

Open

Cabinet

Agenda

6pm
Tuesday, 12th February 2019
Council Chamber
Wyre Forest House
Finepoint Way
Kidderminster



Cabinet

The Cabinet Members and their responsibilities:-

Councillor M J Hart	Leader of the Council & Strategy
Councillor I Hardiman	Deputy Leader & Housing, Health & Well-being
Councillor R J Vale	Operational Services
Councillor N J Desmond	Resources
Councillor J Smith	Culture, Leisure & Community Protection
Councillor C Rogers	Economic Regeneration & Planning

Scrutiny of Decisions of the Cabinet

The Council has one Scrutiny Committee that has power to investigate policy issues and question members of the Cabinet who have special responsibility for a particular area of the Council's activities. The Cabinet also considers recommendations from this Committee.

In accordance with Section 10 of the Council's Constitution, Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, and Standing Order 2.4 of Section 7, any item on this agenda may be scrutinised by the Scrutiny Committee if it is "called in" by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and any other three non-Cabinet members.

The deadline for "calling in" Cabinet decisions is 5pm on Friday 22nd February 2019.

Councillors wishing to "call in" a decision on this agenda should contact, Louisa Bright, Principal Committee and Member Services Officer, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster. Telephone: 01562 732763 or email louisa.bright@wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Urgent Key Decisions

If the Cabinet needs to take an urgent key decision, the consent of the Scrutiny Committee Chairman must be obtained. If the Scrutiny Committee Chairman is unable to act the Chairman of the Council or in his/her absence the Vice-Chairman of the Council, must give consent. Such decisions will not be the subject to the call in procedure.

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 the Council's 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.

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, Principal Committee and Member Services Officer, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster. Telephone: 01562 732763 or email louisa.bright@wyreforestdc.gov.uk

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* Unless there are no reports in the open session.

Wyre Forest District Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 12th February 2019

Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster

Part 1

Open to the press and public

Agenda item	Subject	Page Number
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Declarations of Interests by Members 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. Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's Constitution for full details.	
3.	Minutes To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on the 18th December 2018.	7
4.	CALL INS a verbal update will be given on any decisions which have been "called in" since the last meeting of the Cabinet.	
5.	Items Requiring Urgent Attention To consider any item which, in the opinion of the Chairman requires consideration at the meeting as a matter of urgency.	
6.	Public Participation In accordance with the Council's Scheme for Public Speaking at Meetings of Full Council/Cabinet, to allow members of the public to present petitions, ask questions, or make statements, details of which have been received by 12 noon on Monday 4 th February 2019 . (See front cover for contact details).	

7.		
7.1	<p style="text-align: right;">Councillor J Smith</p> <p>Transfer of operational responsibility and surrender of lease for Kidderminster Town Hall</p> <p>To consider a report from the Corporate Director: Community, Well Being and Environment on the transfer of the management of Kidderminster Town Hall (KTH) to Kidderminster Town Council (KTC) from 1st April 2019.</p>	12

8.		
8.1	<p style="text-align: right;">Councillor N Desmond</p> <p>Results of Budget Consultation, Alternative Budgets and Recommendations from the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel</p> <p>To consider the results of the budget consultation exercise launched following the presentation of the Financial Strategy 2019/2022 to Cabinet on the 18th December 2018, alternative budget proposals and recommendations from the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel from their meeting on the 31st January 2019.</p>	18
8.2	<p>Financial Strategy 2019-2022</p> <p>To consider a report from the Corporate Director: Resources on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-22 and to make recommendations to Council on the proposed budget decision.</p>	23

9.		
9.1	<p style="text-align: right;">Councillor C Rogers</p> <p>Lion Fields Parcel 4 - Delivery Options</p> <p>To consider a report from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place on the feasibility and masterplanning study prepared for Parcel 4 of Lion Fields, Kidderminster and to seek approval to undertake soft market testing of the Bromsgrove Street Car Park site</p> <p>To also consider the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7th February 2019 (<i>To follow</i>).</p>	38

10.		
10.1	<p style="text-align: right;">Councillor I Hardiman</p> <p>Housing Allocations Policy</p> <p>To consider a report from Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place which outlines the proposed changes to the Allocations Policy following amendments made to the legislation around Homelessness (the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) and other statutory instruments / guidance around allocations.</p> <p>To also consider the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7th February 2019 (<i>To follow</i>).</p>	48

11.	To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Solicitor to 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.	
12.	<p>Exclusion of the Press and Public</p> <p>To consider passing the following resolution:</p> <p>“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”.</p>	

Part 2

Not open to the Press and Public

13.		
13.	To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Solicitor to 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.	

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

18TH DECEMBER 2018 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: M J Hart (Chairman), N J Desmond, C Rogers, J D Smith and R J Vale.

Observers:

Councillors: H E Dyke and F M Oborski MBE.

CAB.52 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor I Hardiman.

CAB.53 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.54 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13th November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.55 Call Ins

No decisions had been called in since the last Cabinet meeting.

CAB.56 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.57 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

CAB.58 Financial Strategy 2019 – 2022

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Resources which provided Cabinet with financial information in order to make proposals for the Budget Strategy for the period 2019-2022.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He said that this was a balanced proposal for the Council's future spending and set out a clear and strategic way of taking

the Council forward over the next 3 years. In relation to the Council's financial context he advised that the net expenditure on services was set to fall by circa 3% from just over £12m to £11.7m. He said the key driver for this had been the severe reduction in government grant which was due to be phased out completely next year. He added that despite the further reduction in the government grant and New Homes Bonus (NHB), the Council had a rich history of not only balancing the books but also driving out savings. He said this gave a firm strategic direction that allowed the Council to continue to invest in services that residents depend upon.

The Cabinet Member for Resources continued that the Council would proceed in a determined and pragmatic way and would continue with its transformation journey in future years. He said the budget set out 3 main levers to help close the financial gap namely; making the Council internally as efficient as possible, using alternative delivery models for services and assets and finally growing income. He added that income from commercial activity had grown from £3.9m to £5.7m, and the medium term financial strategy provided for an additional £325k over a 3 year period.

The Cabinet Member for Resources concluded that, like previous budgets, it was very much strategic in its outlook and continued to invest in the Council's future. He said that over 3 years the Council would have general reserves of just over £1.6m at the end of the strategy term. He said he was very grateful to the Chief Executive, Corporate Director: Resources and Corporate Leadership Team for their continued advice and professionalism. He added that the Administration looked forward to working with all political parties in January 2019 to try and reach a consensus before the final strategy was presented to Council in February 2019.

The Leader of the Council seconded the recommendations. He reminded people that the Council was the billing authority for the precepting authorities, but Wyre Forest District Council only made up 12% of the overall council tax bill. He said that the modest increase would allow a substantial amount of extra income to the Council's base budget which would enable the authority to continue to provide vital services for our communities. He added that the consultation on the strategy would commence on 19th December and urged everybody to take part in it.

Decision:

- 1.1 The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 – Part 1 of the report to Cabinet be noted.**

The Cabinet ENDORSE and RECOMMEND to the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel for scrutiny:

- 1.2 The Council's updated Medium Term Financial Strategy;**

- 1.2.1 Cabinet Proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council's Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2019-22 (paragraph 7.3 of the report to Cabinet) including;**

- a. Approval of the Community Leadership Fund for 2019-20 of £33k;
 - b. Approval of a further Localism Fund allocation of £50k in 2019-20.
 - c. Approval of the allocation of £30k in 2019-20 to preserve service standards of highways verge maintenance;
 - d. Approval of additional staffing resource for Planning Enforcement of 1 FTE for a 2 year fixed term at a cost of £25.9k in 2019-20 and £27.1k in 2020-21 funded from a combination of the 20% increase in Planning Fees previously approved and service efficiency savings as a result of the new system implementation;
 - e. Approval of additional staffing resource for Environmental Protection and Enforcement team of 1 FTE for a 2 year fixed term. Funded in part from additional fine income at a net cost of £17,540k in 2019-20, and £18,780 in 2020-21;
 - f. Approval of additional income generation targets of £75k in 2019-20, £100k in 2020-21 and £150k in 2021-22;
- 1.2.2 The level of net expenditure and resultant Council Tax for 2019-22 as per paragraphs 7.1 and 7.4 including the revenue implications of the Capital Strategy report also on the Cabinet agenda;
- 1.2.3 To increase the Council Tax charge for long-term empty dwellings to the maximum possible level with effect from 1st April 2019 and in future years, in accordance with section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by section 2 of the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 (see paragraph 5.11);
- 1.2.4 The fees and charges in line with this strategy and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2019-22, as shown in Part 3 of Appendix 3 (paragraphs 4.14 and 7.1 also refer);
- 1.3 The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 – Part 2 be approved:
- 1.4 Decisions in relation to the setting of new fees and charges arising in-year be delegated to the Corporate Director: Community Well-Being and Environment in consultation with the Commercial Activity Programme Board (CAPB) and Corporate Director: Resources (paragraph 4.7 refers).

CAB.59 Capital Strategy

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Resources and the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place which provided Members with information to support the recommendations within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and sought approval of a Capital Strategy for 2019-22 including prudential indicators which set limits for non financial investments

and to fulfil the key requirements of the MHCLG Investment Guidance.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report and moved the recommendations for approval. He said that the strategy simply pulled together all the Council's existing strategies for capital and investments into one overarching strategy. He added that the updated strategy now included ethical considerations for development loans and property investments.

Councillor F M Oborski MBE left the meeting at 6.37pm and returned at 6.39pm.

The Leader of the Council seconded the recommendations and said that the strategy showed how open and transparent the authority was in how it was spending Council tax payers' money in terms of the £25m capital portfolio investment fund and the £10m loans to third parties fund.

Decision:

1.1 The Cabinet ENDORSE and RECOMMEND to the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel for scrutiny:

1.2 The Council's updated Capital Strategy:

- a) Approve the Capital Strategy 2019-22 including the associated Quantitative Indicators in Appendix 2 of the report to Cabinet;**
- b) Approve variations to the Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendix 1, Appendices A and B;**
- c) Approve the limits for gross debt of non treasury investments compared to net service expenditure and for commercial income as a percentage of net service expenditure as set out in Appendix 2;**
- d) Approve the limits for loan investments as set out in Section 5.1.**

1.3 The Cabinet APPROVED:

1.3.1 That delegation be given to the Corporate Director: Economic, Prosperity and Place in consultation with the Corporate Director: Resources and Solicitor to the Council and the Cabinet Member for Resources to update the Development Loans Fund and Capital Portfolio Strategy Policies.

CAB.60 Exclusion of Press and Public

Decision: "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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "exempt information" as defined in paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CAB.61 Investment Proposal

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place which provided a business case to support an investment proposal for the Capital Portfolio Fund.

The Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity & Place presented the report. He gave a comprehensive and thorough explanation of the proposed transaction and the consideration of key matters consistent with the Council's Capital Strategy and the Government Statutory Guidelines for Local Authority Investments, covering the background to the investment opportunity including its location, condition, valuation and tenancy details.

Having outlined the justification for the investment and highlighted the potential risks, he confirmed that the proposal was in line with the Council's adopted Capital Portfolio Fund Strategy and met the Government Statutory Guidelines for Local Authority Investments.

The Corporate Director: Resources gave an explanation of the financial implications of the transaction.

The Cabinet Member for Resources formally moved the recommendations for approval. He said that the proposed purchase was subject to further checks being undertaken by Officers, but felt this was an exciting opportunity for the authority.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor H Dyke, presented the recommendations from the Committee and said there had been unanimous support for the proposal. The Leader of the Council seconded the recommendations.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee from its meeting on 17th December 2018:

- 1.1 The business case for the purchase of the Freehold property known as ("the Property") subject to the existing leases, be approved.**
- 1.2 Delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity & Place in consultation with the Corporate Director: Resources, the Solicitor to the Council and the Cabinet Member for Resources to conclude the purchase of the Property once the outstanding matters and documentation set out in the confidential report have been received and deemed satisfactory by the Council's officers.**

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

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**CABINET****February 12th 2019****Transfer of operational responsibility and surrender of lease for Kidderminster Town Hall**

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Cabinet member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Linda Draycott
CONTACT OFFICER:	Kay Higman
APPENDICES:	Plan of “blue land” occupied by WFDC

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To transfer the management of Kidderminster Town Hall (KTH) to Kidderminster Town Council (KTC) from 1st April 2019 with a grant which reduces over a period of 5 years.

2. RECOMMENDATION**The Cabinet is asked to DECIDE:**

- 2.1 To surrender the Council’s Lease of Kidderminster Town Hall (KTH) to Kidderminster Town Council (KTC), terminate the Dual Use Agreement and revise the service level agreements that it entered into with KTC such that KTH is both occupied and managed by KTC subject to the new service level agreements set out in the report from 1st April 2019.
- 2.2 To provide a grant to KTC which reduces over a period of 5 years to support the cost of operating KTH.
- 2.3 To revise the service level agreements from 1st April 2019
- 2.4 To enter into a short term lease of the land shown edged blue on the plan attached for a period of three months from 1 April 2019 to 30 June 2019, with an option to extend with adequate notice, until the Customer Service Team is in a position to move into their new accommodation at Green Street on the terms set out in the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Joint working with KTC on the potential transfer commenced in May 2018 and included a presentation to KTC on 18 July 2018 giving detailed information and confirming the principles and timescales for negotiation. Regular meetings and presentations with the Town Clerk and KTC councillors have taken place and financial proposals from both parties discussed. KTC decided at its meeting of KTC

Committee on 19th December 2018 to support the transfer; final authority has been given at its full council meeting on January 30th 2019 (TBC).

- 3.2 If WFDC served notice to end the Lease of KTH on the 21 April 2021 (or any 5th anniversary of that date) then the Dual Use Agreement will also end on that date. However, if WFDC does not exercise the break and continues to remain in KTH managing the facility then WFDC is committed to 10 years of the Dual Use Agreement (KTC can break the Dual Use Agreement at 5 years in 2021). If WFDC served notice as above then KTC would have to take on the management of the facility and decide whether or not the activities would cease.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The proposed transfer is fully in accord with the Council's approach to localism, and marks a welcome change in the maturity of KTC and its ability to take on more local services following its creation in 2015. The proposal also provides a very welcome contribution to the Council's financial gap, as the full cost of operating KTH will shift to KTC when the grant is phased out.
- 4.2 The six WFDC staff at KTH including the wedding co-ordinator would be transferred to KTC because they are wholly engaged in the management of KTH. TUPE is the "Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006" as amended by the "Collective Redundancies and Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Amendment) Regulations 2014". The TUPE rules apply to organisations of all sizes and protect employees' rights when the organisation or service they work for transfers to a new employer. In order to meet the proposed transfer date of 1st April 2019, discussions with employees should commence at the earliest opportunity after this meeting about the transfer and consultation will follow as appropriate as part of the normal TUPE process (this is a minimum of 30 days given the numbers of employees involved).
- 4.3 A number of contracts were due for renewal at KTH in 2019/20 and therefore at the request of KTC the contracts for cleaning, operation of the bar and lighting/sound were renewed for 12 months to enable KTC to proactively manage the procurement process after the transfer and maintain flexibility.
- 4.4 The management and organisation of the event Youth Makes Music would also transfer to KTC and is included in the budget. KTC has indicated that the wedding co-ordinator post would also transfer and all income and expenditure associated with town hall weddings. The costs for the wedding co-ordinator have not been included in the budgets after May 2019 when WFDC funding ceases as this post was subject to temporary, short term funding by WFDC. In order to continue with the wedding co-ordinator post funding would need to be separately identified by KTC.
- 4.5 There have been detailed management negotiations about the funding and the provision of a time-limited grant by WFDC. The negotiated position is set out in the table.

The support grant amount in year 1 would be the actual net expenditure figure, capped at £122,530. The remaining 4 years where a support grant applies would be an absolute amount per year over this period, which would mean that KTC would have full risk; WFDC would have certainty over costs. These amounts are as follows:

Year	Grant to KTC from WFDC	Savings for WFDC
2019/2020	£122,530	£0
2020/2021	£74,220	£38,240
2021/2022	£43,320	£64,970
2022/2023	£29,980	£81,040
2023/24	£0	£114,100

- 4.6 KTC has agreed to buy back financial (including payroll), audit, legal, facilities, IT and Parks and Depot support from WFDC but would use National Association of Local Councils (NALC) for HR and line management. The Service Level Agreements for these services would need to be amended or redeveloped and have been agreed to be for 5 years. This would bring £350,000 of income to WFDC from KTC over the 5 year period. The existing Service Level Agreements include services relating to the day to day management of KTH and so will need to be ended and new ones issued to reflect the new arrangements.
- 4.7 A short term lease from KTC to WFDC will be needed for the area currently occupied by the Customer Service Team shown edged blue on the attached plan (“the Blue Land”) to enable them to remain until they are able to move into new accommodation at Green Street.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The main financial implications are detailed in the key issues above and set out in the table in section 4.5. The significant savings WFDC will make from transferring the management of KTH to KTC will contribute to the £2.1 million funding gap and will be applied to reduce the Wyre Forest Forward unachieved savings in the revised version of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-22 (MTFS). There are some minor costs that remain with WFDC post transfer, being shares of support and general administration costs that cannot be charged to KTC under service level agreements. They amount to circa £15,000 per year from 2019-20.
- 5.2 WFDC currently leases the Blue Land for occupation by customer services functions. KTC has entered into an arrangement to extend use of the blue land for up to six months in order to accommodate the current capital development at Green Street.
- 5.3 A three month lease extension from 1st April 2019 to 30th June 2019 will cost £12,500 and is included within the MTFS report. Should a further three month extension (1st July 2019 to 30th September 2019) be required WFDC need to inform the Town Council by Monday 13th May 2019 to confirm that second agreement.
- 5.4 Once the Green Street capital project is completed there will be a full year ongoing saving of £50,000 per annum to WFDC because the Council will no longer pay to occupy the Blue Land’ used by the Customer Service team. This saving is included in within the MTFS report based on the projected timeline.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The current arrangements are by way of a lease by KTC to WFDC of the whole of the Town Hall coupled with management and sharing arrangements set out in the Dual Use Agreement and Service Level Agreements. The proposal requires a change to this arrangement which, notwithstanding the terms of the Lease and the Dual Use Agreement, can be negotiated outside the current agreed terms by **mutual agreement**. There is therefore an opportunity to terminate current arrangements to bring about this operational transfer earlier subject to all formal decisions from each party supporting the principles, although there is substantial work involved in redrafting the legal documentation.
- 6.2 The current Service Level Agreements will need amending or developing depending on KTC's requirements.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 None required

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Risks in respect of personnel issues and the legal aspects of the proposal have been mitigated by full involvement of the HR and legal teams in developing and implementing these proposals.
- 8.2 The development of this proposal mitigates against a financial cliff edge for KTC if WFDC were to exercise the break clause in April 2021. In the absence of a mutually agreed and negotiated settlement for the future of the community facilities and activities at KTH, the community risks losing valuable community well being and cultural services.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Cabinet is recommended to support this further significant step in localism, with the transfer of management of the town hall to KTC to take place from 1 April 2019

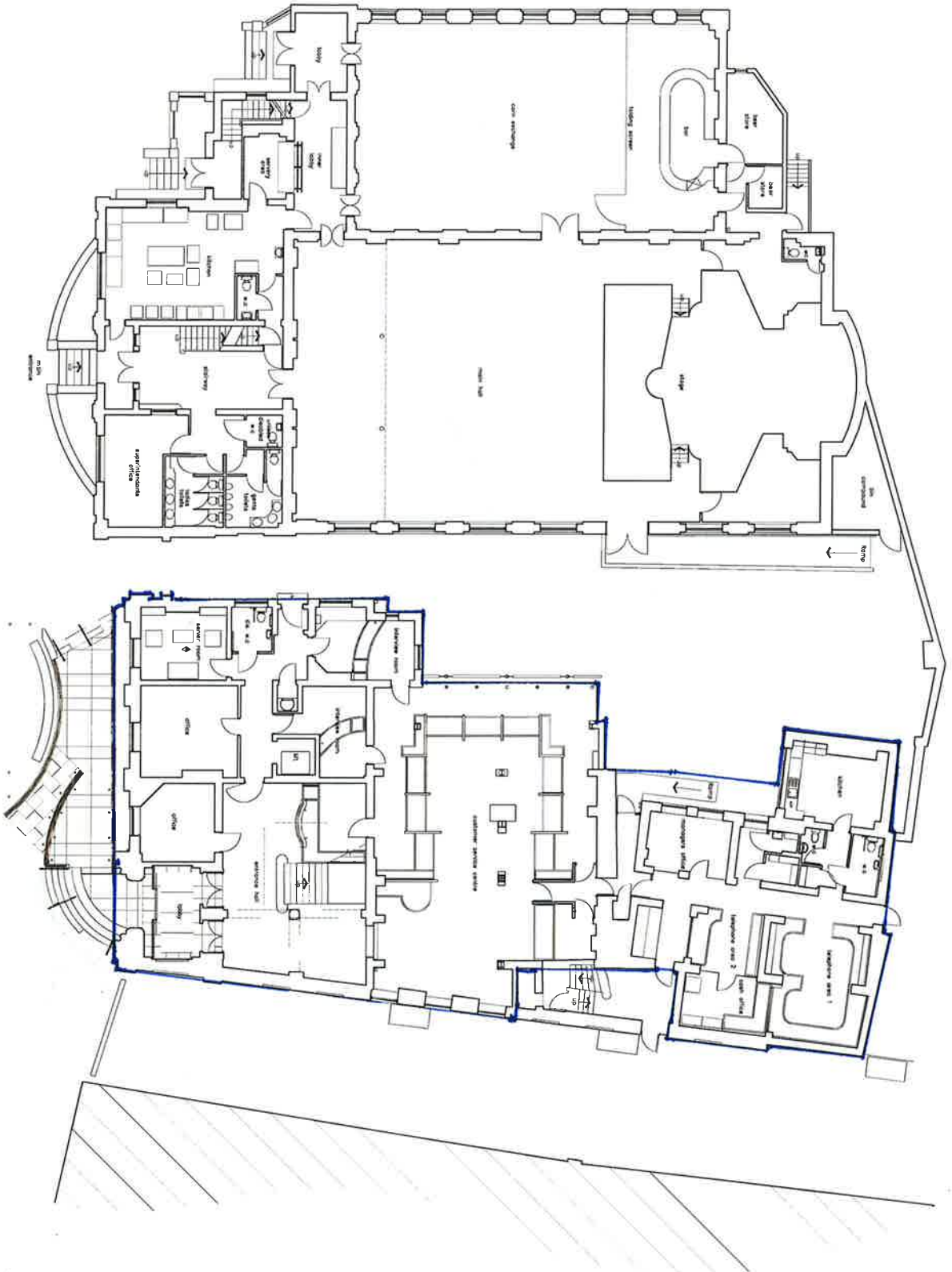
10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Cabinet/CLT
10.2 Kidderminster Town Council Clerk

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet report May 2018

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

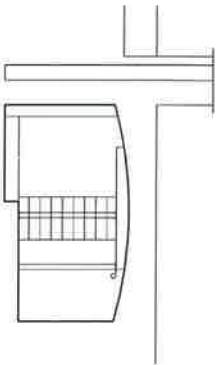


GENERAL NOTES

CONTRACTING WORK WITH THIS SET AND BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING AND
CARRYING ALL NECESSARY DIMENSIONS

Ground Floor Plan as Existing





SECTION AA (1:50)



BASEMENT PLAN



GENERAL NOTES
CONTRACTOR TO VERIFY THE SITE AND BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM AND
OBTAIN ALL NECESSARY PERMISSIONS.

Basement Plan as Existing



20 St. George's Lane,
The Rectory, Kildermister,
Vicar Street, Kildermister,
Kildermister,
Co. Wick, Ireland.
Tel: 01943 860000
www.s.t.s-architects.com

Wyre Forest D.C.
Kildermister Town Hall
Vicar Street
Kildermister

SCALE: 1:100 1:50
DATE: May 2010
DRAWN BY: S.T.
DRAWING NO: 10-907/02

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
12th FEBRUARY 2019

**RESULTS OF BUDGET CONSULTATION. ALTERNATIVE BUDGETS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET FINANCIAL STRATEGY ADVISORY
PANEL**

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor N J Desmond
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Corporate Director: Resources Tracey Southall Ext 2100 tracey.southall@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
Appendix 1 Appendix 2	Budget Consultation Results Labour Party Alternative Budget Proposals <i>The appendices to this report have been circulated electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request. (See front cover for details.)</i>

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the results of the budget consultation exercise launched following the presentation of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy 2019/22 to Cabinet on the 18th December 2018, alternative budget proposals and recommendations from the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel from their meeting on the 31st January 2019.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to NOTE in line with the recommendations of the Cabinet Financial Advisory Panel:

- 2.1 **The results of the budget consultation exercise and the alternative budget proposals as detailed within the report and appendices.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following the consideration of the Medium Tern Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy 2019/22, on 18th December 2018 there has been extensive consultation on the proposals. The purpose of this report is to feed back to Cabinet the results of the consultation to inform final recommendations on the budget to Council later this month. The main groups which have been consulted are:

- Council Tax Payers, Business Rate payers and Staff
- Other Members of the Council
- Partners including Town and Parish Councils
- Unions

3.2 This report summarises the responses received.

4. SUMMARY OF BUDGET CONSULTATION RESULTS

4.1 The Council has invited comments on the budget proposals presented to Cabinet on the 18th December 2018. A total of 430 respondents accessed the consultation. A summary of the responses is shown below. More detailed analysis is available in Appendix 1.

5. BUDGET CONSULTATION RESULT DETAILS

5.1 The Council has invited comments on the budgets proposals presented to Cabinet on the 18th December 2018. A total of 430 respondents accessed the consultation. A summary of the responses (top two categories of response) is shown below. A full list of the questions and more detailed analysis is available in Appendix 1.

Question 1: Do you support proposals to freeze car parking charges during 2019-20?

Strongly Support	51%
Support	25%

Question 2: Do you support proposals to increase council tax for our portion of your bill by 2.39%?

Strongly Support	22%
Support	33%

Question 3: Do you support proposals to spend £30,000 to maintain verges along district's highways to bridge service reductions made by Worcestershire County Council?

Strongly Support	23%
Support	42%

Question 4: Do you support proposals to bring in a further full time planning enforcement officer for two years?

Strongly Support	19%
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Support 29%

Question 5: Do you support proposals to keep the Community Leadership Fund running in 2019-20?

Strongly Support 28%
Support 33%

Question 6: Do you support continuing our Localism initiative to help fund community-led projects around the district?

Strongly Support 27%
Support 33%

Question 7: Do you support proposals to hire an extra full-time environmental protection and enforcement officer for two years?

Strongly Support 45%
Support 29%

Question 8: Do you support proposals to increase our income generation targets by £75k in 2018/19, £100k in 2019/20 and £150k in 2020/21?

Strongly Support 36%
Support 37%

6. KEY ISSUES

- 6.1 In making the final recommendation to Council on the Financial Strategy 2019/22 the Cabinet will consider the recommendations from the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel that they note the budget consultation results as set out in this report and the alternative budget proposal contained in Appendix 2.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications.

8. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 An equality impact assessment screening has not been necessary as the Cabinet Proposals do not introduce significant change therefore there are no discernible impacts on the nine equality strands.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1 It is good practice to determine the views of Council Tax payers in making determinations on the budgets.

11. CONCLUSION/FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 The Council continues to engage with the public, staff, other Members and various stakeholders in setting the direction of the Council. In these times of financial austerity difficult choices will be required on selective reductions in costs in line with the Council's priorities. The total number of people accessing the budget is much higher than last year (last year there were around 260 responses) and can be considered to be a representative sample of overall public opinion. All but three of the respondents took part in the survey online. Around 100 paper copies were made available at public buildings in all three key towns across the district. Three paper responses were returned (no respondents sent back paper copies of the completed survey last year).
- 11.2 All of the proposals received support with a minimum of 55% supporting or strongly supporting every proposal with the exception of the employment of a further full-time planning enforcement officer that received 48% supporting or strongly supporting the proposal however this was more than twice the number of respondents opposing it. The proposal that received the strongest support was for the council to freeze car parking charges during 2019/20 with 86% of respondents either supporting or strongly supporting this proposal (Question 1).
- 11.3 The proposal to bring in an extra full-time environmental protection and enforcement officer for two years also received high support with 74% of respondents either supporting or strongly supporting this proposal (Question 7).
- 11.4 The proposal to increase our income generation targets received majority support—with 73% of respondents either supporting or strongly supporting this proposal (Question 8).
- 11.5 The council's proposed council tax increase of 2.39% also won support from the majority of respondents. Those supporting or strongly supporting the proposed increase were 55% (Questions 2).

12. CONSULTEES

- 12.1 Corporate Leadership Team
12.2 Cabinet

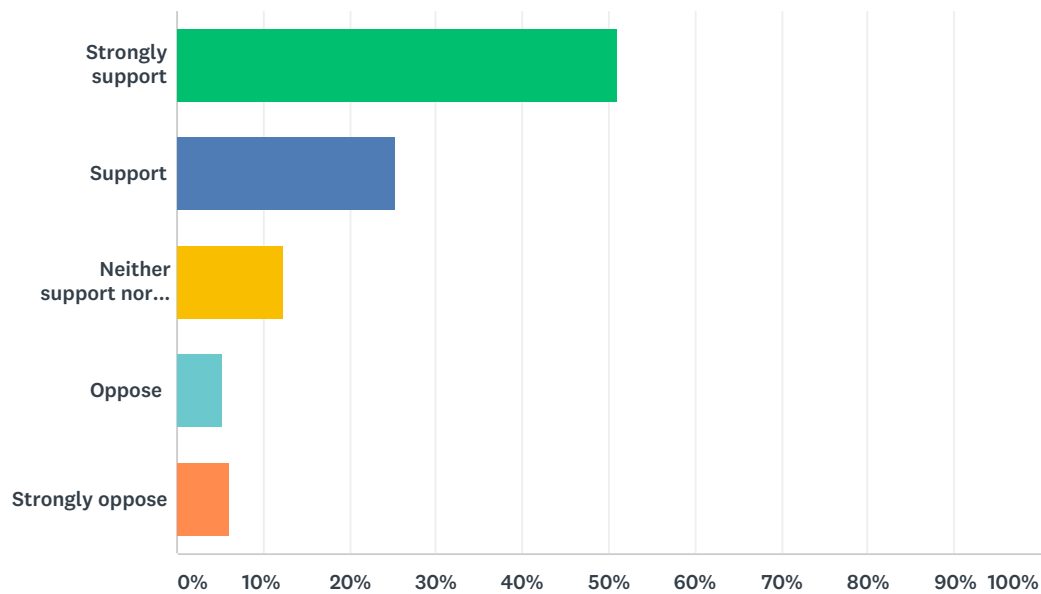
12.3 Media Team

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 Cabinet Report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019/22 and Capital Strategy 18th December 2018
- 13.2 Agendas and Minutes of the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel
- 13.3 Budget Consultation Response 17th January 2019

Q1 Do you support proposals to freeze car parking charges during 2019-20?

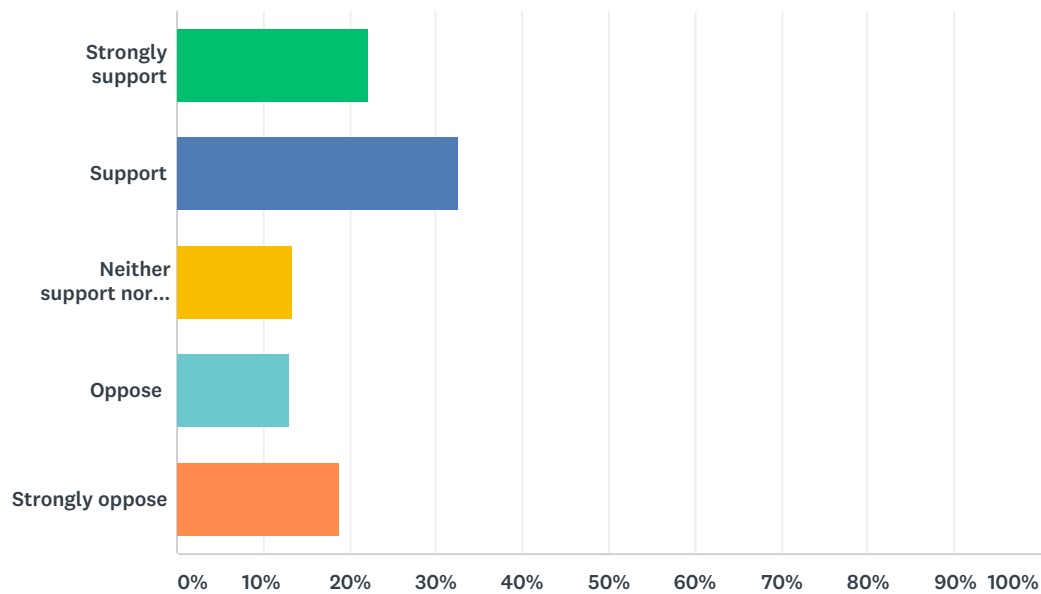
Answered: 423 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	51.06%	216
Support	25.30%	107
Neither support nor oppose	12.29%	52
Oppose	5.20%	22
Strongly oppose	6.15%	26
TOTAL		423

Q2 Do you support proposals to increase council tax for our portion of your bill by 2.39%?

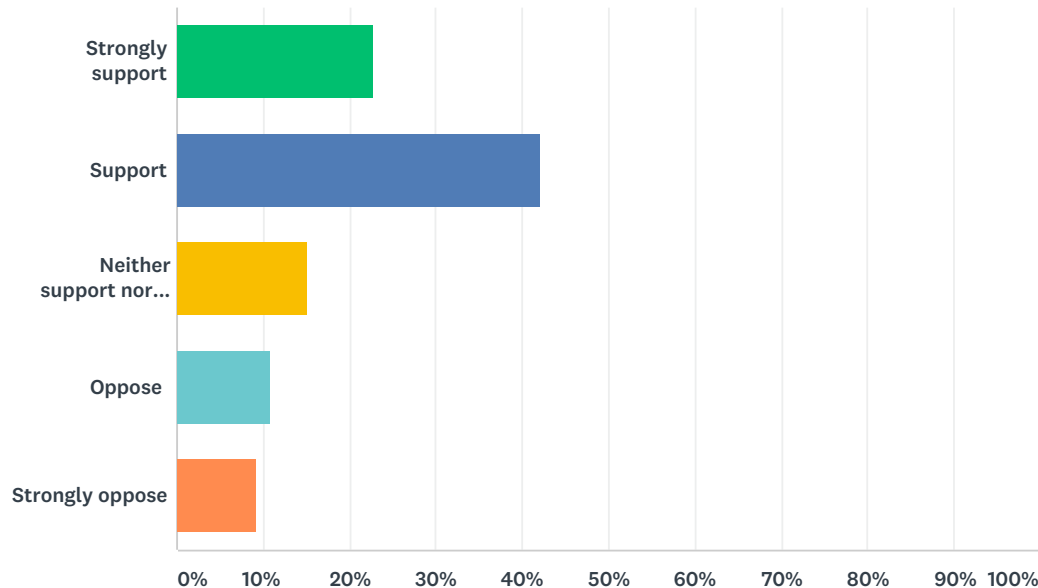
Answered: 414 Skipped: 16



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	22.22%	92
Support	32.61%	135
Neither support nor oppose	13.29%	55
Oppose	13.04%	54
Strongly oppose	18.84%	78
TOTAL		414

Q3 Do you support proposals to spend £30,000 to maintain verges along the district's highways to bridge service reductions made by Worcestershire County Council?

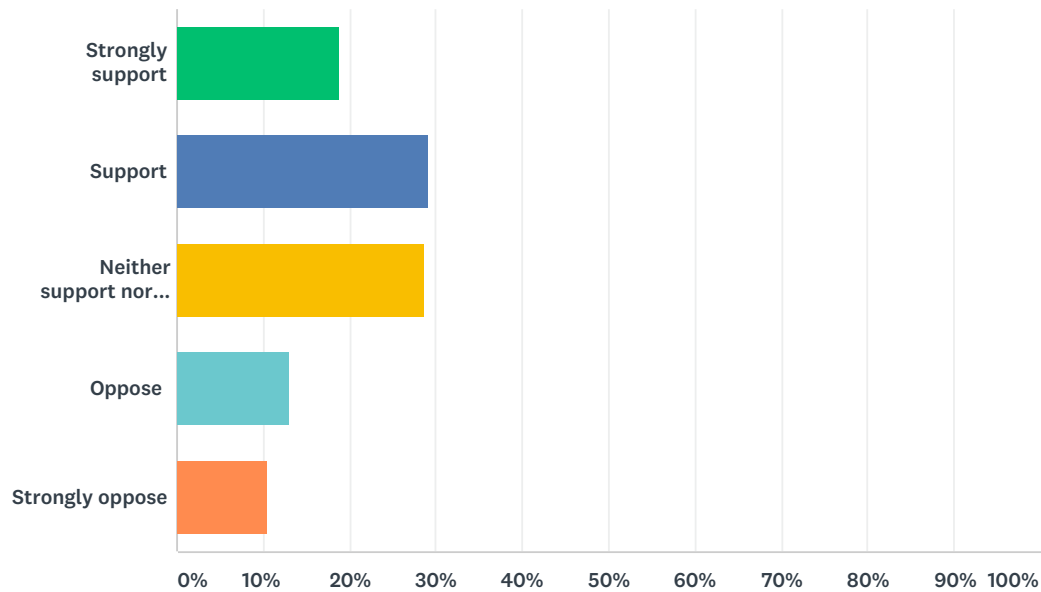
Answered: 404 Skipped: 26



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	22.77%	92
Support	42.08%	170
Neither support nor oppose	15.10%	61
Oppose	10.89%	44
Strongly oppose	9.16%	37
TOTAL		404

Q4 Do you support proposals to employ a further full-time planning enforcement officer for two years?

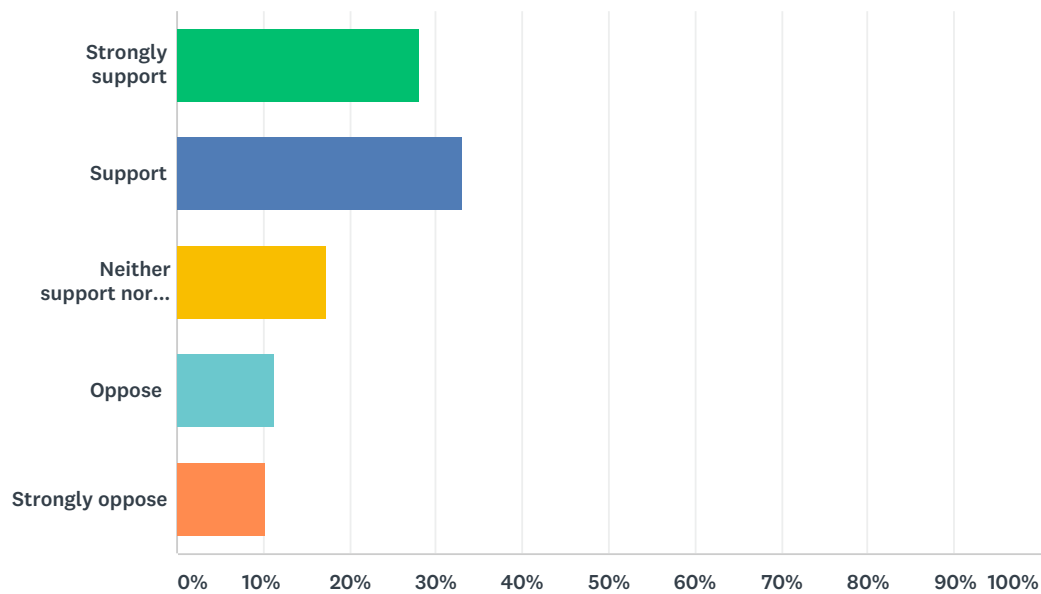
Answered: 399 Skipped: 31



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	18.80%	75
Support	29.07%	116
Neither support nor oppose	28.57%	114
Oppose	13.03%	52
Strongly oppose	10.53%	42
TOTAL		399

Q5 Do you support proposals to keep the Community Leadership Fund running in 2019-20?

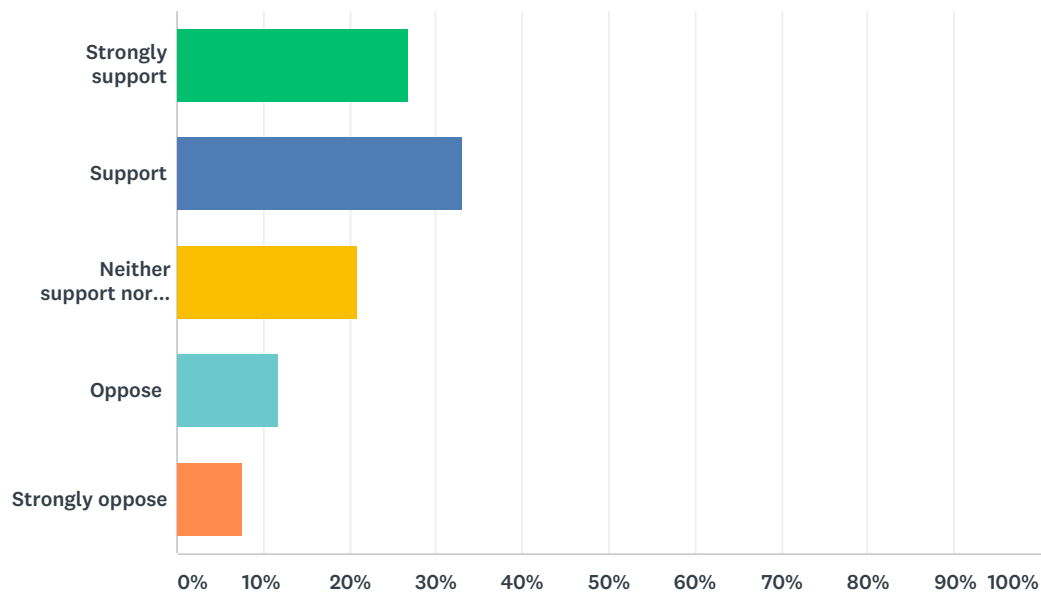
Answered: 390 Skipped: 40



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	27.95%	109
Support	33.08%	129
Neither support nor oppose	17.44%	68
Oppose	11.28%	44
Strongly oppose	10.26%	40
TOTAL		390

Q6 Do you support proposals to continue our Localism initiative to help fund community-led projects around the district?

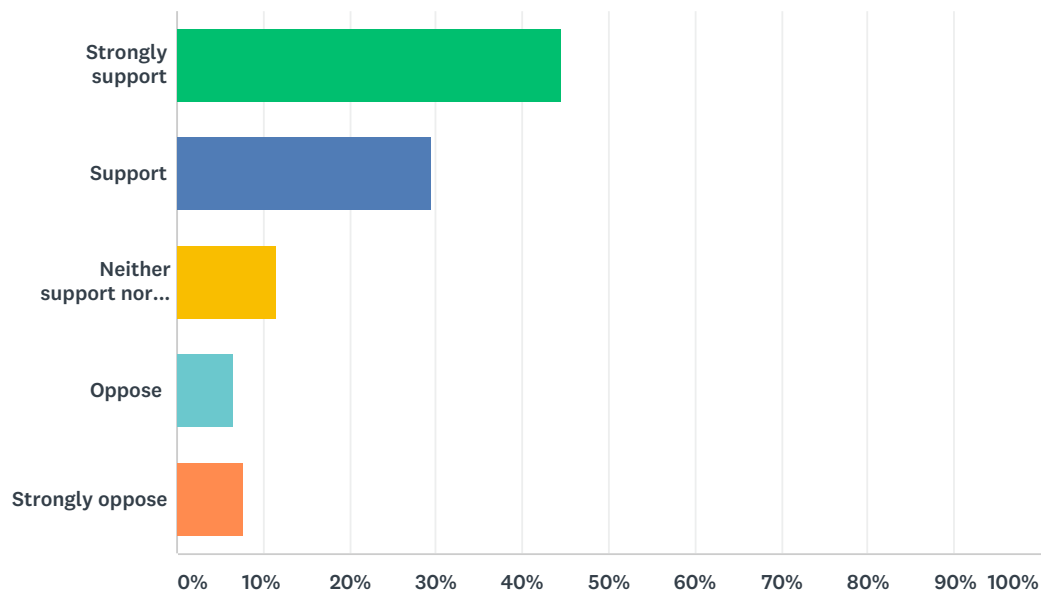
Answered: 384 Skipped: 46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	26.82%	103
Support	33.07%	127
Neither support nor oppose	20.83%	80
Oppose	11.72%	45
Strongly oppose	7.55%	29
TOTAL		384

Q7 Do you support proposals to bring in an extra full-time environmental protection and enforcement officer for two years?

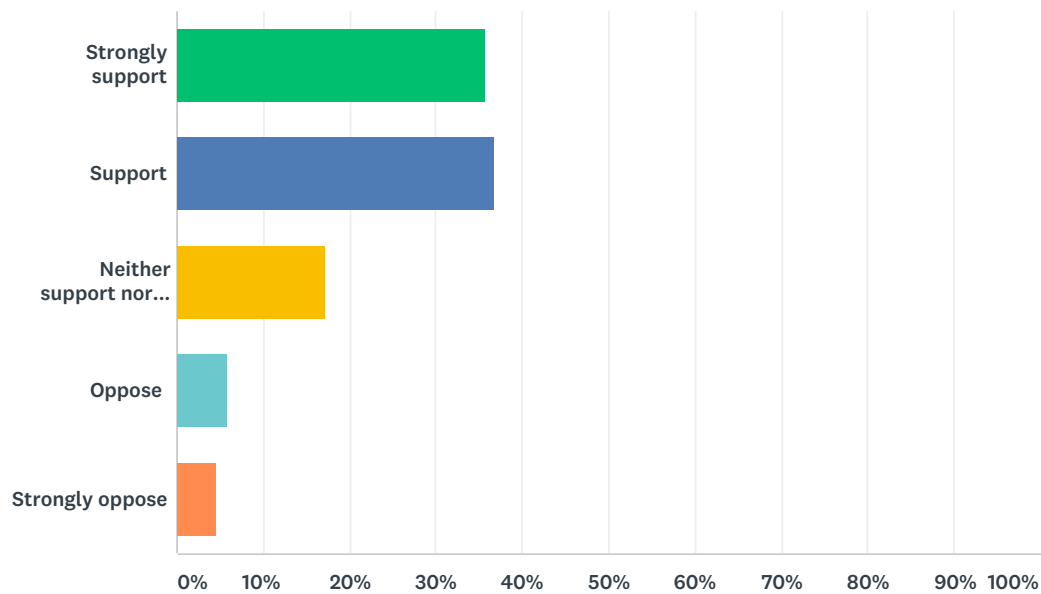
Answered: 383 Skipped: 47



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	44.65%	171
Support	29.50%	113
Neither support nor oppose	11.49%	44
Oppose	6.53%	25
Strongly oppose	7.83%	30
TOTAL		383

Q8 Do you support proposals to increase our income generation targets by £75k in 2018/19, £100k in 2019/20 and £150k in 2020/21?

Answered: 375 Skipped: 55



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	35.73%	134
Support	36.80%	138
Neither support nor oppose	17.07%	64
Oppose	5.87%	22
Strongly oppose	4.53%	17
TOTAL		375

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

LABOUR ALTERNATIVE BUDGET/CAPITAL STRATEGY
PROPOSALS 2019-20 ONWARDS

The Labour Party intend to propose a budget amendment as set out below and in the attached papers. In summary this proposal differs to the Cabinet Proposals including policies within the Cabinet's Proposed Capital Strategy as follows:

- 1 Reduces the £33k **Community Leadership Funding** in 2019-20 to **£500** per Member.
- 2 The Labour Party also propose approval of the following **policy statement** which fits in with the Financial Strategy 2019-2022 towards housing and employment.

The proposal is to use monetary investment from the £25m capital portfolio fund specifically for employment and to develop work with partners on the Silverwoods site and other suitable sites to create industrial units for employment and also to lease out to employers.

Housing

Worcester Street, Kidderminster; at the last count there were 15 empty shops in the street, we propose WFDC buys the lease or freehold on the shops which are available. Wyre Forest could then convert the shops into housing units acting as landlord offering fair rents and secure tenancies which would reduce the number on the housing waiting list.

Joint Housing Schemes

We propose that WFDC joins a partner to go forward and build social housing in the District. Our preference would be the Wyre Forest CHG.

Costings to be worked out after agreement to this policy and then to be fed into the budget estimates if it proves to be financially viable for the above policy proposals - therefore they are not included in the detailed schedule of Labour Party Proposals.

LABOUR PROPOSALS

CABINET PROPOSALS FEBRUARY 2019				
	Revised 2018/19 £	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £
Net Expenditure on Services (per Appendix 1)	12,016,120	11,790,010	11,358,010	11,685,840
Total Net Expenditure on Services (per Appendix 1)	12,016,120	11,790,010	11,358,010	11,685,840
Less Cabinet Proposals		55,540	(81,220)	(150,000)
Net Expenditure	12,016,120	11,845,550	11,276,790	11,535,840
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	(264,210)	(309,650)	(779,620)	(847,960)
	11,751,910	11,535,900	10,497,170	10,687,880
Net Budget Requirement				
<u>Less</u>				
Revenue Support Grant	100,680	0	(356,790)	(356,790)
Business Rates	3,281,510	3,395,610	3,102,520	3,136,410
New Homes Bonus	1,272,700	906,100	232,690	201,960
Business Rates Returned Levy	42,920			
Transition Grant	0	0	0	0
Collection Fund Surplus	50,000		50,000	0
Council Tax Income	7,004,100	7,234,190	7,468,750	7,706,300
COUNCIL TAX LEVY increase by £5 pa from 2019-20 onwards	209.34	214.34	219.34	224.34
COUNCIL TAX BASE	33,458	33,751	34,051	34,351
Reserves Statement	Revised 2018/19 £	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £
Reserves as at 1st April	4,151	3,687	3,377	2,597
Increase to Working Balance	(200)			
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	(264)	(310)	(780)	(848)
Reserves as at 31st March	3,687	3,377	2,597	1,749
LABOUR PROPOSALS	Revised 2018/19 £	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £
Net Expenditure on Services (per Appendix 1)	12,016,120	11,790,010	11,358,010	11,685,840
		0	0	0
Total Net Expenditure on Services (per Appendix 1)	12,016,120	11,790,010	11,358,010	11,685,840
Less Labour Proposals	0	39,040	(81,220)	(150,000)
Net Expenditure	12,016,120	11,829,050	11,276,790	11,535,840
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	(264,210)	(293,150)	(779,620)	(847,960)
	11,751,910	11,535,900	10,497,170	10,687,880
Net Budget Requirement				
<u>Less</u>				
Revenue Support Grant	100,680	0	(356,790)	(356,790)
Business Rates	3,281,510	3,395,610	3,102,520	3,136,410
New Homes Bonus	1,272,700	906,100	232,690	201,960
Business Rates Returned Levy	42,920			
Transition Grant	0	0	0	0
Collection Fund Surplus	50,000	0	50,000	0
Council Tax Income	7,004,100	7,234,190	7,468,750	7,706,300
COUNCIL TAX LEVY increase by £5 pa from 2019-20 onwards	209.34	214.34	219.34	224.34
COUNCIL TAX BASE	33,458	33,751	34,051	34,351
Reserves Statement - LABOUR Proposals	Revised 2018/19 £	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £
Reserves as at 1st April	4,151	3,687	3,394	2,614
Increase to Working Balance	(200)			
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	(264)	(293)	(780)	(848)
Reserves as at 31st March	3,687	3,394	2,614	1,766

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

LABOUR PROPOSALS 2019/20 ONWARDS

Cost Centre	ACTIVITY AND DESCRIPTION OF LABOUR PROPOSAL	KEY	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	After 2021/22 £
			£	£	£	£
CLEAN, GREEN AND SAFE COMMUNITIES						
R335	<u>Localism Fund</u> To top up the single Localism Fund by a further £50k to continue the good work done so far with Parish and Town Councils and other local organisations.	C R S	- 50,000 -	- - -	- - -	- - -
R205	<u>Highways Maintenance of Verges</u> To help deliver the corporate priority: "to support you to live in clean, green and safe communities" to allocate funding of £30k pa to ensure service standards of maintenance of highways verges are maintained at current levels in 2019-20. This will be subject to review in subsequent years.	C R S	- 30,000 -	- - -	- - -	- - -
R610	<u>Planning and Enforcement</u> To provide additional resource for Planning Enforcement for a fixed term of 2 years - 2019-20 to 2020-21 of 1 FTE Assistant Enforcement Officer Band F funded from a combination of additional income raised from 20% planning fee increase and service efficiencies achieved from the new Planning system implementation	C R R S	- 25,920 25,920 CR 1.00	- 27,130 27,130 CR 1.00	- - - -	- - - -
R720	<u>Community Leadership Fund</u> In light of the acknowledged effectiveness of this fund to retain this funding stream of £500 per Member for 2019-20	C R S	- 16,500 -	- - -	- - -	- - -
R726	<u>Environmental Protection and Enforcement</u> To provide additional resource within the Environmental Protection/Enforcement team of 1 FTE for 2 years to supplement the current total 8.5FTE; the costs of this post can be offset from additional income generated of circa £5k pa	C R S	- 17,540 1.00	- 18,780 1.00	- - -	- - -
	<u>Income Generation</u> To introduce an additional generic income generation target across all areas of activity including the Capital Portfolio Fund.	C R S	- 75,000 CR -	- 100,000 CR -	- 150,000 CR -	- 175,000 CR -
	<u>Rough Sleepers Protocol</u> To agree a Rough Sleepers night shelter protocol to be funded from additional Flexible Homeless Support Grant from Government and commissioned as part of the procurement already planned for a more comprehensive service	C R R S	- 13,500 13,500 CR -	- 13,500.00 13,500 CR -	- 13,500 13,500 CR -	- 13,500 13,500 CR -
	TOTALS	C R S	- 39,040 2.00	- 81,220 CR 2.00	- 150,000 CR -	- 175,000 CR -

KEY - Changes in Resources

- C Capital
- R Revenue
- S Staffing - Stated in FTEs

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**CABINET**
12th FEBRUARY 2019**Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-22**

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor N J Desmond
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Corporate Director: Resources
CONTACT OFFICER:	Tracey Southall, Ext 2100 tracey.southall@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
Appendix 1 Appendix 2 Appendix 3 – Part 2 Appendix 3 – Part 3 Appendix 4	Base Budget Projections 2019-22 Capital Programme 2018-19 onwards Part 2 – Fees and Charges - Cabinet Part 3 – Fees and Charges – Council Report of the Corporate Director: Resources/Chief Financial Officer in respect of Sections 25-28 Local Government Act 2003 <i>The appendices to this report have been circulated electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request. (See front cover for details.)</i>

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-22 and make recommendations to Council on the proposed budget decision. Also to consider the report of the Corporate Director: Resources in respect of statutory duties placed on Local Authority Chief Financial Officers in relation to budget setting and monitoring.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The **CABINET** having re-considered the Financial Strategy 2019-22, the results of the Budget consultation exercise and recommendations of the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel **RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL** that it:

2.1 THREE YEAR BUDGET, CAPITAL STRATEGY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 2019-22

2.1.1 **APPROVES** the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-22;

2.1.2 **APPROVES** the revised Cabinet Proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council's Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2019-22 as shown in the table in paragraph 3.14 including:

- a. Approval of the Community Leadership Fund for 2019-20 of £33k;
- b. Approval of a further Localism Fund allocation of £50k in 2019-20.

- c. Approval the allocation of £30k in 2019-20 to preserve service standards of highways verge maintenance;
 - d. Approval of additional staffing resource for Planning Enforcement of 1 FTE for a 2 year fixed term at a cost of £25.9k in 2019-20 and £27.1k in 2020-21 funded from a combination of the 20% increase in Planning Fees previously approved and service efficiency savings as a result of the new system implementation;
 - e. Approval of additional staffing resource for Environmental Protection and Enforcement team of 1 FTE for a 2 year fixed term. Funded in part from additional fine income at a net cost of £17,540 in 2019-20, and £18,780 in 2020-21;
 - f. Approval of additional income generation targets of £75k in 2019-20, £100k in 2020-21 and £150k in 2021-22;
 - g. Approval of £13.5k in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 for a Rough Sleeper night shelter protocol to be funded from additional Flexible Homeless Support Grant from Central Government (see paragraph 3.13).
- 2.1.3 **APPROVES** the fees and charges in line with this Strategy and in line with the recommendations of the Licensing and Environmental Committee of 4th February 2019, and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2019-22, as shown in Appendix 3- Part 3;
- 2.14 **APPROVES** the Council's updated Capital Strategy including:
- a) **Approval** of the Capital Strategy 2019-22 including the associated Quantitative Indicators in Appendix 2 of the December Cabinet report;
 - b) **Approval** of variations to the Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendix 2 of this report (which updates Appendix 1, Appendices A and B of the Capital Strategy report to December 2018 Cabinet) ;
 - c) **Approval** of the limits for gross debt of non treasury investments compared to net service expenditure and for commercial income as a percentage of net service expenditure as set out in Appendix 2 of the December report;
 - d) **Approval** of the limits for loan investments as set out in paragraph 5.1 of the 18th December 2018 report.
- 2.1.5 **APPROVES** that any Final Accounts savings arising from 2018-22 over and above the target allowed for in the Council's Financial Strategy, together with surplus Earmarked Reserves, be allocated by the Corporate Director: Resources in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources;

- 2.1.6 The General Fund Revenue Budget be **APPROVED** including all updates from the position in December 2018 as set out in this report.

2.2 COUNCIL TAX

- 2.2.1 **SETS** the Council Tax for Wyre Forest District Council on a Band D Property at £214.34 for 2019-20 (£209.34 2018-19) which represents an increase of 2.39% on Council Tax from 2018-19.
- 2.2.2 **ENDORSES** the provisional Council Tax on a Band D Property in 2020-21 of £219.34 and £224.34 in 2021-22, being increases of 2.33 % and 2.28% respectively.
- 2.2.3 **APPROVES** increasing the Council Tax charge for long-term empty dwellings to the maximum possible level with effect from 1st April 2019 and in future years, in accordance with section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by section 2 of the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 (see paragraph 5.3);
- 2.2.4 **NOTES** the Corporate Director: Resources (as Chief Financial Officer) opinion on the budget proposals, recommended by the Cabinet in this report, as detailed in Appendix 4 of this report.

2.3 The Cabinet is asked to **APPROVE:**

- 2.3.1 Delegated authority is given to the Corporate Director: Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Leader of the Council, to make any appropriate adjustments to the General Fund Revenue Budget recommended under paragraph 2.1.6 above, as a result of any further notifications from Central Government.
- 2.3.2 The updated schedule of Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix 3- Part 2 to reflect redesignations of Bromsgrove Street car park for a new season ticket offer.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 On 18th December 2018, Cabinet considered reports on proposals for the Budget Strategy for the period 2019-22 including the intrinsically linked Capital Strategy 2019-22. The Final Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on the 29th January 2019; there were no major changes from the Provisional Settlement issued on the 13th December 2018 that did not differ significantly from funding assumptions within the December report. This report provides an updated position and a proposed budget decision for Council to consider on the 27st February 2019.
- 3.2 The following assumptions included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy are now updated or confirmed:
- Final Finance Settlement
 - Council Tax Base

- The position in relation to New Homes Bonus
- Collection Fund Surplus
- Cabinet Proposals refreshed to include provision for Rough Sleepers (see paragraph 3.13)
- Refreshed Capital Programme taking into account the additional Disabled Facilities Grant/Better care funding now confirmed of £14,000
- Business Rates Pilot and also retained growth projections
- One-off return of £42,920 business rates levy surplus in 2018-19.
- Transfer of operational responsibility and surrender of lease for Kidderminster Town Hall
- Confirmation of £20k funding from Worcestershire County Council for revenues fraud and error recovery work to improve collection rates in 2019-20
- Car Parking fees and charges - Season Ticket – Bromsgrove Street car park redesignation for season ticket purposes (see paragraph 3.8)
- The district council share of the additional £56.5m funding to help carry out Brexit preparations announced by the Government on the 28th January of £17.5k in 2018-19 and 2019-20 to be held in the General Risk Reserve.

- 3.3 Taking into account the freeze in council tax for five of the previous eight years and the proposed 2.39% increase in 2019-20 still means that the council tax for Wyre Forest District Council will have been held substantially below inflation across that nine year period.
- 3.4 As agreed by the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel, a Budget Consultation exercise was launched on the 19th December 2018 to run until the 17th January 2019. The results of this consultation are reported as a separate item on this agenda and show that 55% of the 430 respondents are in favour of the proposed modest Council Tax increase in 2019-20. This has informed the final decision to recommend the proposed 2.39% increase.
- 3.5 The Capital Programme considered by December Cabinet is included in Appendix 2 for Council approval, updated to reflect the additional £14k Disabled Facilities Grant /Bettercare Fund that has now been confirmed.
- 3.6 The financial strategy recommended by Cabinet continues with a more nuanced approach to fees and charges aided by the post of Commercial Business Manager and the Commercial Activity Programme Board. The risk of failing to optimise income due to elasticity of demand, changing economic circumstances and the emergence of competition has been evaluated. As a result some fees and charges have been frozen or increased by less than the average of 5%. The proposals for 2019- 20 show that 12% of Fees and Charges will be frozen, whilst a further 28% are to be increased but below the general 5%. All proposals were subjected to rigorous check and challenge.
- 3.7 Car park charges will be frozen for 2019-20 and then continue to be increased by CPI +2% subject to a 5% maximum cap. This policy will be kept under review going forwards, based on more detailed analysis of car parking data. For the 2020-21 increase the CPI rate applied will be the actual rate as at October 2019 (notified in November 2019) + 2% to apply from October 2020; so using the prior year's CPI rate to allow for certainty in the planning and approval process. For 2020-21 the total increase forecast therefore is 4.1% made up of 2.1% forecast CPI as at November 2019 + 2% but actual increases will be dependent on actual CPI.

- 3.8 From April 2019 it is proposed that there is a change to the provision of car parking season tickets, to enhance the use of Kidderminster Town Centre car parks, which will have a positive effect on the local economy. The proposal follows a detailed review building on the Independent and Liberal Democrat Alternative Budget proposal and is to give a new designation to Bromsgrove Street car park for the purpose of season tickets for a trial period of 6-12 months. Designating this car park as a new season ticket offer, priced at £300 for 12 months, which is below that of the current restricted rate should be more attractive to commuters in Kidderminster. It should also significantly reduce street parking in favour of secure car parks. There may also be a secondary benefit with a possible increase in the number of regular shoppers to the town, which would boost the local economy. This trial will inform a further review of season tickets usage and car parking overall, across all car parks to be reported to members in due course. Detailed analysis has shown that the financial impact of this trial can be assumed to be budget neutral; this will be carefully monitored.
- 3.9 This approach to fee increases is to provide a clear linkage to inflation rates and allow for scope for lower increases if appropriate. It is important to remember that not all of the increased income from fees and charges will be contributed by local residents as at least some will come from visitors and commuters to the area (for example in car park charges) and some will come from local businesses.
- 3.10 The Commercial Activity Programme Board (CAPB) set up as part of last year's MTFS will continue to operate in 2019-20 aided by the Commercial Business Manager. The CAPB was allocated a generic Capital Budget of £250k supplemented by £100k for Revenue was previously allocated and of this £192k Capital and £91k Revenue is unallocated at the time of writing this report. To assist with pace, Cabinet on the 18th December 2018 approved that decisions in relation to the setting of fees and charges arising in year are delegated to the Corporate Director: Community and Well-Being and Environment in consultation with the CAPB and the Corporate Director: Resources.
- 3.11 The Council will continue to expand its commercial activities during the medium term financial strategy, as reflected in the increased targets for commercial income utilising the additional resource for marketing and sales support to capture potential growth in key income generation areas.
- 3.12 Fees and Charges requiring Council approval are detailed in Appendix 3 – Part 3.

Spending Proposals

- 3.13 The Cabinet Proposals previously presented have been updated following careful consideration of Alternative Budget proposals considered by the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel on the 8th January 2019. A new proposal in relation to a protocol for night shelters for Rough Sleepers building on the Independent and Liberal Democrat proposal is set out in detail as follows:
- Provision to be made of £13.5k in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 for a **Rough Sleeper night shelter protocol** and provision within the district to be funded from additional Flexible Homeless Support Grant funding from Central Government.

There is a plethora of services in relation to Rough Sleepers, each of which is funded by a different method and most of which is dependent on short-term funding.

If the Government provided a single long-term automatic funding stream, it would be much easier to commission a more comprehensive service.

The amount required for provision to be open every night through the winter months would probably need to be more like £40k whereas a facility just open on the coldest nights would require less. This assumes in both cases that delivery would be part of a wider contract.

Additional funding of £13.5k pa for 2019-20 to 2021-22 has been identified from Flexible Homeless Support Grant allocations. Funding for 2019-20 and 2020-21 has been confirmed; it is highly likely that this will continue into the future and this has been assumed for the proposal. Should this not be the case the service will be reviewed and funding made available from the base budget. The proposed approach is to incorporate emergency provision for the winter of 2019/20 with the wider recommissioning of the single homeless service which is due to take place this summer, as it is this service that runs the two other Severe Weather Emergency Protocols (SWEP) in the county. They are a very specialised form of provision (to ensure vulnerable people and workers are kept safe and secure), requiring considerable co-ordination of services and staff and should meet Homeless Link standards of provision so officers would want to contract formally with an experienced partner. We intend to work closely with Churches Together and any other organisation in actually delivering the service (including volunteers and facilities) similarly to how the other SWEPs in the County operate.

- Additional staffing resource for the Environmental Protection and Enforcement team of 1 FTE for a 2 year fixed team is confirmed. This will be subject to reconsideration when the results of the Civil Enforcement Review Panel are available and also to ongoing review of the effectiveness of the overall resource for this service area.

3.14 The overall financial implications of the Cabinet Proposals have been updated to reflect the additional proposal for a Rough Sleeper protocol since the December Cabinet and are shown in the table that follows:

Cost Centre	ACTIVITY AND DESCRIPTION OF CABINET PROPOSAL	KEY	2019-20 £	2020-21 £	2021-22 £	After 2021-22 £
CLEAN, GREEN AND SAFE COMMUNITIES						
R335	Localism Fund					
	To top up the single Localism Fund by a further £50k to continue the good work done so far with Parish and Town Councils and other local organisations.	C	-	-	-	-
		R	50,000	-	-	-
		S	-	-	-	-
R205	Highways Maintenance of Verges					
	To help deliver the corporate priority: "to support you to live in clean, green and safe communities" to allocate funding of £30k pa to ensure service standards of maintenance of highways verges are maintained at current levels in 2019-20. This will be subject to review in subsequent years.	C	-	-	-	-
		R	30,000	-	-	-
		S	-	-	-	-
R610	Planning and Enforcement					
	To provide additional resource for Planning Enforcement for a fixed term of 2 years - 2019-20 to 2020-21 of 1 FTE Assistant Enforcement Officer Band F funded from a combination of additional income raised from 20% planning fee increase and service efficiencies achieved from the new Planning system implementation	C	-	-	-	-
		R	25,920	27,130	-	-
		R	25,920 CR	27,130 CR		
		S	1.00	1.00	-	-
R720	Community Leadership Fund					
	In light of the acknowledged effectiveness of this fund to retain this funding stream of £1,000 per Member for 2019-20	C	-	-	-	-
		R	33,000	-	-	-
		S	-	-	-	-
R193	Environmental Protection and Enforcement					
	To provide additional resource within the Environmental Protection/Enforcement team of 1 FTE for 2 years to supplement the current total 8.5FTE; the costs of this post can be offset from additional income generated of circa £5k pa	C	-	-	-	-
		R	17,540	18,780	-	-
		S	1.00	1.00		
	Income Generation					
	To introduce an additional generic income generation target across all areas of activity including the Capital Portfolio Fund.	C	-	-	-	-
		R	75,000 CR	100,000 CR	150,000 CR	175,000 CR
		S	-	-	-	-
	Rough Sleepers Protocol					
	To agree a Rough Sleepers night shelter protocol to be funded from additional Flexible Homeless Support Grant from Government and commissioned as part of the procurement already planned for a more comprehensive service	C	-	-	-	-
		R	13,500	13,500.00	13,500	13,500
		R	13,500 CR	13,500 CR	13,500 CR	13,500 CR
		S	-	-	-	-
	TOTALS	C	-	-	-	-
		R	55,540	81,220 CR	150,000 CR	175,000 CR
		S	2.00	2.00	-	-
KEY - Changes in Resources						
C	Capital					
R	Revenue					
S	Staffing - Stated in FTEs					

- 3.15 This Council participated in a successful application for a pan-Worcestershire Business Rates Pool (WBRP) for pilot status for the 75% Business Rate Retention for 2019-20 financial year. Participation in this Pilot is at no detriment to our financial position based on the current 50% scheme and membership of the Worcestershire Business Rates Pool. The decision to participate in the Pilot status Worcestershire Business Rates Pool will help to maximise the benefit by retaining more of the business rates delivered from economic growth within Worcestershire. Economic and subsequent business rates growth remains a key priority for this Council. The position in relation to the baseline reset in 2020-21 and also further appeals and resultant uncertainty due to the impact on performance remains a concern; this is being managed by the Corporate Director: Resources in conjunction with the other treasurers within the Pool. Business rates projections included within the December Cabinet report have now been confirmed. It is unknown if Business Rate Pools will cease when the new funding system is introduced.

- 3.16 A separate report on this agenda sets out the financial implications of the transfer of operational responsibility and surrender of lease for Kidderminster Town Hall. Savings occur 2020-21 onwards and total a very welcome £103,210 over this MTFS. These have been reflected within the revised figures now presented and scored against the Wyre Forest Forward savings.
- 3.17 Worcestershire County Council has now confirmed continuation of funding for additional recovery work for revenues and business rates of £20k for 2019-20 and this is reflected in these revised projections.
- 3.18 Taking these measures into account the projected Base Budget net expenditure for 2019-20 is estimated to be £11,845,550 (see paragraph 6.3). This is £310k more than currently estimated to be raised from Council Tax, Business Rates Income retained, Collection Fund Surplus New Homes Bonus and all other grants.

4. LOCAL AUTHORITY REVENUE FINANCE SETTLEMENT FOR 2019-20

- 4.1 The Final Local Government Settlement was announced on the 29th January 2019. There have been no major changes compared to the provisional settlement published in December 2018. In accordance with the accepted four year settlement, Revenue Support Grant (RSG) will not be received in 2019-20. It is however good news that negative RSG will be deferred from 2019-20. Uncertainty about how the negative RSG arising in future years will be factored into the overall Funding Reform for this Council. This should emerge as more detail is provided as part of the ongoing consultation process.
- 4.2 The main changes announced as part of the 2019-20 Provisional Settlement announced on the 13th December 2018 now confirmed in the Final Settlement are set out below:

• Core Spending Power – Overall

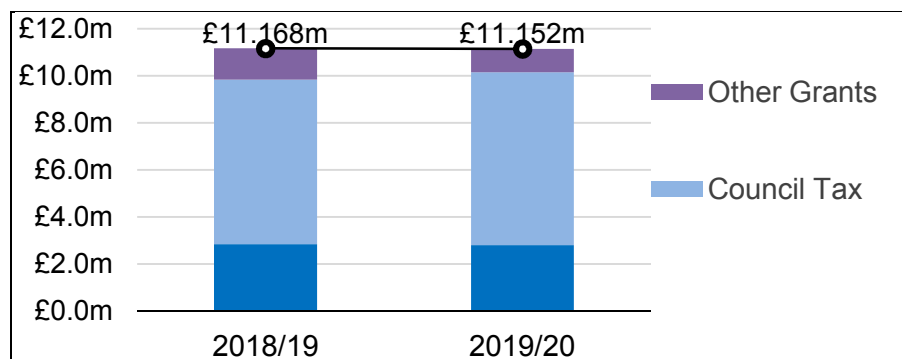
“Core Spending power” is a headline figure used by MHCLG to represent the key revenue resources available to local authorities, including an estimate of actual and potential council tax

The updated National Core Spending Power figures for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 are shown in Table 4.2 below. It shows an increase of 2.8% for 2019/20 and an overall increase for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 of 3.8%. However the Council’s core spending power will fall as shown in Table 4.2.2 and will in fact be lower again because the council tax increase is lower than the maximum assumed by the Government.

Table 4.2.1 Core Spending Power figures for England 2015/16 to 2019/20

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Settlement Funding Assessment	21,250	18,602	16,633	15,574	14,560
Under-indexing business rates multiplier	165	165	175	275	400
Council Tax	22,036	23,247	24,666	26,332	27,927
Improved Better Care Fund	0	0	1,115	1,499	1,837
New Homes Bonus	1,200	1,485	1,252	947	918
Rural Services Delivery Grant	16	81	65	81	81
Transition Grant	0	150	150	0	0
Adult Social Care Support Grant	0	0	241	150	0
Winter pressures Grant	0	0	0	240	240
Social Care Support Grant	0	0	0	0	410
Core Spending Power	44,666	43,730	44,296	45,098	46,373
Change %		-2.1%	1.3%	1.8%	2.8%
Cumulative change %		-2.1%	-0.8%	1.0%	3.8%

Table 4.2.2 Core Spending Power figures for Wyre Forest District Council



- **Local Government Funding Reform** - The government has published two consultation papers setting out the Government's latest proposals on the Fair funding review (FRR): "A review of relative needs and resources", and "Business Rates Reform". The deadline for responses on these technical consultation papers is 21st February 2019. This Council intends to respond to both individually and as part of a County wide response.
- The Secretary of State stated that responses from these consultations will be taken into account in the Funding Reforms to be introduced in 2020-21.
- The Secretary of State also confirmed that there will be a business rates baseline reset in 2020-21 and, from 2020-21, business rates retention will be at 75% (with existing grants, including RSG and Public Health Grant incorporated

into business rates retention). The consultation asks for indications of preference on a partial reset, a phased reset or a combination of the two.

- **Council Tax** – The Council Tax referendum limits for local authorities will remain as previously indicated in the 2018-19 provisional settlement, although for Police and Crime Commissioners the potential annual increase to their precept will be extended to £24 per annum
- **Business Rates Pilots** - Proposals for **new 75%** Business Rates Pilots in 2019-20 have been approved for 15 areas and these are in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hertfordshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, North and West Yorkshire, North of the Tyne, Solent, Somerset, Staffordshire and Stoke, West Sussex and **Worcestershire**;

New Homes Bonus - the **2019-20 allocations have been announced**, for 2019/20 there are no changes to the New Homes Bonus deadweight threshold (at 0.4%) or the eligibility of properties to qualify for the funding (this was suggested as a possibility in September 2018). Instead up to an additional £20m of funding was added to the scheme.

- **Negative RSG for 2019-20** - the £153m in 2019-20 will be eliminated by the government. This will be funded through its share of business rates. This was assumed in the December Cabinet report.
- **Business Rates Retention** – a £180m balance on the national Levy Account will be distributed based on need. This is good news for Wyre Forest in the form of a one-off return of £42,920 business rates levy surplus in 2018-19.

- 4.3 As set out above, New Homes Bonus grant in 2019-20 will be paid on the basis of 4 years award; the proposal is that there will be assumed baseline growth of 0.4% for the annual grant award for 2019-20 and from 2020-21 New Homes Bonus will be considered as part of the overall Fair Funding Reform and will be subject to further consultation in due course.
- 4.4 The retention of the 0.4 % baseline is welcome news; based on the provisional settlement this Council a small adjustment has been made to reflect a number of affordable homes that will now slip into future year's funding formula reducing our New Homes Bonus allocation for 2019- 20 by £2,800 compared to the estimates in the December report.
- 4.5 It is certain that Public sector funding reductions will continue until the middle of the next decade, with increasing reliance on locally raised income including Council Tax. The funding outlook for local government, districts in particular, is set to become significantly more challenging.
- 4.6 The proposed changes to Local Government Funding present a significant financial challenge for this Council and have resulted in challenging targets for future savings from the Wyre Forest Forward Programme. The toughest year looks like 2020-2021. The Council's updated summary Budget taking into account all the changes set out in this report can be seen at Table 6.3.

- 4.7 The forecast position in relation to total Government grant taking into account the multi-year Finance Settlement that removed uncertainty around this diminishing funding stream is shown in the Table at 6.3. Business Rate projections as included within the December Cabinet report are now confirmed.

5. **COUNCIL TAX BASE**

- 5.1 The Council Tax Base previously reported for 2019-20 has now been confirmed; this has risen from the 2018-19 level of 33,458 to 33,751 being an increase of 293 or circa 0.9% higher compared to 2018-19 level. This is forecast to generate additional Council Tax income of £63k in 2019-20, rising over the term of the Strategy to take into account planned increases of just over 2% in 2020-21 and 2021-22, resulting in additional income of around £393k over the three year term. This includes an assumption of stepped increases of 300 additional properties per year from 2019-20 onwards.
- 5.2 A revised Council Tax Reduction Scheme effective from April 2019 was approved by Council on 12th December 2018 to better align with the Universal Credit Scheme; this should have a neutral impact overall on the Council Tax Base and this is reflected in the above figures.
- 5.3 There is currently discretion to increase the charge on a property that has been empty for 2 years or more to 150%. This Council increased council tax to 150% with effect from 1st April 2018 to align with most other councils. The increase was expected to generate only a modest increase in council tax income estimated at circa £20k pa; the motivation was not financial but rather to incentivise property owners to bring empty homes back into use to assist with the housing deficit. Section 2 of the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 has amended section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to allow even higher council tax charges to be applied to long-term empty dwellings. The Council intends to implement the maximum charges possible at the earliest date possible in order to increase the incentive for property owners to bring empty homes into use. The table sets out the council tax charges that will therefore apply to long-term empty homes in the financial years shown.

Table 5.3 Percentage increase in council tax for long-term empty dwellings

See section 11B(1A) to (1C) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as inserted by section 2 of the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018. Where a dwelling becomes empty for five or ten years - as the case may be - on a day during a financial year, the relevant increase for that dwelling is applied from that day (which is the “relevant day” as defined in section 11B(1)(b) of the 1992 Act).

Table 5.3	Empty Dwelling Council Tax % Increases		
Financial year	2019- 20	2020- 21	2021-22 and subsequent years
Dwellings that have been empty for two years or more but less than five years	100	100	100
Dwellings that have been empty for five years or more but less than ten years	100	200	200
Dwellings that have been empty for ten years or more	100	200	300

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Cabinet Proposals previously considered have now been updated. A schedule is shown in the table in paragraph 3.14.
- 6.2 The Council Tax Collection Fund surpluses have now been reviewed. The previously estimated £50k for 2018-19 remains unchanged; a neutral position is now forecast for 2019-20 with no surplus or deficit being likely, followed by £50k surplus in 2020-21.
- 6.3 The following table demonstrates the updated position for the Council when all the revisions included in this report are incorporated into the Base Budget. The Council is forecast to hold a balance of £1,749k at the end of 2021-22 (see reserves table in 6.4).

	Revised 2018/19 £	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £
Net Expenditure on Services (per Appendix 1)	12,016,120	11,790,010	11,358,010	11,685,840
Total Net Expenditure on Services (per Appendix 1)	12,016,120	11,790,010	11,358,010	11,685,840
Less				
Cabinet Proposals	0	55,540	(81,220)	(150,000)
Net Expenditure	12,016,120	11,845,550	11,276,790	11,535,840
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	(264,210)	(309,650)	(779,620)	(847,960)
Net Budget Requirement	11,751,910	11,535,900	10,497,170	10,687,880
Less				
Revenue Support Grant	100,680	0	(356,790)	(356,790)
Business Rates	3,281,510	3,395,610	3,102,520	3,136,410
Business Rates - National levy redistributed	42,920			
New Homes Bonus	1,272,700	906,100	232,690	201,960
Collection Fund Surplus	50,000	0	50,000	0
Council Tax Income	7,004,100	7,234,190	7,468,750	7,706,300
WFDC Council Tax: £5 increase from 2019-20 onwards	209.34	214.34	219.34	224.34
Percentage increase in Council Tax	1.94%	2.39%	2.33%	2.28%

- 6.4 Reserves available as part of the three year financial strategy are as shown in the following table. Taking all of the revisions contained in this report into account this shows an increase of £102k at the end of 2021-22 compared to the December forecast.

Reserves Statement	2018-19 £'000	2019-20 £'000	2020-21 £'000	2021-22 £'000
Reserves as at 1st April	4,151	3,687	3,377	2,597
Increase to Working Balance	(200)			
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	(264)	(310)	(780)	(848)
Reserves as at 31st March	3,687	3,377	2,597	1,749

- 6.5 The table below shows a refreshed funding gap of £2.03m in 2021-22, reduced from the previously reported £2.10m in December 2018 as a result of the updates in this report.

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
	£	£	£	£
Financial Gap				
Depot 2020	0	32,500	159,900	159,900
Efficiency Savings (2%, 1%, 1%,1%)	20,500	36,250	140,790	250,790
Wyre Forest Forward Savings not yet achieved	41,440	181,650	645,720	618,330
New Cabinet Proposal: Income Generation Target		75,000	100,000	150,000
SUB- Total	61,940	325,400	1,046,410	1,179,020
Use of reserves from Proposed 2019-22 Strategy	264,210	309,650	779,620	847,960
TOTAL	326,150	635,050	1,826,030	2,026,980

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Cabinet Proposals do not represent significant changes to service delivery, so it is not necessary to undertake further EIA's on the protected groups.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Achieving financial sustainability is the most significant challenge facing the Council. The Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel provided some options for the Cabinet to consider in making its recommendations on the medium term financial strategy. The principal risks were outlined in Appendix 5 of the report to Cabinet on 18th December 2018 and are summarised and are refreshed where appropriate in Appendix 4 of this report.
- 8.2 The albeit slowly growing Council Tax base, Cabinet Proposals and continuing progress with the Wyre Forest Forward Transformation savings all contribute to the mitigation of the financial risk within this budget strategy.
- 8.3 Recognition of the importance of the development of commercialism and income generation to help close the funding gap by the work of the Commercial Activity Programme Board. The CAPB utilises the generic Capital and Revenue funding

delegated to it and also the significant allocation of funding from the Innovation Fund; commercial growth is a key element of this MTFS and is not without risk. Each business case for commercial development includes an appropriate assessment of risks and potential rewards; reviewing at least annually performance and risk of each area of commercial activity. Summary updates on commercial activity are included in the Quarterly Budget Monitoring Cabinet reports. This regular review includes the option to cease commercial activity if appropriate.

- 8.4 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require Local Authorities to fully consider and manage Risk as part of the Budget process. Appendix 5 of the December 2018 Cabinet report showed an analysis of the significant financial risks which are affecting the Council. This has been reviewed and remains current subject to the comments and updates provided in paragraph 8.5 below:
- 8.5 All local authorities are required to formalise their approach to risk management and evidence it more directly as part of the budgetary process. This requirement has arisen as a result of:-
- The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015
 - Prudential Framework:-
 - The assessment of affordability of financial plans requires a judgement about risk. The code issued in late December 2017 supplemented by Investment and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Guidance remains current.
 - These codes include a new requirement for a detailed capital strategy from 2019-20 setting out the long term context in which capital expenditure and investment decisions are made, giving due regard to both risk and reward and the achievement of priority outcomes. The main objective is to introduce greater focus on reporting and planning for long term financial and risk implications in relation to non treasury investments. This Council was one of the first to progress approval of a Capital Strategy to meet the new requirement, with formal approval received at May 2018 Council in advance of the statutory timeline.
 - There is a risk that further controls will be put in place to further restrict authorities borrowing more than or in advance of their needs for out of area investments purely for commercial gain. More information is required to provide clarity but further such restrictions would be of concern and could cause significant problems across the local government sector. It should be noted that this Council only makes investments within the approved functional economic geography for multiple objectives so whilst proportionality is a key issue; the current acquisition policy is within relevant guidance.
 - Prudential Indicators are the monitoring tool to assess performance and risk. The latest guidance and code of practice on Treasury Management has been reflected in the Treasury Management Service Strategy for 2019-20.
 - CIPFA Guidance on Reserves and Balances: - Highlighting the need to consider risks facing the authority. The risks posed by the continuing austerity measures place pressure on the Council to hold higher levels of reserves to ensure ongoing sustainability. This is detailed in Appendix 4.

9. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Local Government Act 2003

- 9.1.1 The Local Government Act 2003 (Sections 25-28) places duties on Local Authorities on how they set and monitor budgets.
- 9.1.2 Sections 25-27 require the Section 151 Officer to report on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of its proposed financial reserves. This is reported to Council as Appendix 4 of this report.
- 9.1.3 Section 28 places a statutory duty on an Authority to review its budget from time to time during the year. If the Budget Monitoring Report shows that there has been deterioration in the Authority's financial position, the Authority must take such action as it concludes necessary. The Council currently reviews the Budget on a quarterly basis, with CLT/Cabinet receiving monthly budget monitoring reports, and this practice will continue.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Corporate Leadership Team
- 10.2 Cabinet

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 11.2 Cabinet Report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019–22 18th December 2018.
- 11.3 Cabinet Report on updated Capital Strategy 2019-22 18th December 2018.
- 11.4 Agendas and Minutes of the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel.
- 11.5 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2019-20.
- 11.6 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes December 2017
- 11.7 Strong Leader Cabinet Report – September 2018 – Business Rates Retention – Pilots for 2019-20- Pan Worcestershire Bid
- 11.8 Cabinet Report on the Capital Strategy 2018-21, 27th - March 2018, approved by Council 23rd May 2018
- 11.9 Cabinet Report on Depot Investment 19th September 2018, Council approval September 2018
- 11.10 Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2019 to 2020

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

REVENUE BUDGET TOTAL REQUIREMENTS - DISTRICT COUNCIL PURPOSES

SERVICE	2018/19		2019/20			2020/21			2021/22		
	Original Estimate £	Revised Estimate £	At Nov.18 Prices £	Inflation £	TOTAL £	At Nov.18 Prices £	Inflation £	TOTAL £	At Nov.18 Prices £	Inflation £	TOTAL £
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL	1,699,770	1,737,630	1,544,390	21,360	1,565,750	993,070	46,330	1,039,400	992,460	74,410	1,066,870
COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND ENVIRONMENT	4,445,320	4,636,750	4,608,570	79,320	4,687,890	4,457,580	173,400	4,630,980	4,376,050	278,610	4,654,660
ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND PLACE	2,400,470	2,723,760	2,454,630	53,180	2,507,810	2,243,720	114,950	2,358,670	2,254,480	182,890	2,437,370
RESOURCES	3,706,500	3,626,180	3,571,800	26,700	3,598,500	3,594,400	112,300	3,706,700	3,598,030	184,340	3,782,370
LESS: CAPITAL ACCOUNT	12,252,060	12,724,320	12,179,390	180,560	12,359,950	11,288,770	446,980	11,735,750	11,221,020	720,250	11,941,270
REVERSAL OF CAPITAL CHARGES	1,340,090	1,253,440	1,698,970	890	1,699,860	1,939,690	1,930	1,941,620	2,036,880	3,210	2,040,090
INTEREST RECEIVED	(1,560,510)	(1,636,510)	(1,715,410)	0	(1,715,410)	(1,644,770)	0	(1,644,770)	(1,601,910)	0	(1,601,910)
CAPITAL PORTFOLIO FUND AND DEVELOPMENT	(86,510)	(112,670)	(121,440)	0	(121,440)	(140,130)	0	(140,130)	(162,500)	0	(162,500)
LOANS FUND	(80,310)	(212,460)	(357,000)	390	(356,610)	(355,610)	830	(354,780)	(224,700)	1,360	(223,340)
INCREASES IN FEES AND CHARGES	0	0	(76,340)	0	(76,340)	(179,680)	0	(179,680)	(307,770)	0	(307,770)
TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE ON SERVICES	11,864,820	12,016,120	11,608,170	181,840	11,790,010	10,908,270	449,740	11,358,010	10,961,020	724,820	11,685,840
LESS: CONTRIBUTION FROM RESERVES	(455,830)	(264,210)			(254,110)			(860,840)			(997,960)
NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT	11,408,990	11,751,910			11,535,900			10,497,170			10,687,880
LESS: REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT	(100,680)	(100,680)			0			356,790			356,790
BUSINESS RATES	(2,981,510)	(3,281,510)			(3,395,610)			(3,102,520)			(3,136,410)
BUSINESS RATES - NATIONAL LEVY REDISTRIBUTED	0	(42,920)			0			0			0
COLLECTION FUND SURPLUS	(50,000)	(50,000)			0			(50,000)			0
NEW HOMES BONUS	(1,272,700)	(1,272,700)			(906,100)			(232,690)			(201,960)
GENERAL EXPENSES -											
COUNCIL TAX INCOME	7,004,100	7,004,100			7,234,190			7,468,750			7,706,300
COUNCIL TAX LEVY		209.34			214.34			219.34			224.34
COUNCIL TAX BASE		33,458			33,751			34,051			34,351

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2019 TO 2022

Detail	2018-19		2019-20 Estimate £	2020-21 Estimate £	2021-22 Estimate £	Prior to 01/04/2018 £	Total £
	Original £	Revised £					
1. COMMITTED EXPENDITURE							
1. CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL							
New Headquarters - Office Accommodation	413,610	413,610	-	-	-	9,586,390	10,000,000
Boundary Wall at 49 Worcester Street	10,000	10,000	-	-	-	-	10,000
SUB TOTAL	423,610	423,610	0	0	0	9,586,390	10,010,000
2. COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND ENVIRONMENT							
Future Leisure Provision (including demolition costs)	-	1,100	-	-	-	13,914,560	13,915,660
Northwood Lane Improvements	-	330	-	-	-	19,670	20,000
Franchise Street S106 - Brinton Park	-	-	-	37,430	-	24,780	62,210
Franchise Street S106 - Arts Development	-	9,330	-	-	-	-	9,330
Parking Facilities: Improvement to Car Parks	50,010	40,000	34,530	-	-	419,970	494,500
Bewdley Museum Improvements	-	8,090	-	-	-	29,870	37,960
Green Street Depot Investment	3,150,000	3,689,660	-	-	-	190,340	3,880,000
Bewdley Medical Centre	20,000	218,120	-	-	-	684,620	902,740
Spennells Valley Boardwalk Improvements	38,000	38,000	-	-	-	-	38,000
Brinton Park HLF Scheme (subject to successful HLF bid)	-	-	-	100,000	-	-	100,000
Commercial Activity Capital Funding*	250,000	250,000	-	-	-	-	250,000
* Subject to Business Cases & approval by the Commercial Activity Board							
SUB TOTAL	3,508,010	4,254,630	34,530	137,430	0	15,283,810	19,710,400
3. ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND PLACE							
Housing Strategy:							
Disabled Facilities Grants (subject to confirmation 2019-20, 2020-21 & 2021-22)	1,475,370	1,355,140	1,683,840	1,000,000	1,000,000	11,129,090	16,168,070
Conversion of 2-3 New Street, Stourport	-	9,430	-	-	-	287,630	297,060
Comberton Place Residential Investment*	440,000	-	440,000	-	-	-	440,000
Housing Assistance - Private Sector Measures (including Decent Homes Grant)	68,540	80,000	103,830	-	-	1,876,540	2,060,370
Planning Delivery Grant Capital Projects	-	11,000	-	-	-	246,760	257,760
Flood Relief	18,410	10,000	18,410	-	-	170,590	199,000
North Worcs Water Management Capital Projects - Redditch Schemes	-	17,230	18,870	-	-	98,700	134,800
Regeneration and Economic Development	-	181,810	-	-	-	2,804,160	2,985,970
Carbon Management Plan	15,000	20,000	-	-	-	83,150	103,150
Worcester Street Improvements Grant (Match Funding)	500,000	450,000	375,000	-	-	-	825,000
Future Investment Evergreen Fund*	-	60,580	-	-	-	-	60,580
Industrial Units Development - Silverwoods	1,075,020	215,000	1,935,040	-	-	-	2,150,040
Capital Portfolio Fund*	9,750,000	20,000,000	4,750,000	-	-	-	24,750,000
Loans to Third Parties*	4,000,000	6,000,000	4,000,000	-	-	-	10,000,000
* Subject to Business Cases & Due Diligence							
SUB TOTAL	17,342,340	28,410,190	13,324,990	1,000,000	1,000,000	16,696,620	60,431,800
4. RESOURCES							
ICT Strategy (2018-19 FMS Upgrade £69,500 included in Renewals Schedule)	706,500	760,230	558,000	113,000	260,000	2,590,550	4,281,780
SUB TOTAL	706,500	760,230	558,000	113,000	260,000	2,590,550	4,281,780
5. VEHICLE, EQUIPMENT & SYSTEMS RENEWAL SCHEDULE							
Vehicles & Equipment & Systems Renewal Schedule	884,920	1,132,900	1,017,000	745,000	676,000	7,066,610	10,637,510
SUB TOTAL	884,920	1,132,900	1,017,000	745,000	676,000	7,066,610	10,637,510
TOTAL COMMITTED EXPENDITURE	22,865,380	34,981,560	14,934,520	1,995,430	1,936,000	51,223,980	105,071,490

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2019 TO 2022

Detail	2018-19		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Prior to	Total
	Original £	Revised £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	01/04/2018 £	£
2. FINANCING							
Capital Receipts: Funding Approved	1,267,940	1,360,810	695,260	-	-		2,056,070
Future Leisure Provision Scheme - Prudential Borrowing	-	1,100	-	-	-		1,100
Prudential Borrowing for Spennells Valley Boardwalk Improvements	38,000	38,000	-	-	-		38,000
Prudential Borrowing for Regeneration and Economic Development Scheme	-	134,180	-	-	-		134,180
Prudential Borrowing for Carbon Management Scheme	15,000	20,000	-	-	-		20,000
Prudential Borrowing for Worcester Street Improvements Grant (Match Funding)	500,000	450,000	375,000	-	-		825,000
Prudential Borrowing for Industrial Units Development	1,075,020	-	1,650,040	-	-		1,650,040
Prudential Borrowing for Loans to Third Parties	4,000,000	6,000,000	4,000,000	-	-		10,000,000
Prudential Borrowing for Capital Portfolio Fund	10,000,000	19,900,000	5,000,000	-	-		24,900,000
Prudential Borrowing for Green Street Depot Investment	2,550,000	2,729,660	-	-	-		2,729,660
Prudential Borrowing for Brinton Park HLF Scheme	-	-	-	100,000	-		100,000
Prudential Borrowing for ICT Strategy	706,500	760,230	558,000	113,000	260,000		1,691,230
Prudential Borrowing for Commercial Activity Capital Funding	250,000	250,000	-	-	-		250,000
Public Realm Funding (from Worcestershire County Council)	-	41,830	-	-	-		41,830
Better Care Fund Grant (from Worcestershire County Council)	1,276,440	1,200,000	1,482,410	1,000,000	1,000,000		4,682,410
Additional Disabled Facilities Grants Funding (from MHCLG)	-	155,140	-	-	-		155,140
Planning Delivery Grant	-	11,000	-	-	-		11,000
S.106 Funding (Parking - Contractual Agreement)	28,150	18,140	34,530	-	-		52,670
S.106 Funding (Franchise Street)	-	9,330	-	37,430	-		46,760
S.106 Funding (Sutton Park Road)	85,000	-	85,000	-	-		85,000
Flood Relief Grant (from DCLG)	18,410	10,000	18,410	-	-		28,410
West Midlands Museum Development Grant	-	8,090	-	-	-		8,090
North Worcs Water Management Capital Projects - Redditch BC Funding	-	17,230	18,870	-	-		36,100
Vehicles, Equipment & Systems (Prudential Borrowing)	884,920	1,132,900	1,017,000	745,000	676,000		3,570,900
<u>Direct Revenue Funding:</u>							
Bewdley Medical Centre	20,000	218,120	-	-	-		218,120
Green Street Depot Investment	150,000	510,000	-	-	-		510,000
Regeneration of Economic Development	-	5,800	-	-	-		5,800
	22,865,380	34,981,560	14,934,520	1,995,430	1,936,000		53,847,510

VEHICLE, EQUIPMENT AND SYSTEMS RENEWALS SCHEDULE 2019 TO 2022

APPENDIX 2/B

DETAIL	Fleet Number	2018-19		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
		Original £	Revised £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £
1. VEHICLES						
CMP - Engine Management System & Electric Bin Lifts						
EMS & BIN LIFTS		9,000	22,500	13,500	-	4,500
GARAGE EQUIPMENT		23,420	23,420	-	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV064	30,000	30,000	-	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV200	30,000	30,000	-	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV201	30,000	30,000	-	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV202	30,000	30,000	-	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV214	30,000	30,000	-	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV216	30,000	30,000	-	-	-
RIDE ON MOWER	AV269	30,000	30,000	-	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV177	30,000	30,000	-	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV193	30,000	30,000	-	-	-
REFURBISHMENT FUND	N/A	-	30,000	-	-	-
REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg	AV241	91,000	91,000	-	-	-
REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg	AV237	-	95,500	-	-	-
REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg	AV238	-	95,500	-	-	-
REFUSE FREIGHTER 24000kg	AV234	100,000	95,500	-	-	-
REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg	AV268	100,000	100,000	-	-	-
REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg	AV239	100,000	100,000	-	-	-
MEDIUM REFUSE FREIGHTER 12000kg RCV	AV211	80,000	100,000	-	-	-
RIDE ON MOWER	AV226	-	-	25,000	-	-
4x4	AV252	-	-	30,000	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV220	-	-	30,000	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV063	-	-	30,000	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV221	-	-	30,000	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV222	-	-	30,000	-	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV223	-	-	30,000	-	-
TRACTOR	AV070	-	-	32,000	-	-
RIDE ON MOWER	AV212	-	-	32,000	-	-
TIPPER 7000kg	AV181	-	-	48,000	-	-
REFUSE FREIGHTER 24000kg	AV245	-	-	170,500	-	-
REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg	AV246	-	-	170,500	-	-
REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg	AV083	-	-	170,500	-	-
REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg	AV084	-	-	175,000	-	-
ATV WEED SPRAYER	AV271	-	-	-	15,000	-
LIGHT VAN	AV218	-	-	-	25,000	-
LIGHT VAN	AV230	-	-	-	25,000	-
LIGHT VAN	AV229	-	-	-	25,000	-
MIDI TRACTOR	AV189	-	-	-	30,000	-
MOWING MACHINE	AV240	-	-	-	35,000	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV255	-	-	-	35,000	-
TIPPER 3500kg	AV256	-	-	-	35,000	-
JCB DIGGER	AV183	-	-	-	50,000	-
PAVEMENT SWEEPER	AV258	-	-	-	80,000	-
SMALL REFUSE FREIGHTER 7500kg RCV	AV261	-	-	-	85,000	-
ROAD SWEEPER 15000kg	AV184	-	-	-	130,000	-
REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg	NEW	-	-	-	175,000	-
CAR	AV279	-	-	-	-	10,000
CAR	AV272	-	-	-	-	15,000
FORK LIFT	FORKLIFT	-	-	-	-	15,000
PAVEMENT SWEEPER	AV275	-	-	-	-	60,000
PAVEMENT SWEEPER	AV276	-	-	-	-	60,000
REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg	AV186	-	-	-	-	170,500
REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg	AV187	-	-	-	-	170,500
REFUSE FREIGHTER 18000kg	AV185	-	-	-	-	170,500
2. OTHER						
Post handling machines replacements	POST1, POST2	12,000	9,980	-	-	-
Parking & Enforcement - replacement handsets	DECRIM2	30,000	30,000	-	-	-
Financial Management System Replacement	FMS001	69,500	69,500	-	-	-
		884,920	1,132,900	1,017,000	745,000	676,000



Service	Operational Services	Service Manager	Operational Services Manager
Directorate	Community Well-Being and Environment	Cabinet Member	Operational Services

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION		Current Charge TO 30-09-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-10-2019 £ Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-10-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Car Parking Season Tickets				
FULL SEASON TICKET	1 month	82.00	68.33	82.00
Kidderminster	6 months	389.00	324.17	389.00
Aldi Store Surface Vehicle Park	* 12 months:	706.00	588.33	706.00
Batemans Yard Surface Vehicle Park	Payable as 10			
Market Street Surface Vehicle Park	monthly DD			
Pike Mills Surface Vehicle Park				
Riverside Meadow Surface Vehicle Park				
Bewdley				
Load Street Surface Vehicle Park				
Stourport-on-Severn				
Raven Street Surface Vehicle Park				
Severn Meadows No. 1 Surface Vehicle Park				
Bridge St Surface Vehicle Park				
RESTRICTED SEASON TICKET	1 month	41.00	34.17	41.00
Kidderminster	6 months	194.00	161.67	194.00
Castle Road Surface Vehicle Park	* 12 months:	353.00	294.17	353.00
Comberton Place Surface Vehicle Park	Payable as 10			
St. Mary's Church Surface Vehicle Park	monthly DD			
Bewdley				
Dog Lane Surface Vehicle Park				
Gardners Meadow Surface Vehicle Park				
Stourport-on-Severn				
Vale Road Surface Vehicle Park				
Severn Meadows Nos. 2 & 3 Surface Vehicle Parks				
Blakedown				
The Avenue Surface Vehicle Park				
SENIOR CITIZEN SEASON TICKET	6 months	98.00	81.67	98.00
All vehicle parks	* 12 months:	176.00	146.67	176.00
	Payable as 10			
	monthly DD			
INCOME DESCRIPTION		Current Charge TO 31-03-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Car Parking Season Tickets				
DESIGNATED SEASON TICKET	1 month	Not Applicable	30.00	36.00
Bromsgrove Street Surface Vehicle Park	6 months	Not Applicable	141.67	170.00
Note - All season tickets are valid on this car park	* 12 months:	Not Applicable	250.00	300.00
	Payable as 10			
	monthly DD			

NOTES:

Customers may be able to order and pay for some services online – please refer to <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk>
* 1 months deposit paid in advance. Remainder payable as 10 monthly DD's.

APPENDIX 3 (Part 3)

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**FEES AND CHARGES 2019-2020****COUNCIL**

Cost Centre	ACTIVITY AND DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE OPTION	KEY	CHANGES IN RESOURCES		
			2019-20 £	2020-21 £	2021-22 £
R605	<u>ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND PLACE</u>				
	<u>Development Control - Planning Advice</u>	C	-	-	-
	Increase charges by 5% in line with Council Policy.	R S	40 CR -	40 CR -	40 CR -
R605	<u>Development Control - Pre-application advice/ Permitted Development</u>	C	-	-	-
	Increase charges by 5% in line with Council Policy.	R S	760 CR -	760 CR -	760 CR -
R625	<u>Building Control - Decision Notices</u>				
	To increase charges by 5% for copies of decision notices held by the Council prior to the formation of the North Worcestershire Building Control Shared Service.	C R S	- - -	- - -	- - -
R605	<u>Development Control - Sale of Documents</u>	C	-	-	-
	Increase charges by 5% in line with Council Policy.	R S	250 CR -	250 CR -	250 CR -
R637	<u>Environmental Health - Water Sampling</u>	C	-	-	-
	Water sampling and analysis charges are set by Worcs Regulatory Services. No increase is being proposed in 2019-20.	R S	- -	- -	- -
R637	<u>Environmental Health - Control of Dogs</u>				
	The charges levied for the control of stray dogs are set by Worcs Regulatory Services on a cost recovery basis. Charges are consistent across all authorities within the Shared Service. No increases are being proposed in 2019-20.	C R S	- - -	- - -	- - -
R638	<u>Licensing Activities - Hackney Carriages</u>	C	-	-	-
	No increase are being proposed in 2019-20 to Hackney Carriage licences.	R S	- -	- -	- -
R638	<u>Licensing Activities - Animal Activity Licensing</u>				
	New Animal Activity licensing charges were introduced in October 2018, covering animal boarding, dog breeding, pet shops, riding establishments and performing animals. The additional income raised across the whole shared service will pay for two additional licensing officers.	C R S	- - -	- - -	- - -
R638	<u>Licensing Activities - Other General Licensing</u>				
	To increase charges by 5% in line with Council Policy where appropriate (some exceptions detailed on backing sheets).	C R S	- 870 CR -	- 870 CR -	- 870 CR -
R638	<u>Licensing Activities - Gambling Act 2005 (Premises)</u>	C	-	-	-
	Increase charges by either 5% in line with Council Policy or up to prescribed maximum level (if this is lower).	R S	530 CR -	530 CR -	530 CR -

APPENDIX 3 (Part 3)

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**FEES AND CHARGES 2019-2020****COUNCIL**

Cost Centre	ACTIVITY AND DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE OPTION	KEY	CHANGES IN RESOURCES		
			2019-20 £	2020-21 £	2021-22 £
R638	<u>Licensing Activities - Scrap Metal Dealers Licence</u> Scrap metal dealers licence is a 3 year licence which was introduced in 2014. Level of charges are recommended by Worc's Regulatory Services. No increase is being proposed in 2019-20.	C R S	- - -	- - -	- - -
R310	<u>RESOURCES</u> <u>Council Tax and NNDR</u> Summons Costs £50 Liability Order Costs <u>£30</u> <u>£80</u> Bi-annual review of summons costs and liability orders to reflect inflation and additional Magistrates Court costs.	C R S	- - -	- - -	- - -
	TOTALS	C R S	- 2,450 CR -	- 2,450 CR -	- 2,450 CR -



Service	Planning	Service Manager	Development Manager
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Planning and Economic Regeneration

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge TO 31-03-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
High Hedge Applications			
High Hedge Applications			
Householder	300.00	350.00	No VAT currently charged
Other	300.00	350.00	No VAT currently charged
Concession (for those in receipt of housing or council tax benefits)	100.00	120.00	No VAT currently charged

NOTES:

Customers may be able to order and pay for some services online – please refer to <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk>



Service	Planning & Building Control	Service Manager	Development Manager
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Planning and Economic Regeneration

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge	Proposed Charge	Proposed Charge
Planning Advice	TO 31-03-2019	FROM 01-04-2019	FROM 01-04-2019
Building Control Decision Notices (Pre 01-01-2012)	£	£	£
Sale of Copy Documents	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Charges before VAT	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Reply to general individual queries, Planning or Building Control for up to 6 questions (after that the full Local Land Charge Search fee will be charged)	26.00 per Question	27.00 per Question	No VAT currently charged
If any query requires a site visit to be made (e.g. compliance with conditions)	71.00	75.00	No VAT currently charged
Charges for Copy Documents			
See Note 2 below			
Monthly Decision List - Emailed	Free	Free	Free
Weekly Planning Application List - Emailed	Free	Free	Free
Decision Notices	21.00	18.33	22.00
Decision Notices Additional Copies	1.30	1.17	1.40
A4 - For each copy	1.30	1.17	1.40
A3 - For each copy	1.30	1.17	1.40
A2 - For each copy	3.60	3.17	3.80
A1 - For each copy	4.80	4.25	5.10
A0 - For each copy	5.90	5.17	6.20

NOTES:

Note 1 - Copies, where appropriate, are available free up to a cumulative single transaction value of £10 for individuals (the discretion of Director of Service to be applied in cases of multiple separate transactions) and charged at full cost to representatives of professional and/or commercial companies.

Note 2 - Copies of all planning application plans and decision notices made from 2006 onwards are available online at zero cost at <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings.aspx>

Customers may be able to order and pay for some services online – please refer to <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk>



Service	Planning	Service Manager	Development Manager
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Planning and Economic Regeneration

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge TO 31-03-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Permitted Developments and Pre-application Advice			
Permitted Development enquiries			
Proposed development type			
Householder	Free	Free	Free
Other	Free	Free	Free
Pre-Application advice			
Householder	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting	Free	Free	Free
Residential Development (see note 1)			
1 dwelling	80.00	70.00	84.00
Cost of each additional meeting	40.00	35.00	42.00
Cost of Highway Advice	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	Free	Free	Free
2-3 dwellings	200.00	175.00	210.00
Cost of each additional meeting	100.00	87.50	105.00
Cost of Highway Advice	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	Free	Free	Free
4-5 dwellings	310.00	271.67	326.00
Cost of each additional meeting	160.00	140.00	168.00
Cost of Highway Advice	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	Free	Free	Free
6-7 dwellings	450.00	394.17	473.00
Cost of each additional meeting	225.00	196.67	236.00
Cost of Highway Advice	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	Free	Free	Free
8-9 dwellings	620.00	542.50	651.00
Cost of each additional meeting	310.00	271.67	326.00
Cost of Highway Advice	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	Free	Free	Free
10-24 dwellings	1,436.00	1,256.67	1,508.00
Cost of each additional meeting	719.00	629.17	755.00
Cost of Highway Advice	504.00	440.83	529.00
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	251.00	220.00	264.00
25-49 dwellings	1,436.00	1,256.67	1,508.00
Cost of each additional meeting	719.00	629.17	755.00
Cost of Highway Advice	504.00	440.83	529.00
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	251.00	220.00	264.00
50 - 99 dwellings	2,874.00	2,515.00	3,018.00
Cost of each additional meeting	1,064.00	930.83	1,117.00
Cost of Highway Advice	1,006.00	880.00	1,056.00
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	373.00	326.67	392.00
100 - 199 dwellings	2,874.00	2,515.00	3,018.00
Cost of each additional meeting	1,064.00	930.83	1,117.00
Cost of Highway Advice	1,006.00	880.00	1,056.00
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	373.00	326.67	392.00
200 - 299 dwellings	4,311.00	3,772.50	4,527.00
Cost of each additional meeting	1,436.00	1,256.67	1,508.00
Cost of Highway Advice	1,508.00	1,319.17	1,583.00
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	504.00	440.83	529.00
300+ dwellings	4,311.00	3,772.50	4,527.00
Cost of each additional meeting	1,436.00	1,256.67	1,508.00
Cost of Highway Advice	1,508.00	1,319.17	1,583.00
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	504.00	440.83	529.00



Service	Planning	Service Manager	Development Manager
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Planning and Economic Regeneration

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge TO 31-03-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Permitted Developments and Pre-application Advice			
Non Residential/Commercial Development (see note 1)			
Gross floor area up to 500m2 (site up to 0.5ha)	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting	Free	Free	Free
Cost of Highway Advice	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	Free	Free	Free
Gross floor area 501m2 - 999m2 (site 0.5 -1ha)	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting	Free	Free	Free
Cost of Highway Advice	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	Free	Free	Free
Gross floor area 1,000 - 2,499m2 (site 1-1.25ha)	1,436.00	1,256.67	1,508.00
Cost of each additional meeting	719.00	629.17	755.00
Cost of Highway Advice	504.00	440.83	529.00
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	251.00	220.00	264.00
Gross floor area 2,500 - 9,999m2 (site 1.26-2ha)	2,874.00	2,515.00	3,018.00
Cost of each additional meeting	1,064.00	930.83	1,117.00
Cost of Highway Advice	1,006.00	880.00	1,056.00
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	373.00	326.67	392.00
Gross floor area +10,000m2 (site +2ha)	4,311.00	3,772.50	4,527.00
Cost of each additional meeting	1,436.00	1,256.67	1,508.00
Cost of Highway Advice	1,508.00	1,319.17	1,583.00
Cost of each additional meeting with Highway Authority	504.00	440.83	529.00
Other Categories			
Advertisements	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting	Free	Free	Free
Change of Use	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting	Free	Free	Free
Telecommunications	Free	175.00	210.00
Cost of each additional meeting	Free	87.50	105.00
Glasshouses/Poly Tunnels	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting	Free	Free	Free
Others (see note 2)	Free	Free	Free
Cost of each additional meeting	Free	Free	Free
Historic Environmental and Tree related enquiries			
Separate Listed Building and Conservation Area Advice (Up to 3 Separate Matters)	45.00	39.17	47.00
(More than 3 Separate Matters)	88.00	76.67	92.00
Cost of each additional meeting	22.00	19.17	23.00
Separate Tree related Advice - number of trees not exceeding 10	45.00	39.17	47.00
Cost of each additional meeting	22.00	19.17	23.00
Separate Tree related Advice - number of trees over 10 but not exceeding 30	88.00	76.67	92.00
Cost of each additional meeting	22.00	19.17	23.00
Exemptions			
As set out in Guidance Note (e.g. Parish Councils, etc)			

NOTES:

Note 1 - If only principle to be discussed developer to provide indicative capacity
 Note 2 - Includes other development proposals such as variation or removal of conditions-proposed changes of use, car parks and certificates of lawfulness.
 Customers may be able to order and pay for some services online – please refer to <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk>



Service	Worcestershire Regulatory Services	Service Manager	Worcestershire Regulatory Services Officer
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge	Proposed Charge	Proposed Charge
Water Sampling and Analysis Charges - Fees Recommended By Worcestershire Regulatory Services	TO 31-03-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges before VAT	FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
POLLUTION CONTROL			
Water Sampling Charges			
The Regulations allow local authorities to charge a fee, to enable reasonable costs of services (lab fees etc) to be recovered			
Proposed Fees and Charges			
Risk Assessment	55.00 per hour	55.00 per hour	No VAT currently charged
Sampling (each visit)	55.00 per hour	55.00 per hour	No VAT currently charged
Investigation	55.00 per hour	55.00 per hour	No VAT currently charged
Analysing a sample			
taken under regulation 10 (small supplies)	lab analysis cost	lab analysis cost	No VAT currently charged
(Plus extra lab costs for additional parameters where required)			
taken during monitoring for Group A parameters	lab analysis cost	lab analysis cost	No VAT currently charged
taken during audit monitoring	lab analysis cost	lab analysis cost	No VAT currently charged

NOTES:

Where the request is made by the Owner/Occupier and the Authority is not the only service provider - VAT will be added.
Where the authority instigates the testing under regulations i.e. Periodic tests, assessments - VAT is not applicable in this instance.
Customers may be able to order and pay for some services online – please refer to <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk>



Service	Worcestershire Regulatory Services	Service Manager	Worcestershire Regulatory Services Officer
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge TO 31-03-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Fees			
Hackney Carriage Vehicle (includes renewal plates and twice yearly vehicle inspections)	416.00	416.00	No VAT currently charged
Private Hire Vehicle (includes renewal plates and twice yearly vehicle inspections)	416.00	416.00	No VAT currently charged
Change of Business (Sell Car and Transfer Plate)	105.00	105.00	No VAT currently charged
Temporary Replacement HC & PH vehicle (excluding plates & decals)	104.00	104.00	No VAT currently charged
Initial or Replacement Licences/Plates (if lost or damaged)			
External Car Plate	49.00	49.00	No VAT currently charged
Internal (Executive Vehicles) Car Plate	21.00	21.00	No VAT currently charged
Vehicle Decals - Replacements	19.00	19.00	No VAT currently charged
Exemption Notice (Executive Vehicles)	29.00	29.00	No VAT currently charged
Vehicle Testing			
Vehicle Retest Fee (if re-tested within 48 hours of failure)	31.00	25.83	31.00
Vehicle Retest Fee (if re-tested after 48 hours of failure)	59.00	49.17	59.00
Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Drivers Licence (valid for 3 years)	415.00	415.00	No VAT currently charged
Disclosure and Barring Service check	62.00	62.00	No VAT currently charged
Drivers Badge	25.00	25.00	No VAT currently charged
Drivers' Knowledge Test	54.00	54.00	No VAT currently charged
Private Hire Operators (valid for 1 year)	463.00	463.00	No VAT currently charged
Private Hire Operators (valid for 5 years)	1,760.00	1,760.00	No VAT currently charged

NOTES:

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Service	Worcestershire Regulatory Services	Service Manager	Worcestershire Regulatory Services Officer
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge TO 30-09-2018 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-10-2018 £ Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-10-2018 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Licensing and Registration - Animal Activity Licence			
Animal Boarding Establishments Initial	391.00	Repealed	No VAT charged
Renewal	258.00	Repealed	No VAT charged
Vet fees/Animal welfare visit (if applicable)	Charged at Cost		
Dog Breeding Establishments Initial	391.00	Repealed	No VAT charged
Renewal	258.00	Repealed	No VAT charged
Vet fees/Animal welfare visit (if applicable)	Charged at Cost		
Pet Shops Initial	391.00	Repealed	No VAT charged
Renewal	258.00	Repealed	No VAT charged
Vet fees/Animal welfare visit (if applicable)	Charged at Cost		
Riding Establishments Initial	391.00	Repealed	No VAT charged
Renewal	258.00	Repealed	No VAT charged
Vet fees/Animal welfare visit (if applicable)	Charged at Cost		
Animal Activity Licence			
Animal Boarding, Dog Breeding, Pet Shops, Riding Establishments			
Application Fee	N/A	322.00	No VAT currently charged
1 Year Licence Fee	N/A	180.00	No VAT currently charged
2 Year Licence Fee	N/A	357.00	No VAT currently charged
3 Year Licence Fee	N/A	535.00	No VAT currently charged
Variation Fee	N/A	235.00	No VAT currently charged
Inspection Fee	N/A	160.00	No VAT currently charged
Vet Fees	N/A	Charged at Cost	
Animal Activity Licence			
Performing Animals (No Risk Assessment)			
Application Fee	N/A	215.00	No VAT currently charged
1 Year Licence Fee	N/A	N/A	No VAT currently charged
2 Year Licence Fee	N/A	N/A	No VAT currently charged
3 Year Licence Fee	N/A	290.00	No VAT currently charged
Variation Fee	N/A	155.00	No VAT currently charged
Inspection Fee	N/A	160.00	No VAT currently charged
Vet Fees	N/A	Charged at Cost	

NOTES:

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Service	Worcestershire Regulatory Services	Service Manager	Worcestershire Regulatory Services Officer
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge TO 31-03-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Licensing and Registration			
Dangerous Wild Animals Initial	391.00	411.00	No VAT currently charged
Renewal	258.00	271.00	No VAT currently charged
Vet fees/Animal welfare visit (if applicable)	Charged at Cost		
Zoo Licences Initial	1,882.00 (plus Inspector's expenses)	1,976.00 (plus Inspector's expenses)	No VAT currently charged
Renewal	1,692.00 (plus Inspector's expenses)	1,777.00 (plus Inspector's expenses)	No VAT currently charged
Vet fees/Animal welfare visit (if applicable)	Charged at Cost	Charged at Cost	
Acupuncture, Tattooing, Electrolysis, Ear Piercing, Skin Piercing & Semi-Permanent Skin			
Colouring -			
Certificate of Registration: (a) Person	190.00	200.00	No VAT currently charged
(b) Premise	274.00	288.00	No VAT currently charged
(c) Persons & Premises	462.00	No Longer Available	
Sex Establishments Initial	4,977.00	5,226.00	No VAT currently charged
Renewal	1,911.00	2,007.00	No VAT currently charged
Transfer	380.00	400.00	No VAT currently charged

NOTES:

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Service	Worcestershire Regulatory Services	Service Manager	Worcestershire Regulatory Services Officer
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge TO 31-03-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Gambling Premises Licence Fees			
Gambling Premises Licence - New Application			
Adult Gaming Centre	1,601.00	1,681.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (excluding Tracks)	2,402.00	2,522.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (Tracks)	2,000.00	2,100.00	No VAT currently charged
Bingo Club	2,798.00	2,938.00	No VAT currently charged
Family Entertainment Centre	1,601.00	1,681.00	No VAT currently charged
Temporary Use Notices	408.00	428.00	No VAT currently charged
Gambling Premises Licence - Annual Fee			
Adult Gaming Centre	801.00	841.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (excluding Tracks)	481.00	505.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (Tracks)	801.00	841.00	No VAT currently charged
Bingo Club	801.00	841.00	No VAT currently charged
Family Entertainment Centre	599.00	629.00	No VAT currently charged
Provisional Statement Application			
Adult Gaming Centre	1,601.00	1,681.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (excluding Tracks)	2,402.00	2,522.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (Tracks)	2,000.00	2,100.00	No VAT currently charged
Bingo Club	2,798.00	2,938.00	No VAT currently charged
Family Entertainment Centre	1,601.00	1,681.00	No VAT currently charged
Licence Application (Provisional Statement Holders)			
Adult Gaming Centre	759.00	797.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (excluding Tracks)	962.00	1,010.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (Tracks)	759.00	797.00	No VAT currently charged
Bingo Club	962.00	1,010.00	No VAT currently charged
Family Entertainment Centre	759.00	797.00	No VAT currently charged
Application to Transfer			
Adult Gaming Centre	759.00	797.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (excluding Tracks)	962.00	1,010.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (Tracks)	759.00	797.00	No VAT currently charged
Bingo Club	962.00	1,010.00	No VAT currently charged
Family Entertainment Centre	759.00	797.00	No VAT currently charged
Application to Vary			
Adult Gaming Centre	801.00	841.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (excluding Tracks)	1,199.00	1,259.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (Tracks)	999.00	1,049.00	No VAT currently charged
Bingo Club	1,402.00	1,472.00	No VAT currently charged
Family Entertainment Centre	801.00	841.00	No VAT currently charged
		0.00	
Reinstatement of Licence			
Adult Gaming Centre	759.00	797.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (excluding Tracks)	962.00	1,010.00	No VAT currently charged
Betting Premises (Tracks)	759.00	797.00	No VAT currently charged
Bingo Club	962.00	1,010.00	No VAT currently charged
Family Entertainment Centre	759.00	797.00	No VAT currently charged

NOTES:

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Service	Worcestershire Regulatory Services	Service Manager	Worcestershire Regulatory Services Officer
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge TO 31-03-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Street Trading			
Single Unit up to 12 x 12 (max 5m length) Food - Initial	2,332.00	2,450.00	No VAT currently charged
- Renewal	2,218.00	2,330.00	No VAT currently charged
Single Unit up to 12 x 12 (max 5m length) Non-Food - Initial	1,949.00	2,045.00	No VAT currently charged
- Renewal	1,754.00	1,842.00	No VAT currently charged
For every additional 12 x 12 or part thereof or length more than 5m	962.00	1,010.00	No VAT currently charged
Mobile Traders - Initial	916.00	962.00	No VAT currently charged
Mobile Traders - Renewal	916.00	962.00	No VAT currently charged
Street Amenities (Control of Street Furniture)	369.00	387.00	No VAT currently charged

NOTES:

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Service	Worcestershire Regulatory Services	Service Manager	Worcestershire Regulatory Services Officer
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge	Proposed Charge	Proposed Charge
Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 - Fees Recommended By Worcestershire Regulatory Services	TO 31-03-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges before VAT	FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Site Licence - Initial (3 year licence)	290.00	290.00	No VAT currently charged
Site Licence - Renewal (3 year licence)	240.00	240.00	No VAT currently charged
Collectors Licence - Initial (3 year licence)	145.00	145.00	No VAT currently charged
Collectors Licence - Renewal (3 year licence)	95.00	95.00	No VAT currently charged
Variation of Licence	65.00	65.00	No VAT currently charged
Copy of licence (if lost or stolen)	25.00	25.00	No VAT currently charged

NOTES:

Customers may be able to order and pay for some services online – please refer to <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk>


Wyre Forest District Council


Service	Worcestershire Regulatory Services	Service Manager	Worcestershire Regulatory Services Officer
Directorate	Economic Prosperity & Place	Cabinet Member	Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge	Proposed Charge	Proposed Charge
Control of Dogs - Fees Recommended By Worcestershire Regulatory Services	TO 31-03-2019 £	FROM 01-04-2019 £	FROM 01-04-2019 £
	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Charges before VAT	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Statutory Fine per dog seized	25.00	25.00	No VAT currently charged
Kennelling charge per dog per day	13.50	13.50	No VAT currently charged
Kennelling of Dangerous Dogs charge per dog per day	20.00	20.00	No VAT currently charged
Administration Fee per stray dog seized	15.00	15.00	No VAT currently charged
Out of Hours Charge	35.00	35.00	No VAT currently charged
Repeat stray charge	25.00	25.00	No VAT currently charged
Vet fees/treatment charges (if applicable)	Charged at Cost	Charged at Cost	

NOTES:

Customers may be able to order and pay for some services online – please refer to <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk>



Service	Revenues	Service Manager	Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager
Directorate	Resources	Cabinet Member	Resources

PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge TO 31-03-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2019 £ Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
Council Tax and NNDR			
Council Tax and NNDR			
Summons costs	50.00	50.00	No VAT currently charged
Liability Orders	30.00	30.00	No VAT currently charged

NOTES:

Customers may be able to order and pay for some services online – please refer to <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk>

**Report of the Chief Financial Officer in respect of
Sections 25-28 Local Government Act 2003**

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the report of the Chief Financial Officer in respect of statutory duties placed on Local Authority Chief Financial Officers in relation to budget setting and monitoring.

2. RECOMMENDATION (see 2.2.4 of main report)

THAT COUNCIL NOTE:

- 2.1 The Chief Financial Officer's opinion on the budget proposals, recommended by the Cabinet on 12th February 2019, as detailed in this report.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Sections 25 to 28 of the Local Government Act 2003 (The Act) place statutory duties on Local Authorities on how they set and monitor budgets. The Act requires local authorities to ensure that the Budget estimates are robust, Reserves are adequate and the Budget is monitored on a regular basis.
- 3.2 Section 25 requires the Chief Financial Officer to report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates it makes when calculating its budget requirement under Section 32 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and on the adequacy of its proposed financial reserves.
- 3.3 Section 26 requires authorities to adhere to their approved policies in relation to Reserves when setting budgets to ensure that the minimum Reserve levels are maintained.
- 3.4 Section 27 requires the Chief Financial Officer, at the time of the budget setting, to report if it appears that a reserve in relation to the previous financial year is likely to be inadequate. The reasons for the inadequacy and a recommended course of action must be considered by Council.
- 3.5 Section 28 places a statutory duty on the Council to review its budget and all calculations related to it from time to time. If the review shows a deterioration in the financial position, the Council must take such action as it considers necessary (if any) to address the situation.
- 3.6 Whilst Sections 25-27 relate specifically to budget and council tax setting for the following financial year, these Sections are being more widely interpreted by External Auditors to include the period of the Council's Financial Strategy; as a consequence it is necessary to report not only on next year's Budget but on the period covered by the Three Year Budget Strategy (2019-22).

APPENDIX 4

4. **KEY ISSUES – CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER’S OPINION ON 2019-22 BUDGET & THREE YEAR BUDGET STRATEGY**

In respect of the Budget Proposals recommended by the Cabinet, in my opinion:-

- 4.1 The estimates made for the purposes of Section 32 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 calculations are robust.
- 4.2 The Reserves outlined in the Three Year Budget and Policy Framework Report to the Cabinet on this agenda are adequate in relation to the 2019-22 Budget. The work done by the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel this year and resultant Cabinet report recommendations, supplemented by the updates included in the latest Cabinet report are instrumental in continuing to promote economic growth and moving the Council closer to a sustainable balanced budget in the future, that is less reliant on the use of reserves. The continuing Transformation Programme required to deliver the savings required continues to progress albeit at a more modest pace this year, and remains challenging. No additional Savings target has been added as part of this year’s Cabinet Proposals although a modest new income generation is proposed that is considered to be achievable. The significant funding gap as a result of unachieved and unidentified savings together with use of reserves to balance each year of the MTFS is clearly reported to ensure there is full transparency. It is acknowledged that this represents a key risk to ongoing financial sustainability. This will need to be directly addressed following the all-out elections in May 2019 and continue to be carefully managed and mitigated by the member and officer Leadership team.
- 4.3 Work is planned to continue to reduce costs through internal efficiency, grow income by selling services and generate income from the Council’s assets and seek out alternative service delivery vehicles where appropriate. Work is also planned to build on the excellent progress with localism, including the transfer of operational services to Kidderminster Town Council.
- 4.4 The programme of change described in the MTFS will continue to apply to all services. Over the next 12 months, all service areas will be reviewed accompanied by a management review, to ensure that the Council is organised to meet the priorities of the Council elected in May 2019 and future changes and challenges. Prior to this review, all service areas are continuing to build on the 2% achieved in 2018-19 by requiring a further 1% in each subsequent year; this is forecast to reduce costs by £570k target by the end of the strategy.
- 4.5 The Council have adopted the general principles of the CIPFA Guidance on Local Authority Reserves and Balances, which outline a minimum Reserve (Working Balance) for this Council which has been adhered to in the Financial Strategy 2019-22.
- 4.6 Following an external review by Link Asset Services (our retained Treasury Management advisors) last year this year’s MTFS includes a proposal to increase the working balance from £1m to £1.2m. The external report advised that we considered increasing the working balance up to £1.5m, £1.2m is considered to be adequate pending a further increase from Final Accounts savings, to provide additional risk mitigation for this MTFS and the position will continue to be kept under review. The 2017 Link Report confirmed that the levels of reserves currently held were fair and reasonable.

- 4.7 This report endorses the revised methodology for Ear Marked Reserves (EMRs) (see paragraph 8.4 of main December MTFS) that previously resulted in the release of £233k EMRs into General Reserves as part of the 2017-18 Final Accounts process and the creation of a new General Risk Reserve from April 2018 of circa £720k. This has introduced a more strategic approach to EMRs and reduced the number of smaller EMRs individually held. The MTFS proposes that both the General Risk Reserve and the Innovation fund held separately to support transformational work will be replenished as part of the Final Accounts Process; the exact amount of the top-up will be based on a review of financial risk at that time. The end of December balance on the Innovation Fund taking into account known commitments is £253k. A new Planned Property Maintenance reserve has been created this year by taking 20% of the net proceeds from Capital Portfolio purchases to help mitigate future unknown risk.
- 4.8 The assessment of affordability of financial plans requires a judgement about risk and is covered in the Prudential Framework and associated codes and guidance. The latest code was issued in December 2017 supplemented by Investment and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Guidance and remains current. These codes included a requirement for a detailed capital strategy from 2019-20 setting out the long term context in which capital expenditure and investment decisions are made, giving due regard to both risk and reward and the achievement of priority outcomes. The main objective is to introduce greater focus on reporting and planning for long term financial and risk implications in relation to non treasury investments. This Council was one of the first to progress approval of a revised Capital Strategy to meet the new requirement, with formal approval received at May 2018 Council in advance of the statutory timeline. There is a risk that further controls will be put in place to further restrict authorities borrowing more than or in advance of their needs for out of area investments purely for commercial gain. More information is required to provide clarity but further such restrictions would be of concern and could cause significant problems across the local government sector.
- 4.9 Prudential Indicators are the monitoring tool to assess performance and risk for treasury management and non treasury capital expenditure. The latest guidance and code of practice on Treasury Management has been reflected in the latest 2019-20 Treasury Management Service Strategy and Capital Strategy.
- 4.10 It is important that the level of reserves is carefully monitored and reviewed as the impact of the proposed Local Government Finance Reforms become clear and also once future funding levels are known. The proposed Local Government Finance Reforms place significantly increased risk on local authority income and funding streams and the levels of reserves may need to be reviewed as the reforms are implemented and their impacts become clear.
- 4.11 The Cabinet monitors Budgets on a monthly basis in accordance with Section 28 of the 2003 Act, including 'Budget Risk Management' and takes appropriate action to ensure financial accountability. The enhanced level of reporting developed in liaison with the Commercial Activity Programme Board will be embedded in regular budget monitoring reports to provide improved management information to improve the pace of decision making around demand-led income.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no Financial Implications.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 These are contained in Paragraph 3 of this report.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This is a financial report and there is no requirement to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment screening.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Contained within the Financial Strategy 2019-22 and subsequent Cabinet reports are the significant risks and mitigating actions which have been identified, allied to the budget process.

- 8.2 There are three significant financial risks affecting the Council over the next three years:

- Funding reductions from Central Government in light of the Local Government Finance Reforms changing key funding streams and methodologies including the Fair Funding Reform, phasing out of Revenue Support Grant, New Homes Bonus funding reductions and the move towards 75% Business Rates Retention in 2020-21. The Pan- Worcestershire 75% Business Rates Pilot should help inform the new system;
- The increased reliance on local income sources including the Capital Portfolio Fund and Development Loans Fund policies and risk this may not be realised in line with projected expectations and;
- Further savings required from the Transformation Programme are significant and could prove challenging to deliver in the timeframe required unless this is addressed directly after the all-out elections in May 2019.

- 8.3 It is for the reasons such as the above that the Council proposes to increase the working balance reserve from £1,000,000 to £1,200,000 (previously increased from £700,000 in 2012/13). This level will be subject to further review as part of the next MTFS. This fund is also available to provide cover for urgent unforeseen expenditure e.g. in respect of a civil emergency. The Innovation Fund is held to fund one-off costs of implementation of Transformation; significant allocations have been made to increase capacity and resource to support commercial development. Consideration should be given to replenishing both the Innovation Fund and the General Risk Reserve from Final Accounts savings, in accordance with the delegations in the separate budget report on this agenda. In addition to these generic reserves, earmarked reserves are held to cover specific commitments and therefore limit financial risk. The new Planned Property Maintenance reserve created this year by taking 20% of the net proceeds from Capital Portfolio purchases will help to mitigate future unknown risk.

9. CONCLUSION/FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 Whilst the Council continues to be reliant on contributions from reserves to balance its budget over the term of the Financial Strategy, the ongoing Transformation Programme should deliver ongoing savings to improve this. The Provisional Finance Settlement suggests that from 2019-20 overall Central Government funding will have reduced to a particularly challenging level.
- 9.2 To reduce the financial risks now faced, it is essential that net expenditure and funding be better aligned by the progression of efficiency plans for reductions in spending and increased income generation. It is important that this is directly addressed as is planned, following the all-out elections in May 2019.
- 9.3 The ongoing Local Government Finance Reforms that see Revenue Support Grant phased out from 2019-20, New Homes Bonus and Business Rates Reform reduce Central Government funding and increase the reliance on local funding streams. The level of reserves may need to be reconsidered once the impact of the reforms has been confirmed.
- 9.4 The recommendation in relation to the review of the level of the Working Balance from the Link Asset Services independent report on reserves held by this council, has been partially achieved and will be further reviewed as part of the 2020-23 MTFS.
- 9.5 The assessment of affordability of financial plans requires a judgement about risk. This has been updated in the latest Capital Strategy. This meets the main objective of the latest code by introducing greater focus on reporting and planning for long term financial and risk implications in relation to non treasury investments. Current approvals for the Capital Portfolio Strategy and Development Loans Fund are considered to be proportionate to the size of this Council and the Balance Sheet composition of Balance Sheet as reported in the statutory accounts. It should be noted that this Council only makes investments within the approved functional economic geography for multiple objectives, so whilst proportionality is a key issue, the current acquisition policy itself is within relevant guidance. Any further developments will continue to be monitored and updates including associated risks covered in future reports.
- 9.6 The importance of the development of commercialism and income generation to help close the funding gap has been recognised by the appointment of a Commercial Business Manager and by the work of the Commercial Programme Activity Board utilising the generic capital and revenue budget allocations made within last year's Cabinet Proposal and from 2017-18 Final Account savings. This strategy is not without risk and to mitigate this each business case for commercial development will continue include an appropriate assessment of risks gauged against potential rewards; review of risk and performance will be at least annually for each area of commercial activity. This regular review includes the option to cease commercial activity if appropriate.
- 9.7 During 2018-19 CIPFA consulted on the introduction of a Local Authority Financial Resilience Index. This consultation generated a significant level of debate and this

APPENDIX 4

Council like many other responded to say that whilst we have broad support for the main objective of the proposal, being to help CFOs by giving their views the back-up of the concerns of an independent body, thereby adding further weight to the expert advice already provided we did have a few concerns. The main concern was that a publicly available index of resilience would be used as an overly simplistic benchmark to stigmatise less resilient authorities and generally put too much emphasis on financial considerations at the expense of local context and broader governance considerations. CIPFA listened to the consultation feedback and they are making a number of modifications to proposals whilst remaining committed to the project. CIPFA also hopes in time to make it a requirement to refer to the indicators in Section 25 statements, which cover the robustness of budget estimates and the adequacy of financial reserves.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Leader of the Council
- 10.2 Cabinet Member for Resources
- 10.3 CLT

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2003 Sections 25-28
- 11.2 Local Government Finance Act 1992 Section 32
- 11.3 CIPFA revised Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code December 2017
- 11.4 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-22 Cabinet December 18th 2018

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**CABINET**
12th February 2019**Lion Fields – Parcel 4**

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Chris Rogers
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Mike Parker, Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity & Place
CONTACT OFFICER:	Jonathan Elmer, Ext. 2552 Jonathan.Elmer@nwedr.org.uk
APPENDICES	Appendix 1 – Parcel Four, Lion Fields, Kidderminster: Feasibility and Masterplanning study Appendix 2: Kidderminster Eastern Gateway – Development Framework, available here

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the feasibility and masterplanning study prepared for Parcel 4 of Lion Fields, Kidderminster and to seek approval to undertake soft market testing of the Bromsgrove Street Car Park site, in line with the vision articulated within the document attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

2. RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is asked to DECIDE:

- 2.1 To endorse the vision set out within Appendix 1 as an appropriate framework for delivering the redevelopment of Parcel 4 of Lion Fields; and
- 2.2 To give delegated authority to the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to
- 2.21 progress the expression of interest in the Future High Streets Fund as well as pursuing other opportunities for gap funding to render the viability of the scheme more attractive for investors
- 2.2.2 to undertake the soft marketing of the site to determine investor appetite for developing the site

And to report back to Cabinet by September 2019

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 12th July 2016, Cabinet approved a new vision and preferred development option for the Kidderminster Eastern Gateway area (now known as Lion Fields) as part of an overall Development Framework (produced with the

assistance of Savills). The Development Framework is intended to guide and inform the comprehensive regeneration of the Lion Fields site.

- 3.2 Three development parcels have been identified which could come forward to the market in phases and independently of each other, yet complementing each other to achieve the comprehensive redevelopment of the Lion Fields area as a whole. Cabinet agreed that the preferred development option for Lion Fields should be a mixed use scheme, anchored by a multi-screen cinema complex, with restaurant/café units with the remainder of the scheme including residential accommodation, retail units and creative workspace.
- 3.3 Cabinet subsequently received a report on 17th July 2018 regarding Parcel 4, which is the Bromsgrove Street Car Park, and provided a recommendation that further work be undertaken to understand the development potential of this site. This report provides the update following the delivery of a feasibility and Masterplanning study, which is attached at Appendix 1. In advance of this, a brief update in relation to the other parcels at Lion Fields is presented below.

Progress on Lion Fields Parcel 1 and Parcel 2

Parcel 1

- 3.4 As was reported at the meeting on 17th July 2018, Cordwell Property Group Ltd (CPG) and Peveril Securities were appointed by the Council in December 2017 as its preferred developer to re-develop Parcel One. The proposal from the developers is to deliver a mixed-use leisure scheme, in line with the Development Framework.
- 3.5 As previously reported, the developers have undertaken Ground Investigations across the entire site and this has helped to firm up the construction design. In addition to this, the land that is owned by Worcestershire County Council and previously leased to the NHS has been vacated so that it is available for redevelopment and will not impact on the delivery of the scheme.
- 3.6 In terms of the scheme itself, the developers are currently concluding negotiations with a number of occupiers that have shown an interest in the development, and terms are due to be discussed by the respective Boards of each of the companies in early 2019. Once these discussions have concluded then a final design will be produced and this will form the basis of a planning application. It is currently anticipated that a planning application will be submitted in Spring 2019.

Parcel 2

- 3.7 Members will be aware that the Council agreed at its meeting in March 2018 to find a development partner to help deliver Parcel 2 of Lion Fields, the former Magistrates Court, the former covered market to the rear and the area of land in front of the building, which is currently laid out (temporarily) as an 'Urban Park'. This process is underway and as part of the initial site due diligence the Council have worked with Historic England to ascertain the importance of the buildings on site. The result of this work was that the former Magistrates Court building was identified as being worthy of statutory listing and has received a Grade II listing.
- 3.8 Given the position in relation to the historic significance of the building has now been crystallised, the Council is currently in the process of working with Homes

England to utilise their Delivery Partner Panel 3 (DPP3) to ascertain the appetite from developers to deliver a scheme at this site in conjunction with the District Council.

Worcester Street – Public Realm Scheme

- 3.9 The proposals will see the opening up of Worcester Street to traffic one-way in a north bound direction. A public engagement exercise was held in October 2018 and work commenced on the scheme in November. The scheme is being led by Worcestershire County Council and their retained contractors and it is being funded in partnership between the County and District Councils with a contribution also expected from the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership. Work has started on site and a project board comprising officers from the District and County has been established to oversee the delivery of the scheme. It is anticipated that the scheme will be completed in Autumn 2019.

4. KEY ISSUES

Parcel 4: Bromsgrove Street Car Park, Background

- 4.1 The focus of the remainder of this report is on the next main development opportunity, which is the area centred on Bromsgrove Street Car Park. Following the meeting of the Cabinet on 17th July 2018, the Council commissioned a procurement exercise to select a consultant to undertake design and feasibility work in relation to the proposed development. The successful consultancy was One Creative Environment (Ltd) who are a multi-disciplinary architectural and engineering practice based in Worcester.
- 4.2 The final report produced by One Creative is attached at Appendix 1 of this report, however, the key issues and themes arising from the document form the basis for the remainder of this report.

Parcel 4, Masterplanning and Feasibility Study

- 4.3 The work undertaken by One Creative can be split in to 5 distinct, but related work streams, which are outlined in turn below:

Site Analysis

- 4.4 The first stage for the consultants was to provide a site analysis, which was informed by a desk-top review and supplemented by an on-site survey that provided a further understanding of the issues, constraints and opportunities associated with the site. Some of the key issues identified were:
- Extensive surface level car parking
 - Significant level changes from the Site down to Worcester Street of between 11-13m.
 - All buildings on Worcester Street back onto the Site with unsightly mix of security fencing/concrete walls defining the western boundary
 - Lack of site presence from the Ringway - its interface is very poor - screened by dense tree cover to the southern section and rear of Youth House and Health Centre buildings, secure fencing and associated car parking to the northern section
 - No public green space

- Lack of high quality public realm connecting through from the Site to the Town Centre
- Step Entry is narrow, hidden, has no natural surveillance, precludes access by wheelchair/ pushchair infirm and is an unsuitable gateway to the Town Centre
- Fast traffic on Bromsgrove Street - the main access road into and through the Site - this needs slowing down to make pedestrian friendly at the entrance (off Coventry Street) to change drivers perception as soon as they enter the Lion Fields site

4.5 With the above issues in mind, the critical success factors for redeveloping Parcel 4, as identified by One, are considered to be as follows:

- To be a destination and a place to congregate and bring life, play, living and activity back into the Town Centre
- To provide excellent way-finding and good connections from the new leisure-led development through the Site and into Kidderminster Town Centre
- To provide new, high density housing provision
- To provide high quality public realm and 'greening' of the site
- To open up views of key Town Centre buildings and heritage landmarks of Kidderminster
- To create a high quality gateway along Bromsgrove Street underpinned by place-making principles to prioritise pedestrians
- To provide more efficient car parking provision for 170 spaces
- To act as a catalyst for further regeneration in Kidderminster

Market Assessment

4.6 As part of the commission, One Creative employed Thomas Lister Ltd to prepare a market assessment to inform potential development options for the site. This incorporated a review of demand and supply across a broad range of sectors, including commercial, retail, leisure and residential. It took account of development proposals for other parcels of land within the Lion Fields framework and gathered evidence in relation to capital, rental values and take-up rates of respective properties. The main conclusions from this review were as follows:

4.7 **Residential Market:** Kidderminster is an area which has seen relatively low levels of new residential development in recent years, with the most recent delivery largely limited to the Silverwoods scheme and a number of smaller infill sites. The subject site ought to provide opportunity to deliver a different high quality offer to the Kidderminster Town Centre market, however achievable sales values are likely to be impacted by public perception and the sites proximity to lower value parts of the town.

4.8 **Residential Care:** The site would be considered ideal for Care Home residential use, being in close proximity to the town centre, health centre and other facilities, however the feedback received from the larger national providers is that achievable values would unlikely facilitate delivery. In the event that the site were to be formally marketed, then it is anticipated that interest would arise from smaller and perhaps specialist Care Home operators, with expected land values arising being potentially slightly higher than for a standard housing scheme.

4.9 **Private Rented Sector:** There is currently a lack of quality Private Rented Sector (PRS) representation within the town with most of the market offer relating to older

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stock held by individual investors. There is considered likely to be potential demand for high quality smaller housing units or apartments within close proximity to the new leisure facilities (Parcel 1) and with good commuter linkage to the railway station. The site is however of insufficient scale to attract a large PRS operator who would ordinarily seek a minimum quantum of 100 units. As achievable PRS values tend to relate to discounted market values then it is considered unlikely that the private sector would be in a progress a scheme without some form of public sector intervention.

- 4.10 **Retail and Leisure:** The prime town centre retail area has, with the delivery of the Weavers Wharf scheme, shifted westward, away from the subject site. The level of demand for retail space within Kidderminster is limited, it is however noted that the recent delivery of 4 new retail units at Riverside Walk has already achieved full occupancy for restaurant type uses. The proposed delivery of the Cinema/Leisure scheme on Parcel 1 provides opportunity to redress the balance of town centre activity and provide a wider evening economy. However the proposed scheme is considered likely to take up identified leisure and retail demand with little opportunity to extend the retail offer into the subject site.
- 4.11 It is understood that Lidl have previously expressed interest in the Lionfields location and that the company retains an active interest in procuring a site in Kidderminster
- 4.12 There is no identified hotel requirement for Kidderminster, with Premier Inn and Travelodge both established in the town and no other interest has been established.
- 4.13 **Commercial / Offices:** Kidderminster currently has a lack of Grade A office stock. Average achieved rental levels in relation to existing stock are in the order of £10.00 per sq.ft. In the event that new stock were to be delivered, then it is considered that a rental rate in the order of £16.00 per sq.ft. might be achievable, however this would be insufficient to render a new build scheme viable. It is considered that there would most likely be some level of pent-up demand for new office space, including for small suites within a serviced/managed workspace environment.
- 4.14 Given the above narrative, the focus for the potential development of this parcel has focused on the residential market, as this has been considered to be the most appropriate, and viable, option available.

Design Proposals

- 4.15 With an understanding of what the site needed and could potentially deliver in the current market, a set of key Design Principles were established to enable two main design options to be developed. A series of 3D computer generated visualisations for each helped to clearly convey the ideas and aspirations and convey 'the art of the possible'. The designs included transformational and visionary proposals for new public realm connections from Lion Fields into Kidderminster Town Centre and Weavers Wharf.
- 4.16 There were two key issues for considering the design of development of this site, firstly was the amount of land available for development at Bromsgrove Street, taking in to account the necessity to retain a suitable number of parking spaces and

the second major consideration was options for improve connectivity between Worcester Street and Bromsgrove Street.

- 4.17 The design proposals are included within the main body of the report at Appendix 1. However, it is worth noting at the outset that the development of Parcel 4 would not generate sufficient return to deliver the proposals, as currently conceived. Therefore, the Council will need to attract private investment or public sector funding support to deliver the transformational change envisaged in Appendix 1.
- 4.18 Notwithstanding the issues about financial viability, what the document does provide is a vision to transform this part of Kidderminster town centre and provide a new identity to a part of the town that has suffered in recent past. Key to this vision is providing the opportunity to re-connect the town and link the two 'book-ends' of Bromsgrove Street and Weavers Wharf. Providing better connectivity and accessibility throughout the town will help to drive footfall and investment in the Bromsgrove Street area helping to 're-balance' the town. In addition, the proposals also identify the opportunity to establish a new park/place as a destination in its own right. The proposals also continue the ideas initially presented within ReWyre to 'break through' between Worcester Street and Bromsgrove Street and provide a much more connected and aesthetically pleasing and easily accessible environment.
- 4.19 The two main options that were taken forward as the preferred options for consideration were as follows.

Design Option A

- Is based on the delivery of circa 70 residential units (flats) and some, albeit limited, designated car parking;
 - A public car park of circa 170 spaces would be retained;
 - In this option, the improved connectivity would be through the existing unit currently in operation as 'Mega Value';
- 4.20 This option provides some moderate connections from Parcel 1 of Lion Fields through to the town centre as well as providing a smaller high quality space for public realm. However, in this option, it is felt that the connectivity between Lion Fields and the remainder of the town centre is not as strong as it could be.

Design Option B

- Is premised on the delivery of circa 69 units (flats) albeit limited, designated car parking;
 - A public car park of circa 161 spaces would be retained;
 - Creation of a high quality public realm space;
 - Creation of a direct link to Worcester Street through the demolition of existing vacant units and the development of a terrace, offering stepped and ramped access between the two areas;
 - This option also suggests considering further enhancements in terms of links between Worcester Street and Exchange Square, which would open up accessibility in the town even further
- 4.21 Option B is considered to be a more preferable option in design terms and would provide direct connections from the new leisure destination at Lion Fields, through the rest of the town centre.

- 4.22 Both of these options are presented in further detail within the report, and have accompanying plans and visuals identifying how a scheme could look.

Viability Appraisals

- 4.23 Following the above work, high level development appraisals of the preferred options have been produced and the key summary of these are as follows:
- 4.24 For Design Option A, the proposed development scheme is currently showing an overall negative residual land value, demonstrating that the scheme would be undeliverable based upon the standard assumptions made and delivery on a planning policy compliant basis. An alternative appraisal has been prepared assuming all the same costs and values but which demonstrates that with a nil affordable housing content, then the scheme provides a marginally viable total overall residual land value of circa £34,000. However at this level of return it will not be attractive to commercial developers.
- 4.25 Option B also highlights that the proposed development is currently showing a negative residual land value, demonstrating that the scheme would be undeliverable based upon the standard assumptions made and delivery on a planning policy compliant basis. An alternative appraisal has been prepared which adopts the same costs and values but with nil affordable housing content. The scheme appraisal then provides a marginally negative total residual land value of circa minus £37,000, also not attractive commercially.
- 4.26 Crucially, the figures included within the appraisals and referenced above do not take account of the associated costs that would be required to deliver the improved access arrangements between Worcester Street and Bromsgrove Street which includes any potential third party land acquisition costs; the public realm improvements or to cover the cost of the revised car parking arrangement. Clearly, these additional costs would make the development even more unviable. Notwithstanding this position, what the document does provide is a clear vision for the site in terms of how to create a step-change in the function and operation of Kidderminster Town Centre and how the town could be better connected in the future.

Next steps

- 4.27 Whilst the work undertaken by One Creative provides a new vision for the delivery of Parcel 4, it is clear to see from the technical analysis and initial costings that the redevelopment of the site is, at best, marginally viable, this is without the significant additional financial burden that creating the improved link between Worcester Street and this site would bring.
- 4.28 Given the financial constraints associated with the delivery of the enhanced pedestrian linkages, the Council will need to consider how best to deliver against the vision outlined within the document and to work with public sector partners and agencies to explore appropriate funding routes. One of the possible funding sources is considered to be the Future High Streets Fund, which was announced by the Government in the Autumn Budget as a £675m fund to help high streets adapt and meet changing expectations of the role of town centres to ensure they thrive rather than just survive. The prospectus for the fund was published in December 2018 and identifies the importance of high streets and the structural impacts that have occurred over recent past.

- 4.29 The objective of the fund is to *renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability*. In the first phase of this programme, the Government wants local authorities to define the specific challenges faced and to set out their strategic ambition for what the high street or town centre should become and what needs to be done to make this possible. The Government are looking to invest in schemes that fall under any of the following themes:
- Investment in physical infrastructure;
 - Acquisition and assembly of land including to support new housing, workspaces and public realm;
 - Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation in the area;
 - Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and diversification; and
 - Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology
- 4.30 It is anticipated that the fund will contribute up to a maximum of £25 million to each successful place, although the expectation is that a range of project sizes will be considered in the region of £5 to £10 million.
- 4.31 It is considered that the development at Lion Fields will form the basis of an expression of interest to the Government under the Future High Streets Fund, as the proposals cover a number of themes in the above list. The Expression of Interest needs to be submitted by 22nd March 2019 and, if successful, the scheme would move towards a second stage later in 2019 where detailed proposals would be required.
- 4.32 In addition to expressing interest in potential funding sources, the Council will also need to more formally test the market appetite for delivering a redevelopment of this site, and this will be undertaken through soft market testing, potentially taking advantage of the Homes England Developer Partner Panel.
- 4.33 It is therefore proposed that further work on the Future High Streets Fund application to support the delivery of the vision is undertaken. In parallel, it is proposed that further work with Homes England to ascertain potential developer interest will be undertaken and a further report provided to members in due course.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As has been noted within the report at Appendix 1, the initial costings of the proposed redevelopment scheme are, at best, marginally viable. Therefore, a likely capital receipt for any disposal of the land is not expected to provide a sufficient return.
- 5.2 The potential for a new improved pedestrian link between Bromsgrove Street and Worcester Street is likely to come at a significant cost, work from One Creative has identified two indicative options and it is identified that public funding streams such as funding from the Local Enterprise Partnerships or through the new High Street Fund will need to be explored as a next step.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council has adopted the Kidderminster Eastern Gateway Development Framework which sets the policy framework for the delivery of regeneration of the area and the proposed re-development of Parcel 4, this new report provides further delivery options to consider for Parcel 4, as envisaged within the framework.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There is the risk that if the Council did not take this opportunity to develop a credible plan for the re-development of Parcel 4 that it could undermine confidence in the delivery of Lion Fields and the other Parcels of land that are currently more advanced.
- 7.2 The Council has ambitions to ensure that the development of this Parcel also considers wider issues such as the retention of car parking and improve the permeability between this site and the remainder of the town centre but this comes at a cost and there is a risk that without further public sector involvement, the plans will not become reality

8. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT (EIA)

- 8.1 There are no immediate equality implications to be addressed at this stage.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Kidderminster is suffering, like most towns and cities, from the effects of internet shopping on the High Street. The Council has already undertaken significant investment in the town in partnership with the County Council in improving the public realm with £2m of investment and opening up Worcester Street with £1.5m of investment. But further proactive reinvention for Kidderminster is required to turn it into a place to live, work and play, not just a shopping destination. Historically, town centres have always provided an important social space - it's the one thing the internet can't provide. A place to congregate is the future for towns. Bringing leisure destinations and permanent homes back into the centre and providing them with parks, gardens, fun and entertainment. A number of vacant units on Worcester Street offer the potential opportunity to create alternative direct principle pedestrian routes to the existing Town Centre and Weavers Wharf but the cost of this is prohibitive to the private sector. Therefore, alternative public funding streams will need to be considered in order to turn plans into reality.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Corporate Leadership Team.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet Lion Fields Future Phases Development report 17th July 2018
- Cabinet Report 27th March 2018 – Lion Fields Parcel Two – Former Magistrates Court – Development Proposals (EXEMPT)
- Cabinet Kidderminster Eastern Gateway report 12th July 2016
- Report to Cabinet, 16th December 2014 – ReWyre – Update on Progress over the last 5 years and a Strategic Action Plan for the Next 5 Years

- Cabinet report 22nd October 2013 – New Leisure Centre for Wyre Forest

12. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Parcel Four, Lion Fields, Kidderminster – Feasibility and Masterplanning study

CABINET
12 February 2019

Allocation Policy Review

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Ian Hardiman, Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Mike Parker, Corporate Director of Economic Prosperity and Place 01562 732500
CONTACT OFFICER:	Kate Bailey, Head of Strategic Growth 01562 732560
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 Allocation Policy Appendix 2 Letter regarding Terminal Illness Homeless Applicants http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/meetings/com60.htm#mt8064 Appendix 3 Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/meetings/com60.htm#mt8064 Appendix 4 Improving access to social housing for Armed Forces consultation http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/meetings/com60.htm#mt8064

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines the proposed changes to the Allocations Policy following amendments made to the legislation around Homelessness (the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) and other statutory instruments / guidance around allocations.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet DECIDES that:

- 2.1 The Council undertakes consultation on the Allocation Policy changes outlined in Appendix One with Members, Stakeholders including Registered Partners and Households on the Housing Register for a period of six weeks.
- 2.2 Delegated authority be given to Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing to amend the allocation policy in line with the proposed changes, following the consultation process.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Local Housing Authorities (LHA) 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.
- 3.2 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 Council amended its policy in accordance with these changes in 2014. The Council shares an Allocations Policy and housing register system with Bromsgrove, Malvern, Stratford, Worcester and Wychavon councils.
- 3.3. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 2017) increased the Council's duties for applicants who were facing homelessness through preventing or relieving homelessness at an earlier stage. At the time the legislation came into force the officers were unsure of the likely impact on the Allocations Policy and how access to social housing would be affected. The Allocations Policy already allowed for applicants to be assisted from becoming homeless through the use of the Gold Plus band and so an immediate change was not required but officers committed to reviewing the policy after the first six months of operations.
- 3.4 In October 2018 the Government wrote to Local Housing Authorities (LHA) to advise them it was making changes to the Homelessness Code of Guidance around people with terminal illness. This came into effect on 1 November, making it clear that applicants with a terminal illness should be treated as having a priority need, that accommodation should be suitable and that terminally ill intentionally homeless applicants should be given consideration around the length of time they were accommodated for whilst they try to secure their own accommodation. Whilst these changes relate to the Homelessness guidance officers believe it would be appropriate to make our treatment of terminally ill homeless applicants explicit in the allocations policy.
- 3.5 In November 2018 the Government wrote to LHAs outlining new statutory guidance around improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse in refuges and other forms of temporary accommodation. Whilst the current Allocations Policy is already compliant with the statutory guidance, it would be appropriate to make the statutory guidance more explicit in the policy, particularly around the award of medical banding for victims who are suffering from physical and mental health issues as a result of the domestic abuse (either directly or indirectly).
- 3.6 In January 2019 the Government published a consultation paper on improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces, veterans and their families. Officers believe a very small number of households would be

affected by these changes as we don't have many armed forces personnel currently registered. As a broad indicator in Wyre Forest there are only 11 households on the Housing Register who are serving or have previously served / their bereaved spouses that meet the additional waiting time criteria. However the suggested changes go beyond what our current Allocations Policy does so would be appropriate to give this consideration and to consult regarding this matter. The consultation runs until 8 March 2019.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The HRA 2017 has increased the number of cases that the Housing Advice Team are working with under the prevention duties. In addition it has introduced a new relief duty. Between April and the beginning of December 2018 518 households were seen under the new legislation and between quarter one and two there was a 60% increase in approaches. Applicants are now supported through their housing options for a far longer period of time and so are remaining in temporary accommodation for longer periods than previously whilst officers attempt to resolve their homelessness.
- 4.2 Under the previous legislation applicants could have a statutory decision accepting a duty to rehouse issued relatively quickly from when they approached as homeless. They would then go on the waiting list on priority band and were usually housed within 4 – 6 weeks unless they had very specific housing needs. Under the new legislation the Council has to accommodate those who it believes are eligible, homeless and in priority need in emergency accommodation for 56 days unless the duty is brought to end, for instance by rehousing. Only after the 56 days has expired (where the duty to assist has not ended for any other reason) can a Local Authorities make a statutory (section 184) decision accepting the permanent duty to rehouse. Under the current Allocations Policy, during the relief stage, applicants are placed in the Gold Plus band as the Priority band is only applicable for those applicants who we owe the statutory duty to permanently rehouse (section 184).
- 4.3 The delay in being able to rehouse applicants in the relief stage (because of the banding) has created a bottleneck in the emergency accommodation and has contributed to the need to increase the budget for temporary accommodation. In addition the overall increase in homeless approaches had meant a corresponding increased in applicants being placed. In April – December 2017 we placed 107 households and over the same timescale in 2018 there was a 70% increase (182 households).
- 4.4 To resolve this through the new proposals the Council would seek to put those applicants it believes it would owe the full rehousing duty to into Priority Band as soon as the relief duty is owed thereby moving them up the banding

structure at an earlier stage. There are currently only 4 households in Priority band but over 600 in Gold Plus band.

- 4.5 In addition, those applicants in the prevention stage are in Gold Plus band along with all the other reasonable preference categories in this banding including those who the Council are preventing from becoming homeless outside of the 56 days, those with a medical or welfare need, those in a social housing who are underoccupying or who have an adaptation they no longer require and those who have two or more reasonable preference categories contained within the Gold banding. This is inhibiting the officers' ability to offer social housing to prevent someone's homelessness in a timely fashion due to the competition for properties from within this group. If they can't be helped within the 56 days or at the point of homelessness the relief duty arises and the Council may then owe them an emergency accommodation duty.
- 4.6 The proposed Allocations Policy will seek to give prevention cases (who are likely to be homeless within 56 days) an additional six months waiting time so they are prioritised within the band. This recognises the requirement to continue to assist other groups in housing need whilst also giving some priority to those that the Council owe the prevention duty to.
- 4.7 **Local Connection Qualifying Criteria:** Applicants must have a 2 year local connection to the Home Choice Plus Partnership area or have been in permanent paid employment in the Partnership area for six months or have a close family member who has lived in the area for a minimum of the last five years. There are some exceptions to the local connection qualification criteria, for example ex service personnel. In the proposed Allocations Policy, where there are specific residency criteria included in section 106 sites, which differ from the qualifying criteria of the Allocations Policy, it will now be included as an exception but only in relation to an allocation to an identified section 106 property. In Wyre Forest s106 sites have the same residency criteria as the allocation policy so this exception isn't relevant.
- 4.8 **Reduced Banding:** Currently households with an income of more than £35k or equity / savings / capital of more than £50k will be placed into the reduced banding unless they are in receipt of means tested benefits. This ensured those applicants who do not have the means to access housing in the private sector will have preference. However income levels have risen slightly so officers will now consult on changing the income level to £38k for household income. In addition house prices have continued to rise across the Home Choice Plus partnership area and the entry price for a one bedroom flat has increased so for those applicants unable to get a mortgage and on a fixed income (e.g. pensioners) officers believe a maximum of £95k for equity / savings / capital will give a more realistic price for someone needing to purchase a property. For other applicants it will remain at £50k. Currently on

the Housing Register there are just over 3400 households, of these only 52 have a household income above £35k and only one in the reduced band for having equity/savings or capital over £50k.

- 4.9 **Children in flats:** The current policy allows families in flats above ground floor, where they have a child under 10, to be awarded Gold Band. This was to recognise that flats aren't ideal for children as they have more limited safe outdoor space to play in. However the policy is seen as unfair to those families occupying flats on the ground floor without gardens and the proposed change would treat all families, with children under 10, without a garden in the same way.
- 4.10 The consultation proposes clarifying the treatment of homeless households with a terminal illness or victims of domestic abuse in relation to banding definitions as outlined in 3.4 and 3.5 above.
- 4.11 The consultation proposes amending the Allocations Policy in line with the Governments consultation paper regarding armed forces so that the Council exempts divorced and separated spouses or civil partners of Services personnel who are required to leave Ministry of Defence accommodation, from the Local Connection criteria.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Any changes made to the Policy following consultation may require funding to alter the Home Choice Plus system depending on the type and scale of changes proposed. If changes are required there may be a delay to the implementation. These costs will be split across the six Home Choice partners and for Wyre Forest a contribution can be met from within existing budgets.

6 LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Local Authorities must consult with relevant stakeholders and households on the Housing Register under the Housing Act 1985 and 1996 on changes to the Allocations Policy that will potentially affect applicants. In addition to consulting with Members and those on Home Choice Plus the consultation will include Registered Providers who utilise the system to let their housing stock.
- 6.2 The Council is expected to give due consideration to changes to the Homelessness Code of Guidance and to implement statutory guidance. Recent changes to guidance need to be incorporated into the Allocations Policy.

7 EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

An equality impact assessment screening has been undertaken and this shows no detrimental affect. There is a positive affect for those families with young children and those with a disability.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 There is a requirement to have an Allocations Policy in place and to revise the policy in line with statutory guidance to avoid the risk posed by legal challenge and so this Policy and its operation mitigates against that risk.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The HRA 2017 has imposed new duties around prevention and relief of homelessness for Local Authorities. To meet these requirements and ensure the Council doesn't keep households in emergency accommodation for longer than necessary, it needs to update the Allocations Policy to reflect the legislative changes.
- 9.2 These, and the other changes proposed will affect others in bands Gold, Gold Plus and Priority so it is important that the Council consults on these amendments.
- 9.3 It is sensible to take the opportunity to review the income and equity / saving levels contained within the Allocations Policy to ensure they are not unreasonably punitive.

10 CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Households on Home Choice Plus
- 10.2 CLT and Members
- 10.3 Registered Providers
- 10.4 The general public

11 APPENDICES

- 11.1 Allocation Policy 2019
- 11.2 Letter regarding Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities – Terminally Ill Homeless People
- 11.3 Statutory guidance on improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse in refuges or other types of temporary accommodation.
- 11.4 Consultation paper on "Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces, Veterans and their families".



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HOME CHOICE PLUS PARTNERSHIP

List of partners

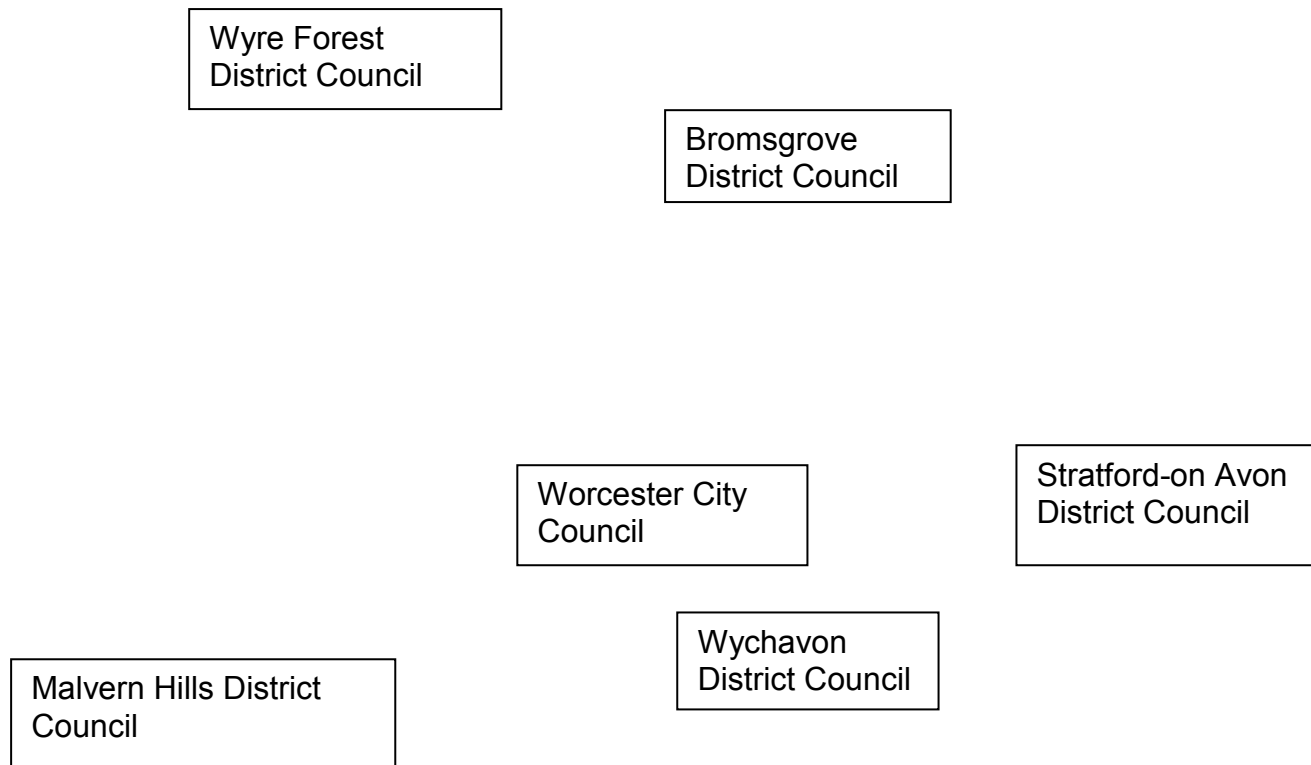
Local Authorities

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, , Fortis Living, Fosseyway Housing, Fry Housing Trust, Greensquare Housing Group, Gloucestershire Housing Association, Hanover Housing Group, Housing 21, , 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, Stonewater Housing Association, Warwickshire Rural Housing Association, Waterloo Housing Association, Community Housing Group

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Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Affordable housing	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
Allocation	an offer of housing from a Housing Association or Local Authority either directly or via a nomination from a Local Authority
Band start date	the date the household is awarded the banding applicable to their housing need
Banding/bands	the prioritisation of households on the housing register based on their housing need
Bid	Households' expression of interest in an available / vacant property
Direct matching	an allocation outside of the Home Choice Policy/Scheme. Please see the policy for more details.
Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy / Allocations policy	the policy document that determines how housing is allocated to households
Home Choice Plus Partnership	A group of local authorities operating the same Allocation Scheme (known as "the partnership")
Home Choice Plus Scheme / Allocations Scheme	the scheme including the software, the policy and the processes involved for allocating housing to households
Homelessness	The legal definition of homelessness in the Housing Act 1996 Part VII / Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 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 56 days from 3 April 2018.
Housing Association	for the purposes of this Scheme also includes Registered Providers and refers to social housing providers regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency
Housing Register	a database/list of households who have applied for affordable housing
Local Authority Agents	organisations that act on behalf of the Local Authority in relation to the Housing Register and Homelessness, under a contractual arrangement usually Housing Associations
Local connection	a household's connection to a local area or authority including residency, family connections and employment
Persons from	people subject to immigration control and any other persons from

abroad	abroad where the secretary of state makes regulations
Qualification Criteria	To join the Housing Register the applicant must meet the eligible qualification criteria including connection to the Partnership, Housing Need and Unacceptable Behaviour
Reasonable preference	categories of housing need which are defined by the Housing Act 1996, Part Six that are required to be included in an allocations policy
Registration / Effective date	the date of registration of the Housing Application
Shared Ownership	Affordable housing option where the applicant parts buys and part rents a property. The Registered Provider owns the remaining share of the property.
Statutorily homeless	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.
Weekly bidding cycle	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 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 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) 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 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, or is a prevention or relief case under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

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.
- 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, immediately prior to the application (please see further information below).
- Where the applicant(s) has a close (immediate) family member living in the HC+ partnership area and has done so for a minimum period of five years, immediately prior to the application (please see further information below).
- Where the applicant has resided in the Partnership area for three out of the last five years at the point of application
- Has a local connection as a result of special circumstances (this would include people with a reasonable preference without a local connection identified above)

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.

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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

Under the Homeless Reduction Act, Care Leavers will have a local connection with the area of the local authority that owes them leaving care duties – therefore if someone is placed in care by Worcestershire County Council they will have a local connection with all six Local Housing Authorities in Worcestershire.

A care leaver aged under 21 who normally lives in a different area to that of the local authority that owes them leaving care duties, and has done for at least 2 years including some time before they turned 16; will also have a local connection in that area. For example if Worcestershire County Council places a young person in Stratford District Council before they turn 16 and they are in care in Stratford District Council for two year period the young person will have a local connection with Stratford and all of Worcestershire.

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 at least one of these 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

Applicants must have a right to live in the UK and be entitled to claim public funds. Examples of people who are eligible are British Citizens, EEA nationals (generally those who are working), and those with leave to remain. People applying to join the Housing Register have to provide documents to confirm their identity and their immigration status.

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 they are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, or are excluded from entitlement to housing benefit by s.115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (c 33) (exclusion from benefits) unless they are 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;

- Refugee status
- Exceptional leave to remain
- Indefinite leave to remain

This does not apply to a person who is already a secure or introductory tenant of the Council or housing association.

If an applicant has any further questions regarding their status they should contact the Council or seek independent legal advice.

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

Applicants who have been 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 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) by a Local Authority (or its agent) in the Home Choice Plus Partnership which has not yet been discharged
- Households with a reasonable preference under the 1985 Housing Act
- 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
- Social housing tenants who need to move because they work or have been offered work in the Partnership Area and they have a genuine intention to take up the offer and will suffer hardship otherwise
- Where a Local Letting Plan or s106 restriction applies on a specific site

Section 106 sites

Where an applicant meets the eligibility criteria established in the s106 agreement, but not the Qualifying Criteria in the Allocations Policy, they will be permitted to join the housing register but will only be considered for the relevant s106 property/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

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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 allocations policy will also extend the provision above, to include divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.

Social housing tenants

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 social housing tenants are a “relevant person”

A relevant person has a need to move because the relevant person—

- (a) works in the district of the local housing authority, or
- (b)(i) has been offered work in the district of the local housing authority, and
- (ii) the authority is satisfied that the relevant person has a genuine intention of taking up the offer of work.

This regulation does not apply if the need to move is associated with work or the offer of work which is—

- (a) short-term or marginal in nature,
- (b) ancillary to work in another district, or
- (c) voluntary work.

In this regulation “voluntary work” means work where no payment is received by the relevant person or the only payment due to be made to the relevant person by virtue of being so engaged is a payment in respect of any expenses reasonably incurred by the relevant person in the course of being so engaged.

Specifically a qualification criteria may not be applied to existing social housing tenants seeking to transfer from another local authority district in England who have a reasonable preference under s166(3)(e) because of a need to move to the local authority’s district to avoid hardship where they need to move because the tenant works in the district, or need to move to take up an offer of work.

In considering registering applications the Council’s (or their agent) will take into account the Right to Move Statutory Guidance March 2015 (or any relevant successor document).

Any other social housing tenant, who satisfies the eligibility criteria will be eligible to join the Housing Register, even if they have no housing need and don’t currently live in the Partnership area.

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 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

- 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
- 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 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 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 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).

Applicants owed the relief duty who are likely to be accepted as statutorily homeless with a duty to rehouse under the above Act

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)
- Applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness under the HRA 2017 (Prevention and Relief)
- 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)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 ▪ Living in exceptional circumstances ▪ Households with children under 10 years old and living in upstairs flat ▪ Households suffering with some disrepair in their property
<p>Silver Plus (6 months time limit) (No Local Connection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Homeless cases where there is no statutory duty to re-house (excludes intentional homeless and those in a priority band) ▪ Homeless cases accepted for a full rehousing duty by a Local Authority within the partnership (but not the LA that accepted the duty) ▪ 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) ▪ 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 ▪ Applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness under the HRA 2017 (Prevention and Relief) ▪ Applicant requires 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 silver
<p>Silver (12 months time limit) (No Local Connection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 ▪ Living in exceptional circumstances ▪ Households with children under 10 years old and living in upstairs flat <p>Households suffering with some disrepair in their property</p>
<p>Reduced Banding (with reasonable preference)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Households with financial resources above defined limits ▪ Households who have deliberately worsened their circumstances to qualify for a higher banding ▪ Households with housing-related debts ▪ Households who have committed acts of anti-social behaviour and other tenancy breaches but not severe enough to have obtained outright possession ▪ 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
<p>Bronze Plus (12 month time limit) (Local Connection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Households who do not meet any of the above reasonable preference criteria and with a local connection, and who may have a low housing need including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<p>Bronze (12 month time limit) (No Local Connection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Households who do not meet any of the above reasonable preference criteria and without a local connection, and who may have low housing need (please see Bronze Plus above)

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.

This may include victims of domestic abuse who are accommodated in refuge or other temporary accommodation, who the authority owe a rehousing duty to.

Homeless cases owed the relief duty under HRA 2017

Where households are owed the relief duty under the HRA 2017 and it is likely that they would be owed the full statutory rehousing duty (if their homelessness doesn't come to an end through one of the potential discharge routes during the relief period) they will be placed in this band at the point the determination is made.

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.

Homeless cases covered by the prevention (HRA 2017)

Gold Plus band is awarded by the local authority or its agent where the applicant will become homeless within 56 days (the prevention duty) The Gold Plus banding award will last for for 56 days and then the banding will be reassessed and a band based on housing need / duties owed at the time will be awarded..

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, including members and former members of the armed forces
- A victim, and their family, of domestic abuse being accommodated in a refuge or other temporary accommodation
- An applicant suffering from terminal illness where they have not already been accepted for a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

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.

Version 1 post HRA

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.

For applicants meeting this criteria the band start date will be the date the applicant moved into the supported accommodation

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. In cases where there is a pregnancy (including multiple births, officers will need to consider whether the current property would be overcrowded when the baby (babies) arrive at the 25 week stage and beyond.

Version 1 post HRA

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:

Home Choice Plus Bedroom Standard			
Household Make-up	Suitable Property Size :		
	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed
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

Version 1 post HRA

- 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. In some circumstances it may be possible to award this banding and direct match a potential foster parent living in social housing to a more appropriately sized property with the agreement of the landlord.

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 who cannot share a bedroom
- 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. Therefore unless there is an exceptional circumstance we would be unlikely to provide family accommodation where they are not the primary carer for the child even if they have 50% access rights to their child.

Currently case law around eligibility for benefits and homeless case law has found that separated parents do not have an automatic right to benefits or a bedroom for a child they do not have primary responsibility for.

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 or harassment from outside the home, and unable to remain in your home, 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 a flat or maisonette with no access to a garden.. 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 up to £95,000 that will enable them to purchase and maintain private accommodation will be encouraged and supported to do so through the housing options service. This will also apply for those able to fund renting accommodation in the private rented sector..

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 or deliberately moved into another property that is unsuitable and as a result 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 / or 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 unless it has been secured through a court order / money judgement order in which case the six year timescale does not apply).

The reduced priority band will apply to those with rent arrears, recharges, former tenancy arrears, rent deposit debt, mortgage arrears 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.

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 (please note review requests where there has not been any change of circumstances will not be considered) but is unlikely to be removed if their circumstances remain the same.

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 work for a minimum of 16 hours per week (permanent and not of a casual nature) 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.

Applicants owed the prevention or relief duties in Gold Plus

We recognise that a housing solution for potentially homeless applicants and those under the relief category to both reduce homelessness and time spent in temporary accommodation is beneficial. We will therefore award an additional six months waiting time for an applicant under the prevention and relief duties, in Gold Plus only. If the applicant already qualifies for one or more other community contributions the waiting time will be in addition, up to a maximum of 12 months.

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).

If the applicant meets the criteria outlined above, also meets the community contribution criteria for one or more of the reasons then they will be awarded an additional six months e.g. a total of 12 months.

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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
- 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
- **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. We will notify you where we have placed a bid. The Local Authority or its agent 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.

This will also apply to those households accepted under the prevention or relief duties within the HRA 2017.

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. If this offer is subsequently refused and the applicant requests a review of the suitability of accommodation, then the application will be suspended and no further bids made until the outcome of the review has been determined.

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 (with no other children) 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 (or is going through the approval process) 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)
- Some Extra Care and 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).

Version 1 post HRA

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 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.

There may also be a requirement to direct match an existing social housing tenant to a larger property to facilitate their approval as a registered foster parent.

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 and any subsequent relevant legislation. 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
www.bdht.co.uk

Bromsgrove District Council

Customer Service Centre, School Drive, Bromsgrove, Worcs, B60 1AY
01527 881288
worcestershirehub@bromsgrove.gov.uk
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

Malvern Hills District

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
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

The Guildhall, High Street, Worcester
01905 722233 housing@worcester.gov.uk
www.worcester.gov.uk

Wychavon District

Wychavon District Council

Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore, Worcs, WR10 1PT
01386 565020 housingneeds@wychavon.gov.uk
www.wychavon.gov.uk

Droitwich Community Contact Centre

44 High Street, Droitwich Spa, Worcs, WR9 8ES
www.wychavon.gov.uk

Evesham Community Contact Centre

Abbey Road, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 4SB
www.wychavon.gov.uk

Version 1 post HRA

Rooftop Housing Group

70 High Street, Evesham, Worcs WR11 4YD
01386 420800 www.rooftopgroup.org

Wyre Forest District

Community Housing Group

Community House, Stourport Road, Kidderminster, Worcs, DY11 7QE
T: 0800 169 5454
E: allocations@communityhg.com
www.communityhg.com

**Wyre Forest District Council
Customer Service Centre**

Vicar Street, Kidderminster, Worcs, DY10 1DB
01562 732928
www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk
T: 01562 732787
E: HousingAdviceTeam@wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Appendix 2 Home Choice Plus Partners' Contact Details

Name	Address	Phone Number	Email	Website
Advance Housing Trust	2 Witan Way Witney Oxon OX28 6FH	01993 772885	info@advanceuk.org	www.advanceuk.org
Anchor Trust	Milestone Place, 100 Bolton Rd, Bradford, BD1 4DH.	0845 140 2020		www.anchor.org.uk
Beth Johnson Housing Association	Sanctuary House, Chamber Court, Castle Street, Worcester, WR1 3ZQ.	01905 338600		www.sanctuary-group.co.uk
Bourneville Housing Trust	Estate Office, Oak Tree Lane, Bourneville, Birmingham, B30 1UB.	0121 472 3831	info@bvt.org.uk	www.bvt.org.uk
Bromford Housing Group	1 Venture Court, Broadlands, Wolverhampton, WV10 6TB.	0330 1234 031	customerservices@bromford.co. uk	www.bromfordgroup.co.uk
Bromsgrove District Housing Trust	Buntsford Court, Buntsford Gate, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B60 3DJ	0800 0850 160	info@bdht.co.uk	www.bdht.co.uk
Wyre Forest	Community House,	0800 169 54	information@communityhg.com	www.communityhg.com

Community Housing	Stourport Road, Kidderminster DY11 7QE	54		
Cottsway Housing Association	Cottsway House Avenue Two Witney OX28 4XG	01993 890000	contact@cottsway.co.uk	www.cottsway.co.uk
Fortis Living	Partnership House, Groewood Road, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR14 1GD.	01684 579579	housingneeds@festivalhousing.org.uk	www.festivalhousing.org
English Churches	2 Estuary Boulevard, Estuary Commerce Park, Liverpool, L24 8RF	0345 155 9029	info@riverside.org.uk	www.riverside.org.uk
Fosseway Housing	1 Venture Court, Broadlands, Wolverhampton, WV10 6TB.	0330 1234 031	customerservices@bromford.co.uk	www.bromfordgroup.co.uk
Friendship Care & Housing	50 Newhall Hill, Birmingham, B1 3JN	0121 506 2800		www.fch.org.uk
Fry Housing Trust	43 Rowley Village, Rowley Regis, West Midlands, B65 9AS	0121 559 6406	admin@fryha.org.uk	www.fryha.uk
Gloucestershire Housing Association	2 St Michael's Court, Brunswick Road, Gloucester, GL1 1JB	0800 318522	info@gloscha.co.uk	www.gloscha.co.uk

Housing 21	The Triangle, Baring Road, Beaconsfield, HP9 2NA.	0370 192 4000	enquiries@housing21.co.uk	www.housing21.co.uk
Marches Housing Association	Benedict Court, Southern Avenue, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 0QF	01568 610100	home@marchesha.co.uk	www.marchesha.co.uk
Mercian Housing	Gee Business Centre, Holborn Hill, Aston, Birmingham, B7 5JR	0121 322 7373	info@mercian.org.uk	www.mercian.org.uk
Midland Heart Ltd	20 Bath Row, Birmingham, B15 1LZ	0345 60 20 540	customer.servicecentre@midlandheart.org.uk	www.midlandheart.org.uk
Nexus Housing (West Midlands)	Apex 2, Wainwright Road, Worcester, WR4 9FN	0300 7906 555	nexus@wmhousing.co.uk	www.nexushousing.co.uk
Orbit Heart of England	10 Greenhill Street, Stratford upon Avon, WARKS CV37 6LG	0345 8 500 500	info@orbit.org.uk	www.orbitheartofengland.org.uk
Rooftop Housing Group	70 High Street, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 4YD	0800 0421 800	info@rooftopgroup.org	www.rooftopgroup.org
Sanctuary Housing	Sanctuary Midlands, 164 Birmingham Road, West Bromwich, Birmingham, B70 6QG	0800 131 3329	midlands@sanctuary-housing.co.uk	www.sanctuary-group.co.uk

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Stonewater	Jephson House 1 Stoneleigh Road Blackdown Leamington Spa CV32 6RE	08000116420	blackdown@stonewater.org	www.stonewater.org
South Shropshire Housing Association Ltd	The Gateway, The Auction Yard, Craven Arms, Shropshire, SY7 9BW	01588 676200		www.sshropsha.co.uk
Stonham Housing Association	2 Gosforth Park Way, Gosforth Business Park, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8ET	0845 155 1234		www.homegroup.org.uk
Viridian Housing	41 Poplar Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7AA	0121 444 6666	wmids@viridianhousing.org.uk	www.viridianhousing.org.uk
Warwickshire Rural Housing Association	Whitwick Business Centre, Stenson Road, Whitwick Business Park, Coalville, Leicestershire, LE67 4JP	01530 278080		www.warwickshirerha.org.uk
Waterloo Housing Association	Waterloo House, 76-78 Boldmere Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B73 5TJ	0121 355 7771		www.waterlooha.org.uk

