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Council

Additional Papers

**Agenda Item No. 13 - Corporate Plan and Financial
and Policy Context for the Medium Term Financial
Strategy**

**Agenda Item No. 14b - Policy and Budget
Framework
Recommendations from Cabinet – 18th September
2019**

6pm
Wednesday, 25th September 2019
Council Chamber
Wyre Forest House
Finepoint Way
Kidderminster



WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL
25 SEPTEMBER 2019

CORPORATE PLAN AND FINANCIAL AND POLICY CONTEXT FOR THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Graham Ballinger, Leader of the Council and
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Ian Miller, Chief Executive
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1: Corporate plan, 2019-2023

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

In line with recommendations from Cabinet on 18 September, to adopt the Corporate Plan 2019-2023 and to note the suggested approach to the medium term financial strategy for 2020-2023.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 COUNCIL is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) adopt the Corporate Plan in appendix 1;
- b) note the suggested approach to the medium term financial strategy set out in paragraphs 4.9 to 4.27 below, and that this will now be the subject of consultation prior to the Cabinet considering the medium term financial strategy at its meeting in December.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council’s Corporate Plan expires in 2019. At its May meeting, Council agreed to create the cross-party Strategic Review Panel, whose terms of reference include overseeing consultation arrangements about priorities and to consider options for and producing recommendations on the Corporate Plan for 2019-2023, with a view to Council adopting the Corporate Plan at its meeting in September 2019. The Panel has met in June, July and August in order to discharge this element of its role.
- 3.2 In addition to an opportunity in July for members to contribute their views about what needs improving and areas of focus, the Council generated the largest response ever to an on line consultation during July and August. Over 1600 members of the public and over 100 members of staff responded to a detailed questionnaire. In addition, focus groups were run by a facilitator funded by the Local Government Association for businesses, younger people and older people. In parallel, work was undertaken with managers and staff and through a survey to seek views about values of the Council – these are primarily intended to be for internal use but one of those identified (“be honest”) is also relevant to how the Council works with the public, businesses and others.

- 3.3 The Strategic Review Panel thus had a rich and detailed set of feedback to consider in helping it consider what should feature as priorities in the Corporate Plan. All the Panel's papers were sent to members of the Council and all members could attend its meetings, whether or not they were members of the Panel.
- 3.4 This report also provides a vehicle to begin earlier consideration than normal of the context facing the Council and the policy and financial issues that it will have to address. The bulk of the report therefore outlines the suggested approach to the medium term financial strategy. This will be the subject of consultation with the public during the autumn, prior to the Cabinet considering the medium term financial strategy at its meeting in December. As part of this, the report provides a response to the issues and suggestions that were raised most frequently by the consultation on priorities.

4. KEY ISSUES

Corporate Plan

- 4.1 Cabinet recommends that the Council adopts the Corporate Plan set out in Appendix 1, which was recommended to it by the Strategic Review Panel on 27 August.

Financial and policy context for the medium term financial strategy

- 4.2 The national position remains uncertain at the time of writing. The new Government is determined to leave the European Union on 31 October, without a deal if necessary. Parliament has passed legislation to block a no deal exit. The basis of the UK's departure could have a significant adverse impact on the UK economy, although it is not expected that any impact would be felt by many local businesses straightaway: this could take some weeks or months to emerge and could have an impact on business rates income that helps fund local services, including the District Council. All respected economic commentators and the Treasury's own economic assessment show that a no deal exit would be more damaging for the UK economy in the short to medium term than a negotiated deal.
- 4.3 Against this backdrop, the Government has sought to provide some certainty in financial planning by organising a very rapid one year spending round for 2020-21 that was unveiled on 4 September. 75% business rate retention and the fair funding formula have been delayed to 2021. In the meantime, it has been confirmed that revenue support grant will continue at its current level, meaning that the Council will not experience "negative RSG" in 2020-21. Additional funding of £54m across England is to be provided for homelessness but details of how this will be distributed are yet to be confirmed: it might cover the additional costs of the Homelessness Reduction Act that this Council has had to fund in the last and current financial years. However an unwelcome proposal – which will be the subject of consultation – is that the threshold for referenda on "excessive" council tax increases should be set at 2%, lower than the current year's threshold of 3% or £5. The Council's adopted medium term financial strategy assumes a £5 increase in future years so its financial position will be worsened if the Government imposes a more restrictive limit on future council tax increases (see table 3 below).

4.4 The financial situation facing the Council remains stark. Table 1 below sets out the present estimates of the Council's income and expenditure and the financial gap that needs to be closed. These are the figures reported to Council in February as part of the medium term financial strategy for 2019-2022 and updated only in respect of pay assumptions for 2021 onwards, the confirmation of removal of negative RSG in 2020 in line with the spending round, and the impact of the Government's proposal of maximum 2% council tax increases in 2020 (which is assumed to continue into 2021).

Table 1 – summary of medium term financial strategy: funding, funding gap and reserves

Net Budget Requirement and Funding	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
	£	£	
Net Budget Requirement- Approved Budget	11,845,550	11,276,790	11,535,840
Funding			
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	0	-356,790	-356,790
Business Rates	2,795,610	2,854,320	2,911,410
Business Rates (growth)	600,000	248,200	225,000
New Homes Bonus	906,100	232,690	201,960
Council Tax Income	7,234,190	7,468,750	7,706,300
Collection Fund Surplus	0	50,000	0
Use of Reserves	309,650	779,620	847,960
Total Approved Budget	11,845,550	11,276,790	11,535,840
Funding Gap - Latest Forecast	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Wyre Forest Forward Savings not yet achieved	181,650	645,720	618,330
Depot 2020 Savings Target	32,500	159,900	159,900
2019-22 Cabinet Proposal Income generation target	75,000	100,000	150,000
2019-29 Cabinet Proposal 2%,1%, 1% generic targets	36,250	140,790	250,790
Use of reserves (see above)	309,650	779,620	847,960
Previously Reported Financial Gap	635,050	1,826,030	2,026,980
New Budget Pressure - Pay		110,000	220,000
Reduced Council Tax Income - 2% Increase		24,860	47,400
Remove Negative RSG 2020-21		-356,790	
Revised Funding Gap (use of reserves for new Budget Pressures assumed)	635,050	1,604,100	2,294,380
Forecast Reserves Statement			
Reserves as at 1 April	3,786,940	3,477,290	2,919,600
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	-309,650	-557,690	-1,115,360
Reserves as at 31 March	3,477,290	2,919,600	1,804,240

- 4.5 The Government’s retrograde proposal to limit local discretion on council tax would hinder the Council’s ability to raise resources from council tax in 2020 and beyond. Table 2 shows the additional council tax income that could be generated if the Council was able to increase council tax by 3% a year, in line with arrangements that applied for this and previous years, instead of 2%. It demonstrates why the Council’s response to consultation on the principles for council tax referenda will continue to be oppose them outright - council tax increases should be a matter for local decision - and in particular to oppose any move away from the previous criteria of the higher of 3% or £5.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Impact in Year	72,870	77,930	83,090
Cumulative Impact	72,870	150,800	233,890

- 4.6 The Council’s response to its funding gap is to continue to use all levers to bring its expenditure into line with income, focussing in particular on:
- growing income;
 - efficiency; and
 - alternative service delivery models.

Despite the lack of clarity beyond 2020-21 being provided by central Government at present, a detailed medium term financial strategy for 2020-2023 will be produced for the Cabinet’s consideration at its December meeting. This will benefit from input from, and scrutiny by, all political groups through the Strategic Review Panel. Scrutiny by the Review Panel will include the approach outlined in this report. The strategy will be shaped by the corporate plan and take account of the best information and projections about the financial position available later in 2019.

- 4.7 In a new initiative, consultation with the public is being undertaken at an earlier stage in the process. This part of the report therefore sets out a high level view on various issues that are being considered for the medium term financial strategy and on which the public’s views will be sought through consultation, prior to the report to Cabinet in December.
- 4.8 In line with the corporate plan’s value of “be honest”, there needs to be candour and directness in explaining the Council’s position and the choices it faces. There also needs to be openness about its position compared to other organisations – for example, how the Council’s share of council tax has grown much less in absolute and percentage terms than other bodies and that the District Council is not responsible for their decisions although local residents see “Wyre Forest District Council” at the top of their council tax bills. In addition an honest response is required to the main suggestions raised by the public in the survey on priorities, making clear those that cannot be accepted because they would add to the Council’s funding gap or for other practical reasons.

Income

Council tax and the council tax reduction scheme

- 4.9 Because the District Council collects council tax for the county council, police, fire and parish councils, the public is often misled into thinking that the total average bill at Band D of £1812 in 2019 is the responsibility of Wyre Forest District Council, when its element is only £214 or 11.8% of the total bill, the equivalent of £4.11 a week.
- 4.10 Total council tax bills have increased ahead of the rate of inflation in recent years. One of the main reasons has been the introduction of the adult social care precept to help fund social services provided by Worcestershire County Council. It was first payable in 2017 at £21.60 for a Band D property and has since grown to £90.83 in 2019. The county council’s element of council tax, including the adult social care precept, increased by £48.37 in 2019. There was also a significant increase in the precept issued by the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia in 2019, which added £19.59 at Band D: as a result, the police element of council tax at £216.66 exceeded the District Council element for the first time.
- 4.11 In contrast, for five of the eight years between 2011 and 2019, the District Council’s element of council tax was frozen. At Band D, the District Council’s element of council tax increased from £197.62 in 2010-11 to £214.34 in 2019-20, an increase of £16.72 or 8.5%, significantly lower than inflation across that period. As can be seen, **the District Council’s increase over 9 years is significantly lower than the cash increases decided by the county council and police and crime commissioner for 2019-20 alone.**
- 4.12 The Cabinet is minded to propose increasing the district element of council tax at the rate permissible without triggering a referendum on an “excessive” council tax increase. Based on previous years’ criteria, this would involve increases of 3% a year for the District Council’s element instead of £5 assumed in the current medium term financial strategy. At Band D it would involve increases of £6.41, £6.60 and £6.80 or in the range of 12p to 13p a week at Band D (the average dwelling in Wyre Forest is Band B). However this approach has now been jeopardised by the Government’s proposal to consult on a criterion of 2%. An increase of 3% for the District Council element would be modest when compared with past and likely future increases from the county council and police and crime commissioner. If the Council was able to increase the district element of council tax by 3% instead of the current approved assumption of £5, it would generate extra funds estimated at £48k/£104k/£167k over the life of the next strategy. It will be noted that, in year 3, this would address less than 10% of the projected financial gap, demonstrating the scale of other changes that will be required. However as set out in table 3, the Government’s present proposal would reduce resources available to the District Council, compared to the plans previously approved by full Council.

Table 3: adverse impact on medium term financial strategy from Government’s proposal for 2% for “excessive” council tax increases

Table 3 - Difference between 2% and £5 pa increase assumed in approved budget				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
Impact in Year	24,860	22,330	19,400	
Cumulative Impact	24,860	47,190	66,590	

- 4.13 While the Cabinet’s proposal is that all residents would be asked to pay a little more than now for the District Council’s services, it does not consider it appropriate to add

further to the burden of the poorest working age residents. They have to pay a minimum contribution of 20% of council tax. The Cabinet has reviewed data on collection rates, recovery activity and use of the hardship fund and concluded that increasing the minimum contribution (to, say, 25% or 30%) would generate limited additional funds for the District Council but would increase recovery activity and hardship payments to the extent that any financial gain might be negated. It therefore does not intend to propose changing the minimum contribution although there will need to be a formal decision not to undertake a review of the scheme for 2020, in accordance with the legislation.

Commercial income and fees and charges

- 4.14 The Council will continue to identify and exploit opportunities to grow commercial income beyond existing plans, with business cases for new or expanded services being considered by the Commercial Programme Activity Board. Further work is being done to establish whether any proposals can be included in the medium term financial strategy. The Development Loan Fund of £10m is now fully operational and open for applications. As loans are issued to developers and companies, this will generate a return for the Council and supplement the returns already being generated from the Capital Portfolio Fund. £19.3m of the £25m in the Capital Portfolio Fund has now been spent or committed and consideration will be given to the question of whether and when the Fund should be expanded, to help generate further returns.
- 4.15 Fees and charges will also be reviewed as usual. The Progressive Alliance will ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a formal opportunity to consider the Cabinet's proposals on car parking charges (the setting of which is an executive function) before the Cabinet takes its decisions. Proposals will be brought to the Strategic Review Panel in the autumn prior to consideration by the scrutiny committee in (probably) November: it will have the opportunity to consider and make representations on car parking charges to the Cabinet in December, when it expects to take decisions.

Expenditure

Efficiency

- 4.16 Every effort will be made to continue to identify and implement efficiencies, through process changes, digital services and so on. The Cabinet will consider options to reduce costs across the Council's activities, using a transformation framework that has provided an evidence based methodology for any reductions. However the reality is that the choices are limited. Mandatory services (such as planning, domestic waste collection, council tax and benefit administration and elections) have to be carried out: the only options to reduce costs come from reducing service levels/standards or by the Council ceasing to operate the services on its own or using its own staff (i.e. shared services or contracting out). Discretionary services that are the subject of long-term contractual arrangements and/or produce a net return for the Council – because income exceeds gross costs – will continue. It will add to the Council's financial gap if these activities were to be reduced or ended. Examples include the leisure centre contract, garden waste collection, trade waste collection, the capital

portfolio fund, off street car parks and “traded” aspects of tree work and grounds maintenance.

- 4.17 While the areas mentioned in the preceding paragraph might be expected to assist with closing the financial gap, the conclusion is that areas of discretionary activity where the income (if any) is less than the gross costs incurred by the Council will have to make the largest contribution to closing the financial gap. Examples include parks, play areas, toilets, economic development and regeneration, the museum and events and activities. However this has to be considered within the context of the priorities in the corporate plan. The Cabinet intends to adopt a positive approach, seeking to maintain these activities where they align with the Council’s priorities and looking for alternative ways to ensure their sustainability wherever possible. However the option of reducing or ending services has to be kept open to ensure that the financial gap is closed.

Staffing costs and pay

- 4.18 The Council’s workforce is both its greatest asset but also the largest single controllable area of expenditure. Thus it will be necessary to continue to reshape and redeploy staffing resources of the Council as part of the range of measures to close the financial gap. It is expected that overall staffing levels will fall, except to the extent that additional posts may be created in areas where commercial income can more than meet the cost and depending on whether the District Council hosts any newly created shared services. Proposals for a significant management restructuring in one directorate have been the subject of recent consultation and would be implemented subject to Council’s agreement to certain aspects at its meeting later in September. All parts of the Council will need to review their staffing costs. This will include any proposals for creation of further shared services that might emerge from the programme of work agreed with Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council before the elections – a range of factors including the change of political control at Wyre Forest and the change of leadership at Bromsgrove, and pressure of other work in all three councils, has meant that the first review of planning services has not been able to make progress as intended.
- 4.19 While staffing numbers are expected to fall, the Cabinet is clear nevertheless that staff should be appropriately rewarded and therefore believes that a shift in approach to arrangements for deciding pay increases is appropriate. A report will be brought to the Council meeting later in September about reverting to applying national pay increases, which will mean that higher assumptions about future pay increases will need to be built into the medium term financial strategy. Ultimately, the Council has no control over the outcome of the national pay increases, although evidence shows that they have been higher than local arrangements since 2014. In addition, there will have to be a pay and grading review because of the impact of the national living wage which will soon overtake the lowest points on the Council’s pay scale. While the details of changes to be made over the period to 2021 are emerging, it is expected that there will be significant reshaping of the Council which will see staffing levels reduced and/or additional income, whether from commercial activity or through cost sharing arrangements under the localism agenda. Thus the expectation is that, overall, the total pay bill will not rise – indeed the net effect of the paybill on the Council’s budget cannot increase as that would add to the financial gap

- 4.20 Virtually every aspect of the Council's services depends on information and communication technology in terms of ensuring efficient delivery, including digital services. The Council approved a capital allocation for the ICT strategy in 2018 onwards and this is being used at a faster rate than originally envisaged, reflecting the scale and depth of services' need for investment to support an efficient, digital model. Additional funding for the ICT strategy will therefore need to be considered as part of the medium term financial strategy.

Alternative service delivery models

- 4.21 The Cabinet expects widening and deepening of the localism agenda to make a major contribution towards the medium term financial strategy. This is in line with the corporate plan and the analysis presented above about the need for discretionary activities that do not cover their costs through income to make a greater contribution to savings. A "localism forum" was held in July when the Cabinet met councillors and the clerks from the town councils to discuss a wide range of areas where they can help to sustain services and assets. The discussions included but are not limited to parks, toilets and events and activities. Bilateral meetings with each of the town councils are being held during September to understand the ambition of the town councils to protect local assets and services. Discussions are also being initiated with parish councils about the same issues, although the town councils are expected to play a larger role given the location of assets and their greater ability to raise council tax. The reality is that the town and parish element of council tax is much lower than the English average (£35.65 at Band D in 2019-20 compared to the English average of £67.18). Therefore there is scope for town councils in particular to ensure a sustainable future for local assets and services, while securing a wider role for themselves and local control over those assets and services: the impact would be an increase in the town and parish council element of council tax, which could be phased in over a period.
- 4.22 Without ambition from the town and parish councils, regrettably expenditure on the assets and services concerned will have to be reduced or ended as it is not realistic to expect the District Council to continue to sustain them.
- 4.23 Conversely, the Cabinet recognises that town and parish councils may require some additional incentives over and above securing sustainability and greater local control. It is offering that, if a town council takes over ownership of parks, play areas and public open space in its area, it would receive any section 106 contributions negotiated in future for public open space. In respect of Stourport, the Cabinet is prepared to recommend including in the capital programme contributions towards the cost of providing additional toilets in the centre of the town and a splash pad if the town council is prepared to show ambition by meeting most of the capital cost and all of the revenue costs.
- 4.24 Work is under way to explore conversion of Bewdley Museum into a self-standing charitable trust which would be overseen by a board of independent trustees and which would employ the staff. This change is considered essential in order to move the Museum to a sustainable position where its operating costs can fall because of the tools that would be available to it as a charity. The financial and support calls on the District Council would be reduced or removed, and the District Council's role would be limited to being a funding partner. The new model is being explored

regardless of progress of discussions with Bewdley Town Council about localism and what its role might be in owning a much wider range of assets in the town, including the Guildhall/Museum/Jubilee Gardens site.

- 4.25 The county council reduced its funding for the work that the District Council does on highway verge cutting, which is now very heavily subsidised by the District Council even though it is the county council's statutory responsibility. Town councils can supplement the funding package in order to protect current levels of service. However it may be necessary for the District Council to review and reduce verge cutting without compromising highway safety (this would mean some areas being cut less often or not at all and perhaps looking more "natural" or "untidy" – depending on people's perspective) or to hand the work back to the county council. It is unlikely that the county council would be able to undertake a satisfactory level of work at the current level of funding that it gives the District Council.

Other demands and external drivers

- 4.26 In addition to points already raised, the consultation on priorities raised a number of suggestions for things that the District Council might do. As set out in the response below, many of these are not considered realistic. However, a number of potential actions are set out and the Cabinet will explore how they can be progressed at low or ideally zero cost.
- 4.27 The Government's waste strategy includes proposals to require weekly food waste collections, even though in Worcestershire they are unnecessary in order to avoid food being placed in landfill - residual waste is used to create energy at the plant in Hartlebury. The Government is also proposing further consultation on whether councils should offer free garden waste collection. Again this is considered a significant retrograde step, as the surplus that the Council generates from charging for such collections helps to sustain other services. The Government has promised to meet all the costs of change but it is impossible to rely on such a "guarantee" at this stage when legislation has not been passed and detailed estimates of costs and the regime for funding them are not known. This area thus represents a potentially significant funding risk for the Council in future.

Responses from the consultation on the corporate plan

- 4.28 Five hundred members of the public provided written feedback that raised a wide variety of issues beyond the questions about priorities. What follows is not a statistical analysis but an attempt to reflect the points that were most commonly mentioned, together with a commentary on them.
- 4.29 There were a number of negative **comments about central Kidderminster**: the number of vacant shops and too many charity shops, opposition to the works that have been undertaken to improve the public realm and open up Worcester Street to traffic, and issues of anti-social behaviour as well as drug-taking and homelessness including reluctance by some to visit the town as a result. Sometimes these comments were linked particularly to the underpasses and to some parks. Comments about empty shops and the proliferation of charity shops were also made in respect of the other towns.

4.30 Measures that the public identified for consideration were:

Suggestion	Response
<p>...reducing or removing car parking charges, to encourage footfall or support new businesses</p>	<p>This is not realistic. It would add to the council’s financial gap, up to about £400k if there were no fees for parking. Car parks cost money to maintain and require staff to enforce waiting restrictions and parking in marked bays, and that bays for disabled people are used only by blue badge holders. The public would soon complain if there was a “free for all” and short stay car parks closest to town centres were occupied all day by those working in shops or other businesses. It should be noted that the net surplus from car parking is spent on other related services which would have to be funded from elsewhere or ceased if this was not available.</p> <p>There is no clear evidence that reducing fees would mean that people would spend more money in total in Wyre Forest businesses – the public’s disposable income would not change. The comparison with free parking at Merry Hill was made by several respondents. It seems to be lost on them that spending half an hour or more of travel time in each direction plus fuel and wear and tear is likely to involve a higher cost than paying to park in Wyre Forest.</p> <p>Moreover, reducing or removing car parking charges would now contravene the Council’s declaration of a climate emergency because it would tend to encourage people to make more frequent trips by car.</p>
<p>...reducing business rates by offering discounts to see empty buildings used</p>	<p>This might be a realistic option - the point was well made by some respondents that it is better to have some business rates income than none at all. The cost of discounts falls to the District Council.</p> <p>The Council already has a policy in place on how it will approach requests for discretionary relief. https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/business-and-work/national-non-domestic-rates/help-with-nndr-bills/charitable-and-discretionary-rate-relief.aspx</p> <p>Charity shops automatically receive 80% relief as a result of legislation and the Council has no control over this. Under its policy, charity shops are not eligible for further discretionary relief, consistent with the comments on proliferation of charity shops which was criticised by many respondents.</p> <p>Further work will be done on developing a more targeted policy to ensure that it benefits uses that would add vibrancy to the centres of the three towns (for example, leisure uses and restaurants, not takeaways; offices and financial services; and independent operators, not regional or national chains). This will also include the possibility of an approach that is targeted geographically e.g. Worcester Street in Kidderminster.</p> <p>Consideration can also be given to a local development order to remove the need for planning permission in converting ground floor retail premises to alternative business uses, and thus facilitate the transformation of Worcester Street. Proposals will be developed for consideration by the Cabinet.</p>

<p>...stronger enforcement activity</p>	<p>The Council has enhanced its civil enforcement and planning enforcement capacity on a temporary basis to 2021. Consideration will be given to extending this, including working with town and parish councils for them to fund a higher level of enforcement activity than the District Council can afford.</p>
<p>...close the underpasses</p>	<p>This is the Council’s long-term ambition but it would require major highways works to the ring road so that there were “at grade” crossings. Such a project would be expensive and dependent on external funding given the likely scale: no funding opportunities have been identified at this stage.</p> <p>In the meantime, some greater assurance could be provided through seeking more frequent patrols by enforcement or police officers. Realistically, these will not provide 24 hour coverage or alleviate everyone’s concerns.</p>

4.31 There were many comments about **rebalancing investment towards Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn**, how Kidderminster seemed to receive all the investment and a perception that the Council was ignoring Bewdley and Stourport, while being happy to generate revenue from them because of their tourism economy. There were a number of negative comments about the impact of the funfair site in Stourport. There were many specific calls for toilets in the centre of the town in Stourport (including some incorrect comments suggesting that there are no public toilets in Stourport) and for provision of a splash pad in Stourport. A response to these issues is provided below:

Suggestion	Response
<p>Greater investment in Stourport and Bewdley</p>	<p>As home to well over 50% of the district’s population and the major retail and services centre for the district and a wider hinterland, it is inevitable that Kidderminster will continue to receive the majority of investment. It also has proportionately far bigger sites that are capable of regeneration than the other two towns put together (e.g. Crown House, Lion Fields, former magistrates’ court, Sladen school site, Churchfields etc). Kidderminster will thus continue to see significant investment, including, hopefully, under the Future High Streets Fund bid.</p> <p>That said, WFDC is working with partners to bring forward a new medical centre for Stourport (having already facilitated a new medical centre and library in Bewdley) and has agreed a confidential business case for development of the Bridge Street site. These proposals will be the subject of planning applications in due course, when the public will be able to comment.</p> <p>The Council has approved the principle of a compulsory purchase order on the major housing site at Carpets of Worth in Stourport, although the Council would trigger action to purchase the site only if there was a partner developer that would take over the site in a “back to back” arrangement. The Council understands that the site is being actively marketed to find a new developer and the Council is keeping this progress under close scrutiny in case it has to take positive action to acquire the site compulsorily.</p>

	<p>A master plan has been prepared for the future development of the Riverside in Stourport. The Council is considering what elements of this can reasonably be afforded in the short-, medium- and long-term and proposals will be announced in due course.</p>
<p>More toilets and a splash pad in Stourport</p>	<p>WFDC offered to pay for a splash pad to be installed in Stourport some years ago but the town council at the time declined to bear the cost of operation and maintenance.</p> <p>WFDC no longer views it as its responsibility to provide and operate local facilities such as public toilets and splash pads. These should be owned and operated by town or parish councils.</p> <p>Nevertheless, despite the Council's financial position, it has made a fresh offer to Stourport-on-Severn Town Council to provide financial contributions for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The town council to buy premises in the town centre for conversion into public toilets; b) The construction of a splash pad in Stourport. <p>In both cases, the town council would have to find most of the capital cost and meet all revenue costs of operation and maintenance. The town council would retain all revenue income (e.g. from a flat above the toilets).</p>
<p>Funfair in Stourport</p>	<p>The Council agrees that the funfair as currently operated detracts from the historic setting of the canal basins. It gives rise to a number of noise complaints and other enforcement issues from time to time. However this has to be balanced with its role in providing employment and being part of what attracts people to visit the town. The Council does not have control of the land, and therefore any initiative for change would have to come from the Canal and River Trust as the freeholder.</p>

4.32 The survey was about the District Council's priorities but prompted **many responses about the state of highways, footpaths and (most frequently mentioned) bus services. These are all the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council.** A response is provided below:

Suggestion	Response
<p>Condition of roads/footpaths</p>	<p>The county council is responsible for highways and decides on the priority of repairs. Any concerns should be reported through the county council's website.</p> <p>http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/homepage/98/report_it</p>

<p>Poor quality, frequency and coverage of bus services</p>	<p>The county council is responsible for deciding which bus services to commission and subsidise. The county council is carrying out a public transport review, which is due to report in November. Consultation on the passenger transport strategy closed on 13 September.</p> <p>http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/passengertransportstrategy</p>
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4.33 Several responses made **suggestions about providing free or subsidised waste collection and waste disposal services**, with many of them suggesting that this would reduce fly-tipping. A response is provided to these suggestions below.

Suggestion	Response
<p>Free garden waste collection</p>	<p>This is not realistic. It would add to the Council’s financial gap to remove charges but continue to offer this discretionary service. The Council believes it would be wrong for a discretionary service that is used by only some households to be subsidised by all households.</p> <p>Offering a free service would also encourage more people to take it up, thus adding further to costs – when any growth in the service at the moment helps to close the financial gap and maintain services.</p> <p>Providing a free service would undermine efforts to encourage composting at home, which involves no emissions from transport or processing plant.</p> <p>The Government is planning further consultation on requiring councils to provide a free garden waste collection service, and has promised to provide funding to meet all the cost if it goes ahead with legislation. In common with most other councils, the District Council will continue to oppose this proposal, which would remove local decision-making and – for those councils that choose to charge – “freeze” the value of a commercial income stream that has growth potential.</p>
<p>Free/cheaper bulky waste collection</p>	<p>This is not realistic. It would add to the Council’s financial gap to remove charges but continue to offer this discretionary service. The Council believes it would be wrong for a discretionary service that is used by only some households to be subsidised by all households.</p> <p>Offering a free service would also encourage more people to take it up, thus adding further to costs.</p> <p>Those creating bulky waste should pay for its disposal, either by making arrangements to take it to a household recycling centre</p>

	or by paying for one of the wide range of commercial providers (including the Council) to remove it on their behalf.
No restrictions/charges for using household recycling centres	<p>Worcestershire County Council is responsible for these centres and decides on any restrictions or charges for non-domestic users.</p> <p>The District Council supports the principle that companies which generate waste should pay for its disposal and that they should not be subsidised by council tax payers.</p>

- 4.34 Finally, there were a number of responses about **planning matters**, including opposition to the proposed quarry at Cookley and the proposed new community at the Lea Castle site and other issues to do with the local plan such as opposing building on greenfield sites. The public has other appropriate methods to raise these points, through the consultation on the local plan that ends on 14 October and through consultation on individual planning applications.

5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Even though it outlines the administration's thinking on certain issues such as future increases in council tax or the localism agenda, no decisions are sought at this point – they will follow in the medium term financial strategy in December and recommendations to Council in February about the budget and council tax for 2020-21. The financial implications will be set out in full in the report about the MTFS.
- 5.2 The implications of the approach to future pay increases and a pay and grading review, and of a management restructure are addressed in separate reports at this meeting.

6. **LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council's budget setting process is governed by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and other local government finance legislation. While this does not oblige the Council to share the shape of emerging issues for the medium term financial strategy at this early stage, it is recognised as good practice to do so. Decisions will be taken in due course as necessary in accordance with legislative requirements and will identify any changes that might be required to the Council's policy framework.

7. **EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required at this point as no decisions are sought that would have an impact on the protected characteristic groups. As proposals move forward to decision, such impact assessments may be required for particular proposals and these will be addressed in subsequent reports as appropriate.

8. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 The most significant risk facing the Council remains its funding gap. The suggestions outlined for the medium term financial strategy, which will be the subject of

consultation, would help to address this gap.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Council is invited to adopt the Corporate Plan 2019-2023 and note the suggested approach outlined in respect of the medium term financial strategy, which will be the subject of consultation during the autumn.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 CLT
10.2 Cabinet
10.3 Strategic Review Panel (on the corporate plan)
10.4 The public and staff on priorities etc for the corporate plan; staff on values of the Council

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Reports to the Strategic Review Panel, June to August 2019

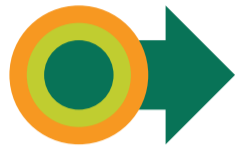
Wyre Forest District Council

Corporate Plan 2019-2023



Our vision:

Wyre Forest is a network of thriving and confident communities, which minimise their impact on the environment, where people have a decent and affordable home, feel safe and enjoy a good quality of life.



Our priorities:



Our strategic actions:



Within the council, everything staff and councillors do is underpinned by **our values:**

Be honest	Invest in our workforce	Be supportive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are honest, say what we mean and are always courteous We challenge others' ideas constructively and respect decisions once made 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We identify what skills are needed and develop our employees We understand our development is a shared responsibility and give ourselves time to learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We work together and openly help each other We encourage a supportive environment

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL
25th SEPTEMBER 2019

POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK
MATTERS WHICH REQUIRE A DECISION BY COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET –
18TH SEPTEMBER 2019

Purpose of Report

To consider recommendations from the Cabinet on matters outside the policy framework or approved budget of the Council.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Would Councillors please note that the related reports and documents have not been included in the Council book, as they have already been sent to Members via the Cabinet agenda. A public inspection copy is available on request. The policy documents, referred to below, have been posted on the Council's website. See the report on page 119 of the pdf at this link:

<http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/meetings/com60.htm#mt8087>

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL	CABINET MEMBER
<p>Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Enforcement Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adoption of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy so far as it relates to non-executive functions, for use in relation to any formal action under the legislation delegated to the service by the Council. 	<p>Councillor Helen Dyke</p>