensure it meets their needs. If, however, an applicant decides to refuse an offer of accommodation, the property will be offered to the next suitable applicant. An application may be reassessed if an offer of a property is refused. The Local Authority or its agent will take into consideration suitability of the property and reasonableness of the offer in any reassessment undertaken.

If an applicant in a time limited band refuses an offer of accommodation the application including the banding will be reassessed and may be placed in the reduced priority band.

### **Refusals by Households to whom the full homeless duty is owed**

If a homeless applicant refuses an offer of suitable accommodation, the local authority or its agent may decide that its duty under the Homeless Legislation is discharged, subject to the statutory review process and their banding will be reassessed.

Homeless applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions made by the local authority or its agent in respect of their homeless application. This includes the decision to bring to an end the full homeless duty by making a suitable offer of settled accommodation. The applicant has this right whether they refuse or accept the offer of accommodation. If the review finds in favour of the homeless applicant, the applicant will retain their Priority band (provided they are still homeless) and will be able to place bids on alternative properties. However, if the reasonableness and suitability of the offer is upheld, the homeless duty will be ended and the applicant's banding will be reassessed. Homeless applicants are therefore advised to accept an offer and then request a review if they believe it to be unsuitable..

### **Exempt Allocations – Accommodation provided for lettings that are not covered by this Scheme.**

The following exempt allocations are covered by s160, Housing Act 1996;

The following are not allocations under this Policy:

- Succession to a tenancy on a tenant's death pursuant to s89 Housing Act 1985 and s17 Housing Act 1988 (this will be dealt with by the landlord under the relevant legislation and policies)
- Assignment of a tenancy by way of mutual exchange
- Transfer of the tenancy by a court order under family law provisions or under the Civil Partnership Act 2004
- An introductory tenancy (including assured shorthold) becoming an assured / secure tenancy



- Transfers initiated by Council / Housing Associations (e.g. decant to alternative accommodation to allow for major works)
- Rehousing due to being displaced from previous accommodation by a Council or being rehoused by a Council pursuant to the Land Compensation Act 1973

The following allocations are deemed to be exempt as, although they may consider this allocation policy to some extent, they also require different decision making processes and criteria in making assessments and rehousing the applicant:

- A person being granted a family intervention tenancy
- Provision of non-secure temporary accommodation in discharge of any homelessness duty or power
- Supported accommodation
- Where a Housing Association needs to directly match a property (more details regarding this are included later in this policy)
- Extra care and some Very Sheltered accommodation
- Changes to joint tenancies which will include the granting of a new tenancy through changes from a sole to a joint tenancy and from a joint to a sole tenancy. The individual Housing Association will decide whether to allow a Joint Tenancy depending on the circumstances of the case.
- Households requiring a move through the Witness Protection Scheme or similar, at the formal request of the appropriate authority
- Some adapted properties may be held on a separate register specifically for people with disabilities

## **Local Lettings Plans**

Home Choice Plus reserves the right to apply additional criteria for example specific local connection criteria, offers of family sized accommodation to smaller households or employment- while still meeting the statutory obligations for Reasonable Preference when using Local Letting Plans. The Local Authority partners may, in the interests of promoting balanced and sustainable communities, agree with participating Housing Associations local lettings plans for specific areas, estates, or blocks. This is to ensure that lettings plans are tailored to the needs of an area, and protect the interests of existing residents and the wider community.

All local lettings plans will be published on the Home Choice Plus website.

### The principles in applying Local Lettings Plans (LLPs)

- Local Lettings Plans may be developed to meet the particular needs of a local area.

- There must be a clear reason for having LLPs (this may take the form of recurring antisocial behaviour issues, high child densities or a concentration of older residents) and will be subject to reconsideration.
- LLPs must be developed and approved in accordance with an agreed procedure that must have specific aims and will be reconsidered on an annual basis.

The decision to implement a local lettings plan will be developed and approved by the Local Authority Senior Officer responsible for the relevant Home Choice Plus area and a Senior Manager of the relevant Housing Providers. Any decision to implement a local lettings policy will always take into account the implications for equal opportunities and the need to ensure that the Council is able to meet the allocation needs of those owed a reasonable preference.

Where a property is advertised in accordance with a Local Lettings Plan (LLP), the letting will be made to the highest bidder who meets the eligibility criteria of the LLP

#### Examples of possible Local Lettings Plans:

The following are examples of local letting policies that could be employed in Home Choice Plus covering an area, estate, or block:

- Age restrictions.
- Where the property forms part of a rural housing scheme on an exception site
- Restrictions on lettings to vulnerable households where there are already a concentration of supported tenants/residents
- Lettings to childless households where there are high concentrations of children and young people living on a specific estate or scheme

#### **Direct Matching for urgent cases with reasonable preference**

Where possible all lettings should be made through Home Choice Plus to ensure fairness and transparency in the system and to give our customers confidence. Where applicants have got reasonable preference but their circumstances mean they have urgent housing need they may require a direct match. An example of this would be those with critical health or social needs where an immediate move is necessary for their health and wellbeing and this can only be achieved through direct matching.

The direct matching might also occur because of the type of accommodation e.g. because it has adaptations and requires a specific applicant.

Direct matching may also occur for those in fear of extreme incidences of domestic violence, harassment, hate crime or extreme neighbour nuisance / anti-social behaviour where there is a genuine risk to their health and well-being or to support a move through witness mobility schemes (or similar).

There may be direct matching that takes place for tenants within the Housing Associations which are outside of the allocations scheme, where applicants are registered on Home Choice Plus (these are often known as management moves). This would apply in circumstances such as Tenants who are required to decant from their premises due to re-designation, demolition or refurbishment or where

Version 6 16/06/2014

Successors left in a property too large for their needs or where a non-successor has exceptional needs / would be deemed to be owed a duty under Part 7 Housing Act 1996 for example.

## **7. Administration of the Scheme**

### **Delegation of Authority**

The Home Choice Plus Scheme operates alongside the separate allocation policies and activities of partner Housing Associations (please see Home Choice Plus website for further information).

The Council may delegate or contract out functions to Housing Association partner organisations and will not abrogate any of its legal duties and powers to any Housing Association partner.

The administration of the scheme is undertaken by the Local Authorities or their agents and they are also responsible for updating and improving the scheme in line with good practice and legislation, consulting with partners and customers and ensuring the scheme is followed.

Certain functions within the scheme can only be undertaken by a senior officer or manager and, where this is the case, this has been highlighted throughout the allocations policy.

### **Reassessment of Bandings**

Applications to the Home Choice Plus Scheme will be reassessed on a regular basis. The timescale for this is determined by their banding and is conducted by their owning Local Authority or its agent.

Bandings will be reassessed when it is apparent there has been a change of circumstances.

An applicant will be notified of the reassessment. Failure to respond to appropriate correspondence in relation to the reassessment within one month will result in the application being closed. If good reason can be shown why there was a failure to respond to the reassessment then the application may be reinstated with the original band start date.

When the date is reached for reassessing the banding, the Local Authority or its agent will contact the applicant for confirmation of their circumstances. This contact may take the form of a letter, telephone call or email. If the applicant's circumstances have changed, they will be assessed and banded accordingly.

If the Local Authority, or its agent, considers that an applicant has not been using their priority and bids appropriately, a senior officer will review the application and banding may be altered to the reduced priority band unless good reason can be shown as to why bids have not been placed.

### **Reduced Priorities**

#### The process for reducing priority

Any applicant whose priority is reduced will be provided with written notification of the decision that will contain the following information:

- The reasons for the decision to reduce priority
- The Band that their housing circumstances would have warranted and the Band that they have been placed in as a result of the decision (the reduced priority band).
- What they have to do before they can be considered again for any higher Band warranted by their housing needs.
- That the applicant has a right to request a review

### **Closing of Applications**

Applications will be closed if applicants:

- Request their application to be closed
- Do not respond to a request to provide updated information about their registration, or
- Do not make a bid within 1 year of applying to join the Scheme
- Circumstances have changed and they are no longer eligible under this allocations policy.
- Have not informed Home Choice Plus they have moved and given a forwarding address.

When an applicant is re-housed through Home Choice Plus, their application will be automatically closed and they will need to complete a new registration form if they want to remain on the Housing Register.

In all other circumstances where they have moved they will need to complete a change of circumstances and be reassessed.

### **Re-joining the Housing Register**

Where a household wishes to re-join the Home Choice Plus housing register at a later date, their new date of application will be the date they re-register.

### **Equality and Diversity**

Our aim is to implement and maintain services which ensure that no potential or current applicant is treated less favourably on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, age or sexual orientation, nor is disadvantaged by the application of a rule, condition, or requirement, which has a discriminatory effect which cannot be justified by law. Allocations will only be made to those persons who are eligible.

This policy will be subject to periodic equality impact assessments.

### **Confidentiality**

The fact that a person is an applicant on the Allocation Scheme will not be disclosed (without their consent) to any other member of the public.

### **Data protection and information sharing**

All information held is subject to the Data Protection Act 1998. Home Choice Plus will seek the express consent of applicants joining the Allocation Scheme to share personal information about the applicant, and any member of their household. Please be aware that the application and any information relating to it can be viewed by all key partners through the Home Choice Plus partnership.

### **Information sharing without consent**

Information may be shared about the individual and their history irrespective of whether their consent has been obtained in exceptional circumstances which will include:

- In accordance with the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Section 115).
- Where there is a serious threat to the other party's staff or contractors.
- Where information is relevant to the management or support duties of the proposed landlord or support organisation to ensure the health and safety of the applicant, a member of his or her household, or a member of staff.

### **False statements or withheld information**

It is a criminal offence for applicants and/or anyone providing information to this Scheme to knowingly or recklessly make false statements or knowingly withhold reasonably requested information relevant to their application (s171 Housing Act 1996). This includes but is not limited to information requested on the housing registration form, in response to correspondence at the renewal of the application, or relating to any other reassessment of the application. An offence is also committed if a third party provides false information whether or not at the instigation of the applicant. This would apply at any stage of the application process.

Where there is suspicion or an allegation that a person has either provided false information or has withheld information, the application will be placed under pending status during the investigation and will be excluded from this Allocation Scheme until an outcome is reached.

If the outcome of any investigation is that they did not provide false information or there was no withholding of information or such was not found to be withheld knowingly, then the application will be reinstated from the date of registration meaning the relevant applicant should not suffer prejudice.

However, where the investigation shows that false information was provided on the application form the application will be re-assessed. The applicant may also be liable to prosecution.

Ground 5 in Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the 1996 Act, s.146) enables the landlord to seek possession of a property where it has been granted as a result of a false statement by either the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's instigation.

If it is determined that an applicant directly, or through a person acting on his or her behalf, has given false information or withheld required information it will result in an applicant being removed from the Scheme and deemed Ineligible.

### **Monitoring Home Choice Plus**

The full Home Choice Plus Partnership will meet regularly to monitor the outcomes being achieved (please see the Terms of Reference for the Home Choice Plus Steering Group and associated groups).

The Home Choice Plus Steering Group will complete an annual report to Registered Social Landlords as part of regular monitoring

## 8. Reviews of decisions

### Information about decisions and reviews

The Local Authority, or its agent, makes the decision regarding the start dates and banding of every applicant.

An applicant to the Home Choice Plus scheme has a right to request a review from the owning Local Authority, or its agent, if unhappy with any decision (finding of fact) including decisions to exclude from registration, the level of priority awarded or the way in which the application has been dealt with. Applicants will be able to appoint an advocate, and once appointed, the Home Choice Plus partner will deal directly with the advocate. The applicant should request an internal review within 21 days of the date of the decision letter.

Applicants have the following further and specific rights to information about decisions and rights of review of decisions:

- the right, on request, to be informed of any decision about the facts of their case which has been, or is likely to be, taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation to them
- the right, on request, to review a decision mentioned above, or a decision to treat them as ineligible due to immigration controls or unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant
- the right to be informed of the decision on the review and grounds for it.

The applicant will be notified of the outcome of the review including the reasons if the original decision is confirmed. We will aim to determine the review within 56 days of the request or such longer period as may be agreed with the applicant. Once the review has been decided upon there is no further right of review on the same matter unless there is a material change of circumstance.

The applicant will also have the right to seek judicial review, make a formal complaint through the Local Authorities complaints procedure (please see below) or to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Reviews will be carried out by a senior member of staff within the Home Choice Plus partnership or delegated to an appropriate organisation and an officer who was not involved in the original decision.

Where the complaint concerns an issue with the letting of a property, the applicant should address their complaint directly to the relevant Housing Association and follow that organisation's complaint procedure.

### Complaints

An applicant who is not satisfied with the service that they receive may register a complaint with the appropriate Home Choice Plus Partner by telephone, e-mail or in person. All complaints will be acknowledged and investigated. Please see the organisation's individual complaints procedure for details on how to complain and the



length of time to consider your complaint. You can ask someone else or an organisation such as Citizen's Advice Bureau to make a complaint on your behalf.

For those whose first language is not English, assistance can be made available.

## **9. Feedback on let properties**

Home Choice Plus will publish details of the number of bids for each property on the website giving details of the successful applicant's band and their band start date.

This feedback will help applicants determine their prospects of success in obtaining housing.

Lettings are monitored by property type and household to demonstrate how the Home Choice Plus partnership meet their various aims and objectives. The Home Choice Partnership will share this information with the Full Partnership on an annual basis and will ensure it is published on the Home Choice Plus website.

We will also monitor the number of lettings to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups to ensure that we are reflecting the overall population and that all households are fairly accessing the system.

## Appendix 1 Home Choice Plus Advice and Contact Points

### Bromsgrove District

#### **Bromsgrove District Housing Trust**

Bromsgrove District Housing Trust, Buntsford Court, Buntsford Gate,  
Bromsgrove, Worcs B60 3DJ  
0800 0850 160 [customer\\_services@bdht.co.uk](mailto:customer_services@bdht.co.uk)  
[www.bdht.co.uk](http://www.bdht.co.uk)

#### **Bromsgrove District Council**

Customer Service Centre, School Drive, Bromsgrove, Worcs, B60 1AY  
01527 881288  
[worcestershirehub@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:worcestershirehub@bromsgrove.gov.uk)  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

### Malvern Hills District

#### **Elgar Housing Association**

Partnership House, Grovewood Road, Malvern, Worcs, WR14 1GD  
01684 579579  
[housingneeds@festivalhousing.org](mailto:housingneeds@festivalhousing.org)  
[www.festivalhousing.org](http://www.festivalhousing.org)

#### **Malvern Library**

Graham Road, Malvern, Worcs, WR14 2HU  
01684 862151

#### **Tenbury Wells Library**

24 Teme Street, Tenbury Wells, Worcs, WR15 8AA  
01684 862151

#### **Upton upon Severn Library**

School Lane, Upton upon Severn, Worcs, WR8 0LE  
01684 862151

### Stratford-on-Avon District

#### **Stratford-on-Avon District Council**

Elizabeth House, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon,  
Warks, CV37 6HX  
01789 260861/2  
[housingadviceteam@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:housingadviceteam@stratford-dc.gov.uk)  
[www.stratford.gov.uk](http://www.stratford.gov.uk)

#### **Stratford-on-Avon District Council**

Globe House, Priory Road, Alcester, Warks, B49 5DZ  
01789 762216

#### **Southam Library**

High Street, Southam, Warks, CV47 0HB  
01926 817560

### Worcester City

#### **Worcester City Council**

Orchard House Complex, Farrier Street, Worcester WR1 3BB  
01905 722233 [housing@worcester.gov.uk](mailto:housing@worcester.gov.uk)  
[www.worcester.gov.uk](http://www.worcester.gov.uk)

### Wychavon District

#### **Wychavon District Council**

Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore, Worcs, WR10 1PT  
01386 565020 [housingneeds@wychavon.gov.uk](mailto:housingneeds@wychavon.gov.uk)  
[www.wychavon.gov.uk](http://www.wychavon.gov.uk)

Version 6 16/06/2014

**Droitwich Community Contact Centre**

44 High Street, Droitwich Spa, Worcs, WR9 8ES  
[www.wychavon.gov.uk](http://www.wychavon.gov.uk)

**Evesham Community Contact Centre**

Abbey Road, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 4SB  
[www.wychavon.gov.uk](http://www.wychavon.gov.uk)

**Rooftop Housing Group**

70 High Street, Evesham, Worcs WR11 4YD  
01386 420800 [www.rooftopgroup.org](http://www.rooftopgroup.org)

**Spa Housing Association**

The Royal Exchange, 9 Queen Street, Droitwich Spa, Worcs, WR9 8LA  
01905 823100 [www.festivalhousing.org](http://www.festivalhousing.org)

**Wyre Forest District**

**Community Housing Group**

Community House, Stourport Road, Kidderminster, Worcs, DY11 7QE  
T: 0800 169 5454  
E: [allocations@communityhg.com](mailto:allocations@communityhg.com)  
[www.communityhg.com](http://www.communityhg.com)

**Wyre Forest District Council**

**Worcestershire Hub**

Vicar Street, Kidderminster, Worcs, DY10 1DB  
01562 732928  
[www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk)

Version 6 16/06/2014

## Appendix 2 Home Choice Plus Partners' Contact Details

| Name                             | Address                                                                        | Phone Number     | Email                                                                                | Website                                                                  |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Advance Housing Trust            | 2 Witan Way<br>Witney Oxon<br>OX28 6FH                                         | 01993<br>772885  | <a href="mailto:info@advanceuk.org">info@advanceuk.org</a>                           | <a href="http://www.advanceuk.org">www.advanceuk.org</a>                 |
| Anchor Trust                     | Milestone Place, 100<br>Bolton Rd, Bradford,<br>BD1 4DH.                       | 0845 140<br>2020 |                                                                                      | <a href="http://www.anchor.org.uk">www.anchor.org.uk</a>                 |
| Beth Johnson Housing Association | Sanctuary House,<br>Chamber Court,<br>Castle Street,<br>Worcester, WR1<br>3ZQ. | 01905<br>338600  |                                                                                      | <a href="http://www.sanctuary-group.co.uk">www.sanctuary-group.co.uk</a> |
| Bourneville Housing Trust        | Estate Office, Oak<br>Tree Lane,<br>Bourneville,<br>Birmingham, B30<br>1UB.    | 0121 472<br>3831 | <a href="mailto:info@bvt.org.uk">info@bvt.org.uk</a>                                 | <a href="http://www.bvt.org.uk">www.bvt.org.uk</a>                       |
| Bromford Housing Group           | 1 Venture Court,<br>Broadlands,<br>Wolverhampton,<br>WV10 6TB.                 | 0330<br>1234 031 | <a href="mailto:customerservices@bromford.co.uk">customerservices@bromford.co.uk</a> | <a href="http://www.bromfordgroup.co.uk">www.bromfordgroup.co.uk</a>     |

Version 6 16/06/2014

|                                   |                                                                       |               |                                                                                              |                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bromsgrove District Housing Trust | Buntsford Court, Buntsford Gate, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B60 3DJ  | 0800 0850 160 | <a href="mailto:info@bdht.co.uk">info@bdht.co.uk</a>                                         | <a href="http://www.bdht.co.uk">www.bdht.co.uk</a>                   |
| Cottsway Housing Association      | Cottsway House Avenue Two Witney OX28 4XG                             | 01993 890000  | <a href="mailto:contact@cottsway.co.uk">contact@cottsway.co.uk</a>                           | <a href="http://www.cottsway.co.uk">www.cottsway.co.uk</a>           |
| Elgar Housing Associations        | Partnership House, Grovewood Road, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR14 1GD. | 01684 579579  | <a href="mailto:housingneeds@festivalhousing.org.uk">housingneeds@festivalhousing.org.uk</a> | <a href="http://www.festivalhousing.org">www.festivalhousing.org</a> |
| English Churches                  | 2 Estuary Boulevard, Estuary Commerce Park, Liverpool, L24 8RF        | 0345 155 9029 | <a href="mailto:info@riverside.org.uk">info@riverside.org.uk</a>                             | <a href="http://www.riverside.org.uk">www.riverside.org.uk</a>       |
| Festival Housing                  | Festival House, Grovewood Road, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR14 1GD.    | 01684 579579  | <a href="mailto:housingneeds@festivalhousing.org.uk">housingneeds@festivalhousing.org.uk</a> | <a href="http://www.festivalhousing.org">www.festivalhousing.org</a> |
| Festival Housing                  | The Royal Exchange, 9 Queen Street, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire,    | 01905 823100  | <a href="mailto:housingneeds@festivalhousing.org.uk">housingneeds@festivalhousing.org.uk</a> | <a href="http://www.festivalhousing.org">www.festivalhousing.org</a> |

Version 6 16/06/2014

|                                     |                                                                              |                  |                                                                                      |                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                     | WR9 8AL                                                                      |                  |                                                                                      |                                                                      |
| Fosseway Housing                    | 1 Venture Court,<br>Broadlands,<br>Wolverhampton,<br>WV10 6TB.               | 0330<br>1234 031 | <a href="mailto:customerservices@bromford.co.uk">customerservices@bromford.co.uk</a> | <a href="http://www.bromfordgroup.co.uk">www.bromfordgroup.co.uk</a> |
| Friendship Care & Housing           | 50 Newhall Hill,<br>Birmingham, B1<br>3JN                                    | 0121 506<br>2800 |                                                                                      | <a href="http://www.fch.org.uk">www.fch.org.uk</a>                   |
| Fry Housing Trust                   | 43 Rowley Village,<br>Rowley Regis,<br>West Midlands,<br>B65 9AS             | 0121 559<br>6406 | <a href="mailto:admin@fryha.org.uk">admin@fryha.org.uk</a>                           | <a href="http://www.fryha.uk">www.fryha.uk</a>                       |
| Gloucestershire Housing Association | 2 St Michael's<br>Court, Brunswick<br>Road, Gloucester,<br>GL1 1JB           | 0800<br>318522   | <a href="mailto:info@gloscha.co.uk">info@gloscha.co.uk</a>                           | <a href="http://www.gloscha.co.uk">www.gloscha.co.uk</a>             |
| Housing 21                          | The Triangle,<br>Baring Road,<br>Beaconsfield, HP9<br>2NA.                   | 0370 192<br>4000 | <a href="mailto:enquiries@housing21.co.uk">enquiries@housing21.co.uk</a>             | <a href="http://www.housing21.co.uk">www.housing21.co.uk</a>         |
| Jephson Housing Association         | Jephson House,<br>Blackdown,<br>Leamington Spa,<br>Warwickshire,<br>CV32 6RE | 01926<br>339 311 | <a href="mailto:info@jephson.org.uk">info@jephson.org.uk</a>                         | <a href="http://www.jephson.org.uk">www.jephson.org.uk</a>           |
| Marches Housing                     | Benedict Court,<br>Southern Avenue,                                          | 01568<br>610100  | <a href="mailto:home@marchesha.co.uk">home@marchesha.co.uk</a>                       | <a href="http://www.marchesha.co.uk">www.marchesha.co.uk</a>         |

Version 6 16/06/2014

|                               |                                                              |                |                                                                                                            |                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Association                   | Leominster,<br>Herefordshire,<br>HR6 0QF                     |                |                                                                                                            |                                                                                    |
| Mercian Housing               | Gee Business Centre, Holborn Hill, Aston, Birmingham, B7 5JR | 0121 322 7373  | <a href="mailto:info@mercian.org.uk">info@mercian.org.uk</a>                                               | <a href="http://www.mercian.org.uk">www.mercian.org.uk</a>                         |
| Midland Heart Ltd             | 20 Bath Row, Birmingham, B15 1LZ                             | 0345 60 20 540 | <a href="mailto:customer.servicecentre@midlandheart.org.uk">customer.servicecentre@midlandheart.org.uk</a> | <a href="http://www.midlandheart.org.uk">www.midlandheart.org.uk</a>               |
| Nexus Housing (West Midlands) | Apex 2, Wainwright Road, Worcester, WR4 9FN                  | 01905 342600   | <a href="mailto:nexus@wmhousing.co.uk">nexus@wmhousing.co.uk</a>                                           | <a href="http://www.nexushousing.co.uk">www.nexushousing.co.uk</a>                 |
| Orbit Heart of England        | 10 Greenhill Street, Stratford upon Avon, WARKS CV37 6LG     | 0345 8 500 500 | <a href="mailto:info@orbit.org.uk">info@orbit.org.uk</a>                                                   | <a href="http://www.orbitheartofengland.org.uk">www.orbitheartofengland.org.uk</a> |
| Rooftop Housing Group         | 70 High Street, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 4YD            | 0800 0421 800  | <a href="mailto:info@rooftopgroup.org">info@rooftopgroup.org</a>                                           | <a href="http://www.rooftopgroup.org">www.rooftopgroup.org</a>                     |
| Sanctuary Housing             | Sanctuary Midlands, 164 Birmingham Road,                     | 0800 131 3329  | <a href="mailto:midlands@sanctuary-housing.co.uk">midlands@sanctuary-housing.co.uk</a>                     | <a href="http://www.sanctuary-group.co.uk">www.sanctuary-group.co.uk</a>           |

Version 6 16/06/2014

|                                                   |                                                                                                                       |                  |                                                                                |                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                   | West Bromwich,<br>Birmingham, B70<br>6QG                                                                              |                  |                                                                                |                                                                            |
| South<br>Shropshire<br>Housing<br>Association Ltd | The Gateway, The<br>Auction Yard,<br>Craven Arms,<br>Shropshire, SY7<br>9BW                                           | 01588<br>676200  |                                                                                | <a href="http://www.sshropsha.co.uk">www.sshropsha.co.uk</a>               |
| Stonham<br>Housing<br>Association                 | 2 Gosforth Park<br>Way, Gosforth<br>Business Park,<br>Gosforth,<br>Newcastle upon<br>Tyne, NE12 8ET                   | 0845 155<br>1234 |                                                                                | <a href="http://www.homegroup.org.uk">www.homegroup.org.uk</a>             |
| Viridian<br>Housing                               | 41 Poplar Road,<br>Kings Heath,<br>Birmingham, B14<br>7AA                                                             | 0121 444<br>6666 | <a href="mailto:wmids@viridianhousing.org.uk">wmids@viridianhousing.org.uk</a> | <a href="http://www.viridianhousing.org.uk">www.viridianhousing.org.uk</a> |
| Warwickshire<br>Rural Housing<br>Association      | Whitwick Business<br>Centre, Stenson<br>Road, Whitwick<br>Business Park,<br>Coalville,<br>Leicestershire,<br>LE67 4JP | 01530<br>278080  |                                                                                | <a href="http://www.warwickshirerha.org.uk">www.warwickshirerha.org.uk</a> |
| Waterloo<br>Housing<br>Association                | Waterloo House,<br>76-78 Boldmere<br>Road, Sutton                                                                     | 0121 355<br>7771 |                                                                                | <a href="http://www.waterlooha.org.uk">www.waterlooha.org.uk</a>           |



Version 6 16/06/2014

|                               |                                                                             |               |                                                                              |                     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
|                               | Coldfield, West Midlands, B73 5TJ                                           |               |                                                                              |                     |
| Worcester Community Housing   | Progress House, Midland Road, Worcester, WR5 1DU                            | 0800 197 2805 | <a href="mailto:wchtalk@wchnet.co.uk">wchtalk@wchnet.co.uk</a>               | www.wchnet.co.uk    |
| Wyre Forest Community Housing | 3 Foley Grove, Foley Business Park, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY11 7PT | 01562 733 000 | <a href="mailto:information@communityhg.com">information@communityhg.com</a> | www.communityhg.com |
| Wyre Forest Sheltered Housing | 3 Foley Grove, Foley Business Park, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY11 7PT | 01562 733 000 | <a href="mailto:information@communityhg.com">information@communityhg.com</a> | www.communityhg.com |



## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### Briefing Paper

Report of: Jenny Moreton, Principal Health and Sustainability Officer

Date: Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

### Open Report

### Climate Change Update

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks endorsement of the updated Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy and the associated action plan for 2014/15. It also provides an update on implementation of the council's Carbon Management Programme.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 The Health and Sustainability Team in Strategic Housing Services lead the co-ordination and delivery of work to tackle climate change issues in Wyre Forest.
- 2.2 The first Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy was produced in 2008 and an associated action plan produced and reported to committee annually. The strategy was written in alignment with the Worcestershire Partnership's Climate Change Strategy and aimed to raise awareness about climate change, reduce climate change gas emissions in the district and enable adaptation to the impacts of climate change.
- 2.3 Both the district and county climate change strategies have been reviewed and updated to cover the period to 2020. The Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy 2014-2020 and the 2014/15 Action Plan aim to deliver the Worcestershire strategy within Wyre Forest. They focus on key areas where Wyre Forest District Council and partners can have the most impact in the district, within current resources.
- 2.4 The strategy is to be delivered through four key themes:
1. Warmer, healthier homes. This incorporates work to tackle fuel poverty, which was previously included in a separate Affordable Warmth Annual Action Plan.
  2. Building a low carbon economy.
  3. Transport and infrastructure.
  4. Healthy and resilient communities.

- 2.5 In 2011/12, Wyre Forest District Council worked with the Carbon Trust to develop a five year Carbon Management Plan. The plan sets out a series of projects to reduce energy and fuel use, and associated carbon emissions, from the council's own buildings, fleet and staff travel. The target is to see a reduction of 30% in our carbon emissions over the 5 year Plan period (2012/13- 2016/17).

### **3. Key Issues**

- 3.1 In September 2013, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its fifth five-yearly assessment report on the latest climate change science. The report considered evidence from many independent scientific analyses and has been endorsed by all UN member States. Scientists are now all but certain that climate change is mostly caused by human action, and that it is already leading to changes in regional weather patterns, with extreme events such as flooding and heat waves on the increase. The Industrial Revolution led to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activity. The Earth's surface has consequently warmed by about 0.8°C since around 1900, with much of this warming occurring in the past 50 years. If the global average temperature rises more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, significant negative impacts of climate change will be more likely and the cost of managing them will rise sharply.
- 3.2 In the UK, the Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK to reducing emissions by at least 80% by 2050 from 1990 levels. This is to be achieved through a series of legally binding 5-year 'carbon budgets'.
- 3.3 A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Local Government Group and the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) acknowledges "the pivotal role councils have in tackling climate change: by reducing carbon emissions from their own estates and operations; encouraging and enabling their residents, businesses and visitors to reduce their carbon emissions; and by achieving national priorities such as the Green Deal and renewable energy deployment in a locally appropriate way." It recognises how councils, through local governance, "can ensure climate change policies and programmes protect and help the most vulnerable, particularly the fuel poor." The government also recognises the leadership role that local authorities can play in their communities by reducing their own emissions.
- 3.4 The Local Government Association has developed the Climate Local initiative, to drive, inspire and support council action on climate change. Wyre Forest District Council is already signed up to Climate Local and this strategy and the associated action plan outline our commitments under this initiative.
- 3.5 Local authorities are uniquely placed to assess the needs of their areas and local residents and to act as catalysts for change. The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) recognises local authorities' ability to use their position to improve the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation in

their areas. HECA requires local authorities to produce a series of reports, setting out the energy conservation measures that considered practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area. Fuel poverty is also an issue for the district; more than 15% of Wyre Forest households are classed as being fuel poor, with this figure varying between wards, ranging between 5.6% and 26.4%. Living in cold, damp homes can exacerbate health conditions, particularly cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses. Worcestershire has slightly higher than average excess winter deaths, the majority of which tend to be caused by diseases of the cardiovascular system (such as stroke and heart attack) and respiratory illness (e.g. influenza).

- 3.6 In 2010/11, the Council's energy and fuel costs totalled almost £659k. Due to predicted increases in energy and fuel prices, if the Council carries on with 'Business as Usual', i.e. does nothing to try and reduce energy and fuel use, by 2016/17, based on DECC predictions, our total energy and fuel bill will be in the region of £810k.
- 3.7 The Carbon Management Programme identified measures to reduce the Council's energy and fuel use. Implementation of all measures, and realisation of predicted savings, should mean that by 2016/17, our total energy and fuel bill will be in the region of £595k.
- 3.8 In 2013/14, two new refuse vehicles were purchased, each fitted with an electric (rather than a hydraulic) bin lift and a fuel saver package. Analysis of fuel data for these vehicles shows that they were c.18% more fuel efficient than other comparable vehicles for the period 1 March 2013 to 28 February 2014 (23p/km cheaper to run). From 2014/15, refuse vehicles are being refurbished rather than replaced; refurbished vehicles will be fitted with electric bin lifts, but not the fuel saver package. Green driver training for fleet drivers has been incorporated into the compulsory driver training programme.
- 3.9 LED lighting was installed at three sites (Kidderminster Town Hall, Green Street offices and depot and Bewdley Museum) in 2013/14. This work is expected to pay for itself, through savings on electricity bills and maintenance, in less than 3 years. In 2014/15, LED lighting is to be installed at further appropriate sites (e.g. public toilets, car park lighting, cemetery). Heating and associated controls/insulation works at several sites are also planned. All projects are subject to a successful business case being made.
- 3.10 All local authorities are required to measure and report annually on the greenhouse gas emissions from their own estates and operations. This data is also used to measure progress on implementation of the carbon management programme. In 2013/14, the council emitted c.1550 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, a 17.9% reduction from 2010/11 (the baseline year in the carbon management programme).

**4. Options**

4.1 The committee may wish to:

- Recommend to Cabinet that the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2014/15 (Appendix 1) are approved.
- Put forward alternative or additional proposals to recommend to Cabinet.
- Note the progress on implementation of the carbon management programme.

**5. Consultation**

5.1 Internal and external stakeholders were consulted with in developing the Climate Change Strategy.

**6. Related Decisions**

6.1 None.

**7. Relevant Council Policies/Strategies**

7.1 [Carbon Management Plan](#)

**8. Implications**

8.1 Resources:

8.1.1 Delivery of the CMP will be funded through existing resources and business cases are considered for each individual project

8.2 Equalities: Not applicable

8.3 Partnership working: We will continue to deliver the Climate Change Strategy working with partners where applicable.

8.4 Human Rights: Not applicable.

8.5 E-Government: Not applicable.

8.6 Transformation Not applicable.

**9. Equality Impact Needs Assessment**

9.1 N/A.

**10. Wards affected**

10.1 All.

**11. Appendices**

11.1 Appendix 1 Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2014/15.

**12. Background Papers**

12.1 [Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy](#)

**Officer Contact Details:**

Name: Jenny Moreton

Title: Principal Health and Sustainability Officer

Contact Number: 01562 732569

Email: [Jennifer.moreton@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:Jennifer.moreton@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)

**APPENDIX 1 A Climate for Change- Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy 2014-2020**

**Introduction**

The world's climate and weather patterns are changing. Global temperatures are rising, causing more extreme weather events, like flooding and heat waves. If the global average temperature rises more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, significant negative impacts of climate change will be more likely and the cost of managing them will rise sharply. The Industrial Revolution led to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activity. The Earth's surface has consequently warmed by about 0.8°C since around 1900, with much of this warming occurring in the past 50 years.

Climate change presents both a challenge and an opportunity to transform our homes, our businesses, our public services and the way we live and work. We also need to adapt by preparing for the potential impacts of climate change. This means we will be better protected against negative impacts like flooding. It also means we'll be better prepared for new opportunities, like the chance to grow different crops. The earlier we plan for adaptation, the less it will cost and the better equipped we will be to cope with potential changes.

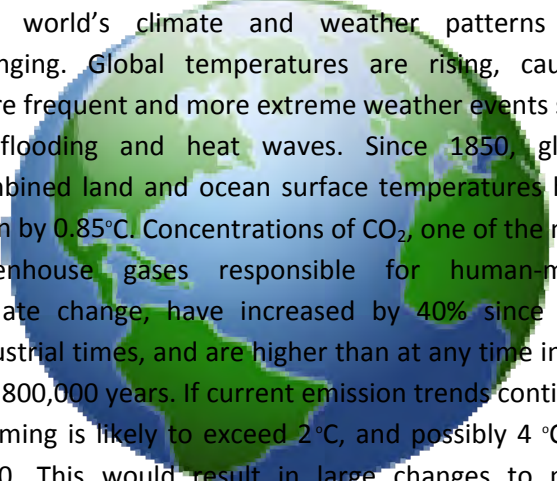
The Government is taking this seriously and has agreed goals to address the trend. For example, it includes a target to reduce carbon emissions by 80% (from 1990 levels) by 2050. It also wants to achieve a 15% increase renewable energy by 2020.

We all have a vital role to play in cutting energy consumption, tackling fuel poverty and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. Energy efficiency and renewable energy are important issues and people expect us to play a strong role in addressing them. It is about making choices that not only have a positive environmental impact, but also generate a return in financial or community terms

Over recent years, there has been concerted action to cut emissions and protect from extremes of weather at both district and county level. However, while carbon emissions are currently falling, there is much to be done. The first Wyre Forest District strategy on climate change (2008) identified a variety of actions. This new strategy, developed by Wyre Forest District Council with input from a range of key local organisations, shows how we will build on previous good work in order to tackle this issue through these themes:

1. Warmer, healthier homes
2. Building a low carbon economy
3. Transport and infrastructure
4. Healthy and resilient communities

### **The Global Context**



The world's climate and weather patterns are changing. Global temperatures are rising, causing more frequent and more extreme weather events such as flooding and heat waves. Since 1850, global combined land and ocean surface temperatures have risen by 0.85°C. Concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub>, one of the main greenhouse gases responsible for human-made climate change, have increased by 40% since pre-industrial times, and are higher than at any time in the last 800,000 years. If current emission trends continue, warming is likely to exceed 2°C, and possibly 4 °C, by 2100. This would result in large changes to most natural cycles.

### **Climate Change 2013 IPCC Assessment Report 5**

In September 2013, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its fifth five-yearly assessment report on the latest climate change science. The report considered evidence from many independent scientific analyses and has been endorsed by all UN member States. Scientists are now all but certain that climate change is mostly caused by human action, and that it is already leading to changes in regional weather patterns, with extreme events on the increase. Further reports in 2014 examine climate change impacts/ adaptation and mitigation measures. The full reports and summary versions are available at [www.ipcc.ch](http://www.ipcc.ch)

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change considers the global response to climate change-how do we collectively reduce emissions and adapt to the inevitable impacts of a changing climate. Governments have agreed that emissions need to be reduced so that global temperature increase is limited to below 2 °C.

### **UK- the National Picture**

The UK Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK to reducing emissions by at least 80% by 2050 from 1990 levels. This is to be achieved through a series of legally binding 5-year 'carbon budgets'. To better understand the specific risks that climate change poses to the UK, the government has carried out a [UK climate change risk assessment' \(CCRA\)](#) . The [National Adaptation Programme \(NAP\)](#) sets out what government, businesses and society are doing to become more climate-ready.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Local Government Group and the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) acknowledges "the pivotal role councils have in tackling climate change: by reducing carbon emissions from their own estates and operations; encouraging and enabling their residents, businesses and visitors to reduce their carbon emissions; and by achieving national priorities such as the Green Deal and renewable energy deployment in a locally appropriate way." It recognises how councils, through local governance, "can ensure climate change policies and programmes protect and help the most vulnerable, particularly the fuel poor."

The Local Government Association has developed the Climate Local initiative, to drive, inspire and support council action on climate change. Wyre Forest District Council is signed up to Climate Local and this strategy and the associated action plan outline our commitments under this initiative.

Local authorities are uniquely placed to assess the needs of their areas and local residents and to act as catalysts for change. The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) recognises local authorities' ability to use their position to improve the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation in their areas. HECA requires local authorities to produce a series of reports, setting out the energy conservation measures that considered practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area.

The government also recognises the leadership role that local authorities can play in their communities by reducing their own emissions. All local authorities are required to measure and report annually on the greenhouse gas emissions from their own estates and operations.



### Tackling Climate Change in Worcestershire

The Worcestershire Partnership's Climate Change Strategy 2012-2020 sets out a framework for securing a low carbon and climate resilient County. It sets a vision of a county:

- *Making the most of opportunities that a low carbon economy brings,*
- *Resilient to volatile costs of fossil fuels and severe weather,*
- *Where businesses and residents are empowered to take action themselves and the most vulnerable people and assets protected.*

Its aims are to:

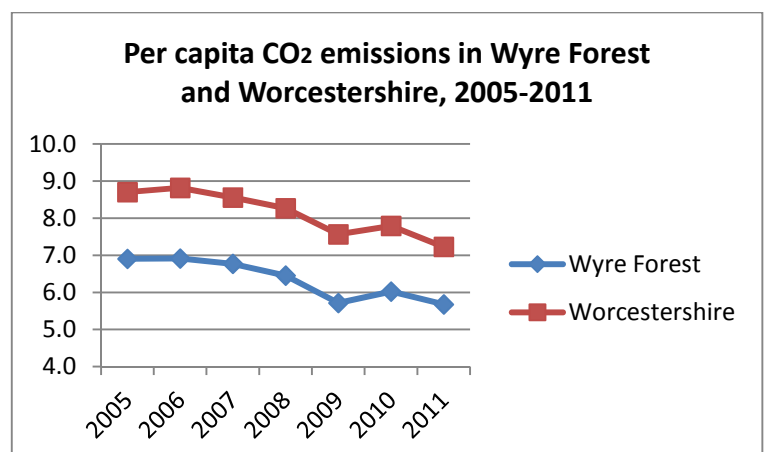
- *Build Worcestershire's low carbon economy*
- *Hit tough but critical carbon targets*
- *Adapt to inevitable climate change*
- *Empower Worcestershire's communities to take action*



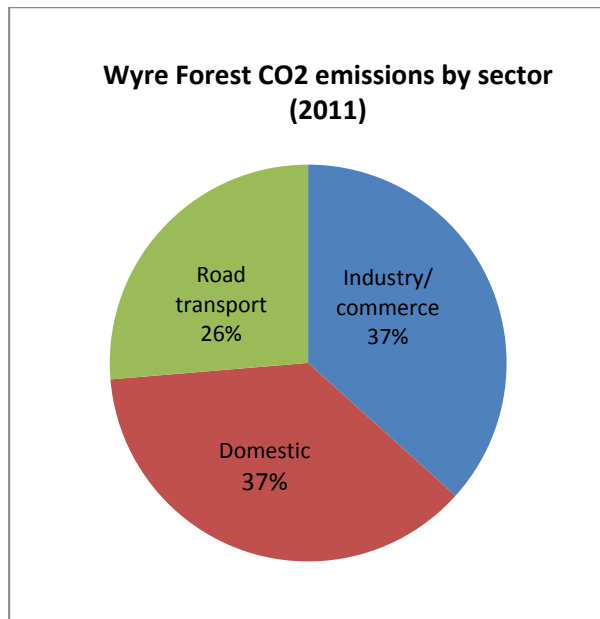
The Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan aims to deliver the Worcestershire strategy within Wyre Forest. It focuses on key areas where Wyre Forest District Council and district partners can have the most impact within current resources.

#### Wyre Forest- A Climate for Change

Each year, DECC releases per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emission figures for all local authorities. Between 2005 and 2011 (the latest data available), emissions in Wyre Forest fell by over 17%, from 6.9 to 5.7 tonnes per capita. Emissions fell in all sectors measured- industry/ commerce, domestic and road transport. These figures reflect the trend across Worcestershire as a whole, where emissions fell from 8.7 to 7.2 tonnes per capita.



**Weird weather**



Our climate is already changing and will continue to do so, due to the carbon already 'locked in' to our climate systems. In the UK, agencies such as Defra and the Met Office develop climate projections. These projections indicate milder but wetter winters, warmer but drier summers and more frequent and intense extreme weather, such as flooding. Projections are based upon different scenarios, representing future levels of greenhouse gas emissions (high, medium or low). The more we do to reduce our emissions, the less extreme the impacts will be. However, as some degree of

climate change is unavoidable, we need to be prepared in order to withstand or recover from the impacts. Locally, we have seen the impacts of severe weather in recent years, especially during the summer of 2007. It is estimated that the 2007 floods had an overall cost to Worcestershire of around £150 million. The earlier we plan for adaptation, the less it will cost and the better equipped we will be to cope with potential changes.

**Theme 1: Warmer, Healthier Homes.**

## **Agenda Item No. 8**

### **Appendix 1**

Improving the energy efficiency of the district's housing stock has multiple benefits- social, economic and environmental.

Living in cold, damp homes can exacerbate health conditions, particularly cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses. Worcestershire has slightly higher than average excess winter deaths, the majority of which tend to be caused by diseases of the cardiovascular system (such as stroke and heart attack) and respiratory illness (e.g. influenza). Excess cold, damp and mould growth are some of the most common more serious category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), used by environmental health professionals in assessing the condition of private rented properties. Slips and falls are also a significant issue and can also be exacerbated by living in cold homes. Helping residents to keep warm and well can help reduce costs to the health service, by reducing the need for treatment or a hospital stay. Public Health England recognises the importance of energy efficiency measures and locally the council works closely with public health professionals, amongst others, at a district and county level, to promote affordable warmth.

The rising costs of energy are never far from the headlines. According to Ofgem, energy costs have increased for a variety of reasons over recent years: an increasing dependence on gas imports, the need to replace ageing power stations and the move towards cleaner sources of energy. A recent report from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) shows that in 2012, UK households spent an average of £106 a month on household energy, a 55% rise on the 2002 monthly spend, after accounting for inflation. This is despite a decline in average energy usage. The proportion of disposable household income spent on energy also increased over the same period. The council therefore works with a range of partners, including public health, Age UK, Act on Energy, Wyre Forest Citizens Advice Bureau, the home improvement agency and the Fire and Rescue Service, to encourage various measures to reduce energy bills. Such measures include encouraging residents to make sure they're on the best tariff, claiming any grants or benefits they are entitled to and installing insulation and efficient heating systems.

37% of the district's carbon emissions came from the domestic sector, i.e. from the energy used to heat and power our homes. Improvements to make our housing stock more energy efficient, and to move towards less carbon intensive forms of energy, will also have environmental benefits.

**Fuel poverty.**

Traditionally, a household is said to be fuel poor if it needs to spend 10% of its income on fuel to maintain a satisfactory heating regime. The key drivers behind fuel poverty are:

- The energy efficiency of the property (and therefore, the energy required to heat and power the home).
- The cost of energy.

| Year | Properties in fuel poverty | %     |
|------|----------------------------|-------|
| 2009 | 10,654                     | 24.8% |
| 2010 | 8,536                      | 19.9% |
| 2011 | 6,676                      | 15.3% |

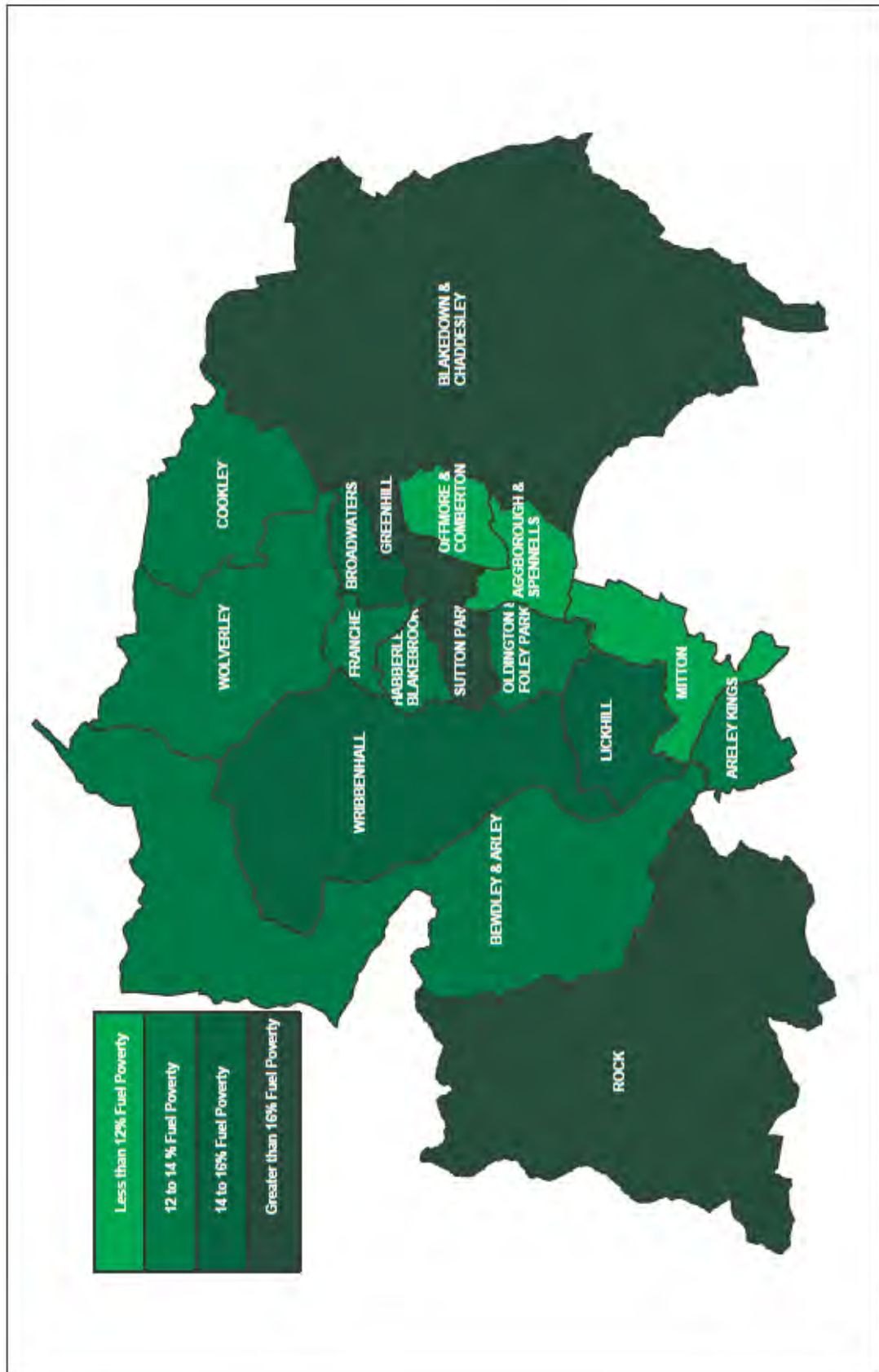
The table to the left shows the number and proportion of properties in Wyre forest in fuel poverty, based on this definition.

This information is also made available at ward level. In 2011 (the latest data available), the percentage of properties in fuel poverty varied from 5.6% (in Spennells, Kidderminster, which has more modern/efficient housing) to 26.4% (in Chaddesley Corbett, where there are more off-grid, harder to treat properties).

The government has recently set out a new definition, where a household is said to be in fuel poverty if:

- they have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)
- were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line

# Fuel poverty in Wyre Forest wards (2011)



SO8178

1:85000 @ A3  
Crown Copyright 100018317 2014

**Warmer, Healthier Homes: The story so far**

For many years, the council has led work in the district to tackle fuel poverty, working with a range of partner organisations including Act on Energy, public health, the Fire and Rescue Service, Disability Action Wyre Forest, Community Housing, Age UK and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). Activities have included training and awareness events and running schemes to provide assistance for energy efficiency measures, utilising external funding wherever possible. Examples include:

- Act on Energy run energy advice surgeries at the Kidderminster Hub once a month between September and June. Residents are able to seek in depth advice on reducing their fuel bills, whether by changing tariffs or by installing energy efficiency measures, such as insulation. In 2013, the Act on Energy advisor spoke to an average of 25-30 people at each surgery.
- Advice stands are also held at events where those most likely to be affected by the impacts of fuel poverty are likely to be in attendance, such as flu jab clinics, the annual Showcase of Services for Older People at Kidderminster Town Hall and the Home Safe Home electric blanket testing events at Bewdley, Stourport and Kidderminster fire stations. We have also provided advice to residents in rural areas through the mobile library service.
- In October 2013, the council joined forces with the Wyre Forest CAB to organise the first Wyre Forest Energy Day at Kidderminster Town Hall. An estimated 200 people attended to obtain advice on all matters energy related, from a wide range of organisations, including energy suppliers and renewable energy companies.
- Each year we organise affordable warmth training for frontline workers who come into contact with vulnerable residents who may be at risk of fuel poverty. As well as helping these workers to recognise the signs of fuel poverty and the problems associated with living in cold, damp homes, the training also covers the types of support available to help. The training has benefited staff from within the council, such as Hub advisors and housing officers, and from a wide range of partner organisations, including Citizens Advice Bureau, Community Housing, nurse advisors, Age UK, Care and Repair, medical centres, doctors surgeries and children's centres.
- The national Warmfront scheme provided funding for heating and other energy measures for benefits recipients. WFDC co-ordinated activity to promote the scheme amongst front line workers and residents. Between 2007 and 2013, 1513 Wyre Forest households were assisted through £3million of Warmfront funding. Whilst this scheme has now closed, we are working to ensure households will benefit from its successor, funded through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO).
- Over recent years, WFDC has run a number of subsidised/ free loft and cavity wall insulation schemes, utilising external funding wherever possible. As an example, 1260 lofts and cavities in the district were insulated through the council run scheme in 2012/13, leading to estimated annual savings of £147k on energy bills, as well as an estimated annual 580 tonne reduction in CO2 emissions.

## **Agenda Item No. 8**

### **Appendix 1**

- In October 2013, a 'Services on your doorstep' project was carried out in Broadwaters, Kidderminster. Various organisations, including WFDC, Act on Energy, CAB, the police and fire service, carried out a doorstep survey. Residents were then assisted as appropriate, e.g. advice on for energy efficiency and fire safety measures, clearing debt and health issues.
- As well as promoting energy efficiency, WFDC has also encouraged installation of appropriate renewable micro-generation systems. Initially this was through a grant scheme for residents and community groups; currently interested parties are signposted to relevant national support such as the Feed-in Tariffs. A series of case studies featuring local renewable energy installations are available on the sustainability pages of the council's website.
- Officers from sustainability and planning (conservation) also joined forces with Transition Bewdley to run an event on 'Energy Conservation in the Conservation Area', focussing on what CAN be done to reduce energy use in conservation areas and Listed Buildings.

#### **Warmer Worcestershire**



The Warmer Worcestershire project began in 2009 with a thermal image survey of Worcestershire to highlight heat loss from roof of properties. Residents- and businesses- were able to go online and get an indication of the energy efficiency of their property. They were then encouraged to take up insulation measures to reduce their energy use and bills. In a typical British home, one third of the heat produced by central heating systems is lost through the roof, walls and windows. For a poorly insulated property, this means that £1 out of every £3 spent is wasted.

Warmer Worcestershire has since grown and carried out a range of schemes to encourage energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty, including insulation and boiler repair schemes, training for front-line workers, provision of energy advice (e.g. at flu jab clinics and electric blanket testing events) and production of promotional materials such as thermocards. In the last two years Warmer Worcestershire has attracted £340,000 of funding from the Department of Health's 'Warm Homes, Healthy People' fund. The Warmer Worcestershire Network is made up of the county and district councils, public health, and other agencies such as Age UK, Act on Energy and Care & Repair. Through linking with these partners, Warmer Worcestershire promotes a whole range of services which support the energy efficiency agenda e.g. tackling the health impacts of living in cold damp homes, financial support through benefit checks giving residents more income to pay their bills, fire safety checks, carbon monoxide detector installation and promotion of chimney safety for those residents with open fires.

The network plans to build on the established Warmer Worcestershire branding and resources in attracting new external funding through the Energy Company Obligation and in delivering the Green Deal in the county.

**Warmer, Healthier Homes: Overall Aims**

- Stop the growth of fuel poverty and reduce excess winter mortality.
- Help to maximise the take up of energy efficiency schemes (e.g. ECO funding, Green Deal) by Wyre Forest residents.
- Reduce CO2 emissions from homes by 32% from 2009 levels by 2020, in line with county and national targets.

**How we will we do this.**

- 1.1 Encourage and support uptake of energy efficiency retrofit measures, such as loft and cavity wall insulation, solid wall insulation and efficient heating systems, in all types of residential property.
- 1.2 Work with partners (e.g. through the Warmer Worcestershire Network) to secure external funding and deliver energy efficiency schemes and campaigns.
- 1.3 Seek to assist 'harder to treat' properties, such as residential park homes and off-grid properties (e.g. through appropriate insulation and by encouraging installation of appropriate renewable energy systems).
- 1.4 Help protect householders against rising energy costs (e.g. by carrying out benefits checks; advising on energy tariffs and on setting up oil buying clubs).
- 1.5 Encouraging energy efficient behaviour by working with community groups, schools etc and by taking part in campaigns such as the national Big Energy Saving Week.
- 1.6 Providing training for front line workers to help them recognise the signs of fuel poverty and advise on the support available to help.
- 1.7 Delivering an ongoing programme of awareness and advice (e.g. through press releases, websites, displays, newsletters, social media, at events etc).



## **Theme 2: Building a low carbon economy**

In Wyre Forest, 37% of carbon emissions arise from the industrial and commercial sector, including the public sector. This includes the energy used to heat and power our businesses and organisations and to run our services. Businesses also contribute significantly to transport emissions. Taking transport into account it is estimated that business activities account for about half of all greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions from this sector have fallen over the last few years, due to a number of factors- the recession, increased energy efficiency, the shift away from heavy industry and changes to the national energy mix.

Increasing energy prices have led to an increase in business interest in becoming more energy efficient, as shown through attendance at seminars on this topic and take up of grant schemes. Good energy management makes good economic as well as environmental sense. According to the Carbon Trust, for businesses, reducing energy bills by 20% can add the same amount to profits as a 5% increase in sales. Energy efficiency can contribute to aspirations to decouple the link between economic activity and carbon emissions.

As well as opportunities to reduce costs through resource efficiency, there are opportunities for 'green growth' for businesses setting up or diversifying into the environmental technologies sector, for example in renewable energy, electric vehicles, energy and waste management. In Wyre Forest and across Worcestershire there is a need for a greater understanding of the size and potential of the low carbon economy.

### **Building a low carbon economy: The story so far**

The Feed-in Tariff (FIT) is a government scheme to promote the uptake of small scale renewable electricity generation. The tariff provides a payment for both the generation and export of electricity from renewable/ low carbon sources. The latest available OFGEM report shows that between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010, when the scheme was launched, and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013, there were 350 accredited installations under the FIT scheme in Wyre Forest. All of these were photovoltaic panels; the vast majority were retrofits to domestic properties.

The Marches Environmental Technology Network (MetNet) promotes the development of environmental technologies in Worcestershire, as well as Herefordshire and Shropshire. MetNet promotes collaborative working amongst businesses providing products and services relating to environmental technologies such as pollution control, renewable energy, waste recovery and contaminated land remediation. For example, Kidderminster based renewable energy company Eco2Solar linked up with a Shropshire based environmental consultancy through MetNet in a business deal to help farmers and landowners make the most of renewable energy opportunities.

The two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to which Wyre Forest belong, Worcestershire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull, both have aspirations to enable a low carbon economy. WFDC is a member of the Worcestershire Nature Partnership, which is working with the Worcestershire LEP to develop the county's low carbon economy, for example through resource efficiency, skills development, business opportunities, green jobs and best practice sharing. WFDC is also represented on the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP's Green Commission and Low Carbon

group, and will work with partners on delivering a carbon roadmap to reduce emissions and encourage 'green growth'. Sustainability West Midlands, a regional advisory body, is working on a number of cross-LEP projects on the low carbon agenda, in order to share best practice and avoid duplication.

As part of work to develop the Green Deal and ECO, Encraft consultants produced a report, on behalf of Worcestershire councils, to identify opportunities in the county. The report identified the potential for investment in energy efficiency projects in homes and businesses across Worcestershire, for example though solid wall insulation. It is estimated in the report that more than 14,000 households in Wyre Forest have either un-insulated solid walls or hard-to-treat cavity walls. The report also looked at issues such as supply chain opportunities and skills requirements. This information will be used in the ongoing development of energy efficiency projects.

Energy and resource efficiency assessments and grants are available to small and medium sized businesses in the district, through a scheme run by Worcestershire County Council and the local Chamber of Commerce. In Wyre Forest to date, 22 companies have had a resource efficiency review through the scheme; of these 5 went on to receive grants funding totalling £32k, towards measures such as energy efficient lighting and equipment.

WFDC has a Carbon Management Plan, which aims to combat rising energy bills and reduce carbon emissions from its buildings and fleet by 30% over a 5 year period to 2017. When the plan was developed, it was estimated that carrying on with 'business as usual' would lead to an annual energy bill increase of £215k by 2017, whereas implementing the plan would lead to a £65k annual reduction in our energy bills. Projects to date have included installation of LED lighting at several sites, insulation measures, green driver training for fleet staff and inclusion of fuel efficiency features in fleet vehicle upgrades. Projects currently underway include further LED lighting installations and upgrades to appropriate heating systems.

#### **Case Study: Efficient lighting**

State-of- the- art new lighting has been installed at three Wyre Forest District Council sites, in a bid to slash energy bills and reduce carbon emissions. LED lighting is now in place at the council's Green Street Depot and offices, Kidderminster Town Hall and Hub, and Bewdley Museum.



LED lighting technology has advanced rapidly over recent years and can now be a viable option for commercial buildings. The LED lights installed use a fraction of the energy of the previous lights and are expected to lead to significant savings on the electricity bill. LED lighting has a much longer lifespan than other lighting, which will also lead to a reduction in maintenance costs. The costs of the installation are expected to be recouped within 2 to 3 years though the savings made

**Building a low carbon economy: Overall aims**

Contribute to county targets to reduce emissions from businesses by 19% from 2009 by 2020.

Maximise the opportunities for Wyre Forest residents and businesses in the development of a green economy.

**How we will do this:**

2.1. Work with the Local Enterprise Partnerships and regional bodies such as Sustainability West Midlands in developing the low carbon economy.

2.2. Participate in the development and promotion of county wide low carbon schemes, ensuring that Wyre Forest businesses get their 'fair share' (e.g. through energy efficiency project work, supply chain and training opportunities).

2.3. Promote relevant low carbon support opportunities (e.g. networks, grants, FITs) to Wyre Forest businesses and organisations.

2.4. Lead by example in reducing our own energy use and carbon emissions, through implementation of the carbon management plan.

2.5. Encourage sustainable procurement and lead by example in our own procurement decisions.

2.6. Ensure low carbon economy opportunities are considered in relevant strategies and developments (e.g. green tourism?)

**3. Transport and Infrastructure**

In order to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and our carbon emissions, we will need to make significant changes to our infrastructure. We need to start planning now in order to achieve the required level of cuts in emissions- 80% by 2050. We need to consider how we design our buildings and towns, travel, deal with our waste and generate/ use energy.

Planning policies and building regulations are gradually changing to facilitate lower carbon development, for example by guiding the types and location of new developments and by requiring increasingly energy efficient new buildings. It is estimated that 80% of buildings in existence today will still exist in 2050, so retrofitting energy efficiency measures to these buildings will also be necessary.

In Worcestershire, an estimated 5% of Gross Value Added (GVA) is spent on energy to heat and power buildings. Much of this money leaves the local economy, going to companies outside of the county. Using imported energy more efficiently may help reduce energy bills; increasing the proportion of energy sourced from local renewable resources may also be beneficial to the local economy.

More than a quarter of carbon emissions in Wyre Forest arise from road transport and traffic congestion is an issue in the three main towns. Encouraging and enabling residents and

businesses to adopt more low carbon means of transport, such as public transport, electric vehicle use, walking and cycling, can provide many benefits including increased opportunities for exercise, reduced congestion and improved air quality.

### **Transport and Infrastructure: The story so far**

The Wyre Forest Local Development Framework is a portfolio of documents setting out what type of development is to be located where and which areas of land are to be safeguarded. The LDF's Core Strategy was adopted in 2010 and covers the period to 2026. This is the key strategic level document for development in the district, centred on key issues and challenges, including the need to adapt to and mitigate against climate change. Sites for new development identified and allocated in other LDF documents, the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (KCAAP), need to meet the requirements of the adopted Core Strategy.

In the Wyre Forest and Worcestershire, the amount of energy generated from renewable sources forms a very small percentage of the total energy use. Locally, residents and organisations are signposted to national incentive schemes such as the Feed-in Tariff and Renewable Heat Incentive, which aim to increase renewable energy generation. The government's new Heat Delivery Network Unit has been set up to support local authorities progress the development of local heat delivery networks (e.g. district heating schemes). There may be opportunities, e.g. through the Local Enterprise Partnerships, to investigate the potential for, and the benefits of, local heat networks.

The Wyre Forest Cycle Forum was formed in 1998 to promote cycling within the area. The Forum acts as a facilitator and consultee for all matters relating to cycling. Members of the Forum work to raise the public's awareness towards cycling and to ensure that new infrastructure for cyclists is convenient and safe to use. Activities have included the provision of advice to the local highways authorities on local cycling infrastructure and the organisation of events for the annual national Bike Week.



### **Case study: Tackling climate change through the Wyre Forest Core Strategy**

Wyre Forest District Council's adopted Core Strategy has 4 key themes, one of which is 'Adapting to and Mitigating against Climate Change.'

The strategy includes a policy on Delivering Sustainable Development Standards, setting out requirements on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, including:

- All new development proposals within the District must demonstrate how they reduce their impact on the environment. The design, layout, siting, orientation, construction method and materials used should seek to maximise energy conservation and efficiency.
- A minimum of 10% of the energy requirements of major new developments should be met on-site from low or zero-carbon energy sources. The technologies installed should be retained and maintained during the full lifetime of the building. Consideration should be given to the use of combined heat and power systems on larger sites, particularly on industrial sites or sites of new community infrastructure.
- Free-standing renewable energy developments will be supported, subject to them meeting the requirements of all other policies within the Local Development Framework.
- The implementation of the Code for Sustainable Homes will be supported in line with the national timescale. Developers will be encouraged to meet a higher code level than is mandatory where this is economically viable. Non-residential buildings will be encouraged to achieve a BREEAM rating of 'very good' or higher.

The Core Strategy also includes a policy on promoting transport choice and accessibility. Development proposals should have full regard to the traffic impact on the local highway network and developers are required to provide a Travel Plan for major development proposals, demonstrating full consideration of access by all modes of transport. Where appropriate, new developments are required to connect into the surrounding infrastructure and contribute towards new or improved walking and cycling facilities and the provision of an integrated public transport network.

Development and implementation of relevant planning policies to assist in the transition towards a low carbon economy.

Contribute to county targets to treble the amount of energy generated from renewable sources (2012-2020), recognising the importance of public perception in renewable energy developments.

Contribute to county targets to reduce emissions from road transport by 10% from 2009 by 2020.

**How we will do this:**

- 3.1 Seek to encourage low carbon development and sustainable travel through the development and implementation of relevant planning policies.
- 3.2 Participate in activity to investigate the potential for local heat networks and renewable energy.
- 3.3 Encourage cycling through training, awareness and facilitating cycling infrastructure improvements, e.g. through the Wyre Forest Cycle Forum.
- 3.4 Lead by example by encouraging our staff, Members and visitors to use lower carbon forms of transport.

**4. Healthy and Resilient Communities**

The impact of both rising energy costs and a changing climate have been, and will continue to be, felt by our communities in various ways. In the context of this strategy, healthy and resilient communities will work together to reduce reliance on fossil fuels (for example through local food production and energy generation) and be resilient to the impacts of climate change and the associated changes in our weather.

In order to meet the scale of the challenge of climate change, action is required across different aspects of our lives and will require the involvement of all sectors of the community. Community engagement through awareness-raising and active participation in decision making will be vital for these aims to be met. For the necessary changes to be carried out, our communities need to understand why action needs to happen, what they can do themselves, what their role can be and be helped to do this.

#### **Healthy and Resilient Communities: The story so far**

- The Transition Network is an international network of voluntary, community-led initiatives. Each transition initiative (a village, town or city) is working to help their community become more resilient by reducing reliance on fossil fuels, for example by promoting local food production, energy efficiency and renewable energy and more sustainable transport. There are currently nine transition initiatives in Worcestershire, including groups in Kidderminster and Bewdley. The council has provided some officer support for these groups, such as assistance in organising events and producing promotional materials.
- The 'Growing Worcestershire' initiative aims to promote the benefits of buying local food and growing your own, to reduce food miles and associated carbon emissions, and to improve resilience to climate change in the natural environment and in agriculture. Stakeholders from across Worcestershire, including various organisations in Wyre Forest, attended a launch event in November 2013, to map activity, identify opportunities and barriers and begin to develop a local food strategy. A Growing Your Own event, held at Bishop's Wood Centre (near Stourport) in March 2014, was attended by 300+ people and supported by various Wyre Forest organisations.
- Transition Kidderminster and Transition Bewdley both have their own Food Groups. In Kidderminster, the transition group has organised a plant swap event and a talk on permaculture gardening, and is involved in a project to set up a community allotment in Birchen Coppice.
- Any school is an important part of its local community. The Eco-schools award scheme encourages everyone in the school community to get involved in improving the school, local and global environment. It involves pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff, governors and members of the local community. Worcestershire is a leading county on the Eco-schools programme, with support from the county council. In Wyre Forest 46 schools and nurseries are participating in the scheme; of these 11 have achieved the prestigious Green Flag award.

- The Warmer Worcestershire Network was recently awarded funding through DECC's Green Deal Communities Fund. The money is to be used for making 'harder to treat' properties more energy efficient, and will be delivered through community groups throughout the county, including Transition Kidderminster, with support from the local authorities.
- The Government released its first Community Energy Strategy in January 2014. The strategy recognises the role of local communities, alongside government, large companies and investors, in maintaining energy security, helping keep down energy costs and tackling climate change. Local authorities have a role to play in community projects to generate, use, manage and purchase energy, for example through planning policy and provision of support to apply for funding and develop project ideas.
- In the past, the council has carried out work to assess the impacts of extreme weather events, on our communities and services, and to identify the potential impacts of further climate change upon the district and possible adaptation measures. Flooding, for example, whether from water courses or surface water, is predicted to become more frequent as our climate changes and managing this is a key function of the North Worcestershire Water Management Team, hosted by WFDC.

**Case study: Transition Bewdley**



Transition Bewdley was established in 2011 and focuses on land use/ food and energy. Their Land Group identified a need for increased space to grow food in the town so have promoted a national garden share scheme and have been trying to identify land for allotments. Negotiations with the Town Council resulted in the development of a community garden on the Millenium Green. Some individuals were able to negotiate shared use of private land for their own projects. The group also ran a family gardening event in Jubilee Gardens and are involved in the Growing Worcestershire project. Members have also been instrumental in developing a Bewdley Apple Co-op, bread making courses, a local Community Land Trust and plans are advancing for a Local Food Centre.

The Energy Group organised an event to explore making buildings in the conservation area more energy efficient. They coordinated a successful Energy Tracers pilot project using thermal imaging cameras to survey 5 old houses and to identify ways in which they can be improved for energy efficiency without compromising architectural conservation. Approx 20 energy champions have been trained. The group are identifying potential sites for community owned renewable energy schemes.

Two young volunteers who carried out projects for Transition Bewdley while based at Bewdley Development Trust have gone on to full time employment as a result of their involvement. One who developed the Transition Bewdley website moved into full time work in the IT field. Another who organised two "renewable energy" weekends and who designed several energy conservation and renewable energy leaflets went on to work for Worcestershire County Council.

**Healthy and Resilient Communities: Overall aims**



- Help Wyre Forest's communities and organisations to prepare for the impacts of climate change.
- Build capacity within Wyre Forest communities to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and become more healthy and resilient.

**How we will do this**

4.1 Work with local community groups to organise events e.g. Wyre Forest Energy Day

4.2 Support the development of local transition groups.

4.3. Provide appropriate assistance to community groups in investigating community renewable energy and energy efficiency schemes.

4.4. Assist in low carbon promotions to the school community (e.g. through Ecoschools and the 'My Money' initiative).

4.5 Identify and publicise funding opportunities for local community groups to deliver low carbon projects.

4.6 Support schemes to encourage food growing and to reduce food waste.

4.7 Participate in county activity to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

**Delivery of this strategy**

This strategy will be delivered through a range of partners and in part via other plans and strategies. An annual action plan will be developed. Progress on delivery will be reported to the appropriate committee each year.

**Agenda Item No. 8**  
**Appendix 1**

| <b>Warmer, Healthier Homes</b>                                                                         | <b>Apr 14</b> | <b>May 14</b> | <b>Jun 14</b> | <b>Jul 14</b> | <b>Aug 14</b> | <b>Sep 14</b> | <b>Oct 14</b> | <b>Nov 14</b> | <b>Dec 14</b> | <b>Jan 15</b> | <b>Feb 15</b> | <b>Mar 15</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Energy Advice Surgery at Kidderminster Town Hall                                                    |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 2. Develop and deliver park home insulation project                                                    |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 3. Produce advice/ information on setting up oil buying clubs                                          |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 4. Energy advice at the Showcase of Services for Older People                                          |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 5. Promote and deliver schemes to install energy efficiency measures e.g. insulation, boiler upgrades. |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 6. Provision of energy advice to school students through talks, events and the My Money initiative.    |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 7. Home Safe Home events at the 3 main fire stations                                                   |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 8. Energy advice at at least 3 flu jab clinics                                                         |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 9. 'Services on your Doorstep' surveys and referrals                                                   |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 10. Affordable Warmth training sessions for front line workers, Members etc.                           |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 11. Produce a stakeholder update on current energy efficiency schemes                                  |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 12. Investigate opportunities for collective switching for residents.                                  |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 13. Hold an affordable warmth networking event for relevant partners.                                  |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 14. Take part in the national Big Energy Saving Week                                                   |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 15. Submit Home Energy Conservation Act update report to DECC                                          |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| <b>Building a low carbon economy</b>                                                                   | <b>Apr 14</b> | <b>May 14</b> | <b>Jun 14</b> | <b>Jul 14</b> | <b>Aug 14</b> | <b>Sep 14</b> | <b>Oct 14</b> | <b>Nov 14</b> | <b>Dec 14</b> | <b>Jan 15</b> | <b>Feb 15</b> | <b>Mar 15</b> |
| 16. Publicise available resource efficiency support to local businesses and encourage uptake.          |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 17. Subject to business case, install LED lighting at relevant WFDC sites.                             |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 18. Subject to business case, install at upgrades to heating and controls at relevant WFDC sites.      |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| 19. Subject to business case, install energy efficiency measures at the museum store.                  |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |

**Agenda Item No. 8**  
**Appendix 1**

| <b>Transport and Infrastructure</b>                                                                                                       | Apr 14 | May 14 | Jun 14 | Jul 14 | Aug 14 | Sep 14 | Oct 14 | Nov 14 | Dec 14 | Jan 15 | Feb 15 | Mar 15 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 20.Contribute to development of Design Guidance policy review.                                                                            |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 21.Organise/ participate in awareness events for national Bike Week                                                                       |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 22.Apply for funding through the cycle forum to run adult Bikeability training                                                            |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>Healthy and resilient communities</b>                                                                                                  | Apr 14 | May 14 | Jun 14 | Jul 14 | Aug 14 | Sep 14 | Oct 14 | Nov 14 | Dec 14 | Jan 15 | Feb 15 | Mar 15 |
| 23.Identify and publicise funding opportunities for local community groups to deliver low carbon projects.                                |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 24.Ongoing participation in county wide activity on climate change adaptation.                                                            |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 25.Provide appropriate support to local transition groups (e.g. assistance with events and promotions)                                    |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 26.Provide appropriate assistance to community groups in investigating community renewable energy and energy efficiency schemes.          |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 27.Participate in Growing Worcestershire activity to encourage local food growing.                                                        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 28.Investigate opportunities to distribute surplus fresh produce through the local food banks.                                            |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>Cross-cutting actions</b>                                                                                                              | Apr 14 | May 14 | Jun 14 | Jul 14 | Aug 14 | Sep 14 | Oct 14 | Nov 14 | Dec 14 | Jan 15 | Feb 15 | Mar 15 |
| 29.Ongoing awareness for staff, Members and visitors on energy and fuel saving.                                                           |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 30.Ongoing development of/ participation in LEPS' low carbon activities.                                                                  |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 31.Ongoing development & delivery of Warmer Worcestershire Green Deal/ ECO funded schemes, maximising opportunities for local businesses. |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 32.Communications on energy (websites, events, press releases, social media etc)                                                          |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 33.Develop & deliver ECO/ DECC 'Green Deal Communities/ funded external wall insulation project                                           |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 34.Collate and submit WFDC's greenhouse gas emissions 2013/14 report to DECC                                                              |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 35.Wyre Forest Energy Day at Kidderminster Town Hall                                                                                      |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |

# **JOINT WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY TASK GROUP**



**June 2014**



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

**This page is intentionally left blank**

## Contents

|                                                                               | <b>Page No</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Membership of the Task Group                                               | 1              |
| 2. Foreword from the Chairman & Vice Chairman                                 | 2              |
| 3. Summary of Recommendations                                                 | 4              |
| 4. Introduction and Background Information                                    | 11             |
| 5. Chapter 1 – WRS Performance and Communications                             | 15             |
| 6. Chapter 2 – Financing of WRS                                               | 20             |
| 7. Chapter 3 – Governance of WRS                                              | 24             |
| 8. Chapter 4 – Lessons Learned                                                | 34             |
| 9. Conclusion                                                                 | 41             |
| 10. Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference                                           | 42             |
| 11. Appendix 2 – Framework for Joint Overview & Scrutiny in<br>Worcestershire | 44             |
| 12. Appendix 3 – Summary of Meetings and Attendance Record                    | 47             |
| 13. Appendix 4 - List of Services Provided by WRS                             | 49             |
| 14. Appendix 5 - Acknowledgements                                             | 50             |
| 15. Appendix 6 - Declarations of Interest                                     | 51             |

**This page is intentionally left blank**

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP



**(From left to right) Councillors Peter Tomlinson (Vice Chairman), Simon Cronin, Rod Laight (Chairman), Richard Udall, Alan Mason and John Raine.**

The Members in the photograph above regularly attended the meetings.

| <u>Lead Member</u> | <u>Substitute</u> | <u>Authority</u>  |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Rod Laight         | Pete Lammas       | Bromsgrove DC     |
| John Raine         | Mike Morgan       | Malvern Hills DC  |
| Alan Mason         | Gay Hopkins       | Redditch BC       |
| Simon Cronin       | Paul Denham       | Worcester City    |
| Richard Udall      | Lynn Duffy        | Worcestershire CC |
| Peter Tomlinson    | Alastair Adams    | Wychavon DC       |
| Helen Dyke         | Tim Ingham        | Wyre Forest DC    |

### SUPPORTING OFFICER DETAILS

Amanda Scarce – Democratic Services Officer

[a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)

Jess Bayley – Democratic Services Officer

[jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)



## **Foreword from the Chairman and Vice Chairman**

This group came together for the first time in late September 2013. Since then we have met together on 14 further occasions. Our journey together has been taxing, concentrated, at times somewhat frustrating but, in the main, both fulfilling and stimulating. At no time have the divisions which separate us politically played any part whatsoever in our discussions, deliberations or our conclusions. Indeed it became clear from the outset that whatever views individual members of this Task Group may have held about Worcestershire Regulatory Services or whatever their own experiences may have been prior to the review, every single Member was prepared to wipe that individual slate clean and to approach the task with an open and enquiring mind. Working as a team on this Task Group has therefore proved to be very demanding though, for each of us, one of our most worthwhile experiences as Councillors to date.

And it has been some task! We have interviewed 16 people including regulatory professionals, senior Officers from the districts and elected Members representing all the partners in this complex organisation. We have asked for and been given evidence about the performance of WRS in all the areas it covers and we have circulated our own survey amongst elected Members. The overall success of this Joint Scrutiny has been achieved by a team working well together with trust and integrity.

It must be said that all those interviewed by the Task Group have been honest, open and forthright. In particular the Head of Regulatory Services, Steve Jorden, along with his team have been very open and transparent. We have had to listen to and digest a plethora of often divergent views from those sitting on the same Committee. But it would be fair to say that where contrary opinions were put to us they were expressed coherently and with passion. Without exception all those we spoke to believed in Worcestershire Regulatory Services and wanted it to succeed. As our knowledge of the workings of this organisation grew and as we took the pulse, as it were, of all those involved we became ever more certain that the challenge we had taken on was not only timely but vital to the survival of Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

The majority of members of the Task Group took their responsibilities very seriously, though unfortunately the representatives from Wyre Forest District Council were unable to attend the majority of meetings. Similarly in most cases those invited to attend our meetings to be interviewed by us came willingly and in a spirit of co-operation. There was, however, one exception, which again we found most disappointing and that was, when given ample notice, no senior Officer was able to attend from Worcestershire County Council. A written response to our questions was provided by the County Council but this allowed no cross examination. Throughout our work, experience proved that whilst written answers were useful, the real meat then came from our probing of those answers.

We think we speak for all of us on this Task Group when we say that our work though onerous and demanding has been both enlightening and fulfilling. Now that the end is in sight we hope that our recommendations will help underpin the future of WRS. It has achieved so much in such a short space of time it deserves to succeed.

On behalf of all the Task Group Members we would like to thank our two Democratic Services Officers Amanda Scarce and Jess Bayley who have kept us on the straight and narrow, prompted us when we stalled, found the evidence we knew we had heard but had forgotten, nudged us with both advice and insight and generally kept this unique group of disparate individuals good tempered, courteous and above all focused. Thank you both, we could not have done it without you.



**Councillor Rod Laight (Bromsgrove District Council)  
Chairman (pictured on the right)  
Councillor Peter Tomlinson (Wychavon District Council)  
Vice Chairman**

## Summary of Recommendations

After consideration of all the evidence available (both documentary and from the interviews and other consultations) the Task Group have proposed the following recommendations (with full details of the supporting evidence provided in the chapters following this summary):

### **CHAPTER 1 - WRS PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNICATIONS**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 1</b>                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Performance Management Information should continue to be made available for Members' consideration at every meeting of the Joint Committee and be sufficiently high on the agenda to be discussed in detail. |
| <b>Financial Implications:</b><br>There are no financial implications for WRS.                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Legal Implications:</b><br>There are no legal implications to this recommendation.                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Resource Implications:</b><br>Additional officer time may be required should extra meetings be introduced as suggested under recommendation 9.                                                            |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 2</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Twelve months after the new contact centre arrangements for WRS have been introduced, replacing the use of the Worcestershire Hub, the Joint Committee should review the effectiveness of these arrangements for communicating with the public. |
| <b>Financial Implications:</b><br>There are no financial implications.                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Legal Implications:</b><br>There are no legal implications to this recommendation.                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Resource Implications:</b><br>Additional officer time would be required in order to produce this additional report.                                                                                                                          |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 3</b>                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| The web-pages of each partner authority should be regularly monitored to ensure they are kept up to date, with the inclusion of a prominent and obvious link to the WRS website.                                     |
| <b>Financial Implications:</b><br>There are no financial implications to WRS.                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Legal Implications:</b><br>There are no legal implications to this recommendation.                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Resource Implications:</b><br>There would be additional Officers' time from within WRS for the monitoring to take place and to follow up on any extra actions necessary identified during the monitoring process. |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 4</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| The purpose, content and circulation of the WRS newsletter should be thoroughly reviewed, with a view to it providing a more systematic and comprehensive account of the work and performance of the shared service, and with the content and format being agreed by the Joint Committee.                                                               |
| <b>Financial Implications:</b><br>There are no financial implications for WRS.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Legal Implications:</b><br>There are no legal implications to this recommendation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Resource Implications:</b><br>A small amount of additional Officer time will be required to review the content of the newsletter and to present it to meetings of the Joint Committee. However, it is likely that the Officers from WRS who already attend meetings of the Joint Committee could present this item for the consideration of Members. |

|                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 5</b>                                                                                                                                           |
| That WRS have a designated member of staff to act as a Member Liaison Officer and as a single point of contact to signpost Member enquiries.                      |
| <b>Financial Implications:</b><br>There are no financial implications as it should be possible for this work to be undertaken by an existing member of WRS staff. |
| <b>Legal Implications:</b><br>There are no legal implications to this recommendation.                                                                             |
| <b>Resource Implications:</b><br>There would be additional Officer time required from the member of WRS staff designated to this role.                            |

## **CHAPTER 2 - FINANCING OF WRS**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 6</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p>In order to reduce the focus on financial considerations which currently play a major part in influencing partner participation, to the detriment of other equally important aspects of the service, the following should be addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) A new business model for WRS be developed through the Chief Executives' Panel, building on the proposals already being produced by the Panel.</li> <li>(b) Consideration be given to the option for partner authorities to purchase an "out of hours service".</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Financial Implications:</b><br>Initially there would be no financial implications from carrying out this review. It is acknowledged, however, that the intention behind this recommendation is to identify a financial model that would stabilise the funding of WRS in the long term.<br><br>Should this financial model vary to the charging mechanism already in place there may be additional costs for certain partners (with reductions in costs for others). The impact of any variances would have to be considered by partner Councils.<br><br>Each local authority needs to be aware that the option to introduce an out of hours' regulatory service in their area has significant financial implications in term of the Council's financial contribution to the service. Out of hours services are not currently available anywhere in the county and so would require additional expenditure from partners. |

**Legal Implications:**

The existing legal agreement includes a Statement of Partner Requirements, which can be agreed with the Joint Committee. Should the charging model be revised the legal agreement would have to be amended to reflect this and it would have to be approved by the Joint Committee and the Partners.

**Resource Implications:**

Initially Officer time would be required to carry out the exploratory work although the group understand that the Chief Executives' Panel have already been investigating this matter.

**CHAPTER 3 - GOVERNANCE OF WRS**

**Recommendation 7**

A new strategic decision making board for WRS should replace the Joint Committee, comprising one elected member per partner authority and supported by senior officers. This should be called the WRS Board.

- (a) Meetings of this Board should take place at the base of WRS.
- (b) Responsibility for attendance at Board meetings should lie with each authority's representative, and the quorum for meetings proceeding should be set at 5 representatives in attendance.
- (c) Meetings of the Board should take place bi-monthly.
- (d) Elected members appointed to the Board should be provided with an induction programme and sufficient ongoing training to enable them to fulfil their role effectively.
- (e) Members appointed to the Board be expected to serve a minimum of two years to ensure continuity.
- (f) The Chair of the WRS Board should be elected annually by the members of the Board.

**Financial Implications:**

Initially there would be some financial implications for this proposal, but these are likely to be quite limited. In particular there would be financial implications in respect of additional meetings of the WRS Board and in relation to holding an induction programme and on-going training.

**Legal Implications:**

This proposal fundamentally affects the constitution of the Joint Committee under s101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and s20 of the Local Government Act 2000 as established by the founding legal agreement dated 1 June 2009 and would essentially require a re-negotiation of it by member authorities.

**Resource Implications:**

There would be resource implications in terms of Officer time in preparing additional agendas and minutes for the extra meetings and in planning and delivering suitable training. This could be offset by the fact that Democratic

Services Officers would no longer need to spend time ensuring that the meetings are quorate.

There may also be some initial resource implications in relation to convening meetings at the base of WRS (currently Wyatt House in Worcester) as opposed to Bromsgrove Council House where meetings are currently held.

### Recommendation 8

The Management Board be disbanded, with the WRS Management Team taking the lead responsibility for operational decision making under the leadership of the Head of Regulatory Services.

#### **Financial Implications:**

There would be a “one off” financial implication due to having to change the partnership’s legal agreement, although this is likely to be limited.

#### **Legal Implications:**

This recommendation would require changes to the current legal agreement for WRS and each partner would need to approve these changes.

#### **Resource Implications:**

The Officers currently serving on the Management Board would potentially have greater freedom to concentrate on the service needs within their remits of their own authorities.

There are no particular resource implications for WRS staff as operational considerations relating to regulatory services are already within their professional area of expertise.

### Recommendation 9

- (a) The Head of WRS should be fully accountable to the WRS Board (as the strategic decision making body).
- (b) The Chief Executive of the host authority to act in a mentoring role as and when necessary.

#### **Financial Implications:**

There are no financial implications.

#### **Legal Implications:**

This will require an amendment to the existing legal agreement as the role of the Management Board and the Head of WRS are set out therein.

#### **Resource Implications:**

There are no resource implications. In fact if the Head of Regulatory Services was to report to a single body this might help to reduce both financial and resource implications for all partners.

## **CHAPTER 4 - LESSONS LEARNED**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 10</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) All decisions made by the WRS Board be formally reported back to all elected members of the partner authorities in a timely manner.</li> <li>(b) Attention should be paid to communicating updates about any planned changes to WRS services to all elected members of partner authorities..</li> <li>(c) The agendas and minutes of all WRS Board meetings should also be uploaded on to the WRS website in a timely fashion.</li> </ul>                                                                                 |
| <b>Financial Implications:</b><br>There are no financial implications.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Legal Implications:</b><br>(a) Minutes of the meetings of the Joint Committee are referred to the participating Councils where further discussion is possible and in some cases agreement required.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Resource Implications:</b><br>This could potentially require Members appointed to the WRS Board to spend additional time formally reporting back to their Councils about the work of WRS and the Board. In addition, the Democratic Services Officers at each Council would need to spend a limited amount of time uploading the agendas and minutes on to their websites, together with a representative from WRS carrying out this work on the WRS website. This should be fairly easy to achieve as the host authority provides a prepared pack for uploading. |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 11</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| The lessons learned from the WRS shared service experience, particularly as detailed in this report, should be heeded by elected members and senior officers when considering any future proposals for shared service arrangements involving multiple partners.                                                           |
| <b>Financial Implications:</b><br>There are no direct financial implications. However, by reviewing the lessons learned from the WRS Shared Service when considering future proposals for shared services elected members and senior Officers could potentially save partner organisations a significant amount of money. |
| <b>Legal Implications:</b><br>There are no legal implications to this recommendation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |



**Resource Implications:**

Officer time would be required to consider these lessons, though the time required would vary dependent on the shared service being considered.

**Recommendation 12**

- (a) The Joint Scrutiny Protocol should be reviewed in order to take on board the lessons learned during this review.
- (b) Consideration should be given to the reinstatement of the Worcestershire Overview and Scrutiny Chairs Group as a means of feeding back the monitoring of recommendations from Joint Scrutiny exercises, as and when required.

**Financial Implications:**

There are no financial implications.

**Legal Implications:**

There are no legal implications to this recommendation.

**Resource Implications:**

Officer time would be required from representatives of all the Democratic Service teams at each authority in Worcestershire to review this document.

## **Introduction and Background Information**

### Background to the Joint Scrutiny

Wychavon District Council originally proposed that Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) should be subject to a joint scrutiny (in July 2012). Each Council within Worcestershire was consulted about the proposal and all had agreed to participate by spring 2013. Draft terms of reference were drawn up by Wychavon District Council and in line with the agreed framework for joint scrutiny in Worcestershire, each Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered and approved these terms of reference by May 2013.

The potential role of Overview and Scrutiny in holding the Joint Committee and WRS officers to account had in fact been considered in the original partnership agreement for the shared service. However, whilst Overview and Scrutiny was clearly recognised as having a legitimate role to play in this regard, it had also been felt unreasonably onerous for the Head of Regulatory Services to have to report to seven different scrutiny committees across the County. Therefore, as part of the original legal agreement, partners had determined that scrutiny should not be undertaken by any one Overview and Scrutiny Committee but, rather, should be carried out jointly. This review has been conducted in accordance with that principle as a collective exercise.

The terms of reference included the following main tasks (full details are provided at Appendix 1):

- To review the final business case for the shared service (as agreed by the participating Councils) against current operation.
- To compare the previous service levels of each participating Council compared with current levels and those outlined in the final business case.
- To establish the performance of the service for participating Councils prior to and since the establishment of the shared service.
- To review levels of customer satisfaction prior to and following establishment of the shared service and how feedback informs practice.
- To consider the governance arrangements between the shared service and the participating Councils to include how changes to the service requested by one or more Councils can be achieved.

It was agreed that the Scrutiny Task Group should comprise one representative from each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees of the partner authorities and for there to be a named substitute for each. It was also agreed that each representative, or their substitute, should be either the Chair or Vice Chair of their Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

At the first meeting of the Scrutiny Task Group the nominated members elected as their Chair, Councillor Rod Laight (being the representative for the

WRS host authority, Bromsgrove District Council). Councillor Peter Tomlinson, from Wychavon District Council, was appointed as Vice Chair.

### Evidence gathering

The Task Group gathered evidence through a range of means, including scrutiny of relevant documentation and interviews with various representatives of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee (the elected member decision making body for the shared service), the Management Board (comprising officer representatives from each partner authority who advise the Joint Committee), the WRS management team and officers of the host authority (Bromsgrove District Council). The Group also consulted with parish councillors and other elected members from across the County, who were neither on the Joint Committee nor on the Task Group, to find out about their experiences of working with WRS. The feedback provided through this consultation process has been greatly valued and has helped to inform its conclusions. However, the Task Group would like it to be noted that, since only a very small number of councillors responded, the wider representativeness of the feedback received was difficult to gauge.

Consideration was given at an early stage to the potential for a questionnaire to be circulated to obtain feedback from members of the public and from local businesses about the services they had received from WRS. Whilst the Task Group would undoubtedly have benefited from such additional feedback it was concerned about the difficulties involved in obtaining a suitably large or representative sample of responses from across the County. For this reason it was agreed that it should rely instead on the already available 'complaints and compliments' data held by WRS as a basis for assessing the level of customer satisfaction with the services.

At various stages of the review, updates were provided both to Task Group members and to the Democratic Services teams at participating authorities for use when reporting back to partner Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The lead Member from each authority was also encouraged to inform colleagues about progress with the joint scrutiny review as and when appropriate.

### Background to Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS)

The shared Worcestershire Regulatory Service (WRS) was initially conceived as part of the Worcestershire Enhanced Two Tier (WETT) programme in 2009. Each of the seven authorities in Worcestershire expressed an interest at this stage in participating in the shared service. Three key principles underpinned the design of the shared service as follows:

1. Achievement of service improvement and increased effectiveness.
2. Achievement of greater efficiency, cost savings and return on investment.
3. Achievement of a greater degree of sharing of resources for service delivery.

These key principles underpinned thinking in the drafting of the partnership agreement for WRS where it was specifically stated that the shared service had been established “*for the purpose of achieving financial efficiencies, sharing resources and improving delivery of services*”.

Wychavon, Worcestershire County and Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils each submitted a bid to host the shared regulatory service. Initially, the County Council was considered best placed to take on this role. However, at the request of the Worcestershire Chief Executives’ Panel, an independent external evaluation was requested, from a private sector partner and in September 2009, this concluded that Bromsgrove District Council would be the most appropriate host authority.

The shared WRS service was subsequently launched in 2010. Each of the councils signed up to the current partnership agreement for the service in June of that year. This established the governance arrangements for the service, which included a Joint Committee (of elected members from each partner organisation), a Management Board (of officers from each authority) and a WRS management team (of senior practitioners from the new shared service). The agreement also established arrangements for withdrawal from the service, a scheme of delegated responsibilities and financial arrangements, as well as detailing the arrangements for transferring all regulatory staff from their respective local authorities into the employment of the host authority.

Under the terms of the hosting arrangement, Bromsgrove District Council accepted responsibility for the following:

- Arranging suitable accommodation.
- Administration of the Joint Committee.
- Audit services.
- Data protection and information security.
- HR and personnel services.
- Financial services.
- ICT services (and licensing of ICT systems and equipment).
- Insurance.
- Legal services.
- Pensions and procurement.

(It should be noted that whilst Bromsgrove District Council is the host authority, each partner authority contributes to the overhead costs).

At an early stage partners agreed that the shared service needed to be based at a single location, even though staff would be required to work across the County as necessary. It was also agreed that the base should be a building already in the ownership of one of the partner authorities. A number of such buildings were assessed and Wyatt House in Worcester (owned by Worcester City Council) was eventually identified as offering the most suitable base. Accordingly, WRS entered into a 10 year lease for the premises.

### The Role of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS)

WRS covers three key service areas

- Trading Standards
- Licensing
- Environmental Health

(A more detailed list of the constituent activities is provided at Appendix 4).

Key elements of Trading Standards are statutory responsibilities of County Councils in two tier authority areas (and remain so ultimately even under the shared service arrangement). However, WRS also undertakes a number of trading standards-related activities that are discretionary. The main trading standards functions are; fair trading/consumer protection, product safety, food standards, metrology and animal health and welfare.

Environmental Health functions, on the other hand, are primarily a responsibility of district councils, (again even under a shared service arrangement). These include responsibility for food safety/hygiene, nuisance complaints (e.g. noise), air quality and pollution, and health and safety, again with some statutory responsibilities and some discretionary activities.

There are certain licensing functions which, under the terms of the Licensing Acts 2003 and 2005, remain the responsibility of district councils in a shared service environment. Each district council must determine the fees for licenses in its area and each must have a Licensing Committee and Sub-Committee(s) which make (quasi-judicial) decisions about whether to grant licensing applications. Licenses can be provided for a range of services including taxis, alcohol and gambling establishments and a raft of other regimes. The role of WRS in this context is to provide expert advice to each council and to deliver the services required.

On the whole the majority of trading standards, environmental health and licensing services are provided by WRS consistently across the County. However, there are a few services which certain local authorities within the partnership have chosen not to receive (for example Malvern Hills District Council does not receive a pest control service). All service choices are taken into account when calculating the financial contributions made by each local authority to the partnership.

# Chapter 1

## **WRS Performance and Communications**

### Performance

This particular joint scrutiny review was launched largely as a result of concerns raised by members from Overview and Scrutiny Committees about the limited information apparently available about the performance of WRS. Requests had been made for performance data to be provided alongside equivalent performance data for the services as provided previously under in-house arrangements by each council.

The Task Group learned that, in the original business case, it had been agreed that WRS performance would be measured in accordance with the five relevant national indicators (NIs) set by the then government. However the launch of WRS coincided with a change in national government in 2010 and the scrapping of the national indicator framework. WRS took advantage of this change and of the new discretion on local authority performance measurement, choosing an outcomes-based model in preference to the largely output-based national performance indicators approach. This was agreed by both the Management Board and the Joint Committee.

The Task Group has thus found it difficult to assess performance and particularly to draw comparisons between the periods before and after the launch of WRS because of the absence of a consistent series of data. Indeed, it found there to be a very limited amount of relevant performance information available for the individual partner authorities prior to WRS with the result that it was difficult for the Task Group to address objective three of the terms of reference in any real depth.

The Task Group also learned of the considerable difficulties WRS had encountered in its first four years in putting in place an integrated ICT support system. Although the original business case for WRS had envisaged an early procurement process for an appropriate ICT system to support the new service, this proved a more protracted process than expected and the service has had to rely on at least 20 different legacy ICT systems for several years. Indeed, at the start of this scrutiny review in September 2013 six of those legacy systems still remained in place and were clearly a continuing source of inefficiency.

The Task Group was informed by the Head of Regulatory Services that the subject of how best to meet the ICT requirements of WRS had been extensively discussed within the Management Board and culminated in a decision to procure something bespoke for the new service rather than an “off the shelf” package, even though this was recognised as meaning further delay and greater cost. Four years on the specially tailored ICT system is finally in place and at last, there is the basis for provision of good quality management and performance information.

The Task Group is keen that such information should, from now on, be available at every meeting of the Joint Committee. Moreover, the Task Group think that such performance reports should be placed sufficiently high on the agendas to ensure that elected members have the opportunity to consider them in a diligent and constructive manner.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

| <b>Recommendation 1</b>                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Performance Management Information should continue to be made available for Members' consideration at every meeting of the Joint Committee and be sufficiently high on the agenda to be discussed in detail. |

### Communications with the Public

It was proposed in the original business case that the Worcestershire Hub would play a key strategic role in the new service model for WRS by acting as the main communications centre for the public and other service users. This was justified on the basis that the Hub was well equipped to provide *"...a more customer focused and streamlined delivery for the unified regulatory services..."* and the Hub was *"...nationally regarded as an exemplar of best practice..."* in terms of customer access.

However, early in the scrutiny review concerns were raised about shortcomings in the Hub's responsiveness to the public and based on experiences by elected members across the County. Examples are reproduced below:

*"I have not been happy with recent experiences, primarily in relation to getting hold of WRS."*

*"Communication links with officers can be variable".*

*"The problem I have experienced with WRS is that I have been passed from pillar to post. I have been told "we have never heard of the WRS. We don't know what you mean?" I have been put through to another department... It took me about three hours to contact the person I wanted to speak to and then she had left the office so I had to start all over again the next day."*

The Task Group concluded that such comments were particularly indicative of shortcomings in communications between the Hub and WRS rather than any indictment of WRS itself. Moreover, an analysis of WRS 'complaints and compliments' data for the period June 2011 to September 2013 highlighted the extent to which customers' concerns related more to the manner in which their complaint was referred on for action than to the actions subsequently

taken by WRS. In each of those three years the majority of issues related to a breakdown in communications.

The Task Group learned that WRS staff were aware that the contact arrangements with the Hub were not working satisfactorily enough and that discussions had been held with the Hub's senior management about the capacity to meet the needs of WRS customers. The issue had also been raised at the Joint Committee on 26th September 2013 when members discussed a letter from the Chairman of the Worcestershire Hub Shared Services Management Board in which it had been suggested that additional Customer Service Advisors would need to be recruited to handle regulatory services enquiries and for which an increase in funding would be required. In response, the Head of Regulatory Services had advised the Joint Committee that he did not feel convinced about the additional need and cost and that the alternative would be to bring the customer enquiries work in-house within WRS – where it would be easier to refer matters more directly to the appropriate officer. This indeed is what the Joint Committee decided to do and it is understood that the new customer service arrangements were due to be implemented in May 2014.

Given the history of complaints concerning communications with WRS and the frustration that this has caused, the Task Group considers it important that the effectiveness of the new arrangements are closely monitored in the period ahead. The Task Group also suggest that a full report on the effectiveness of the change in customer contact arrangements should be presented to the Joint Committee in 12 months' time – when the change should have become embedded.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 2</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Twelve months after the new contact centre arrangements for WRS have been introduced, replacing the use of the Worcestershire Hub; the Joint Committee should review the effectiveness of these arrangements for communicating with the public. |

The Task Group also noted that information on partner councils' websites regarding regulatory services was not always up to date or easily accessible. As part of the investigation, each Task Group member reviewed their own council's website to assess the quality of the information on regulatory services and the ease of linkage with the WRS website. In doing so, the Task Group recognised that most customers seeking information about such services online would be likely to visit their own council's website initially (probably being unaware of the existence of WRS). Whilst in some cases the websites were helpful and the links straight-forward, it was found that the available information was not always as comprehensive or as up-to-date as should be expected.



The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 3</b> |
|-------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>The webpages of each partner authority should be regularly monitored to ensure they are up to date and with the inclusion of a prominent link to the WRS website.</p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Internal Communications

The Task Group also considered other mechanisms for communicating information about WRS to interested parties across the County and particularly focused on the WRS Newsletter (which is circulated to all members in Worcestershire on a quarterly basis). This is a potentially informative and valuable means of communication, but in its present format the document tends to be more selective and anecdotal than systematic and comprehensive in presentation of the work and performance of WRS.

The Task Group recognises the challenges involved in communicating effectively the diverse work of a multi-functional service in a manner that is satisfactory both to elected members and to a range of other potentially interested parties. However, the Task Group believe the current format and content of the Newsletter could be much improved and that this would help to promote a better understanding of WRS and its work among the wider body of elected members and other stakeholders. The Task Group suggests that members of the Joint Committee should take a more active part in agreeing the style and content of a quarterly newsletter and that its members should be consulted about each edition before it is published.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 4</b> |
|-------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>The purpose, content and circulation of the WRS newsletter should be thoroughly reviewed, with a view to it providing a more systematic and comprehensive account of the work and performance of the shared service and with the content and format being agreed by the Joint Committee.</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Since one of the key concerns raised by elected members across Worcestershire was the difficulty experienced in contacting a representative of WRS directly (despite recent re-circulation to all members of the directory of WRS staff telephone and email contact details) the Task Group considers that it would be useful for a lead member of WRS staff to be specifically assigned the role of 'Member Liaison Officer' to provide a further first point of contact, e.g. for queries and issues where there is uncertainty about who might be best placed to assist. This arrangement is felt to work well for the County Council's Highways Department, where there is an area-based structure of Member Liaison Officers.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

|                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 5</b>                                                                                                                      |
| That WRS have a designated member of staff to act as a Member Liaison Officer and as a single point of contact to signpost Member enquiries. |

## **Chapter 2**

### **Financing of WRS**

As detailed in the background section of this report, one of the key drivers for the shared regulatory service was the potential for efficiencies and cost savings. From the Task Group's interviews with the Head of Regulatory Services, it was learned that WRS had already exceeded the originally anticipated financial savings (which had benefited all the partner councils) yet the overall budget had been further reduced significantly since 2010. For 2014/15, it had been proposed that the WRS budget be further cut (by an additional £646,000 from the 2013-14 figure of £5.626m). Members also learned that the Head of Regulatory Services had advised the Joint Committee of his view that this was the absolute minimum with which WRS could realistically operate if it were to continue to deliver services at current levels. Any further reductions would, in his judgement, impact on service delivery and quality.

More generally and over the life of WRS to date, it appeared to the Task Group that the quest for cost reductions has tended to dominate debate within and between the partner authorities rather than issues of regulatory standards and public protection. Indeed, the Task Group considers finance has been the key driver both for the Management Board and the Joint Committee and has largely come to trump the other objectives that had underpinned the rationale for the shared service in the first place.

In the original partnership agreement it was determined that the budget for WRS should be considered and approved by the Joint Committee by the end of November each year. This would ensure that the partner authorities would be clear about their financial contributions ahead of their own budget setting processes. The Task Group was advised that this arrangement had worked well in the early years of the partnership but that, because of the deterioration in the financial position of partners' budgets, it would probably not be so suitable for future years. Indeed, whilst this joint scrutiny review was taking place, Worcestershire County Council proposed significant reductions in its budget contribution – to be implemented incrementally over a three year period (and which would see the County Council's contribution to WRS decreasing from £1.5m in 2014/15 to £250,000 in 2016/17).

Such a reduction, the Task Group was informed, would have significant implications for the quality and level of services of WRS. Already since 2010, staff numbers have decreased from 154 to 117 (in 2013), and the Head of Regulatory Services indicated to the Task Group that, if implemented, the further proposed budget reductions would imply further shrinkage to an estimated 102 in 2014/15 and probably still smaller numbers in subsequent years.

The Task Group was also advised more specifically of the potential implications for trading standards staff. In this respect, the indication is that,

by 2016/17, the level of funding might support just six trading standards officers for the whole of the County (compared with 25 in 2013/14). . Such a contraction clearly raises questions about resilience within WRS to respond to unforeseen challenges or emergencies such as the horse meat scandal of 2013. In this regard the Task Group was interested to learn that, nationally, the Trading Standards Institute has recently commissioned research on the impacts and cost-effectiveness of different trading standards activities to understand better the possible consequences of such funding and staff reductions.

Recognising the potential risks for all partner councils and their communities if funding is reduced to the point where capacity is unduly compromised, the Joint Committee recently agreed that the WRS budget should in future be planned on a three year rolling programme basis to facilitate longer-term planning. In the same context, a new budget matrix has been designed to assist decision-making as to the costs of different service options for partners. This matrix approach, which was also approved by the Joint Committee in September 2013, has been developed from a “zero based” budget exercise and indicates the minimum resources and budget required to meet existing levels of demand and statutory obligations in all relevant functional areas. The matrix also provides risk assessments in relation to key regulatory objectives of protecting vulnerable people, supporting the local economy and improving health and well being.

A further issue that has recently been pursued as a response to the difficult financial context for WRS and its partners is that of seeking a private sector strategic partner. Here the rationale is to look to grow WRS (either or both by acquiring more local authority partners and undertaking more work for others on a contractual basis) and for which, the argument goes, the commercial experience and marketing skills of the private sector would be especially helpful. In November 2013, during the early months of this joint scrutiny, the Joint Committee approved initial ‘soft marketing’ ahead of a decision to commence a formal procurement process in 2014.

At this early stage, the Task Group has had little information by which to form a view as to the potential of such a private sector strategic partnership in helping WRS in relation to its financial challenges. Accordingly, the Task Group do not draw any conclusion or make recommendations on this issue. However, it is fair to say that the Task Group received mixed feedback on the proposal. Some officers and members on the Joint Committee regarded it as the only viable solution while others stated their concerns that the process was being brought forward too quickly and without sufficient consideration of other options. Concerns were also articulated that a private sector partner’s interests might be selective in focusing largely on the more commercial of WRS’s services and that if capacity was further reduced as a result of shrinking partner financial contributions, the organisation might likely become less attractive to the private sector in any case. The general view taken by the Task Group was that, whilst a strategic partnership might well help to achieve some early financial stability for WRS, a more fundamental reconsideration of the business model and rebuilding of partner commitment

were probably required if the partnership were to remain viable for the longer term.

In this context, a more significant concern of the Task Group was the possibility of members of the partnership losing confidence in the venture and for financial and other reasons, deciding to withdraw and instead once again provide their own regulatory services. The Task Group's clear view here is that any such development would not just be highly regrettable but at odds with the logic of more integrated public service provision that has been pioneered within Worcestershire.

It could also be quite costly as, under the current governance arrangements, the agreement specifically states that

*“... the Member Authority giving notice of termination (or if there is more than one such Member Authority then each of them in equal shares) shall bear all costs arising out of or in connection with such termination and shall indemnify the remaining Member Authorities against all costs and expenses incurred by them arising out of or in connection with that termination...”*

This would include costs such as those for redundancy or redeployment of staff, termination of any leases or licenses for use of premises or equipment, procurement of alternative accommodation, preparation and disaggregation of relevant data or records and reimbursing staff or administrative overhead costs. Feedback received by the Task Group from various witnesses during the review suggested that awareness of this clause within the original agreement was less widespread amongst partners than perhaps it should have been, since, in the current economic climate at least, most authorities would struggle to afford such costs.

Instead, the Task Group is keen to propose a more constructive option for the future. This would build on the work undertaken recently by the Worcestershire Chief Executives' Panel in developing a budget matrix that indicates costs for different activities and for different levels of provision. In this way, more tailored and costed packages of regulatory services might be offered to partners to suit their local needs and budgets, which could be helpful in building partner confidence in WRS. Indeed, such a bespoke approach might well include enhanced as well as reduced services, for example, the possibility of an 'out of hours' service for partners with concerns about late night noise nuisance problems.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

**Recommendation 6**

In order to reduce the focus on financial considerations which currently play a major part in influencing partner participation, to the detriment of other equally important aspects of the service, the following should be addressed:

- (a) A new business model for WRS be developed through the Chief Executives' Panel, building on the proposals already being produced by the Panel.
- (b) Consideration be given to the option for partner authorities to purchase an "out of hours service"

## Chapter 3

### **Governance of WRS**

The partnership agreement for WRS was drawn up by Legal Services Officers representing all seven partner councils in Worcestershire and is divided into two parts; the first section introduces the framework and the second provides details on regulatory services.

In that agreement the main elements of the governance structure for WRS are defined as follows:

- **Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee**, comprising two councillor representatives per authority, is designated as the key strategic decision-making body.
- **The Management Board**, comprising officer representatives from each partner authority is responsible for providing advice on both strategic and operational matters.
- **The WRS Management Team** is responsible for service delivery.

As WRS was the first and only shared regulatory service in a two-tier local government structure, there has been no exemplar framework agreement or constitution available to replicate or learn from. Accordingly, the above governance arrangements were proposed and approved without knowing for sure how well they might work in practice.

### **Governance Review**

Two years on, the Head of Regulatory Services requested that the Chief Executives' Panel conduct a review of those governance arrangements in light of concerns particularly about the Management Board. While the Task Group understand that assurances were given, no governance review had taken place ahead of this joint scrutiny Task Group. However, consultations with stakeholders have highlighted further recognition of the need for such a review and not least because of the possibility now of a private sector strategic partner also becoming involved. Indeed, several consultees alluded to the importance of getting the governance arrangements as effective and efficient as possible to ensure that WRS would be able to present itself as an attractive proposition to commercial organisations. The following comments from representatives of both the Joint Committee and the Management Board underline this viewpoint:

*".... there will need to be a full governance review of both the Joint Committee and the Management Board and an alternative solution found. It would be a very different picture with much less Member involvement and would very much be at arm's length."*

*“I think that if a strategic partnership with the private sector is pursued further all of the governance arrangements for WRS will need to be reviewed and a different structure put in place.”*

*“The partnership agreement was very constrained and no one was aware at the time of how things would change. The partners now need to make changes to governance to make it more flexible.”*

The Task Group has been surprised and concerned at the delay in undertaking such a governance review following the request by the Head of Service two years ago and particularly given the level of confusion encountered amongst some members of the Joint Committee about their own role and that of the Management Board (outlined in detail below). However, the Task Group's terms of reference for this scrutiny included (at point 5) an objective *‘to consider the governance arrangements between the shared service and the participating councils’* and accordingly the Task Group has paid particular attention to this issue and made a number of key recommendations which are designed to resolve some of the problems it identified.

### **Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee**

In first establishing WRS as a shared service, legal requirements had to be followed (notably, that, under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, there would need to be an elected member decision-making body which resulted in the formation of the Joint Committee). At the time, it was agreed by the Executive Committees/Cabinets of each partner authority that delegated power should be granted to the Joint Committee to consider and make decisions on all the regulatory functions detailed in the agreement on their behalf, albeit that any additional changes to policy should be referred back to the respective Executive Committees/Cabinets.

The particular roles of the Joint Committee, as detailed within the agreement, were as follows:

- To make strategic decisions on behalf of the partnership.
- To oversee the development, implementation and operation of the shared service.
- To establish a framework for the operation of the shared service.
- To appoint sub-committees where necessary.

Under the terms of the agreement, each member authority was required to appoint two members to the Joint Committee each year. In the case of those authorities operating Leader/Cabinet arrangements, at least one of these members has to be a member of the Cabinet/Executive Committee. The agreement also permitted substitute members to attend in place of the lead member when necessary. Some councils have chosen to appoint named substitutes each year (although this is not a requirement).



The agreement states that a minimum of one elected representative from each authority should be present at meetings of the Joint Committee in order for those meetings to be quorate (although, as a Legal Services representative informed the Task Group, this is not a general legal requirement, purely something that the partners for this particular agreement insisted upon). The quorum for the Joint Committee was reviewed in 2013 when Members decided to continue with these same requirements.

Attendance, however, is not without its problems and the Task Group learned that Democratic Services officers frequently have to spend significant amounts of time contacting and “chasing” Joint Committee representatives to ensure quorate meetings. To minimise the resources involved in this respect, the Task Group concluded that the onus should be on each partner authority, rather than the officers of the host authority, to ensure that their representatives would indeed be able to attend or to arrange substitutes.

The Task Group was also concerned about the potential for conflicts of interest to arise between membership of the Joint Committee and membership of a particular authority’s Cabinet/Executive Committee in making budgetary decisions (i.e. if the financial pressures of their own local authorities were to influence their voting in relation to the WRS budget). Further potential conflicts of interest were identified in relation to those members of the Joint Committee who were both district and county councillors; and also for the Chair of the Joint Committee in relation to their particular own local authority.

Under current arrangements the Chair of the Joint Committee is appointed on an annual basis from the membership and on a rotating basis. Of concern to the Task Group here, however, was the possibility of a member assuming the chair (because it was ‘their turn’) but without necessarily having a sufficient understanding of the nature of regulatory services or sufficient time to devote to the responsibility. The Task Group considered the alternative of having an independent chair person – someone who specialised in regulatory functions. However, it was recognised that finding such a suitable and willing person could be difficult and also that this approach might seem inappropriate for an essentially democratic decision making body. Consequently, the Task Group concluded that probably the best approach to choice of chair would be for the Joint Committee membership to elect its chair based on merit rather than rotation.

The Task Group was keen to ensure that the Joint Committee as a whole was able to operate effectively as the key decision-making body for WRS and to this end, the Task Group discussed a range of pertinent issues including, duration of appointment for members, size of committee, frequency and location of meetings and training arrangements:

- With regard to duration of appointment, the Task Group considers that members should be expected to serve a minimum term of two years (to develop the necessary understanding and experience of WRS). At present, as indicated, appointments are made on an annual basis and

this has tended to result in frequent turnover of representatives from some authorities. The Task Group believes a minimum term of two years would also help to strengthen commitment and ensure greater continuity in the composition of the Joint Committee, so enabling the level of expertise and experience as a whole to grow.

- Regarding the size of committee, the Task Group believes a committee of fourteen members (two per partner authority) to be unwieldy, especially so as there are usually at least four officers also in attendance in support roles). Indeed, when the Task Group observed a meeting of the Joint Committee, it witnessed how difficult it was for many members to engage fully in such a large 'conference-like' setting and for discussion to develop in any depth on the issues under consideration. Accordingly, the Task Group's clear view is that it would be better to have just one member nominated from each council rather than two as now. This would help to ensure more inclusive debate, it would facilitate deeper discussion and it would facilitate more efficient and effective decision-making and provision of the clear strategic steer that the Head of Regulatory Services and his team look for from the Committee.
- Rather than the current quarterly meetings, the Task Group considers that meetings every other month (i.e. six times per year) would also help to build expertise and commitment in relation to regulatory services. Additional meetings might also mean shorter agendas but create more opportunity to consider the important issues in more depth. Its own experiences as a Task Group illustrate, much time is needed together for rapport and understanding to build between representatives from different local authorities. The Task Group is sure that a leaner Joint Committee, with members meeting more frequently, will greatly help in making the Joint Committee a more effective decision-making body.
- A smaller committee would more easily support the ideal – as the Task Group sees it - of Joint Committee meetings being held at WRS's main office location where the professional staff and other supporting resources are on hand. While no doubt there are some advantages in the current arrangement of holding Joint Committee meetings at the base for the host authority, with just seven members (and supporting officers) the base of WRS would seem a more appropriate setting and one that would of course afford members with the opportunity to see more of the staff and some of the regulatory work first hand. It would also represent a suitably neutral location for all members.
- The issue of training for members of the Joint Committee was also considered – this, too, being seen as vital to the building of a stronger and more competent governance body for WRS. Accordingly, the Task Group asked all the members it interviewed about the amount of training they had received both prior to and during their periods of service on the Committee. Some longer-serving members explained

that in the first year of the shared service, a programme of training had been provided (prior to the first meeting) and that there had been follow-up half day sessions in subsequent months. However, it was understood that members appointed more recently had not received the equivalent induction or training opportunities (some having received little more than a half hour briefing from their authority's representative on the Management Board).

Some relevant comments in this regard were as follows:

*"I have not received any specific training although I did receive a briefing from the Council's representatives on the Management Board and I have not had a chance to visit Wyatt House."*

*"I learnt by osmosis and I think it is up to members to be proactive and to find out what the role is themselves."*

*"I received a briefing from my Council's representative on the Management Board and I spoke with the other councillor from my authority on the Committee as he had served on it for a number of years. I also made a point of arranging to visit Wyatt House and met with the Head of Service and some of the other staff. I found the visit in particular really useful as it helped to explain the role of WRS."*

*"I have an understanding of the workings of a Council and the Committee as I have been a councillor for seven years. Members should make time to educate themselves. Having said that I did receive a two hour briefing from my Council's representative on the Management Board when I started."*

From all such feedback the Task Group concluded that training provision was less than consistent and together with the policy permitting substitutes (who would typically be attending without any prior training at all), meant that levels of understanding and experience of regulatory services around the Committee table were likely to be, at best, variable and in many cases quite inadequate for the nature of responsibility being exercised.

The shared view of the Task Group is that something akin to the requirements for development control committees should be in place. There, members must undergo at least a basic training programme before they can play any part in development control decision-making. Whilst recognising that the decisions in relation to WRS are not quasi-judicial in the manner of those for development control, the Task Group believe that mandatory training for Joint Committee participation is similarly justified, particularly given the diverse and technical nature of the work and the importance of the governance role and the various decisions that members are entrusted to make here.

Despite the quite specific purposes and roles for the Joint Committee (as described in the original formal agreement and summarised above) the Task Group was also surprised to find some quite significant differences of

understanding and viewpoint between members, particularly about the Committee's relationship with the other key body – the Management Board. In the various interviews with members of the Joint Committee, the Task Group listened to a number of apparently conflicting accounts of the Joint Committee's role. For example, while some understood their primary role as being to make strategic decisions on behalf of the partnership, others talked of it more in terms of providing a 'critical friend' role and holding the Management Board to account, as the following comments illustrate:

*"The Joint Committee is the democratic arm that considers the work of the Management Board and ensures that the delivery of services is efficient and equitable."*

*"We could be seen as the critical friend of the senior management of the service, holding them to account for strategic decision making as well as monitoring the budget and performance of the service. We are appointed by our Councils with some powers of delegation as laid down in the original partnership agreement."*

*"The Joint Committee is the critical friend of the service as well as the ultimate decision maker for the service. We are also ultimately responsible for the setting of the budget and the management of the finances as well as agreeing to the strategic direction of the service."*

*"The difference is that the Management Board is held in private and Joint Committee meetings are held in public."*

*"The Joint Committee is ultimately in charge of decision making. However the Management Board generates reports and provides advice and therefore has influence over the decisions that are made in a similar manner to Officers influencing decisions at Cabinet."*

*"The role of the Joint Committee is to act as a watching brief to see that the service is being provided and the money spent well"*

Moreover, the Task Group's own doubts about the clarity of understanding among Joint Committee members as to their role were echoed by at least one of the members themselves, as follows:

*"I do not know if all present members fully understand the governance or the structure. It may be the case that even long-term members do not fully understand it."*

The Task Group is in no doubt that the prevalence of such role ambiguities and uncertainties represents a serious weakness in the governance arrangements for WRS and one that needs to be addressed as a matter of high priority. Of particular concern to the Task Group was the perspective held by more than a few members that regarded their primary objective as being to 'represent' the needs of their own local authority in relation to WRS – with the needs of WRS being very much a secondary consideration. It was

also suggested that the listing on the front page of the agenda papers for Joint Committee meetings of the names of the local authorities with members' names alongside only served to reinforce such a representational mind-set.

*"I believe that members need to strongly represent the interests of their district when attending meetings of the Joint Committee, though this should be tempered by the fact that WRS is a shared service. One local authority should not be allowed to dictate the direction of the service to all the other partners, regardless of its size and status."*

*"... the primary role of members on the Joint Committee is to protect the interests of their council with the function of WRS being secondary".*

To be fair, other members indicated feeling no conflict between the two roles and argued that they were able to represent the interests of both their Council and WRS equally.

*"At a Joint Committee meeting I feel I am representing the district's needs and the needs, requirements and future of WRS across Worcestershire. I am very aware that each Council has its own individual needs and requirements but there are many things which we all share."*

A number of the officers that were interviewed also commented on the tendency of some Joint Committee members to prioritise their own local authority considerations over the needs of the partnership and were similarly concerned that this risked undermining the partnership. One such interviewee suggested that *"localism has no place in Regulatory Services"*. While recognising the contentious nature of such a statement, the Task Group is clear in the view that, unless and until the full membership of the Joint Committee can demonstrate its prioritisation of a shared interest in WRS over that of individual local authority interests, this will always be a weak and fragile partnership and one that will struggle to sustain itself, let alone grow and flourish.

One further small change that the Task Group feels could help make a significant difference in this respect would be a change of title from one that tends particularly to emphasise the 'representational' role of members in relation to their local authorities (i.e. 'Joint Committee'), to one that more specifically focuses on the shared responsibility for WRS governance (i.e. 'Board'). Accordingly, the Task Group considers that switching to a new title - 'the WRS Board' - could be an important step forward.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

### **Recommendation 7**

A new strategic decision making board for WRS should replace the Joint Committee, comprising one elected member per partner authority and supported by relevant officers. This should be called the WRS Board.

- (a) Meetings of this Board should take place at the base of WRS.
- (b) Responsibility for attendance at Board meetings should lie with each authority's representative and the quorum for meetings should be set at 5 representatives in attendance.
- (c) Meetings of the Board should take place bi-monthly.
- (d) Elected members appointed to the Board should be provided with an induction programme and sufficient ongoing training to enable them to fulfil their role effectively.
- (e) Members appointed to the Board be expected to serve a minimum of two years to ensure continuity.
- (f) The Chair of the WRS Board should be elected annually by the members of the Board.

### **Management Board**

The other key body in the governance structure for WRS - the Management Board - was similarly the subject of careful consideration by the Task Group. As with the Joint Committee, a set of roles for the Management Board were defined in the original partnership agreement, these being as follows:

- To oversee and guide the development of WRS, in particular in relation to operational matters.
- To help develop a shared vision and strategy for the partners that takes into account partners' varying needs and priorities.
- To contribute to the transformation of service delivery.
- To resolve matters of concern to the partnership.
- To advise elected Members and to make recommendations to the Joint Committee (alongside the Head of Regulatory Services).
- To report back to their local authorities on the work of WRS and the decisions of the Joint Committee.

Membership of the Management Board comprises the Head of Regulatory Services together with one senior officer representative from each partner authority. Meetings of this Board are also attended by the lead Finance Officer from the host authority and the two Business Managers from WRS, while chairing is undertaken in (annual) rotation by one of the partner authority representatives.

The Task Group heard various viewpoints on the Management Board but, above all, the good news that, in recent times at least, it was felt to have been working more effectively than in the past. Several members of the Joint

Committee that were interviewed highlighted the value to them of the briefings they themselves had received from the representatives on the Management Board of their own authorities regarding the agendas of business and generally, the Management Board was considered to have contributed helpfully to recent discussions on key matters such as the possibility of a strategic link with a private sector partner. Joint Committee members also valued the corporate management expertise that officers appointed to the Management Board were able to add to deliberations and the useful links their representatives also had with other relevant services, such as the Hub shared service.

The Task Group also learned of several other aspects about the Management Board and its role that were concerning, including the following:

- Most of the officers on the Management Board, as representatives of partner authorities, are not from a regulatory services background and may not, therefore, necessarily have the specialist experience to appreciate fully the requirements of and expectations upon WRS.
- Engagement by the officer representatives tends to be variable and with a small core of officers being particularly influential in shaping thinking and conclusions.
- Some of the officers tend to prioritise their own Council's interests over and above those of the partnership.
- Differences of viewpoint between the Head of Regulatory Services and some of the other officers comprising the Management Board have frequently arisen and been quite difficult to resolve because only the Joint Committee has the authority to direct the Head of Service.
- Officers on the Management Board tend to be inconsistent in reporting back to their councils about developments in relation to WRS and do not always act as "advocates" for the shared service within their authorities.

The Task Group was also concerned about apparent differences of viewpoint as to the appropriate role of the Management Board amongst its officers. In particular, some such officers clearly regard their role legitimately as including the provision of advice on operational matters and the Task Group learned of a worrying tendency by the Board to attempt to micro-manage the Head of Regulatory Services.

The Task Group's clear view is that this is both unhelpful and inappropriate and that WRS itself – with its professionally qualified cadre of managers and staff - should be entrusted with full operational responsibility under the leadership of the Head of Regulatory Services. Two principal benefits here, as identified by the Task Group are as follows:

- WRS officers should be the source of advice to elected members about operational matters based on their professional expertise and experience (as, of course, is the case in most other specialist public service contexts – e.g. children's and adult services, highways and transport and planning).

- Officer leadership from WRS itself would be likely to result in a stronger focus on the needs of the partnership as a whole rather than on those of individual councils.

The Task Group's conclusions go further than this. For it does not see a sufficient case for retaining a Management Board as well as a Joint Committee (WRS Board) within the governance structure for WRS. Instead, the Task Group thinks that the disestablishment of this additional layer of management would greatly simplify, clarify and unify the governance structure. Instead, the Task Group considers a more appropriate role for officer representatives from the partner authorities to be in attendance at the WRS Board (Joint Committee) meetings as non-voting participants – sitting alongside and supporting their respective elected members, and providing additional advice (particularly from the perspective of the partner authorities).

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

| <b>Recommendation 8</b>                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Management Board be disbanded, with the WRS Management Team taking the lead responsibility for operational decision making under the leadership of the Head of Regulatory Services. |

#### The WRS Management Team

The Head of Regulatory Services leads the WRS team and should, the Task Group suggests, be formally accountable to the WRS Board (Joint Committee) as the corporate governing body. At present, line management and oversight of his role (including conduct of his annual performance development review) is provided by the Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Council as head of paid service at the host authority. This arrangement generally works well; the Task Group learned and felt it to be entirely appropriate that the Head of Service should enjoy the benefits of chief officer support (from the host authority) and the additional accountability that this involves. The recommendation to disband the Management Board would, be further beneficial in protecting the Head of Service from feeling over-managed and accountable to multiple senior officers.

The Task Group recommends the following:

| <b>Recommendation 9</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) The Head of WRS should be fully accountable to the WRS Board (as the strategic decision making body).</li> <li>(b) The Chief Executive of the host and with the host authority to act in a mentoring role as and when necessary.</li> </ul> |



## **Chapter 4**

### **Lessons Learned**

The Task Group has undertaken a wide ranging and detailed review of a complex shared service and in the process, inevitably, a number of lessons have been learned of potential value to other shared service arrangements and indeed, for other joint scrutiny exercises. In this chapter the key such lessons are summarised.

### **Communications between a Shared Service and Partner Authorities**

At the launch of the WRS shared service, consideration was given to the most appropriate methods by which the work of the new organisation and the decisions of its Joint Committee might be reported back to partner authorities. A formal protocol was developed for the referral of decisions to partner authorities and this stipulated that the following arrangements should be in place:

- The committee clerk for each meeting should draft and circulate minutes from the meetings within ten working days to Joint Committee and Management Board members as well as to the Democratic Service teams from across the county.
- The minutes should be submitted to the next Executive Committee/ Cabinet meetings at each authority for consideration, both in cases where decisions have been taken under delegated powers and where recommendations have been proposed.
- In cases where the minutes contain a recommendation, the supporting reports should be provided for the consideration of the Executive Committees/Cabinets at each authority.
- The Executive Committee/Cabinet at each authority should make a decision about any recommendations referred for their consideration, the result of which should be referred back to the Democratic Services Officer of the host authority who maintains appropriate records.
- In the event that any recommendations are not approved by all partners the Head of Regulatory Services is required to report this fact back to the next Joint Committee meeting.

Despite the specificity and clarity of these protocols, the Task Group investigation identified that partner authorities were not always complying with the expectations, particularly in relation to the handling of minutes of the meetings of the Joint Committee. While in some cases, minutes were consistently being presented for consideration by the Executive Committee/ Cabinet, in others they were only circulated when there happened to be a particular recommendation within them requiring partner approval. In very few instances, the Task Group learned, was there much, if any, discussion at partner authorities of the issues presented in the minutes of WRS Joint Committee meetings.

One consequence of such variable practices is that the majority of elected members in partner authorities have very limited awareness and understanding of the work of WRS, or of the decisions of its Joint Committee. In discussion with Joint Committee members the shortcomings of the communications process with the wider membership of partner authorities was recognised, as was their personal responsibility, as Joint Committee members, to report back to their respective councils. As one acknowledged:

*“There is also a need for the Joint Committee member to promote the service back at their Council and ensure that members are kept informed of how the service is developing”.*

On the other hand, another member of the Joint Committee argued that it was the responsibility of every elected member in the County, not just those appointed to the Joint Committee, to familiarise themselves with the work of WRS:

*“There are few problems with internal communications. At some councils, the minutes of each Joint Committee meeting are considered at Executive meetings and copies are also published on every Council’s website. It is the responsibility of every member to read these minutes and to familiarise themselves with the subject”.*

While some may well subscribe to such a point of view, Task Group members were concerned about the reality that, in practice, the wider body of elected members across the County (i.e. those who had not been involved with the Joint Committee) had very limited knowledge or understanding of WRS and its important public protection functions. Indeed, the Task Group was persuaded that this was a significant enough problem, which needed to be addressed by the following circumstances:

1. Concerns about performance data (e.g. the National Indicators) not being provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committees suggested that scrutiny members had not been aware of the decisions taken by WRS to change their performance monitoring arrangements. At some councils there was also surprise that the partnership agreement for WRS did not allow for scrutiny by local Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
2. When the Scrutiny Task Group consulted with other elected members across the County (and with parish council representatives) several of the responses referred to aspects outside the remit of WRS, demonstrating the level of misunderstanding.
3. Several months after the Joint Committee’s decision to explore the potential for a strategic partnership with a private sector partner for WRS, the Head of Regulatory Services presented a series of updating briefings on the subject to different partner authorities, but encountered at one, widespread ignorance of the decision (and dismay at not having been aware of, or consulted on, the matter).

Such apparent failures in communication have underpinned the Task Group's conclusion that more systematic processes need to be put in place to ensure that all decisions made by the Joint Committee (WRS Board) are indeed communicated back to all elected members of partner authorities and that regular updates of WRS and its work are provided to partner councils. The Task Group suggest that a common approach should be followed in all partner authorities, whether this takes the form of written reports to Executive Committees/Cabinets and/or to Overview and Scrutiny Committees and full Council meetings.

It would also help if Democratic Services officers in partner councils took responsibility for drawing their elected members' attentions to the publication of both the agendas and minutes of each meeting of the WRS Board (Joint Committee) and by highlighting the web links to the relevant pages of the WRS website).

Although the website for WRS was updated and refreshed during the time that the scrutiny Task Group was underway, it noted that copies of agendas and minutes from meetings of the Joint Committee were not always uploaded promptly on to the WRS webpages and available for viewing via the websites of partner authorities. Not least for the purposes of transparency, the Task Group considers it important that such documents are indeed made accessible to all at the earliest opportunities (along with other relevant information about WRS and its operation and governance structures).

Such lessons about the importance of good communication and transparency are relevant of course to all shared services and it is to be hoped that the recommendations in this respect will promote like-minded actions in relation to other such partnership arrangements.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

| <b>Recommendation 10</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) All decisions made by the WRS Board be formally reported back to all elected members of the partner authorities in a timely manner.</li> <li>(b) Attention should be paid to communicating updates about any planned changes to WRS services to all elected members of partner authorities.</li> <li>(c) The agendas and minutes of all WRS Board meetings should also be uploaded on to the WRS website in a timely fashion.</li> </ul> |

### Sharing Services

In conducting this scrutiny review the Task Group inevitably encountered and debated the many strengths and weaknesses that apply to any shared service arrangement, particularly those involving multiple partners. For example, the opportunity to share resources and skills across several councils and so have better overall capacity and capability was widely recognised as a positive outcome by members and officers alike. Similarly, the financial savings that

could be achieved through this way of working were also universally welcomed, especially in the current climate of public sector austerity.

The following comments illustrate such positive perspectives on multi-partner shared services arrangements:

*“In my experience smaller district councils often struggle to attract the good, qualified, professional staff needed to deliver regulatory services. Amalgamation with other local authorities has helped us to attract and retain these types of staff”.*

*“Because the countywide model inevitably involves working with a larger team and a bigger budget, you can attract the professional and skilled staff you need to deliver the services.”*

*“One of the benefits of sharing regulatory services, particularly for district councils, is that it enables those councils to access expertise and resources that might not otherwise have been available. For example, as a result of this shared service, Bromsgrove District Council has been able to directly access officers with expertise in the field of air quality, which has been useful because there are significant problems with air pollution in Bromsgrove district.”*

However, the scrutiny consultations also underscored some of the problems often associated with shared service arrangements, particularly where multiple partners are involved. Above all is the potential for shared service operations to seem remote and detached from the councils they serve, at least for most councillors and officers. Indeed, there is a tendency for bodies like WRS to seem to operate more like separate organisations, delivering services on behalf of the councils, akin to contract-based provision rather than as partnerships of the councils and in which there is a common interest and responsibility.

The following comments expressed to the Task Group epitomise such perspectives:

*“Sometimes we are all partners. Sometimes, usually when something goes wrong, there is a feeling that WRS is acting as a contractor providing services rather than being an integral part of the local government offering”.*

*“Some partners have tended to regard WRS as having been outsourced once the shared service was launched. For example, some of the early problems with ICT were exacerbated by the fact that partner organisations were not always willing to engage in discussions about how to resolve the problem”.*

Such a sense of distance and detachment between the councils and WRS probably also explains, in part at least, the determination of some partners to impose financial reductions on WRS that to regulatory service professionals at

least seem quite unreasonable and unrealistic, as illustrated in the following comment:

*“Very disappointingly some partners have come forward seeking very large reductions but without any clear idea of the necessary changes to their services to achieve this.”*

Compounding this distancing and detachment problem has been some widespread negativity about WRS arising early on in its life as a result of difficulties encountered by councillors (and the public) in contacting regulatory staff and in getting apparently small and simple problems resolved (e.g. complaints about barking dogs or odour problems). It is to be hoped that the new in-house customer contact arrangements now in place will help overcome such negativity and that WRS’s reputation for responsivity will quickly improve. A key lesson is that, under shared service arrangements and particularly one where staff are located elsewhere from the local authority, contact and communication arrangements need to be especially well planned and managed for confidence in the venture to be sustained.

In this context the Task Group was also intrigued as to why, after much initial interest in the Worcestershire initiative from other local authorities, WRS remains the only two-tier regulatory partnership in England. Probably part of the reason has been inertia and fear, particularly on the part of district councils, of surrendering more public service responsibility to their counties and so inadvertently bolstering arguments for unitary council status in the future. Perhaps also a reason has been concern among district councils at the prospect of losing control of some important protective services, notably environmental health and licensing and of councillors feeling that this would weaken their ability to directly address many of the problems routinely raised by local people and businesses. But once again, the key lesson here concerns the quality of the contact and communication arrangements that are put in place between councils and the shared service and the confidence that the partnership body is able to instil among councillors and the general public.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation 11</b> |
|--------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>The lessons learned from the WRS shared service experience, particularly as detailed in this report, should be heeded by elected members and senior officers when considering any future proposals for shared services arrangements involving multiple partners.</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### Joint Scrutiny

This scrutiny is not the first such joint scrutiny review to be undertaken in Worcestershire, although it is the first one involving all seven councils and hosted by one of the district councils. Perhaps because of the increasing number of shared service arrangements now being established within the

County there will be more such joint exercises in the future. Assuming so, the Task Group considers the lessons that it has learned during the process of this joint scrutiny should be of considerable value for others to follow.

The Task Group's review was conducted in accordance with the Framework for Joint Overview and Scrutiny in Worcestershire (which was approved by all councils in 2011). That framework details the principles underlying joint working, processes to be followed and conduct to be expected during such work, resource requirements, meeting arrangements and other matters conducive to effective collaborative working. (A copy of the framework can be viewed at Appendix 2).

As in this case, joint scrutiny reviews are normally hosted by an individual council, usually the one that first proposed the review or the host authority if the subject is a shared service. However, the expectation with all joint scrutiny work is that there should be representation and participation from all the relevant authorities and full co-operation with the process by all parties, for example, in providing evidence and participating in proceedings.

During this joint scrutiny, members of the Task Group sought evidence from a wide range of parties – both elected members and officers from each of the seven partners and of course, from WRS as well. In most instances the Task Group encountered very positive co-operation and generous support, including willingness to travel some distances to attend interviews and preparedness to provide written, as well as verbal, responses to questions. The Task Group wishes to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence during the review for their time and their helpful contributions.

Unfortunately, the Task Group have to report that it did not encounter the same level of co-operation and support from every quarter. It struggled, in particular, to obtain the evidence needed from Worcestershire County Council, particularly regarding the authority's proposed budget reductions for the next three years. Initially, the Task Group sent a letter to the Leader of the Council and to a senior officer (in early February), prior to the authority's setting of its budget. The letter outlined the Task Group's concerns about the implications of budget reductions for the viability of WRS and requested that the Council consider postponing the decision on funding until this joint scrutiny review had been completed. It proved necessary to chase the County Council for a response to this letter and the Task Group subsequently invited a representative to attend one of its meetings (in early April) to respond to various questions. Although a written response was eventually received, the Task Group was disappointed that no-one from the County Council offered to attend the meeting and indeed, the written response itself was quite short and generally less helpful than those received from other witnesses.

The Task Group was also disappointed that not all partners played an equally active part in the joint scrutiny exercise. While most authorities were consistently represented at the meetings, one council, Wyre Forest, was represented at only 5 out of the Task Group's 15 meetings (and this despite the fact that this Council, as with all seven, had designated a substitute as

well as a lead member). While recognising the extra time pressures that participation in such scrutiny exercises creates for members and the various legitimate reasons for absence, the Task Group was nevertheless surprised at the persistent failure to submit apologies or to propose a change in the nomination to ensure due representation from Wyre Forest and the opportunity, with other partners, to shape the final recommendations.

There are lessons here, for sure, for other joint scrutiny exercises and the Task Group considers that in future, particular care should be taken to minimise such missed opportunities for participation. To this end the Task Group suggests that some aspects of the formal framework should be revisited and perhaps amended. In particular, it would be useful to give more consideration to the barriers and constraints likely to affect participation in such Task Groups and to ways of ensuring the desired level of commitment on the part of all members and partner authorities. It would be good to give early priority to reviewing the framework for joint scrutiny and to giving thought to how engagement might be maximised since it is understood that another joint exercise – this on joint arrangements for waste collection and disposal - is about to commence.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

| <b>Recommendation 12</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) The Joint Scrutiny Protocol should be reviewed in order to take on board the lessons learned during this review.</li> <li>(b) Consideration should be given to the reinstatement of the Worcestershire Overview and Scrutiny Chairs Group as a means of feeding back the monitoring of recommendations from Joint Scrutiny exercises, as and when required.</li> </ul> |

## **Conclusion**

The perspectives of the membership of the Joint Scrutiny Task Group on WRS changed quite markedly during the course of this exercise as the evidence was gathered and as more of the realities of the situation became clear. At the start of the review there was some scepticism among Task Group members about the quality of service being provided by WRS, particularly based on anecdotal evidence from customer complaints and members own experiences of trying to get problems resolved. However, by the conclusion, the Task Group members had developed a much better understanding of the challenges and pressures being experienced by the shared service and of the difficulties and shortcomings in relation to governance. Indeed, the Task Group had developed greater empathy with the situation and this has inspired its desire to see the weaknesses and problems addressed and to ensure a better future for WRS.

Some of the proposals to this end may seem radical. But in the Task Group's analysis, significant changes are called for in a number of respects if WRS is to survive and flourish in the manner expected of it at the outset.

The Task Group recognises that, if the recommendations are accepted by partners, each council is likely to have to relinquish a further measure of control and place more trust in the practitioners in WRS to lead and manage the service in Worcestershire's best interests. The Task Group recognises and supports all the efforts currently being made to improve the viability and prospects for the shared service in difficult financial times, including consideration of the possibilities offered by a private sector partner. However, it also considers that a number of other changes – particularly to the governance framework and to the communication processes between WRS and partner authorities – need to be made as well and with similar priority.

Returning to the old (fragmented) way of providing regulatory services at both district and county levels is, the Task Group is sure, not a sensible or realistic option for Worcestershire - tempting though it might perhaps appear in present times when the challenges of partnership working and of coping with financial pressures seem so daunting. Instead, the Task Group concludes, the way ahead lies in building on the foundations that have already been laid; in learning the lessons of the first few years of WRS and in being prepared to adjust and adapt in light of those lessons. The way forward, the Task Group is sure, is to address the challenges as a partnership with renewed commitment and with confidence. Worcestershire's pioneering work in developing a more integrated regulatory service has indeed already been worthwhile and not just in achieving financial savings but also in ensuring higher quality protection for citizens and businesses across the county and beyond.



**Appendix 1**

Joint Scrutiny of Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Terms of Reference

Objectives

1. To review the final business case for the Shared Service (as agreed by the participating Councils) against current operation, including:
  - resilience in the model to cope with fluctuations in workload;
  - efficiencies achieved;
  - cash savings and how these have been used;
  - its level of fitness for purpose;
  - the impact of the model on service levels/quality.
2. To compare the previous service levels of each participating Council compared with current levels and those outlined in the final business case.
3. To establish the performance of the service to participating Councils prior to and since the establishment of the shared service.
4. To review levels of customer satisfaction prior to and following establishment of the shared service and how feedback informs practice.
5. To consider the governance arrangements between the shared service and the participating Councils to include how changes to the service requested by one or more Councils can be achieved.

Membership

6. The Team will be made up of one representative from each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees from Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch Borough, Wyre Forest, Worcester City, Worcestershire County Council and Wychavon District Councils.
7. Each authority will also appoint a named substitute, who will be sent details for each meeting and may attend meetings as an observer to keep up to date with the exercise.
8. That at least one of the appointed Members to the Team or their named substitute must comprise either the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Roles

9. Members of the Panel are expected to:

- undertake appropriate reading and research, which may involve consultation, visits and evidence gathering between meetings;
  - having agreed a programme of meetings of the Team, to attend as many of them as possible;
  - to ask for support, training and development if/when they feel it is necessary;
  - to contribute fully to the drafting of any reports.
10. Each member is responsible for reporting back to parent Overview & Scrutiny Committees as appropriate.
11. Officer support will be provided by Bromsgrove District Council as the host authority, for meeting arrangements and scrutiny support, as well as liaison with officers from each authority to provide evidence and practical help (provision of meeting rooms etc)

Arrangements for Meetings

12. The Team will make its own arrangements for meetings.
13. The meetings may be held in public or in private. In considering how it will meet, the Team will balance the desire for transparency and openness with making visitors feel welcome and comfortable, to encourage frank and open discussion.
14. It will not normally be the case that full notes will be made of each meeting. In most cases a short “action list” will be sufficient for the Team’s use.

Deadline: April 2014.

## **Appendix 2**

### **FRAMEWORK FOR JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN WORCESTERSHIRE**

#### **Principles Underlying Joint Working**

Any joint scrutiny process needs to ensure:

- a) Good quality scrutiny – which adds value and properly investigates issues of concern to participating authorities.
- b) Efficiency – avoiding duplication and bureaucracy.
- c) Confidence in the outcomes of the joint scrutiny exercise by each participating authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and clear communication of expectations from the outset.
- d) Clear working planning and co-ordination.
- e) A coherent approach to scrutiny for external partner organisations
- f) Clear arrangements for reporting and follow-up to ensure action on recommendations.
- g) Reporting arrangements should not create delay through over complexity, and should not create scope for other bodies to block recommendations.
- h) Flexibility in how to carry out joint scrutiny.
- i) It does not undermine each authority's O&S Committee's remit, or officer support available.

#### **Deciding to Scrutinise Jointly**

It is for each authority's O&S Committee to decide if they wish to participate in a joint scrutiny but this needs to be done as efficiently and speedily as possible.

To initiate a joint scrutiny proposal a scoping form should be completed and circulated which will then be subject to agreement of each authority's O&S Committee.

The Worcestershire Scrutiny Officers' Network, in consultation with their respective Chairmen should make proposals for joint scrutiny for considered by the scrutiny chairmen's network (possibly in between meetings) and subsequent recommendation to individual overview and scrutiny committees.

#### **Carrying out Joint Scrutiny**

There are a number of ways that joint scrutiny can be carried out.

There may be times when an individual authority wishes to co-opt members from other authorities onto a particular scrutiny.

There may also be times when it is agreed by each O&S committee that one authority takes the lead in scrutinising an issue on behalf of all authorities.

However, it is suggested that in Worcestershire joint scrutiny should usually be carried out by joint time-limited scrutiny task and finish groups, led by the authority from which the scrutiny originated.

### **Agreeing Membership of Joint Scrutiny Task Group**

After O&S Committees agree to participate in a joint scrutiny they then nominate members.

As the task group would not be an official council committee, political balance requirements do not apply.

The number of Members participating in a joint scrutiny will depend on how many authorities are involved but if all Worcestershire authorities take part it is suggested that one member be appointed from each authority.

### **Agreeing Chairmanship of a Joint Task Group**

Nominations for chairing the task group will be sought from all members of the task group.

Where one authority is leading the scrutiny it may be appropriate for the Chairman to be appointed from that authority.

### **Agreeing Terms of Reference/Scope of the Scrutiny**

Each participating authorities' Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be asked to agree terms of reference for the scrutiny as per the scoping and proposal form.

### **Conduct of the Scrutiny**

Meetings of the joint task group will be arranged by the supporting scrutiny officer(s).

The task group should strive to conduct their business in a consensual, open, responsible and transparent way across the political divides and seek to avoid expressing views based purely on political considerations.

### **Equal Participation**

It is important for all members to be equal participants in the process and for officer support to be available on an equal basis.

### **Meeting Venues**

To be decided by the Review Panel as appropriate to the particular review.

### **Approval of Report's Recommendations**

The joint task group would agree their report and recommendations, normally by consensus. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would then be asked to endorse the report, and could submit their own comments to their Executives.

Time constraints for recommendations need to be fully considered at the scoping stage.

### **Publicising Outcomes from Joint Scrutiny/Sharing Findings**

Once the scrutiny report is agreed by the overview and Scrutiny Committees it should be circulated to Executive members, witnesses and any others involved, by the scrutiny officers supporting the scrutiny.

It could also be put on the website of all the participating authorities.

### **Resourcing and Supporting Joint Scrutiny**

It is intended that joint scrutiny will be supported within the existing resources available to all seven authorities for scrutiny.

Scrutiny officer support for each joint scrutiny should be agreed at the outset. Whilst the authority leading the joint scrutiny would normally provide support for it, ways of sharing the workload should be explored at the scoping stage.

Any expenses for members of a joint scrutiny should be paid by that member's authority in line with that authority's allowance scheme.

### **Tracking the Outcomes of the Scrutiny**

The Review Panel will decide upon arrangements for tracking the implementation of recommendations.

Individual O&S Committees may wish to adopt their own methods for joint scrutiny recommendation tracking.

It is suggested that recommendation tracking for joint scrutinies should be part of the watching brief of the Joint Chairmen's meeting.

**Appendix 3****SUMMARY OF MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE**

| <b>Meeting Date</b>             | <b>Summary</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 26 <sup>th</sup> September 2013 | Appointment of Chair / Vice Chair, endorsement of terms of reference and work planning (including setting future meeting dates).                                                                                                                                        |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> October 2013   | The Task Group reviewed the content of the original business case for WRS and one of the WRS newsletters.<br><br>Members also provided some initial feedback on behalf of colleagues at participating local authorities about Members' experiences of working with WRS. |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2013   | Interview with Steve Jorden, Head of Regulatory Services, and consideration of feedback on WRS experiences from other elected Members and Parish Councillors.                                                                                                           |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> November 2013  | Consideration of WRS Partnership Agreement and Shared Services Joint Committee Protocol and consideration of further feedback as detailed above.                                                                                                                        |
| 21 <sup>st</sup> November 2013  | Observed Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee meeting prior to interview with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee.                                                                                                                                     |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> December 2013   | Consideration of written responses to questions put to the Chair of the Management Board together with work planning, including questions for future witnesses.                                                                                                         |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2013  | Interview with Steve Jorden, Head of Regulatory Services, and WRS senior managers.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> January 2014   | Interview with a member of the Management Board – Ruth Mullen (Ivor Pumfrey was unable to attend).                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 29 <sup>th</sup> January 2014   | Interview with Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive of the Host Authority, and Jayne Pickering, Executive Director, Finance and Resources, Bromsgrove District Council.                                                                                                         |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> February 2014   | Visit to Wyatt House.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> February 2014  | Interview with Clare Flanagan, Principal Solicitor of the Host Authority, and Ivor Pumfrey, Chair of the Management Board.                                                                                                                                              |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2014     | Complaints and compliments data analysed and review of the investigation so far.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 26 <sup>th</sup> March 2014     | Interview with a number of Members of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> April 2014     | Agree draft recommendations and report format.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 28 <sup>th</sup> May 2014       | Agree the draft report.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

**ATTENDANCE RECORD**

|                       | <b>TOTAL<br/>ATTENDANCE</b> |     |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----|
|                       | Lead                        | Sub |
| <b>Bromsgrove</b>     | 11                          | 1   |
| <b>Malvern Hills</b>  | 13                          | 0   |
| <b>Redditch</b>       | 7                           | 4   |
| <b>Worcester City</b> | 12                          | 0   |
| <b>WCC</b>            | 10                          | 0   |
| <b>Wychavon</b>       | 13                          | 3   |
| <b>Wyre Forest</b>    | 0                           | 5   |

**Appendix 4**

**LIST OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY WRS**

The following services are delivered by WRS:

- Air quality.
- Animal health and welfare (including dog warden service).
- Consumer and business advice.
- Contaminated land.
- Environmental packaging
- Environmental permitting (pollution control).
- Fair trading / anti rogue trader activities.
- Food safety.
- Food standards (labelling and composition).
- Health and safety.
- Health promotion.
- Infectious diseases.
- Licensing.
- Metrology.
- Nuisance investigations.
- Pest Control.
- Product safety.
- Public health (burials, drainage, water supplies etc.)
- Under age sales.



## Appendix 5

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Task Group would like to give particular thanks to Steve Jorden and members of the WRS team, especially Mark Kay and Simon Wilkes, who provided evidence, both in person and in writing, throughout the review.

Thanks also go to the following Officers:

#### **Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils**

|                 |                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kevin Dicks     | Joint Chief Executive                                                                                                 |
| Jayne Pickering | Executive Director, Finance and Resources                                                                             |
| Clare Flanagan  | Principal Solicitor                                                                                                   |
| Pauline Ross    | Democratic Services Officer (responsible for clerking meetings of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee) |

#### **Management Board**

|              |                                |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Ivor Pumfrey | Malvern Hills District Council |
| Ruth Mullen  | Worcester City Council         |

#### **Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee - Councillors**

|                 |                                          |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------|
| Lucy Hodgson    | Chair - Worcestershire County Council    |
| Mark Bullivant  | Vice Chair - Bromsgrove District Council |
| Kit Taylor      | Bromsgrove District Council              |
| Bronwen Behan   | Malvern Hills District Council           |
| David Hughes    | Malvern Hills District Council           |
| Brandon Clayton | Redditch Borough Council                 |
| John Fisher     | Redditch Borough Council                 |
| Lynn Denham     | Worcester City Council                   |
| Roger Berry     | Worcester City Council                   |
| Anthony Blagg   | Worcestershire County Council            |
| Ron Davis       | Wychavon District Council                |
| Ken Jennings    | Wychavon District Council                |
| Marcus Hart     | Wyre Forest District Council             |

**Appendix 6**

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

At each meeting Members were asked to declare any interests. The following declarations were received:

*Councillor Cronin, Worcester City Council, declared an other disclosable interest as the publican at The Plough Inn, Broadheath, Worcester.*

**Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services**

Bromsgrove District Council, The Council House, Burcot Lane,  
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 1AA

Telephone: 901527) 881288

Email: [scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk)

## Overview & Scrutiny Committee Recommendation Tracking 2013/2014

| Scrutiny Date | Recommendation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Cabinet Date                     | Decision                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Action Taken                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 04/04/2013    | <b>Recommendations from the Housing Review Panel 05/03/2013:</b><br><b>Housing Strategy: Empty Properties</b><br>1. To bring some of the more difficult longer term empty properties back into use or increase the overall numbers, consideration be given to funding an Officer resource.<br>2. When an additional Officer is agreed to, funding of the resource be identified (both revenue and capital may be required).                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 18/06/2013<br>Agenda Item 9.1(a) | Noted:<br>1. To bring some of the more difficult longer term empty properties back into use or increase the overall numbers, consideration be given to funding an Officer resource.<br>2. When an additional Officer is agreed to, funding of the resource be identified (both revenue and capital may be required).                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Officer recruited on temporary contract has brought back over 40 empty homes back into use in first year and contributed to substantial NHB funding being awarded in last financial year.<br>Small amount of capital identified to bring properties back into use and expecting this to be taken up to bring property in George Street back into use (currently going through planning). |
| 06/06/2013    | <b>Recommendations from the Housing Review Panel 09/05/2013:</b><br><b>Housing Strategy: Housing and Homelessness Services</b><br>1. To undertake an evaluation of the cost effectiveness of homeless prevention services (funded from the Department of Communities and Local Government) to then develop a business case for Cabinet to consider the continuation of funding the prevention services when the allocation goes from an area based grant into unringfenced Business Rates Retention Grant in 2014-15 (by July 2013).<br>2. To undertake research into the different service delivery models for a debt awareness / money advice | 18/06/2013<br>Agenda Item 9.2(a) | Noted:<br>1. An evaluation of the cost effectiveness of homeless prevention services (funded from the Department of Communities and Local Government) to then develop a business case for Cabinet to consider the continuation of funding the prevention services when the allocation goes from an area based grant into unringfenced Business Rates Retention Grant in 2014-15 (by July 2013) be undertaken.<br>2. Research be undertaken into the different service delivery models for a debt awareness / money advice service to | Business case developed and agreed to retain £90,000 of funding for homeless prevention services.<br><br>Internal officer evaluation of current CAB service led to continuation of CAB service in 2014/15.                                                                                                                                                                               |

## Agenda Item No. 10

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | <p>service to homeless /potentially homeless households to include, but not limited to, the Citizens Advice Bureau and an in-house service and to develop an options paper for further consideration.</p> <p>3. To give support to the continued focus and emphasis on homeless prevention services as it is recognised as being good practise, giving a better service to customers and value for money (with a £108k spend p.a. giving and estimated saving of £800k+) and to continue working with partners to ensure services are joined up and comprehensive.</p> |                                  | <p>homeless /potentially homeless households to include, but not limited to, the Citizens Advice Bureau and an in-house service and to develop an options paper for further consideration.</p> <p>3. Support be given to the continued focus and emphasis on homeless prevention services as it is recognised as being good practise, giving a better service to customers and value for money (with a £108k spend p.a. giving and estimated saving of £800k+) and to continue working with partners to ensure services are joined up and comprehensive.</p> | <p>New round of Homeless Prevention Services commissioning concluded and anticipate the highest ever number of homeless preventions in 2013/14 in excess of 1000 households worked with to prevent or relieve homeless by Council and partners.</p> |
| 06/06/2013 | <p><b>Recommendations from the No Surprises Protocol Review Panel 09/05/2013: Revising the No Surprises Review Protocol</b></p> <p>The No Surprises Protocol be amended, as attached as Appendix 1. Additions to the protocol listed at points a – n of the full recommendation.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 18/06/2013<br>Agenda Item 9.2(b) | <p>The No Surprises Protocol be amended, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>The No Surprises Protocol was amended and published in accordance with Appendix 1.</p>                                                                                                                                                           |
| 04/07/2013 | <p><b>Wyre Forest District Site Allocations &amp; Policies Local Plan and Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan – Adoption</b></p> <p>1. Both the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (incorporating the modifications as recommended by the Inspector) are presented to July's Full Council</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 16/07/2013<br>Agenda Item 8.1    | <p>Recommend to Council:</p> <p>a) The Inspector's report as attached to the report to Cabinet at Appendix 1 be accepted in its entirety including the proposed main modifications.</p> <p>b) The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>Council adopted the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013. These now form part of the District's statutory Development Plan.</p>                                  |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|  | <p>meeting for adoption, to be used to determine planning applications from the 24th July 2013.</p> <p>2. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to make the necessary presentational amendments, including the minor amendments as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, to the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan, Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan and the accompanying Policies Map.</p> |  | <p>incorporating the modifications as recommended in Appendix A of the Inspector's Report in the Cabinet report be adopted to be used to determine planning applications from the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013.</p> <p>c) The Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan incorporating the modifications as recommended in Appendix B of the Inspector's Report to the Cabinet report be adopted to be used to determine planning applications from the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013.</p> <p>d) The accompanying Policies Map as attached at Appendix 3 to the report to Cabinet be adopted.</p> <p>e) To note that upon Adoption of the Plans, the list of remaining 2004 Adopted Local Plan Saved Policies (as set out at Appendix 4 to the report to Cabinet), will be fully replaced by those incorporated within the Adopted Core Strategy, the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan.</p> <p>f) Delegated authority be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to make</p> |  |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

|  |  |                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|  |  | <p><b>Council</b><br/>24/07/2013</p> | <p>the necessary presentational amendments, including the minor amendments as set out at Appendix 2 to the report to Cabinet, to the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan, Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan and the accompanying Policies Map.</p> <p>Decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The Inspector's report as attached to the report to Cabinet at Appendix 1 be accepted in its entirety including the proposed main modifications.</li> <li>b) The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan incorporating the modifications as recommended in Appendix A of the Inspector's Report to the Cabinet report be adopted to be used to determine planning applications from the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013.</li> <li>c) The Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan incorporating the modifications as recommended in Appendix B of the Inspector's Report to the Cabinet report be adopted to be used to determine planning applications from the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013.</li> <li>d) The accompanying Policies Map as attached at Appendix 3</li> </ul> |  |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                          |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                              | <p>to the report to Cabinet be adopted.</p> <p>e) To note that upon Adoption of the Plans, the list of remaining 2004 Adopted Local Plan Saved Policies (as set out at Appendix 4 to the report to Cabinet), will be fully replaced by those incorporated within the Adopted Core Strategy, the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan.</p> <p>f) Delegated authority be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to make the necessary presentational amendments, including the minor amendments as set out at Appendix 2 to the report to Cabinet, to the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan, Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan and the accompanying Policies Map.</p> |                                                                          |
| 12/09/2013 | <p><b>Recommendations from the Treasury Management Review Panel:</b></p> <p><b>Consideration of Annual Report on Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2012/13</b></p> <p>To propose to Cabinet that it recommends to Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The actual 2012/13 prudential and treasury indicators be approved.</li> <li>• The annual treasury management</li> </ul> | <p>17/09/2013</p> <p>Agenda Item 8.1</p> <p><b>Council</b></p> <p>Agenda</p> | <p>Recommend to Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The actual 2012/13 prudential and treasury indicators in this report to Cabinet be approved.</li> <li>2. The annual treasury management report for 2012/13 be noted.</li> </ol> <p>Decision:</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <p>No Further action required – statutory reporting requirement met.</p> |



## Agenda Item No. 10

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | report for 2012/13 be noted.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Item 13.a                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The actual 2012/13 prudential and treasury indicators in this report to Cabinet be approved.</li> <li>2. The annual treasury management report for 2012/13 be noted.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 12/09/2013 | <b>West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park (WMSLP) – Planning Brief and Masterplan</b><br>Recommend to Cabinet:<br>To endorse the Planning Brief and Masterplan, as set out at Appendix 1 of the report, as a suitable framework to meet the requirements of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan. | 17/09/2013<br>Agenda Item 10.1 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park Planning Brief and Masterplan (as set out at Appendix 1 to the report to Cabinet), be approved as a suitable framework to meet the policy requirements of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan (Policy SAL.GPB5)</li> <li>2. If any minor amendments are proposed to the Brief and Masterplan that delegated authority be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to agree the final form of the wording of the document with West Midlands Safari &amp; Leisure Park.</li> </ol> | The West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park Planning Brief and Masterplan has been approved and is being used to guide the planning application process for the site. |
| 03/10/2013 | <b>National Non Domestic Rate Relief (NNDR)</b><br>The responses set out in Appendix 2 and the amendments to the proposed scheme set out at Appendix 1 in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be endorsed.                                                                                | 22/10/2013<br>Agenda Item 9.2  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The operating principles for a new scheme of NNDR relief from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report to Cabinet be agreed.</li> <li>2. The eligibility criteria for a new scheme of NNDR relief from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 as set out at Appendix 1 to the report to Cabinet be agreed.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Cabinet agreed new NNDR Policy which came into effect on 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2014.                                                                                |

## Agenda Item No. 10

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                    | 3. Delegated authority be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation to decide whether to include or exclude leisure centres from the scheme once the negotiations on the new leisure centre are completed.                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 03/10/2013 | <b>Wyre Forest District Development Plan: Revised Local Development Scheme (Project Plan 2013-16)</b><br>The proposed Revised Local Development Scheme 2013-16, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be endorsed. | 22/10/2013<br>Agenda Item 10.1     | 1. The Proposed Draft Revised Local Development Scheme (2013-16) be endorsed and published as a basis for the future production of the District's Local Plans.<br><br>2. Delegated authority be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to undertake any necessary formatting amendments to the Draft Revised Local Development Scheme prior to its publication. | The Revised Local Development Scheme (2013-16) is published on the District Council's website and will be used as the timetable for reviewing the Core Strategy. |
| 03/10/2013 | <b>Community Infrastructure Levy</b><br>The progression of a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule is postponed and the position is reviewed again later in 2014.                                                                                 | 22/10/2013<br>Agenda Item 11.1 (a) | The progression of a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule be postponed and the position be reviewed again later in 2014.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | No further work has been undertaken on progression of a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.                                                         |
| 03/10/2013 | <b>Wyre Forest Health Action Plan Update</b><br>The Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2013/14, as attached at Appendix 2 to the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be approved.                                                                    | 22/10/2013<br>Agenda Item 11.1 (b) | The Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2013/14, as attached at Appendix 2 to the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be approved.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Implemented with the majority of actions either completed or ongoing. New plan to be considered by O&S in September 2014.                                        |

## Agenda Item No. 10

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                  |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 03/10/2013 | <b>Supported Housing for Young People – Local Letting Plan</b><br>Recommend to Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Independent Person be appointed onto the multi-agency appeal panel.</li> <li>• The Bromsgrove Street Foyer Local Letting Plan be approved.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Dealt with under Strong Leader Model</b>                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Panel established and Nightstop Officer fulfilling role of independent appeal panel member. To date no appeals have taken place. |
| 07/11/2013 | <b>Recs from Treasury Management Review Panel: Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2013/14</b><br>The Treasury Management Mid-Year Review and updated Prudential Indicators be approved.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 19/11/2013<br>Agenda Item 8.2<br><br><b>Council</b><br>27/11/2013<br>Agenda Item 14.b | Recommend to Council: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Treasury Management Mid-year Review be approved.</li> <li>2. The updated Prudential Indicators be approved.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | No further actions required, the statutory report requirement have been met.                                                     |
| 07/11/2013 | <b>Hereford &amp; Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority – Draft Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020</b><br>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that the following response should be submitted to the consultation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wyre Forest District Council makes no comment about the proposal relating to Bewdley but objects to any proposal to reduce Kidderminster to a single engine when much smaller towns (such as Bromsgrove, Malvern and Droitwich) are proposed to retain two engines. It is recognised that the other towns have their first engine crewed on a different basis, which is not whole-time shift;</li> <li>2. The number of members of the Fire</li> </ol> | <b>Council</b><br>27/11/2013<br>Agenda Item 15                                        | Consultation response: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Closer collaborative working should be given to back office structures with Shropshire &amp; Warwickshire where senior management posts could merge.</li> <li>2. In light of the potential savings of the above, Wyre Forest District Council objects to any proposal to close Bewdley Fire Station or reduce Kidderminster to a single engine when much smaller towns (such as Bromsgrove, Malvern and Droitwich) are proposed to retain two engines. It is recognised that the other towns</li> </ol> | Consultation response sent within deadline.                                                                                      |

**Agenda Item No. 10**

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | <p>and Rescue Authority should be reduced, together with a reduction in related training costs;</p> <p>3. The Council considers that any further reductions in fire cover for Wyre Forest in future would be unacceptable.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                              | <p>have their first engine crewed on a different basis, which is not whole-time shift;</p> <p>3. The number of members of the Fire and Rescue Authority should be reduced, together with a reduction in related training costs;</p> <p>4. The Council considers that any reductions in fire cover for Wyre Forest in future would be unacceptable.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 05/12/2013 | <p><b>Sustainable Communities Act – Proposed Levy on Large Retail Outlets</b></p> <p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that Wyre Forest District Council should back the campaign for a levy on large retail outlets.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <p><b>Council</b><br/>26/02/2014<br/>Agenda<br/>Item 9.a</p> | <p>Wyre Forest District Council back the campaign for a levy on large retail outlets.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <p>WFDC's support for the campaign has been communicated to the organisers.</p>                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 05/12/2013 | <p><b>Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth Consultation</b></p> <p>The Draft Consultation response, as attached at Appendix A to the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to the Draft Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth be endorsed.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p><b>Dealt with under Strong Leader Model</b></p>           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>The Consultation response was submitted on the GBSLEP Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2013.</p>                                                                                                                |
| 19/12/2013 | <p><b>Worcestershire County Council Subsidised Bus Services Review 2013</b></p> <p><b>The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee authorises the submission of the following points and comments made by Committee Members.</b></p> <p>1. The potential loss of a regular bus service will particularly hit the elderly, especially those in sheltered accommodation who are less likely to have access to a car. There are high numbers of rented sheltered units along a number of "at risk" routes including those serving Fairfield (bus routes 4A, 7 and 580), Lickhill (bus routes 15, 192 and 294), George Street/Offmore Road (bus route 7A), Deansway (bus route 7), Blakedown (bus route 197)</p> |                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>Response authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and submitted to Worcestershire County Council.</p> <p>The response represented the views of the Committee, and was not to be interpreted as a formal response from</p> |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                      |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
|  | <p>and Bliss Gate (bus route 291), together with small developments around Chaddesley Corbett parish (bus route 133) and Shatterford (bus route 297).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. The Sion Hill estate is amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England and car ownership within the ward is around only 1 in 4 households (2011 Census). Two of the at risk bus routes serve this community, numbers 7 and 580. This estate is situated up a very steep hillside and access to services in the town centre by foot is not really practicable for most residents. It is requested that due consideration should be given to topographical barriers to movement on foot or by bicycle when considering service reductions.</li> <li>3. The Committee is very concerned about the potential loss of a number of school services, both those bringing children in from the rural areas (routes 15 and 291) and those providing access to Wolverley School (routes 830, 831, 833, 834 and 835). The route to Wolverley School is unlit and has very poor pavements, it is not considered to be a safe route to school for children to walk along.<br/>The Committee also expresses great concern about the potential loss of routes connecting Halesowen College and Worcester University (routes 192, 294 and 295). Reduced bus services also have implications for students accessing Kidderminster College and the Kidderminster Academy. Worcestershire County Council has a Duty of Care to enable children to get to school safely, and indeed all those people wishing to access education. Members of the Committee consider that access to education is of paramount importance.</li> <li>4. The potential loss of off-peak services through Callow Hill has implications for sustainable tourism initiatives at the Wyre Forest itself and could therefore have an adverse impact on the local economy.</li> <li>5. It is considered that the loss of these bus services would have significant adverse impact on the District's economy at a time when there is a strong drive to regenerate Kidderminster. The loss of these services would particularly hit the District's night time economy through reduced levels of accessibility. The Committee does not consider that these proposals have had due regard to the Wyre Forest District Adopted Development Plan (Adopted Core Strategy (Dec 2010), Adopted Site Allocations &amp; Policies Local Plan (July 2013) and Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (July 2013).</li> <li>6. A number of sites recently allocated for development though the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan lie along "at risk" routes. Sites affected include those along route 15 (SAL.WS1 Midland Industrial Plastics, SAL.EA3 Parsons Chain, SAL.EA4 Worcester Road Garage, SAL.EA5 Baldwin Road and SAL.KSS1 Chester Road South Service</li> </ol> | <p>Full Council.</p> |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                    |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | <p>Station), the Broadwaters Community Centre SAL.KSS1 (routes 7 and 580) and SAL.RS2 at Clows Top on route 291. The impact on the site at Clows Top is especially concerning as this is intended to be an affordable housing development.</p> <p>7. A number of the “at risk” routes are presently subject to minimal subsidies of less than 50p. A small increase in fares would potentially aid the retention of a number of services including those serving Sion Hill, Fairfield, Halesowen and Wolverley School.</p> <p>8. Members of the Committee also wish to make a number of points about the consultation process and the consultation material. Firstly, there is little or no information available about user numbers for each of the services at risk. This information is essential to make informed judgements about the potential loss of these services and should be made publicly available. Secondly, the consultation process itself is considered to be found wanting. There is an over emphasis on the use of internet and no contact number is provided for those people who do not have access to email or wish to contact the County Council with specific queries. Therefore it is not considered to be an inclusive consultation which addresses the needs of some of the more vulnerable service users such as the elderly and disadvantaged.</p> <p>9. To conclude, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wishes to express its outrage at the potential losses of key bus routes, many of which serve communities which have low car ownership and high numbers of elderly people and also suffer from high levels of multiple deprivation. It is also considered that this will have severe impacts on accessibility levels across the District.</p> |                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                    |
| 09/01/2014 | <p><b>Home Choice Plus Allocation Policy Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That approval be given to the Strategic Housing Services Team to consult on the proposed allocations policy changes.</li> <li>• That the Home Choice Plus questionnaire as attached at Appendix 2 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, is approved as the appropriate means to undertake the consultation.</li> <li>• That the results of the consultation be bought back to a further meeting of</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 21/01/2014<br>Agenda Item 9.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval be given to the Strategic Housing Services Team to consult on the proposed allocations policy changes.</li> <li>• The Home Choice Plus questionnaire as attached at Appendix 2 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be approved as the appropriate means to undertake the consultation.</li> <li>• The results of the consultation be bought back to a further</li> </ul> | Consultation period now closed – anticipate bringing back results and amended policy in July 2014. |

## Agenda Item No. 10

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to approval of the final policy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                  | meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to approval of the final policy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 06/02/2014 | <p><b>Recommendations from Treasury Management Review Panel:</b></p> <p><b>Treasury Management Strategy 2014-15</b></p> <p>Propose to Cabinet that it recommends to Council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve the restated Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2014/15 to 2016/17 included in Appendix 3 to the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</li> <li>• Approve the updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 (the associated Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 3 to the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the detailed criteria is included in Section 10 and Appendix 5).</li> <li>• Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP included in Appendix 1 to the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</li> <li>• Approve the Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3 to the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</li> </ul> | <p>18/02/2014</p> <p>Agenda Item 8.2</p> <p><b>Council</b></p> <p>26/02/2014</p> | <p>Recommended to Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The restated Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2014/15 to 2016/17 included in Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet be approved.</li> <li>2. The updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 (the associated Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet and the detailed criteria is included in Section 10 and Appendix 5) of the report to Cabinet be approved.</li> <li>3. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP included in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be approved.</li> <li>4. The Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet be approved.</li> </ol> <p>Decision:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The restated Prudential</li> </ol> | <p>The new Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for 2014/15 to 2016/17 has been implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and all investments and treasury management activities are now governed by this policy. Progress and activity will be monitored against the policy and further reports made to members in due course.</p> |

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Agenda Item 9.b               | <p>Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2014/15 to 2016/17 included in Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet be approved.</p> <p>2. The updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 (the associated Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet and the detailed criteria is included in Section 10 and Appendix 5 of the report to Cabinet) be approved.</p> <p>3. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP included in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be approved.</p> <p>4. The Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet be approved.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 06/02/2014 | <p><b>Chaddesley Corbett Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 14 Consultation Response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To submit the response set out at Appendix 2 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council as the</li> </ul> | 18/02/2014<br>Agenda Item 9.1 | <p>1. The response set out at Appendix 2 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council as the District Council's formal response to the Regulation 14 consultation be submitted.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p>The response was submitted to Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council.</p> <p>Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council submitted the Neighbourhood Plan to the District Council on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014. A 6 week publication period is taking place between Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April and</p> |



## Agenda Item No. 10

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | <p>District Council's formal response to the Regulation 14 consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To give delegated authority to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to publish the Neighbourhood Plan upon its receipt and to appoint an examiner to undertake an examination of the Plan.</li> </ul> |                                                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delegated authority be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to publish the Neighbourhood Plan upon its receipt and to appoint an examiner to undertake an examination of the Plan.</li> <li>The Chief Executive to write to Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council congratulating them on their quality of work on their Parish Plan.</li> </ol> | <p>Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May.</p> <p>An examiner has been appointed to undertake an independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>                                   |
| 06/03/2014 | <p><b>Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – Consultation Draft</b></p> <p>The Consultation Statement and Draft Affordable Housing SPD, as amended and set out at Appendices 1 and 2 in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be approved for public consultation.</p>                            | <p><b>Dealt with under Strong Leader Model</b></p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>The Draft Affordable Housing SPD was published for public consultation and will be reported to July's Overview and Scrutiny, Cabinet and Council meetings for Adoption.</p> |
| 01/05/2014 | <p><b>Enforced Sale Policy</b></p> <p>The Enforced Sale Policy as set out at Appendix 1 in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be approved</p>                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>13/05/2014<br/>Agenda Item 8.1</p>              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The enforced sale policy set out in the appendix of the report to Cabinet be approved.</li> <li>Delegated authority be granted to the Solicitor to the Council in consultation with the Strategic Housing Services Manager to determine which cases are suitable for action under the policy.</li> </ol>                                                        | <p>The enforced sale policy was agreed by Cabinet in May 2014 and is now in operation.</p>                                                                                     |
| 01/05/2014 | <p><b>Recommendations from the Blue Badge Review Panel</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A publicity campaign via the Media Team be produced to promote the</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                | <p>13/05/2014<br/>Agenda Item 9.1</p>              | <p>The Cabinet noted the Committee's recommendations on Blue Badge Review Panel.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Work ongoing with the Media team to produce a media campaign.</p>                                                                                                           |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |  |  |  |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|
|  | <p>correct use of permits and to help prevent public misconception of the scheme.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. The Benefits Fraud Hotline telephone number be published and guarantee of anonymity.</li><li>3. The continued efforts by the Kidderminster Hub and Worcestershire County Council to improve the application process and streamlining of issuing permits be endorsed.</li><li>4. The Civic Enforcement Officers continue with the work they are doing to combat misuse of permits.</li></ol> |  |  |  |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**FEEDBACK FROM CABINET MEETING HELD ON  
TUESDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2014**

**Agenda  
Item No.**

**DECISION**

**8.1 Enforced Sale Policy**

**Decision:**

- 1. The enforced sale policy set out in the appendix of the report to Cabinet be approved.**
- 2. Delegated authority be granted to the Solicitor to the Council in consultation with the Strategic Housing Services Manager to determine which cases are suitable for action under the policy.**

**9.1 Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014**

**Decision:**

**The Cabinet noted the Committee's recommendations on Blue Badge Review Panel.**

- 1. A publicity campaign via the Media Team be produced to promote the correct use of permits and to help prevent public misconception of the scheme.**
- 2. The Benefits Fraud Hotline telephone number be published and guarantee of anonymity.**
- 3. The continued efforts by the Kidderminster Hub and Worcestershire County Council to improve the application process and streamlining of issuing permits be endorsed.**
- 4. The Civil Enforcement Officers continue with the work they are doing to combat misuse of permits.**

**Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2014-2015**

**July 2014**

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Leisure Centre Update  
Housing Allocation Policy  
Recs Local Plans Review Panel - Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (will be circulated following LPRP meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2014)  
Chaddesley Corbett Neighbourhood Plan - Examiner's Report and Decision Statement – (will be circulated following LPRP meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2014)  
How Are We Doing? Performance Update (Q4)  
Climate Change Update  
Joint WRS Task Group (Final Report)  
Tracking Recommendations 2013-2014

- 10<sup>th</sup> Development of Council's Assets (Exempt)

**September 2014**

- Leisure Centre Update  
Design Supplementary Planning Document

**October 2014**

- Leisure Centre Update

## **Terms of Reference - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

1. Reviews the policies of the Council and the Cabinet and recommends to the Council or the Cabinet:
  - (i) Whether any new policies are required.
  - (ii) Whether any existing policies are no longer required.
  - (iii) Whether any changes are required to any existing policies.
  - (iv) Whether any action is required to make the policies more effective.
2. Reviews the discharge of Cabinet functions, and recommends to the Council or the Cabinet:
  - (i) Whether any action should be taken to improve the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of those functions.
  - (ii) Whether any action should be taken to improve the co-ordination of the various functions within the Authority, or with any other person or body.
  - (iii) Whether the function should continue to be discharged or be discharged in another way.
3. Reviews any decisions or proposed decisions of the Council and of the Cabinet. In undertaking such reviews, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall in particular consider:
  - (i) Whether the relevant criteria were used.
  - (ii) Whether the decision is in accordance with the budget and policy framework of the Council.
  - (iii) Whether the decision or action was within the powers of the Authority.
  - (iv) Whether the decision was lawful.
  - (v) Whether the decision contributes to the efficient, effective and economic discharge of the function.
4. Recommendations should all take account of the following:
  - (i) Whether the decision should be reconsidered, and if so, what alternative decision should be taken.
  - (ii) Whether the proposed decision should be taken or taken in a different form.
  - (iii) Whether any further action should be taken in the experience of that decision to ensure proper or better implementation of decisions.
  - (iv) Whether any further actions should be taken in the experience of that decision to improve the manner or quality of decision-making for the future.

5. Considers any matters which affect the Council or its administrative area or the inhabitants of that area and makes recommendations to the Council or the Cabinet arising from that consideration.

6. External Partners

Reviews the performance and effectiveness of the Council's external partner organisations, including the duty to scrutinise the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

7. Review Panels

Establishes time limited Review Panels which focus upon specific issues of concern raised by Members through a Scrutiny Proposal Form, consider evidence, and subsequently make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A protocol for the establishment of Review Panels is attached as Appendix C at section 10 of the Constitution.

8. Review the Forward Plan

Regularly reviews the Forward Plan with a view to deciding which, if any, forthcoming items require consideration.

9. Sets and agrees an Annual Work Programme and prioritises the work of the Committee.

10. Ensures consideration is given to encouraging public participation and engagement in functions of the Committee.

11. Ensures that the views of any invitees and co-opted Members (where appropriate) are taken into account when conducting investigations.

12. Monitors the implementation of scrutiny recommendations.

13. Reviews and scrutinises relevant public bodies and partners in the District, including the Council's contribution and relationship with them. Where necessary, requesting them to address overview and scrutiny about their activities, performance, particular decisions, initiatives or projects.