

Open

Cabinet

Agenda

6pm
Wednesday, 8 April 2026
Council Chamber
Wyre Forest House
Finepoint Way
Kidderminster



Cabinet

The Cabinet Members and their responsibilities:-

Councillor M Hart	Leader of the Council & Strategy
Councillor D Ross	Deputy Leader & Finance & Capital Portfolio
Councillor C Rogers	Housing, Health and Well-being
Councillor D Morehead	Economic Regeneration, Planning & the Green Agenda
Councillor I Hardiman	Culture, Leisure, Arts & Community Safety
Councillor N Desmond	Operational Services

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 Monday 20 April 2026.

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.

Disclosure of Interests

Members and co-opted Members of the Council are reminded that, in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and the statutory provisions of the Localism Act, they are required to consider in ADVANCE of each meeting whether they have a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI), an other registrable interest (ORI) or a non-registrable interest (NRI) in relation to any matter on the agenda. If advice is needed, Members should contact the Monitoring Officer or other legal officer in good time before the meeting.

If any Member or co-opted Member of the Council identifies a DPI or ORI which they have not already registered on the Council's register of interests or which requires updating, they should complete the disclosure form which can be obtained from Democratic Services at any time, copies of which will be available at the meeting for return to the Monitoring Officer.

Members and co-opted Members are required to disclose any DPIs and ORIs at the meeting.

Where the matter relates to a DPI they may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not stay in the meeting unless granted a dispensation.

Where the matter relates to an ORI they may not vote on the matter unless granted an advance dispensation.

Where a Member or co-opted Member has an NRI which directly relates to their financial interest or wellbeing, or that of a relative or close associate, they must disclose the interest at

the meeting, may not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not stay in the meeting unless granted a dispensation.

Where a matter affects the NRI of a Member or co-opted Member, the Code of Conduct sets out the test which must be applied by the MEMBER to decide whether disclosure is required. Again please ensure you have spoken in ADVANCE to the relevant legal officer and determined whether it is appropriate to declare the NRI and leave.

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, DY11 7WF. Telephone: 01562 732763 or email louisa.bright@wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Documents referred to in this agenda may be viewed on the Council's website - www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/council/meetings/main.htm

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If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should sit in the Stourport and Bewdley Room where they can still view the meeting.

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If you have any queries regarding this, please speak with the Council's Legal Officer at the meeting.

* Unless there are no reports in the open session.

Wyre Forest District Council

Cabinet

Wednesday, 8 April 2026

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 interest (DPI), an other registrable interest (ORI) or a non-registrable interest (NRI) in relation to any matter on the agenda. 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 11 February 2026.	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 30 March 2026. (See front cover for contact details). No requests for public participation have been received.	

7.		
7.1	Councillor D Ross Budget and Performance Monitoring Q3 update	
	To consider a report from the Head of Resources and s151 Officer that briefs members on the Council's financial and other performance at the end of Quarter 3 ending 31st December 2025 and presents the emerging budget pressures and known variances that are likely to have an impact on the outturn position for the 2025-26 financial year. <i>The appendices to this report have been circulated electronically.</i>	18
	Also to consider recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 March 2026.	47
7.2	Contract for the provision of Measured Term General Building Maintenance & Electrical Services	
	To consider a report from the Head of Commercial Services that seeks approval for the tender evaluation model proposed for the procurement of measured Term contracts for General Building Maintenance and Electrical Services.	48

8.		
8.1	Councillor D Morehead Bewdley Conservation Area Character Appraisal	
	To consider a report from the Head of Strategic Growth that presents the Draft Bewdley Conservation Area Character Appraisal and agree that it be consulted upon. <i>The appendix to this report has been circulated electronically.</i>	53
	Also to consider recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 2 April 2026.	To follow
8.2	Local Plan Timetable	
	To consider a report from the Head of Strategic Growth to seek Cabinet approval to publish the Local Plan timetable and Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan preparation.	56
	Also to consider recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 2 April 2026.	To follow
8.3	Local Plan – further call for gypsy and traveller sites	
	To consider a report from the Head of Strategic Growth that presents a summary of the 2025 needs assessment and the need to undertake a further call for sites for gypsy and traveller accommodation for the next local plan.	64
	Also to consider recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 2 April 2026.	To follow

9.		
9.1	<p style="text-align: right;">Councillor C Rogers</p> <p>Worcestershire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026-2031</p> <p>To consider a report from the Head of Strategic Growth to agree that the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2026-31) is publicly consulted on in advance of adoption.</p> <p><i>The appendix to this report has been circulated electronically.</i></p> <p>Also to consider recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 2 April 2026.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">75</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To follow</p>
9.2	<p>Property Flood Resilience projects contractor procurement</p> <p>To consider a report from the Head of Strategic Growth that outlines the proposed procurement approach for the provision of flood resilience works for properties as part of the North Worcestershire Property Flood Resilience Scheme.</p> <p>Also to consider recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 2 April 2026.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">80</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To follow</p>

10.	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.	
11.	<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

12.		
12.	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

11 FEBRUARY 2026 (5.30PM)

Present:

Councillors: M J Hart (Chairman), D Ross (Vice-Chairman), N J Desmond, I Hardiman, D Morehead and C Rogers.

Observers:

Councillor: F M Oborski MBE.

Observed remotely: Councillors: L Carroll and H E Dyke.

CAB.60 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.61 Declarations of Interests by Members

Councillor M Hart declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 8.2 - Land Disposals: Stadium and Employment Land, as he is a Kidderminster Harriers football club fan and currently a season ticket holder. He stated that he would determine the report before Cabinet appropriately and accordingly.

Councillor N Desmond declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 8.2 - Land Disposals: Stadium and Employment Land, as he is a Kidderminster Harriers football club fan and has regularly attended matches over multiple seasons with his son.

Councillor I Hardiman declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 8.2 - Land Disposals: Stadium and Employment Land, as he is an occasional supporter of Kidderminster Harriers football club.

Councillor C Rogers declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 8.2 - Land Disposals: Stadium and Employment Land, as he is an occasional supporter of Kidderminster Harriers football club.

Councillor F Oborski MBE declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 8.2 - Land Disposals: Stadium and Employment Land, as she is a season ticket holder and player sponsor of Kidderminster Harriers football club.

Councillor L Carroll declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 8.2 - Land Disposals: Stadium and Employment Land, as he is a volunteer for Kidderminster Harriers football club. He takes no payment from the club for his role.

CAB.62 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17 December 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.63 Call Ins

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

CAB.64 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.65 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

CAB.66 Food Waste Collections

A report was considered from the Chief Executive to decide whether to proceed with awarding a contract for weekly collections of food waste from domestic properties.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

The Cabinet Member gave a detailed summary of the background and key issues set out in the report. He explained that DEFRA had provided new burdens funding for capital costs related to procurement of vehicles and containers, and the unused funding for transitional costs.

The Cabinet Member added that whilst the funding from DEFRA was welcomed, the latest Local Government financial settlement did not contain any additional revenue settlement for food waste collection.

He further explained that the administration was not against food waste collection, however without Central Government revenue assistance, the authority did not have the financial resources to fund this additional burden. He said that the Cabinet could not risk the financial stability of the Council and had no other option but to defer the item until Central Government provided funding for the service.

The Leader of Council seconded the recommendations.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor F Oborski MBE, presented the recommendations from its meeting on 5 February 2026.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 February 2026:

The Cabinet AGREED:

- (a) not to award a contract following the recent procurement exercise;
- (b) not to make any arrangements for weekly collections of food waste from domestic properties until the Government provides additional funding to cover the cost of the new burden;
- (c) to recommend to Council that it endorses the decisions taken by Cabinet;
- (d) the Cabinet Member and relevant Officer bring a progress report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 9 months or earlier, to keep this item on the agenda.

CAB.67 Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-2029 and Capital Strategy 2025-2035

A report was considered from the Head of Resources that updated Cabinet on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026-2029 and made recommendations to Council on the proposed budget decision. The report also sought approval of the Capital Strategy for 2025-2035 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 Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Head of Resources and S151 Officer and her team for providing the detailed report.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues set out in the report. He explained that the Strategic Review Panel had considered alternative budget proposals put forward by the opposition groups and following consideration by the Cabinet, two additional items had been included in the Cabinet's spending proposals.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

Decision: The CABINET having re-considered the Financial Strategy 2026-2029, the results of the Budget consultation exercise, alternative budget proposals and recommendations of the Strategic Review Panel RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL that it:

- 1.1 THREE YEAR BUDGET, CAPITAL STRATEGY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 2026-2029**
 - 1.1.1 APPROVES the updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026-2029.**
 - 1.1.2 APPROVES the Cabinet Proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council's Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2026-2029 as shown in the tables in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.5 and as set out below:**

- a) **Tackle illegal parking and abandoned cars by continuing to fund extra Civil Enforcement Officers. We will maintain the temporary increase in staffing levels planned for 2026-27 into 2027-28 at a cost of £42k in 2027-28.**
- b) **Help to keep our streets free from environmental crimes. We will tackle antisocial behaviour and help our residents to feel safe in their communities by expanding the current level of staffing in our environmental protection team at a cost of £43k/£90k in 2026/27 and 2027/28.**
- c) **Fund an increase in litter picking activity in the tourist season to help keep streets, parks and public spaces looking their best for everyone at a cost of £30k/£32k in 2026/27 and 2027/28.**
- d) **Provide extra support for cultural events over the next 2 years to bring more people into our towns, help people feel proud of where they live and support people's wellbeing at a cost of £25k in both 2026-27 and 2027-28.**
- e) **Increase funding to support delivery of the key actions in the Kidderminster 2040 Vision, making it a sustainable place that celebrates its heritage and natural environment including strengthening the museum sector. A one-off transformation grant payable over two years to support development of a new business model for the Museum of Carpet in order for them to become an alternative heritage museum body at a cost of £25k in both 2026-27 and 2027-28.**
- f) **A core funding allocation to support continuation of economic development activity within the district that was previously funded from UK Shared Prosperity Fund. No new generic funding streams were announced for Worcestershire Districts in either the Budget or the Comprehensive Spending Review. This allocation could support continuation of existing projects for example the Business Growth Service delivered by Worcestershire LEP to protect jobs and deliver economic growth at a cost of £70k in both 2026-27 and 2027-28.**
- g) **Support the wider roll out across the district of on street recycling/litter bins, enhancing cleanliness and environmental sustainability and boosting recycling rates. Initial pilot to be run in our three town centres in 2026-27 with further roll-out in future years if successful at a cost of £3,500 in all three years – 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29.**

In addition, approval is sought for:

- h) **The revenue implications of the capital spending proposal to deliver the new vision for Bridge Street – a redevelopment scheme to revitalise the area with a sustainable, heritage led proposal that attracts visitors and businesses, a cost of £3k in**

2027-28 and £22k in 2028-29.

- i) Continuation of the policy to support localism and facilitate the transfer of assets to local council control in order to keep them community focussed and for the transfer of income generating assets such as small car parks in return for the taking on of further service. This will be considered on a case by case basis when the Government's decision in respect of unitarization is known.**
- j) An increase to the commercial income target for the Commercial Strategy Delivery Units to support the Wyre Forest Forward Transformation and Financial Resilience programme. We will increase demand for our charged for services to achieve an increase the existing target of £52k in 2027-28, and £70k in 2028-29.**
- k) An increase to the efficiency and transformation targets by reviewing how services are delivered, being smarter about how they are procured and how we intervene to reduce the need for late-stage services £55k/£85k/£110k.**

1.1.3 APPROVES the fees and charges in line with this Strategy, and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2026-2029, as shown in Appendix 3.

1.1.4 APPROVES the Council's updated Capital Strategy:

- a) Approval of the Capital Strategy 2025-2035 set out in Appendix 1 of the December Cabinet report and the updated, associated Quantitative Indicators set out in Appendix 2C of the report.**
- b) Approval of variations to the Capital Programme as set out in Appendices 2A, of the report (which updates Appendix 1 of the Capital Strategy report to December 2025 Cabinet).**
- c) Notes the indicative Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendices 2B, of the report (which updates Appendix 1 of the Capital Strategy report to December 2025 Cabinet).**
- d) Approval of the limits for gross debt for non-treasury investments compared to net service expenditure and for commercial income as a percentage of net service expenditure as set out in Appendix 2C of the report.**

1.1.5 APPROVES that any Final Accounts savings arising from 2025-2026, together with surplus Earmarked Reserves, be allocated by the Head of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio.

1.1.6 The General Fund Revenue Budget be APPROVED including all

updates from the position in December 2025 as set out in the report.

1.2 COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES

1.2.1 That Council Tax is increased by the higher limit specified by the Government of 2.99% and:

a. SETS the Council Tax for Wyre Forest District Council on a Band D Property at £258.08 for 2026-2027 which represents an increase of 2.99% on Council Tax from 2025-2026.

b. ENDORSES the provisional Council Tax on a Band D Property in 2027-2028 of £265.80 and £273.75 in 2028-2029, being increases of 2.99%.

1.2.3 NOTES the Head of Resources' (as Chief Financial Officer) opinion on the budget proposals, recommended by the Cabinet in this report, as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

1.3 The Cabinet APPROVED that:

1.3.1 Delegated authority is given to the Head of Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital portfolio, 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.

1.4 The Cabinet NOTED in line with the recommendations of the Strategic Review Panel:

1.4.1 The Alternative budget proposals as detailed within Appendix 5 of the report, further noting that updated versions as appropriate will be provided for Full Council on the 25th February 2026.

CAB.68 Land Disposals: Stadium and Employment Land

A report was considered from the Deputy Chief Executive: Regeneration and Commercial that sought agreement for the disposal of the council's freehold interests in the Aggborough Sports Ground; Stadium Close Car Park and the Sports & Social Club all located at Hoo Road, Kidderminster, and the disposal of the employment land at Zortech Avenue, Kidderminster.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Deputy Chief Executive and his team for the report.

The Cabinet Member gave a detailed summary of the background and key issues set out in the report. He explained that the owner of Kidderminster Harriers football club (KHFC) had approached the Council in November 2024 and January 2025 to present their vision for the club. He said that the vision for

the Stadium was to create a modern welcoming hub and to build a strong connection between the club, its fans and the local community.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 5 February 2026.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 February 2026:

The Cabinet APPROVED:

- 1.1 The Disposal of the council's freehold interests in the Aggborough Sports Ground; the Stadium Close Car Park and the Sports & Social Club all located at Hoo Road, Kidderminster to the Kidderminster Harriers FC, as set out in the report.**
- 1.2 The sale of the employment land at Zortech Avenue, Kidderminster, to the highest bidder, as set out in the report, with authority to proceed to the second highest bidder should negotiations with the highest bidder not be successfully concluded.**
- 1.3 Delegated authority to complete the transactions to the Deputy Chief Executive: Regeneration and Commercial in consultation with the Solicitor to the Council, Head of Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and the Capital Portfolio.**

CAB.69 Lease Renewal

A report was considered from the Head of Commercial Services that sought approval to renew a lease to an existing tenant.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the report and formally moved the recommendation for approval.

The Leader seconded the proposal.

Decision: The Cabinet APPROVED the renewal of the lease (subject to contract) on the terms set out in the exempt Appendix of the report.

CAB.70 Climate Change Action Plan

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided an update on actions to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions. The report also included the updated Climate Change Action Plan 2026 for approval.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for

approval. He thanked the Head of Strategic Growth and the Principal Health and Sustainability Officer for compiling the report.

The Cabinet Member gave a comprehensive summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that the Council had declared a climate emergency and was keen to support residents and business to reduce carbon emissions, improve energy efficiency and enhance the built and natural environment.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 5 February 2026.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 February 2026:

The Cabinet:

1.1 CONSIDERED the update of the Climate Change Action Plan 2025.

1.2 APPROVED the updated Wyre Forest Climate Change Action Plan for 2026.

CAB.71 Authorisation to make a non-immediate Article 4 Direction (Houses in Multiple Occupation)

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided background information on the current issues relating to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Kidderminster and sought authorisation to make a non-immediate Article 4 Direction.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Head of Strategic Growth and the Planning Department team for the report.

The Cabinet Member gave a detailed summary of the background and key issues listed in the report. He explained that many HMOs in the town were well managed and provided good quality homes for residents. However, poorly managed, badly designed, or inappropriately located properties or a high concentration of HMOs within a neighbourhood had the potential to cause issues for both occupants and neighbouring residents.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 8 January 2026.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 8 January 2026:

The Cabinet:

- 1.1 **AGREED that the non-immediate Article 4 Direction is made which will be applied to the area within the whole of the parish of Kidderminster (as amended by The Wyre Forest District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) (Kidderminster, Kidderminster Foreign and Stourport-on-Severn) Order 2026)) to remove permitted development rights for the change of use of dwellinghouses (C3 use) to smaller Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) (C4 use);**
- 1.2 **AGREED that notice of the making of the Article 4 Direction is publicised for a period of at least six weeks to allow members of the public and other interested stakeholders to submit comments on the proposal, from 20th February until 6th April 2026;**
- 1.3 **NOTED that a further report will be submitted to its meeting in June following the end of the consultation period to consider any comments made, and informed by these comments, determine whether the Article 4 Direction should be confirmed;**
- 1.4 **NOTED that, if the Article 4 Direction is confirmed, that the confirmation will not take place until 20 February 2027 (not less than 12 months after the Article 4 Direction has been made).**

CAB.72 Cost of Living Action Plan 2026

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided an update on actions carried out in 2025 to progress delivery of the Cost of Living Action Plan 2025-26 and included the new action plan for 2026.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Head of Strategic Growth and her team for the comprehensive report.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that the plan co-ordinated local efforts to support those most affected by the cost of living crisis through awareness, partnership, financial aid and community initiatives.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 5 February 2026.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 February 2026:

The Cabinet:

- 1.1 **NOTED the update on delivery of the Cost-of-Living Action Plan in 2025.**

1.2 APPROVED the Cost of Living Plan for 2026.

CAB.73 Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2026

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided an update on action to improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities in Wyre Forest.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Head of Strategic Growth and her team for the detailed report.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that the plan co-ordinates local efforts to achieve the desired outcomes through collaborative action and targeted initiatives.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 5 February 2026.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 February 2026:

The Cabinet:

1.1 NOTED the update on delivery of the Health Action Plan in 2025.

1.2 APPROVED the Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2026.

CAB.74 Localism – Kidderminster Town Council

A report was considered from the Chief Executive to agree various asset transfers and disposals to Kidderminster Town Council as part of the localism agenda.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Arts and Community Safety presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Chief Executive for producing the report.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues set out in the report. He explained that the proposals would eventually relieve the Council and its unitary council successor of significant revenue costs estimated at over £200k pa.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

Decision: The Cabinet:

1.1 AGREED the principle of the transfer of the land and buildings

listed in Appendix 1 to Kidderminster Town Council on 1 April 2027;

- 1.2 GAVE DELEGATED AUTHORITY to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Arts and Community Safety to advertise the intention to dispose of land that is open space; and to consider any objections made as a result of the advertisement and to take the final decision on disposal in the event of objections having been received;**
- 1.3 AGREED that the consideration for each item to be transferred as consequence of the decisions to be taken under paragraph 2.2 should be £1, complying with the Council's power under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Circular 06/03: Local Government Act 1972 general disposal consent (England) 2003;**
- 1.4 AGREED the transitional funding to be provided to Kidderminster Town Council as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.32pm.

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

8TH APRIL 2026

Budget and Performance Monitoring Quarter Three 2025-26

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor D Ross, Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Head of Resources and s151 Officer
CONTACT OFFICERS:	Helen Ogram Helen.Ogram@wyreforestdc.gov.uk Diana Evans Diana.Evans@wyreforestdc.gov.uk Lisa Hutchinson Lisa.Hutchinson@wyreforestdc.gov.uk Lucy Wright Lucy.wright@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 - Wyre Forest District Council Revenue Budget Requirements Appendix 2 - Capital Programme Appendix 3 - Budget Risk Matrix Appendix 4 – Analysis of Outstanding Debt Appendix 5 – How we are doing performance reports <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 The purpose of the report is to brief members on the Council’s financial and other performance at the end of Quarter 3 ending 31st December 2025 and to present the emerging budget pressures and known variances that are likely to have an impact on the outturn position for the 2025-26 financial year.
- 1.2 The report sets out the current forecast of income and expenditure against budget for 2025-26 for revenue expenditure. In addition, the report also provides key information relating to estimates of the Council’s financial position for the next three years, highlighting the revised Funding Gap that will need to be closed to bring expenditure into line with income.

Revenue – after inclusion of the capital account, the year-end outturn position is forecast to be £422k better than the position forecast in the 2025-28 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The year-end outturn position is forecast to be £39k better than the position forecast in the 2026-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved by Council on 25 February 2026.

Capital – the draft revised Capital Programme for 2025-26 is £18.639m (Original Capital Programme for 2025-26 was £38.248m, including slippage of £14.600m from 2024-25). The forecast slippage to future years at Quarter 3 is currently anticipated to

be £1.973m.

- 1.3 The report also briefs members on current progress against the savings and efficiency targets in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 1.4 The report includes the quarterly “How are we doing?” performance report. This combined report allows both Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee a rounded view of the Council’s performance including its financial position.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to NOTE:

- 2.1 **The projected budget variations, virements and comments within this report and Appendices 1 to 4.**
- 2.2 **The performance against measures and actions as set out in the report and Appendix 5.**
- 2.3 **The recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5th March 2026.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Budget projections are reviewed regularly and reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet on a quarterly basis. The 2025-26 Original Budget was approved as part of the 2025-28 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) by Council on 26th February 2025. Performance is measured against the Original Budget presented within the 2025-28 Strategy and the Revised budget in the 2026-29 MTFS agreed by Council on 25 February 2026 (Appendix 1). The current forecast shows a net overspend against the Original Budget of £16k on services off-set by an underspend of £438k on the Capital account. The net position is an underspend against the Original Budget of £422k. The net position against the revised budget and MTFS 2026-29 assumptions is a net under spend of £39k.
- 3.2 The assessment of the outturn position is based on a wide range of assumptions, predicted patterns of cost, service demand and behaviours and the forecasts continue to be refined.
- 3.3 The balanced budget approved by Council focuses on ensuring that the Council optimises the full range of income sources that affect its overall budget including Council Tax and Business Rates revenue, Government funding and other external specific grants, fees and charges and other elements of income from activities including returns from property and treasury investments.
- 3.4 Wyre Forest District Council is a member of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire business rates pool in 2025-26 and receives a share of any growth in rateable value achieved. Any gain is shared between Worcestershire County Council, the Fire authority, the Herefordshire unitary authority (Herefordshire Council) and the 6 District Councils in Worcestershire.
- 3.5 Year-to-date monitoring shows that in year income from business rates payers is likely to be in line with the position previously estimated with no noticeable increase in empty reliefs. The MTFS takes a prudent assessment of growth above baseline, this position is being closely monitored and assumptions revised, as necessary. The position in relation to the 2025-26 year-end provisions for appeals has been updated when calculating the estimated year end position reported on

the NDR1 return. The adjustment is carried forward to future years and is reflected in the 2026-29 MTFS.

- 3.6 Collection rates at the end of the third quarter are marginally behind those achieved last year for Council Tax and will be closely monitored. The statutory Collection Fund surplus/deficit calculation at 15th January declared an estimated deficit of £70k, This introduces a further funding pressure for 2026-27 but is reflected in the final 2026-29 MTFS considered by Cabinet in February.
- 3.7 Both the 2025-28 and 2026-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy make prudent assumptions about the income stream that is expected to be generated from the Capital Portfolio Fund. The uncertainty and ongoing risk inherent in this income stream is recognised and the properties are actively managed to minimise any risk to Council Tax payers. We continue to work to ensure that current financial performance of the fund, specifically the impact on the MTFS, is clearly presented.
- 3.8 The best value theme, centred around use of resources in the Best Value Standards and Intervention guidance, highlights that dependency on high-risk commercial income for service delivery and balancing budgets is one of the indicators of potential failure. All business cases are subjected to due diligence checks, give a full appraisal of risks and a prudent view of likely income arising with appropriate sensitivity analysis presented to aid decision making. Lessons have been learnt from the Covid pandemic from over reliance by District Councils on demand led income streams.
- 3.9 The Capital Strategy 2025-35 was approved by Council on 26th February 2025, a revised strategy for 2026-36 was considered by Cabinet in December 2025 and an updated Capital Programme approved by Cabinet in February 2026. The revised Strategy covers all capital expenditure and sets out reporting and planning for financial risk implications in relation to non-treasury investments.

4. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

4.1 Revenue Overview

The quarterly budget monitoring includes the forecast position for the current financial year. The Revenue Summary shows net expenditure by reporting group, and where some costs are funded by reserves this is incorporated.

The following table details the current projected outturn position with variances against both the budget approved by Council on 26th February 2025 and the revised budget used as the base for the 2026-28 MTFS approved 25th February 2026. The projection is based on known and emerging cost pressures where these can be quantified and cost reductions or income growth but does not take into account any management action plans being implemented in quarter 4 to address potential overspends:

Table 1: Quarter 3 Revenue Budget variances and Estimated Outturn 2025-26

SERVICE REPORTING GROUP	Original Budget £000	Revised Budget £000	Variances at Q3 £000	Estimated Outturn at Q3 £000
Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council	3,002	3,054	13	3,067
Community and Environment	6,255	6,583	(183)	6,400
Economic Development and Regeneration	564	452	49	501
Resources	1,945	1,569	10	1,579
Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services	1,904	1,901	44	1,945
Strategic Growth	2,619	2,590	28	2,618
WFF Savings target*	(195)	0	0	0
Services Total	16,094	16,149	(39)	16,110
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	1,584	1,499	0	1,499
External debt Interest	1,115	803	0	803
Investment Interest	(1,036)	(1,236)	0	(1,236)
Capital Account (Other)	(2,072)	(1,913)	0	(1,913)
Total Capital account	(409)	(847)	0	(847)
Grand Total	15,685	15,302	(39)	15,263

The assessment of variances is based on a wide range of assumptions, and the forecasts will continue to be refined and reset.

- 4.2 **Capital programme** – progress of spend against capital programme is summarised below:

Table 2: Quarter 3 Capital Spend and Draft Slippage 2025-26

2025-26 Capital Programme	Revised Capital Programme 2025-26 £	Q3 Capital Outturn 2025-26 £	Draft Outturn at Q3 £	Draft Slippage/ Reprogramming to future years at Q3 £
Community and Environmental Services	3,486,880	815,042	2,331,980	1,154,900
Resources and Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services	514,930	83,528	514,930	-
Strategic Growth	5,162,910	1,842,640	4,344,580	818,330
Economic Development & Regeneration	6,804,160	6,403,457	6,804,160	-
Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council	-	-	-	-
Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewal Schedule	2,670,440	104,996	2,670,440	-
Total	18,639,320	9,249,663	16,666,090	1,973,230

Supply and inflationary pressures have created some significant risks for the Council's capital programme, such as increasing costs for construction and equipment renewals. Full detail of scheme progress is provided in the Major Capital projects update at section 8, the How are we doing performance section and Appendix 2 to this report.

The majority of the Council's Capital Programme is financed from either borrowing or capital grants, while some of the programme is funded directly from revenue or from capital receipts. There are revenue implications from capital expenditure funded from borrowing through interest charges and the statutory Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

5. RESERVES POSITION AND FUNDING GAP

Local authorities are required by law to have a balanced budget i.e., a plan based on sound assumptions which shows how income will equal spend over the short and medium term. Plans can take account of deliverable cost savings and/or income growth strategies as well as useable reserves. A budget is considered not to balance where increased uncertainty leads to budget overspends of a level which reduces reserves to unacceptably low levels. Any significant alteration in either expenditure or income may result in an unbalanced budget. Factors affecting a budget could include:

- Natural disaster
- sudden policy change
- demographic pressures
- unexpected funding pressures
- failure to realise planned savings or income growth

To avoid an unbalanced budget the council needs to be financially resilient to ensure that finances can withstand unexpected pressures. A large part of our financial resilience is secured via the adequacy of our general and earmarked reserves.

General Reserves

- 5.1 The tables below present the reserves position with the current (quarter 1) projected outturn for 2025-26. It presents the reserves position projected forward across the 3 years of the published MTFS and takes into account the impact of new and emerging cost pressures and savings that have resulted in variances presented in this report.

Table 3: Reserves statement adjusted for Quarter 3 Estimated Outturn

Reserves Statement	Original Budget 2025-26	Revised Budget 2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
	£	£	£	£	£
MTFS assumed reserves as at 1st April 2025	4,348,770				
2024-25 Outturn adjustment	620,170				
Reserves at 1st April	4,968,940	4,968,940	5,300,990	5,196,620	4,456,440
MTFS assumed contribution to/(from) Reserves	(90,360)	293,060	(404,370)	(1,340,180)	(1,017,750)
Budgeted Release of Earmarked to Unallocated (General) Reserves			300,000	600,000	
Additional Extended Producer Responsibility Grant	713,000	713,000			
Creation of Earmarked Reserve	(713,000)	(713,000)			
Outturn variance projected at quarter three		38,990			
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	(90,360)	332,050	(104,370)	(740,180)	(1,017,750)
Reserves as at 31st March	4,878,580	5,300,990	5,196,620	4,456,440	3,438,690

- 5.2 The Council's original expenditure plans exceed its funding position for each year of the 2025-28 and the 2026-28 MTFS, being balanced by a contribution from reserves. The reserves position is reported **after** consideration of current savings targets and income growth projections. If these targets are not achieved in full the council will have to make a greater contribution from reserves each year. In the absence of additional income, further savings and efficiency measures or additional Government funding, the Council will exhaust its general fund balances in 2030-31 based upon the Q3 estimate. The Cabinet and officers are working towards implementing further savings and efficiency measures and exploring additional income generation proposals.

Earmarked Reserves

- 5.3 The Council's earmarked reserves held at 1st April 2025 totalled £14.355m. The balance includes Business Rates reserves held in respect of the time lag inherent within the current Business Rates Retention (BRR) system, revenue contingency risk reserves to support the major grant funded schemes in the capital programme and reserves set aside to fund Capital expenditure plans (Direct Revenue Financing DRF).

- 5.4 A General Risk Reserve is held to meet one-off unexpected costs and to manage most future operational risks. Allocations against the reserve are approved by the Corporate Leadership Team.

Table 4: Earmarked Reserves latest balances

Earmarked Reserves	Reserves b/f at 01/04/25	Spend 28/01/25	Release to General Reserves	New Reserves Added	Commitments outstanding	Balance available
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
External Funding	(1,598)	107	0	0	1,426	(65)
Shared Service	(93)	19	0	0	74	0
WFDC Budget	(7,532)	72	0	(713)	5,603	(2,571)
Innovation Fund	(1,540)	10	0	0	995	(535)
General Risks	(1,969)	72	0	0	749	(1,148)
Sub Total	(12,733)	281	0	(713)	8,847	(4,319)
Business Rates (timing)	(1,333)	0	0	0	1,333	0
Capital Programme	(289)	0	0	0	289	0
Total	(14,355)	281	0	(713)	10,469	(4,319)

Table 4b: Earmarked Reserves: Allocations from the General Risk Reserve and Innovation Fund during Quarters 1 to 3 2025-26

Detail	Amount (£)	Date considered by CLT
General Risk Reserve		
Counsel fees	15,000	29/04/2025
ICT CrowdStrike	90,000	18/05/2025 & 29/09/2025
Innovation Fund		
Training Budget top-up 2025-26	12,000	29/05/2025
Bewdley Museum collection and condition survey	85,500	27/08/2025
Total Allocations (New commitments)	202,500	

- 5.5 Reserves are very useful for balancing unexpected expenditure in the short term. However, CIPFA's advice is that they are replaced when the short term need has passed and that the use of reserves must be very measured. Application of the General Risk Earmarked Reserves to meet approved capital projects or any day to day recurring operational expenditure would need to be carefully considered to ensure that the financial viability of the Council is not put at risk.

Information and Analysis – Financial Performance Summary

6. REVENUE DETAIL

- 6.1 This report draws attention to new and emerging budget pressures that will potentially have a significant impact on the council's ability to deliver services within the budget envelope approved February 2026 Council. The report is produced in consultation with CLT, Heads of Service and Service Managers.
- 6.2 The following table presents an overview of the projected budget pressures and savings at the end of December 2025.

Table 5: Quarter 3 estimate of major revenue variances compared to approved budget

Estimate of major variances compared to approved budget at Q3	
	£
Income	
Administration of Street Naming and Numbering	(10,020)
Cemetery	(10,000)
Car Parks and enforcement	(28,750)
Domestic Waste and Recycling -bin replacement/ developer contributions	(10,000)
Street Cleansing contracts	(15,000)
Garden/green waste customers	(17,000)
Planning advice / Enquiry fees	35,000
Budget pressures/variances	
Planning expenditure	(34,880)
Property maintenance expenditure	48,000
Revenues system/legislation updates	15,650
Garage/Fleet operational expenses	(30,250)
Other miscellaneous including net Pay	18,260
	(38,990)

- 6.3 **Emerging cost pressures (not fully quantified)** The report draws attention to new and emerging budget pressures that are likely to have a significant impact on the council's ability to deliver services within the approved budget envelope for 2026-2029.
- 6.4 Growth in not for profit specified accommodation providers – council officers are aware of a growing number of charitable/Community Interest Company (CIC) providers establishing supported housing in the district. The accommodation is not solely for the use of local residents although any housing benefit subsidy penalty implications fall as a cost to this council. The potential impact is estimated to be a six figure sum. Council officers are in discussion with providers to limit the potential impact on local council taxpayers.
- 6.5 An estimate was included in 2026-27 and future years for the cost of the new burden relating to the introduction of weekly food waste collections in the budget report considered by Cabinet in December 2025. The formal procurement exercise closed on 5 January 2026. The annual operational costs of the most competitively priced bid was in excess of £1m significantly higher than the £600k that the soft market testing had suggested and higher than the Council had initially budgeted as part of the draft medium term financial strategy.

MHCLG has encouraged councils not to enter financial commitments that would have an adverse effect on their successor unitary council. For example, the MHCLG's explanatory note on "Financial decisions before local government reorganisation" (25 July 2025) states "it is essential that decisions regarding ongoing service delivery and the medium term financial strategy of existing councils do not compromise the future sustainability of new councils". Food waste collections are not an "ongoing service" but a new duty that has been imposed on councils. The full year financial impact of proceeding with award of contract would represent about 8% of the Council's net revenue budget.

The amount included in the December MTFS in relation to 2026-27 would cover the cost of the service with a delayed November start but the amount for future financial years would be insufficient to meet the full cost of the service to WFDC in 2027-28 and to its successor in

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subsequent years. Funding the new service is considered to be beyond the financial capacity of the Council to absorb when the MTFs already involves drawing over £1m a year from reserves in 2027-28 and beyond.

The Council has been placed in an impossible position because the Government has provided WFDC with a below inflation increase in Core Spending Power which is manifestly insufficient to implement what is a very significant new burden. Cabinet decided to not award a contract following the procurement exercise at its meeting on 11th February 2026.

6.6 The following new and emerging cost pressures arising from government policy change will need to be carefully assessed as more information emerges and where possible be managed to mitigate the impact on the 2026-29 MTFs. Council officers will continue to lobby for fair and equitable funding for new burdens:

- Asylum seeker dispersal – the impact of this is twofold through reducing the supply (and increasing the cost) of private rented sector accommodation that would otherwise be available and through potential statutory homeless duties owed to all those dispersed here if their asylum application is successful.
- Devolution and Local Government reorganisation,
- Proposal to restore councillors’ access to the local government pension scheme from April 2026
- Renters Rights Act 2025 – projected demand for homelessness support has been factored into estimates including that arising from a potential peak in demand as landlords respond to the imminent abolition of no fault evictions (section 21 notices) with introduction of the Renters Rights Act 2025. The budget assumes that new burdens funding will be received to meet the cost of implementing the Act but there is a significant likelihood/risk that costs will not be met in full by the Government. The new burdens allocations notified (£48k in 2026/27, £23k in 2027/28 and £0k in 2028/29) is less than half of the projected cost.

Council Tax Base - The level of Council Tax discounts and awards continues to be carefully monitored together with the impact of Council tax banding changes following awareness campaigns by consumer advice groups. There is a risk that the tax base will grow at a slower rate than assumed with a consequential reduction in funding from Council Tax. Collection rates are behind historical averages and there has been a corresponding increase in the number of people approaching the Council as more people struggle with household budgets.

Table 6 – Emerging Budget Pressures (not included in table 1 and 5 unless stated)

Area	Impact	Detail
Slippage on capital programme increasing revenue spend/ decreasing income	£££	Void property expenses, reduced rental income, increased expenses (including business rates and security). Impact of inflation on supplies and materials and labour. Cost of alternative provision. Slippage on fleet due to long lead times. Risk of higher maintenance expense and external hire charges (fleet)
Income from the Council’s property estate	£££	Risk of Council tenants winding up or entering administration and there may be no or insufficient funds available for distribution to creditors meaning that MTFs rental income assumptions aren’t met. Surrender of the lease is likely resulting in void property expenses. Any new tenant secured by remarketing properties may need to be offered rent incentives to secure long term leases.

Area	Impact	Detail
Contract Inflation	££	The 2025-26 Budget included an uplift of £216k for general non pay inflation and specific allowances were made where inflationary increases were built into contracts. For multi year contracts falling due for renewal there is a risk that increases will be above the rate of inflation due to high inflation and pay growth in the intervening years since the last renewal date. Significant contracts due for renewal: Building maintenance, window cleaning, electrical services, fleet renewals
Recruitment and retention of specialist senior staff	£££	There continue to be pressures around staff recruitment due to pay levels at these grades being uncompetitive nationally, hybrid working means we are now competing in some areas where shortages are acute with London Councils. Professional posts are particularly difficult to fill due to national shortages of qualified staff and Local Government Reorganisation.
Housing Benefit subsidy caps	£££	Growth in out of area supported housing provision in district. Supported exempt accommodation, where the landlord is not for profit or charity – DC doesn't get 100% subsidy on rental payments (cost over VOA rent officer determination subsidy capped at 60%)
Housing advice and Homelessness support	££	Pressures on private rented housing supply from Asylum seeker dispersal and other government policies, is likely to increase rents across the District and this could result in higher demand for support from households and increase the cost of emergency accommodation and service provision.
Council tax base	££	Increase in applications for council tax discounts and awards following awareness campaigns and a suppressed collection rate will impact on future year income (deficit on collection fund and reduced tax base).

Key £ = £10k to £25k/year; ££ = £25k to £100k/year; £££ = over £100k/year

7. REVENUE DETAIL - External Income

7.1 External Income is an important element within the finances of the Council, it affects the level of resources available to fund services and makes an important contribution to a balanced budget. The summary budget and estimated outturn position is shown in the table and graphs below. Overall, performance is expected to be behind the target in the 2025-28 MTFS approved by Council in February 2025 by £123k and ahead of the projected outturn assumed in the 2026-29 MTFS by £39k.

7.2 The table below details current projections for the Council's main revenue income sources.

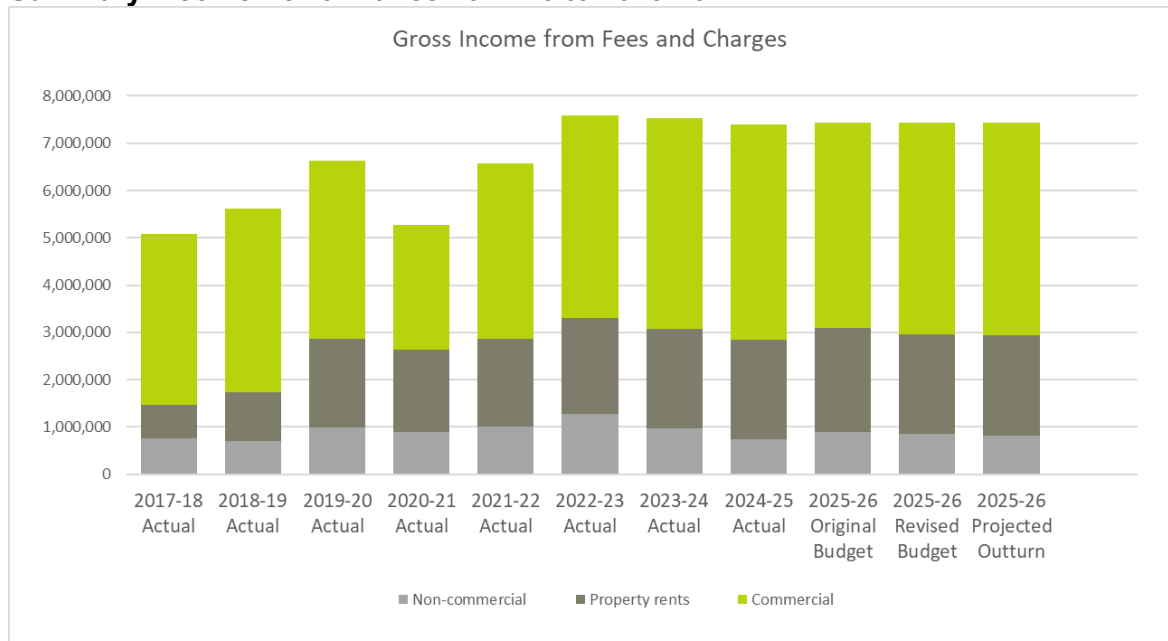
Table 8: Quarter Three External Income variances and Estimated Outturn 2025-26

Income Category	2024-25 Outturn	2025-26 Original Budget	2025-26 Revised Budget	2025-26 Estimated Outturn @ Q3	2025-26 Est. FY Variance	
					To Original Budget	To Revised Budget
	£	£	£	£		£
Commercial						
Bewdley Museum	-165,034	-142,080	-148,830	-148,830	-6,750	0
Building Control	-180	-230	-200	-200	30	0
Bulky Waste and external contracts for sweeping	-119,109	-144,560	-140,000	-155,000	-10,440	-15,000
Cemetery	-57,757	-54,660	-54,660	-64,660	-10,000	-10,000
Arboricultural and Grounds Maintenance	-118,340	-116,500	-119,000	-119,000	-2,500	0
Green Waste	-667,036	-650,000	-650,000	-650,000	0	0
Trade Waste & Highway General Cleansing	-935,242	-1,099,790	-1,000,000	-1,000,000	99,790	0
Land Charges	-52,502	-52,500	-52,500	-52,500	0	0
Leisure Centre	-804,012	-659,610	-682,830	-682,830	-23,220	0
Parking and Enforcement	-1,152,046	-1,166,540	-1,168,000	-1,196,750	-30,210	-28,750
Parking Weavers wharf	-160,911	0	0	0	0	0
Parks and Green Spaces (including Highway Verges)	-246,577	-225,900	-230,860	-230,860	-4,960	0
Planning	-13,959	-4,560	-5,000	-5,000	-440	0
Property Rental	-634,706	-688,640	-686,850	-686,850	1,790	0
Property Rental Capital Portfolio	-1,093,818	-1,092,150	-1,062,260	-1,062,260	29,890	0
Property Rental WFH	-370,465	-408,880	-370,900	-370,900	37,980	0
Other (incl. Professional and Business Services)	-152,440	-115,880	-114,350	-124,350	-8,470	-10,000
	-6,744,134	-6,622,480	-6,486,240	-6,549,990	72,490	-63,750
Non-commercial (Regulatory)						
Building Control	-150,678	-191,500	-191,500	-191,500	0	0
Licensing Activities	-205,883	-203,660	-193,480	-193,480	10,180	0
Homelessness & Private Sector Housing	-57,096	-36,360	-36,360	-36,360	0	0
Planning Fees	-379,957	-476,250	-460,000	-435,020	41,230	24,980
	-793,614	-907,770	-881,340	-856,360	51,410	24,980
Grand Total	-7,537,748	-7,530,250	-7,367,580	-7,406,350	123,900	-38,770

Income is shown as a negative (-), and income growth is shown as a negative (-) variation

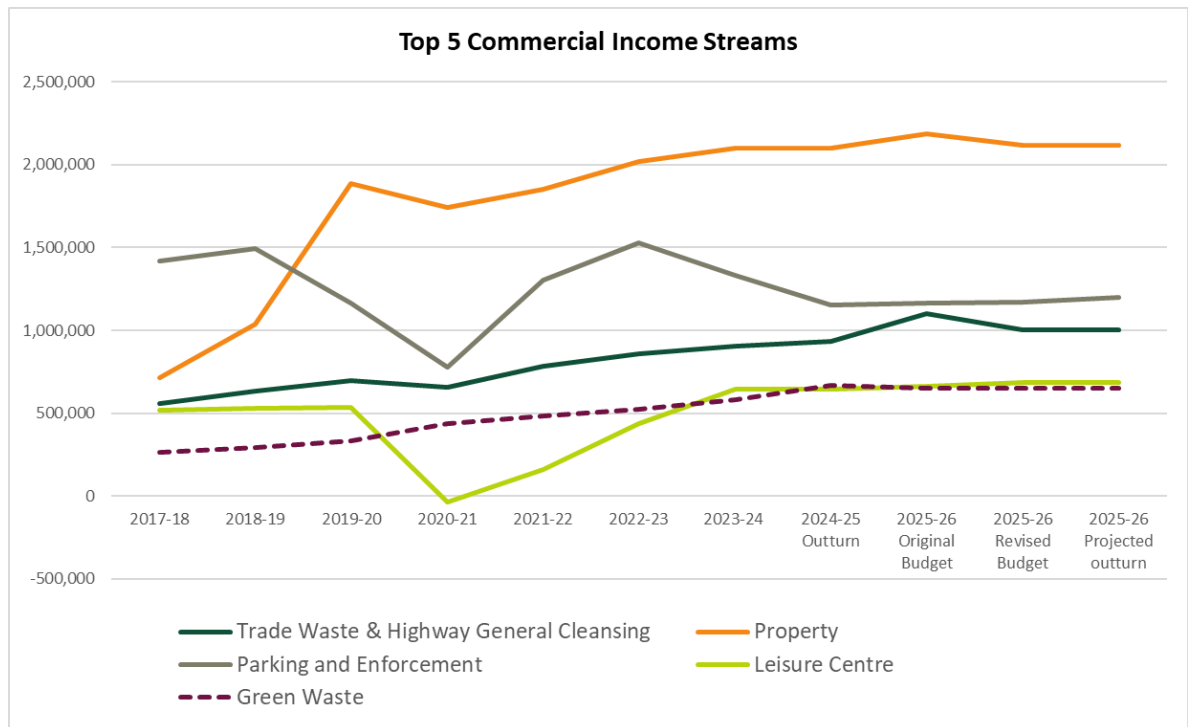
7.3 The previous success of the commercial income generation work and the recent challenges is shown in the graph below.

Summary Income Performance 2017-18 to 2025-26

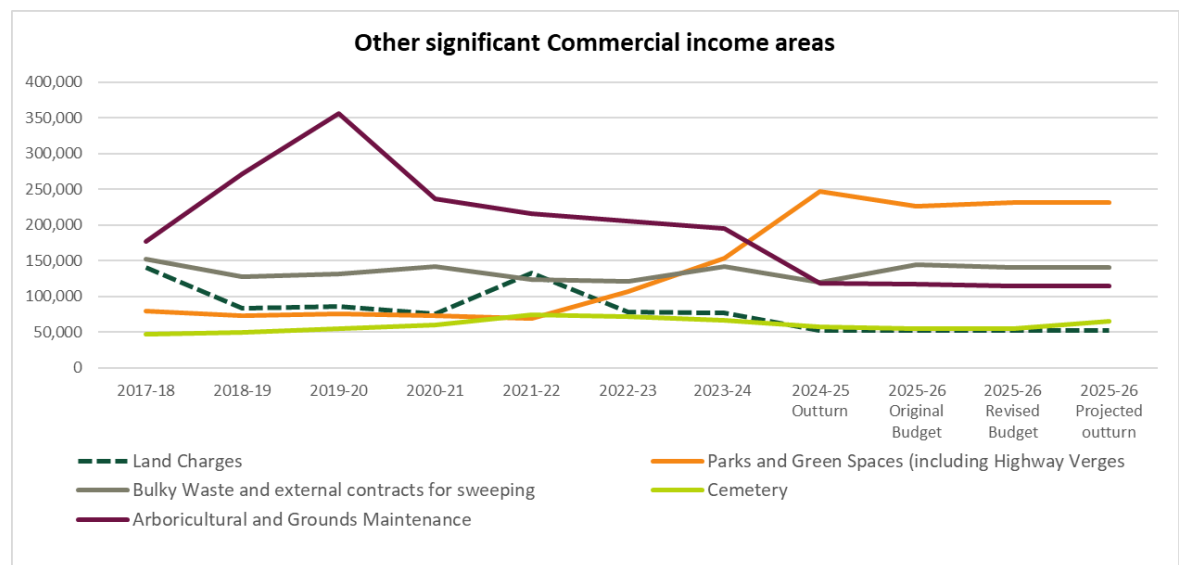


7.4 The graphs below detail performance for the income streams that fall under the Commercial Strategy.

Gross Commercial Income 2017-18 to 2025-26 – Top 5



Gross Commercial Income 2017-18 to 2025-26 – Other



7.5 The Council expanded its commercial activities to generate revenue from fees and charges to help close the funding gap. These demand-led commercial services have struggled the most to recover to levels seen pre-pandemic. Resource has either been reduced or reallocated to grant funded work or other statutory services where there has been growth in demand. The viability of all commercial income activity covered by the strategy is being examined by the Transformation and Commercial Programme Board. The terms of reference of the Board includes consideration of not only gross income performance but also the net return to the Council after marginal costs are considered. Overall income is above that achieved in 2019-20 on a cash basis

(ignoring the time value of money), but has fallen when inflation is factored in.

- 7.6 The Council's income collection position and current levels of arrears at the end of Quarter three is presented in **Appendix 4**.
- 7.7 **Capital Portfolio Fund** - The strategic purpose of holding the assets acquired from the fund is for service delivery. The Capital Portfolio Fund supports regeneration, economic growth and housing although it is allied to the Council's income generation/commercialism objectives and is financed from borrowing.
- 7.8 The intended project outputs from the acquisitions and developments under the strategy included full-time equivalent jobs either created, safeguarded or facilitated through the investment activity and variously reduced vacancy rates of commercial premises, occupancy rates of units or work spaces, business investment and count of active enterprises. All projects were intended to be, as a minimum, cost neutral to the council when costs of borrowing and statutory charges (minimum revenue provision) are taken into account, and most were expected to generate a financial return to support service priorities.
- 7.9 The table below summaries the current projection of the revenue impact of the Capital Portfolio Fund in 2025-26. The Quarter three outturn projection shows that overall the target included within the original budget is not expected to be achieved. In general, where budget targets are over or under achieved it is because rents agreed at review are above/below levels originally assumed due to prevailing market conditions, new lettings have necessitated significant rent incentives, or the Council's share of service charge expenditure arising from common areas, caps, voids and essential health and safety compliance work varies to expectation. The costs of property management are significantly higher than assumed in the original business cases due to shortages in the labour market. These higher costs were built into the budget in 2025-26 so do not constitute a budget pressure but impact the net return on each asset. Market rents have been suppressed since the pandemic but there are signs that the market is shifting towards a recovery phase. There continues to be churn in leases due to natural breaks and expiries.

Table 9: Capital Portfolio Fund Strategy – Quarter Three Financial Performance summary

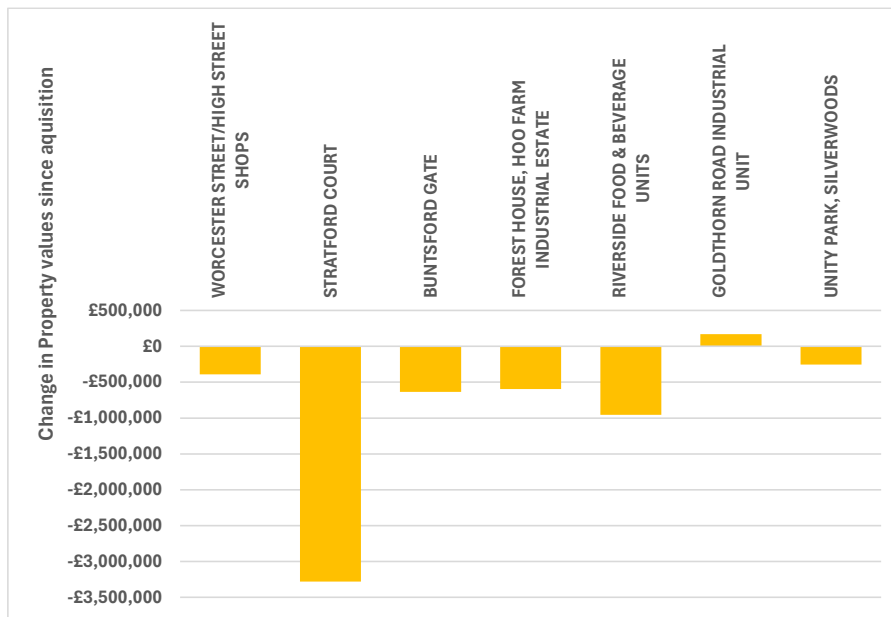
Property Portfolio Fund Net Impact on Council Tax after Statutory Charges		2025-28 MTFS				Draft 2026-29 MTFS	
		2024-25 Outturn	2025-26 Original Budget	Q3 Outturn projection	Variance	2025-26 Revised Budget	Variance
		£	£	£	£	£	£
R276	High Street/Worcester Street	33,080	25,900	22,200	(3,700)	22,200	0
R277	Stratford Court	21,737	38,290	75,170	36,880	75,170	0
R278	Buntsford Gate	46,403	(31,500)	(26,950)	4,550	(26,950)	0
R279	Forest House	51,278	33,520	38,540	5,020	38,540	0
R280	Riverside	(29,603)	2,530	35,750	33,220	35,750	0
R281	Goldthorn Road	(113,318)	(101,950)	(109,130)	(7,180)	(109,130)	0
R282	Unity Park	1,000	7,220	12,550	5,330	12,550	0
R275	Property Portfolio Fund Admin account	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		10,577	(25,990)	48,130	74,120	48,130	0

7.10 Change in Capital value

The overall reduction in the value of properties purchased under the Capital portfolio fund strategy, since acquisition, is 28.65%. The cumulative impairment shown in the Council's accounts at 31st March 2025 is £5.6m. It should be noted that under

regulations, impairment is neutralised by a transfer to the capital adjustment account and does not fall as a charge to be met by tax payers and any loss is only realised on disposal of the assets. Due to the cyclical nature of the value of property assets and the link between value and weighted average lease length, the holding period between the date of acquisition and date of disposal is always likely to be a minimum of 5 years. The assets were acquired to meet operational objectives and not for capital appreciation. However, capital values will continue to be monitored for transparency.

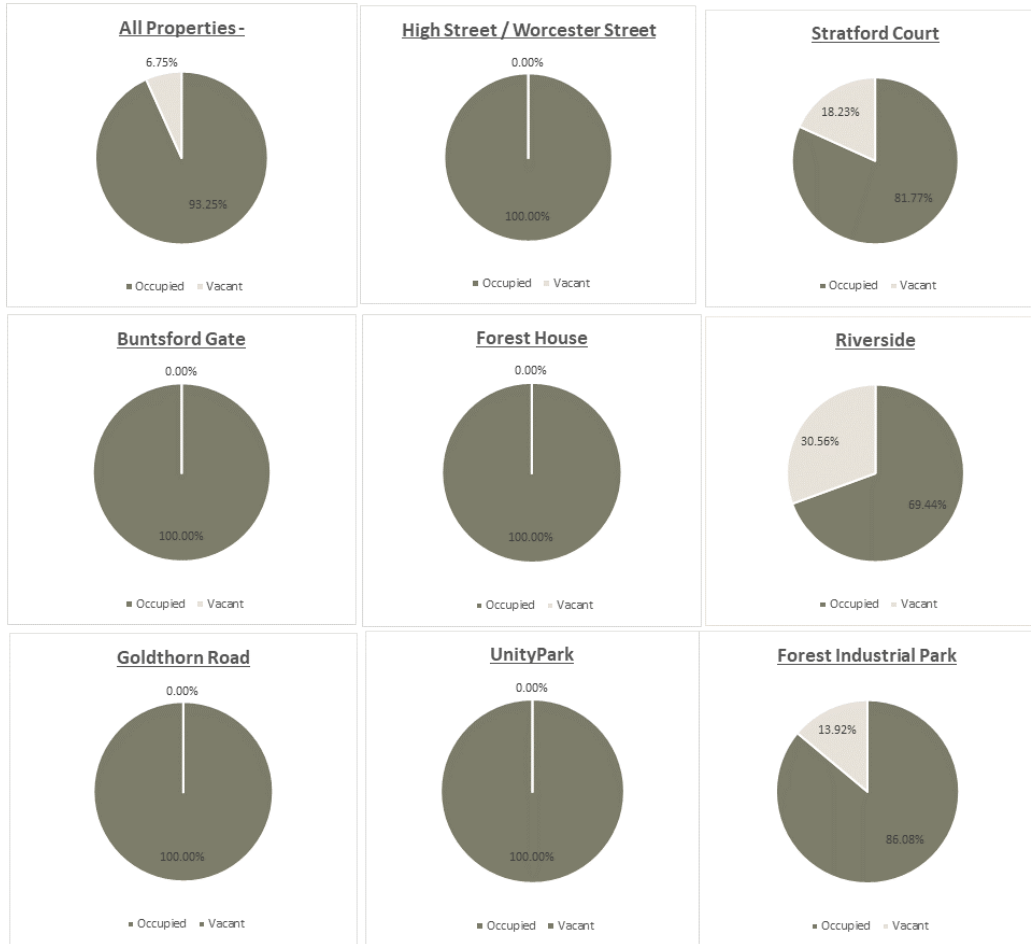
Change in Capital Value for Capital Portfolio Fund properties at latest valuation (31st March 2025)



7.11 Current Vacancy levels/Voids (Capital Portfolio Fund)

There continues to be a churn in leases due to natural breaks and expiries, but overall occupancy, at 93% is high. The refurbishment and splitting of the first floor unit at Buntsford Gate was met favourably by the market and the units were let during the quarter.

Occupancy Rates for Capital Portfolio Fund properties at 31st December 2025



7.12 Investment Income – The statutory guidance on local government investments requires the Council to adopt a prudent investment policy that puts security – protecting the capital sums invested, and liquidity – ensuring the funds invested are available for expenditure when needed, ahead of considerations of yield. The Treasury team seeks to achieve optimal performance (yield) within these constraints. The Council achieved an average in-house return of 4.43% on average cash balances of £32.653m, producing gross interest receivable at 31st December of £1.085m. The Treasury team are proactive in managing our daily cash balances and achieved a return of 0.33% above the model benchmark performance. The projected outturn for 2025-26 at Q3 is £1.236m which is £200k above the 2025-26 original budget in the 2025-28 MTFS. The bank of England cut its benchmark rate to 3.75% in December but overall interest rates have fallen at a slower rate than anticipated when the original budget was set. Increased internal borrowing is used in the short term when interest rates are above historic averages due to the increased cost of loan financing. In 2025-26 delays in receiving external grant funding has also increased the likelihood of needing to externally borrow for cashflow purposes.

8. CAPITAL DETAIL - MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS

This section of the report provides an update on the significant schemes in the Capital Programme in 2025-26, highlighting the latest forecast of spend for the financial year. Council approved the Capital programme allocations at its meeting on 26th February 2025. The governance arrangements for the FHSF and LUF include programme boards to provide assurance on deliverability of these important schemes.

8.1 Future High Street Fund – Update from Major Capital Projects Programme Board

The programme helps to deliver the Council's strategy to re-balance the town on its west/east axis to improve outcomes for the eastern side of the town. The projects included refurbishment of the former Magistrates' Court on Worcester Street as a new creative and innovation hub (now complete), creation of a new urban park in the heart of Kidderminster town centre to improve the appearance, access and connection of Worcester Street with Bromsgrove Street and links to the wider Lionfields development site and ultimately to the railway station as the town's key transport hub.

Project Outputs – creation of temporary jobs, full time permanent jobs and safeguarding permanent jobs, clearance of a brownfield site, creation of new public realm and new pedestrian paths.

Project Outcomes include improvement in air quality and carbon dioxide reduction, improved pedestrian flow and increased patronage of the public transport system.

The programme contributes to Corporate Priority One – Economic Growth and Regeneration and Corporate Priority Three – A Clean, Safe and Green place to Live, Work and Visit.

The total approved capital allocation for the project is £28,996,040 (of which £1.25m is dependent on a viable business case and is currently not being progressed). The programme is funded from Future High Street Fund grant and other capital grants (Brown Field Land Release Fund, UKSPF and LEP Revolving Infrastructure Fund) and a combination of external loan finance, and direct financing from revenue (applying various revenue earmarked reserves). All Council resources have been fully utilised. The LEP grant funding of £2.45m has not been released (pending refreshed business case), so the Council-funded bridging finance at Q3 is £1.808m.

Risk Assessment

The principal programme risks are key delivery dates being missed and cost over runs. The risks are mitigated by robust programme management and close working with MHCLG. An extension of time was granted – extending the delivery deadline for sums to be contractually committed to 31st March 2025, which was achieved. A revenue risk contingency is held in addition to risk contingencies built into the cost plans, these are likely to be fully applied to the scheme. Major Capital Projects programme board meets every 6 weeks to monitor and review progress, discuss issues, risks and action, if appropriate, and to consider any change requests with onward recommendation for approval. The risk is on the Corporate Risk Register and monitored as a key Strategic Risk.

Talbot Park Connectivity Project (Public Realm) – Quarter 3 progress update

Planning permission for the project was secured in December 2023 and demolition of the Worcester Street properties was completed in January 2024. The works contract was awarded to McPhillips (Wellington) Ltd. The contractor completed the site investigation surveys and commenced works on site on 30th September 2024. Technical constraints have led to practical completion being delayed. Practical completion date is now programmed for April/May 2026. The capital programme has been reprofiled, and slippage has been included in table below. Costs are closely monitored and potential to reallocate qualifying costs to revenue continues to be explored.

Table 10: Quarter 3 Financial Performance summary (FHSF Connectivity Project)

	Prior Years £	2025-26 £	2026-27 £	Total £
Capital Programme				
Slippage (Revised Budget - Cabinet Dec 2025)	7,118,630	3,224,710	106,190	10,343,340
Budget Adjustment (within total FHSF capital approval)		-106,190		-
Draft Budget spend profile		-401,450		-401,450
	7,118,630	2,717,070	106,190	9,941,890
2025-26 draft Outturn				
Acquisitions	2,408,914			2,408,914
Prelims and Pre construction	3,625,535			3,625,535
Construction	1,084,181	2,246,499	106,190	3,436,870
Other		470,571		470,571
Total	7,118,630	2,717,070	106,190	9,941,890
Draft slippage to future years at Q3			-	

The extension of time claim from the project manager has been verified and the agreed claim for additional project management fees will be charged to revenue and be met from the revenue contingency EMRs held for this purpose. This contingency sum was created from the additional investment income achieved on the capital grant paid in advance during 2023-24.

The capital allowance (contingency) for programme variations (demolition and construction costs) outside the original agreed sum has now been fully applied. Circa £400k of this contingency was reallocated to support The Old Court project in connection with the Weaving Shed roof and circa £400k met the additional cost of demolition on this project in 2023-24. Any further escalation of cost on the overall FHSF programme will either be considered for funding from the Evergreen Investment Fund or, where appropriate from revenue reserves.

The Old Court/Creative Hub project (Former Magistrates Court)

The building has been handed over and is operational. The final retention sums will be paid in 2025-26. The action plan for letting the Old Court has resulted in lettings on the lower ground, ground and first floor – leases are either complete or currently being prepared. The remaining vacant suites are being actively marketed.

Table 11: Quarter 3 Financial Performance summary (FHSF The Old Court)

	Prior Years £	2025-26 £	2026-27 £	Total £
Capital Programme				
Budget Adjustment (within total FHSF capital approval)	17,559,840	-157,140		17,402,700
Draft Budget spend profile		401,450		401,450
	17,559,840	244,310	-	17,804,150
2025-26 draft Outturn				
Prelims and Pre construction	1,646,080			1,646,080
Construction	14,812,725	231,517		15,044,242
Other	1,101,035	12,793		1,113,828
Total	17,559,840	244,310	-	17,804,150
Draft slippage to future years at Q3			-	

8.2 Levelling up Fund – Update from LUF Programme Board

The Levelling up programme aimed at re-kindling Kidderminster's heritage by making the canal and river a focus, encouraging visitors by making them special, vibrant places with cafes, arts and cultural activities has progressed well and is now complete despite the original programme having to be realigned for all three elements. Wyre Forest was a category one priority area for the LUF, the highest level of need. Kidderminster town centre was identified as a key area in need of regeneration due to high vacancy rates and lack of flexibility and vibrancy in existing uses which had led to a lack of economic opportunities. The LUF programme will directly provide new jobs, both at the regenerated Piano Building and to serve events within the Town Hall, in addition to providing additional economic activity through increased footfall and businesses within the town centre. Whilst contributing directly to delivering economic activity for the wider town centre, the largest mechanism for change will come through the combined impact on the sense of place for the town centre. The combined investment in cultural heritage and the visitor economy provides visible change at the heart of the town centre, building on previous committed projects by both the Council and MHCLG to reverse the trend for declining socio-economic outcomes in the town. The combined projects are expected to deliver the following outcomes – change in pedestrian flow, change in cycle flow and number of visitors/audience members to cultural events. The programme contributes to Corporate Priority One – Economic Growth and Regeneration.

The programme consists of three projects:

Canal Towpath - improvement of the existing canal towpath to improve the leisure offer of the town centre in combination with match funding from the Emergency Active Travel Fund. The project was delivered on time and within budget. Actual spend at practical completion was £231,148. Installing monitoring equipment was the final stage of this project, all associated works are now complete with an additional cost of £37k.

Kidderminster Town Hall - the repair of the existing Town Hall building, alongside the redevelopment of floorspace within the Town Hall to provide restored and regenerated spaces – programme delivered by Kidderminster Town Council, LUF funding to be passported as a contribution to total scheme costs. The work is now substantially complete, and the Town Hall has reopened.

Piano Building – the building was acquired in February 2024 and Speller Metcalfe Ltd were appointed to deliver the works contract via the Constructing West Midlands (CWM) framework. In December 2024, Speller Metcalfe completed the PCSA and Enabling works. All pre-commencement planning conditions were discharged in December 2024. The main contract works commenced in January 2025 and is now complete. Avison Young and Creative Retail (joint agency) are appointed as letting agents for the food & beverage (F&B)/ leisure units. Creative Retail have produced a marketing brochure for the units and competitive socialising space.

The LUF grant allocation and WFDC capital approval, is £17.9m, the balance of funding in relation to delivering the Kidderminster Town Hall project is being met by Kidderminster Town Council.

Risk Assessment

The principal programme risk was key delivery dates being missed resulting in cost over runs. The programme is now complete, subject to final invoices and contract retention. A revenue risk contingency was held in addition to risk contingencies built into the cost plans. A programme board met regularly to monitor and review progress, discuss issues, risks and actions if appropriate and to consider any change requests with recommendation for approval as appropriate. The risk is on the Corporate Risk

Register and monitored as a key Strategic Risk. The primary mitigation has been robust programme management and close working with MHCLG’s Discovery team.

Table 12: Quarter 3 Financial Performance summary (LUF Piano Building)

	Prior Years £	2025-26 £	2026-27 £	Total £
Capital Programme				
Slippage (Revised Budget - Cabinet Dec 2025)	5,476,430	3,927,780		9,404,210
Draft Budget spend profile		-85,000	85,000	-
	5,476,430	3,842,780	85,000	9,404,210
2025-26 draft Outturn				
Acquisition	2,932,680			2,932,680
Prelims and Pre construction	729,680			729,680
Construction & Other	1,814,070	3,842,780	85,000	5,741,850
Total	5,476,430	3,842,780	85,000	9,404,210
Draft slippage to future years at Q3			-	

8.4 Brinton Park Heritage Lottery Fund Scheme

A programme of major improvements including a new café and the re-instatement of an historical ornamental pool funded from the National Lottery Community Fund (Heritage Lottery Fund) following the successful award of grant in September 2020. The restoration will help reinstate the 130 year old park’s original Victorian Landscape design.

The following project outputs were identified as part of the bid (TBC):

- Public realm improvement
- Public amenities created
- Existing parks/green space improved
- New pedestrian paths
- Trainees gaining certificates

Project Outcomes identified

Heritage will be:

- better managed;
- in better condition;
- better interpreted and explained;
- identified/recorded

People will have:

- developed skills;
- volunteered time;
- learnt about heritage.

Communities:

- the local area/community will be a better place to work, live or visit;
- environmental impacts will be reduced;
- more people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage.

The programme contributes to Corporate Priority Three – A Clean, Safe and Green place to Live, Work and Visit.

The original approved capital allocation for the project is £2,600,000 with an additional £460,000 approved from the Evergreen Investment Fund by Cabinet. The programme is funded from a combination of HLF grant, capital receipts (£460K), S106 contributions and various revenue earmarked reserves. £200k of planned

expenditure is to be met from prudential borrowing.

Work is progressing on site with completion expected in the summer of 2026.

Risk Assessment

The principal programme risk is a cost overrun. The risk is mitigated by robust programme management and contractual terms (a fixed price design and build contract). The Council has a Major Projects Programme Board that will regularly monitor and review progress, discuss issues, risks and action if appropriate and to consider any change requests with recommendation for approval as appropriate.

Table 13: Quarter 3 Financial Performance summary (HLF - Brinton Park)

	Prior Years £	2025-26 £	2026-27 £	2027-28 £	Total £
Capital Programme					
Slippage (Revised Budget - Cabinet Dec 2025)	242,270	2,817,730	-	-	3,060,000
Draft Budget spend profile		-1,117,730	1,037,240	80,490	-
	242,270	1,700,000	1,037,240	80,490	3,060,000
2025-26 draft Outturn					
Prelims and Pre construction	242,270	13,144			255,414
Construction & Other		1,686,856	1,037,240	80,490	2,804,586
Total	242,270	1,700,000	1,037,240	80,490	3,060,000
Draft slippage to future years at Q3			-		

8.5 Capital Slippage

The following capital schemes have been reviewed and reprogrammed into future years to align with forecast programme delivery.

Table 14: Capital Programme 2025-26 Estimated Slippage at Quarter 3

2025-26 Capital Programme Estimated Slippage at Q3	Draft Slippage for future years £	Revised Budget Anticipated to Slip at Q3 %	Comments
Community and Environmental Services Food Waste Collection (funded by Defra grant)	1,154,900	100.0%	Unlikely to receive additional Government funding to fully support the introduction of the scheme before April. Budget slipped to 2026-27.
Strategic Growth Better Care Fund (BCF) - Disabled Facilities Grants	400,000	9.5%	Scheme ongoing. Additional grant awarded of £127k - added to revised budget.
BCF- Energy Efficiency	73,000	42.1%	Scheme ongoing. This fund supplements and provides an alternative to government capital funding where it cannot be applied or homes need additional support.
Housing Assistance - Private Sector Measures (including Decent Homes Grant)	85,000	43.8%	Awaiting grant of planning permission and finalisation of contract.
Stourport on Severn Property Conversion	120,000	92.3%	Scheme under way. Planning permission and contractor procurement likely to slip into 2026-27.
North Worcestershire Property Flood Resilience Project	140,330	82.4%	Start of project slightly delayed due to a delay in the release of grant by funding body.
Total	1,973,230	10.6%	

9. TRANSFORMATION AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY SAVINGS PROGRAMME

9.1 The 2026-29 MTFS projects a funding gap in 2027-28 of over £1.8m, any new cost pressures will, in the absence of additional government support, widen the gap further. Against this background it is essential that expenditure is kept within the overall approved budget and that savings and efficiency proposals continue to be developed so that the Council has as much flexibility as possible to meet the

challenges that lie ahead.

- 9.2 Achieving financial sustainability is still the most significant challenge facing the Council. Since 2009 the Council has had a track record of continuously identifying opportunities to make savings. The Commercial Strategy sets out a clear programme of work, to be taken forward by four delivery units. The Wyre Forest Forward savings programme was established to review all aspects of the Council to ensure we deliver a balanced budget and services of real value to our residents. Substantial savings have already been achieved. The work stream originally introduced in the 2021-24 MTFS, to review and reassess how we deliver services with the objective of reducing net cost continues as one of the work streams in the new Commercial Strategy. The corporate efficiencies delivery unit will progress the ideas for cost reductions and efficiency savings that have been identified in the Transformation and Financial Sustainability Plan. Some have already been considered by the Transformation and Commercial Board and the following are being implemented:
- Additional debt recovery officer in revenues
 - Potential savings from review of postage and printing
 - Smarter procurement
 - Exploring all viable areas for capitalisation of costs
 - Introducing discretionary charges for planning services
- 9.3 The Council has done exceptionally well in generating additional income and implementing efficiency savings that have put back the date at which it has to bring its expenditure into line with income but in the absence of additional income, further savings and efficiency measures or additional Government funding, current projections indicate that the Council will exhaust its general balances within the medium term. The current estimates continue to be refined and reviewed as part of on-going detailed work being undertaken by the Finance Team in conjunction with service managers.
- 9.4 The approved targets in the 2025-28 MTFS and new Cabinet proposals for the 2026-29 MTFS are summarised in the table below.

Table 15: Quarter Three Wyre Forest Forward Savings - Performance summary

Transformation and Financial sustainability savings	2025-26 £000	2026-27 £000	2027-28 £000	2028-29 £000
Cummulative Prior year savings achieved	4,771	4,765	4,774	4,773
Savings achieved 2025-26 (YTD)	137	185	188	190
Total Savings Achieved	4,908	4,950	4,962	4,963
MTFS 2025-28 Savings Targets				
Wyre Forest Forward Efficiency and Transformation	61	43	39	39
Localism	60	80	100	100
Income growth - Property	39	93	90	90
Income growth - General	35	75	115	115
Savings Target at 01/04/2024	195	291	344	344
MTFS 2026-29 New Cabinet Proposal				
Commercial Income			52	70
Efficiencies/transformation		55	85	100
Total Savings Target	195	346	481	514
Savings achieved 2025-26				
Wyre Forest Forward Efficiency and Transformation				
Smarter procurement (estimate)	17	17	17	17
Customer journey - reduced unavoidable contact efficiency gain	2	5	8	10
Service efficiencies and innovation				
- BR appeal	73			
- "Telsolutions" postage and collection rate savings	2	10	10	10
- Shared service arrangements (estimate)		100	100	100
	94	132	135	137
Income growth - Property				
Income growth - Property (CPF)				
Income growth - Property (WFH)				
Other Industrial Estates and Other Property - rent review back log	13	13	13	13
Service charge review				
	13	13	13	13
Income growth - Commercial				
Natural Assets				
Commercial Strategy	30	40	40	40
	30	40	40	40
Total Savings achieved in-year	137	185	188	190
Total Budget Savings not yet achieved	58	161	293	324

10 SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES AND VIREMENTS

- 10.1 Service managers who wish to incur expenditure that falls within approved Council Policy for which either there is no or insufficient provision within approved estimates, may incur that expenditure by transferring from one approved budget cost centre to another (the maximum extra revenue expenditure may not exceed £20,000 and capital expenditure £50,000) or by supplementary estimate, subject to specified conditions as setout in the Financial Regulations – 6.7 and 6.8.
- 10.2 No requests have been received during quarter 3.

11 TREASURY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Investments

- 11.1 At 31st December 2025 the council held £36.377m in investments. The level of funds available fluctuates due to the timing of precept payments and receipt of grants. The Treasury team are proactive in managing our daily cash balances and achieved a return of 0.33% above the model benchmark performance calculated by our Treasury Advisors. The estimated outturn of £1.236m is above the 2025-26 Original budget in the 2025-28 MTFs and £100k ahead of the Draft Revised Budget (reported to Cabinet in December 2025) forming the bases of the 2026-29 MTFs.
- 11.2 The approved limits as set out in the Treasury Management Strategy report to Council 26th February 2025 within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the first three quarters of 2025-26.

External Borrowing

- 11.3 The Council had borrowing of £31m as at 31st December 2025. The Council's Capital Financing Requirements (CFR) as at 31st December 2025 is £41.937m. The CFR denotes the Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. If the CFR is positive the Council may borrow from the PWLB or the market (External Borrowing) or from internal balances on a temporary basis (Internal Borrowing); an internal borrowing position of circa £10.937m is currently being held at Q3.

Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits

- 11.4 The Council's approved Treasury and Prudential Indicators are outlined in the approved Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS). The Council has a duty to determine and keep under review the "Affordable Borrowing Limits".
- 11.5 During the period to 31st December 2025 the Council has operated within treasury limits and the prudential indicators set out in the Council's TMSS and with the Council's Treasury Management Practices. The Prudential and Treasury Indicators are shown below:

Table 16: Prudential Indicators – Actual vs Budgeted Indicator

Prudential Indicator as Per Original Budget(to be updated during revised budget process)	2025-26 Original Budgeted Indicator	Actual as at 31 st December 2025
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	£61,881,000	£41,937,000
Gross Borrowing	£61,000,000	£31,000,000
Internal Borrowing	£881,000	£10,937,000
Internal Borrowing as % of CFR	1.42%	26.08%
Authorised Limit for external debt	£75,000,000	£31,000,000
Operational Boundary for external debt	£65,000,000	£31,000,000
Limit on Principal sums invested > 365 days	£2,000,000	-
Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing – upper limits (for future borrowing undertaken)		Maturity structure of existing loan portfolio (No new borrowing undertaken during Q3)
Under 12 months	10%	3.2%
12 months to 2 years	10%	3.2%
2 years to 5 years	25%	12.9%
5 years to 10 years	50%	16.2%
10 years and above	100%	64.5%

12 REVENUE DETAIL – Central Items Business Rates and Council Tax

12.1 **Council Tax** - The level of discounts and awards, together with collection rates, and write-offs are being closely monitored. There is a risk that assumed growth in the tax base might not be achieved in year due to a slowdown in the housing market leading to sites being built out at a slower rate than assumed and greater eligibility to discounts and exemptions.

12.2 **Business Rates** – Officers continue to liaise closely with the Valuation Office Agency to monitor developments in the sector and the progress of check, challenge and appeal applications. The council holds a provision for appeals for the 2017 list and the

2023 list. The 2010 list is now closed. Appeals against the 2017 valuation list are currently in line with expectations. The overall impact of transactions in the collection fund will continue to be monitored to assess the impact on the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

12.3 Collection Rates

Council Tax: As at 31st December 2025, Council Tax in year collection rates were at 85.09% compared to 85.15% in the previous year but above that achieved in 2023-24.

Business Rates: At the end of Quarter 3 2025-26, collection rates for NNDR are slightly behind those achieved last year, at 81.02% compared to 81.31% last year. Current year collection rates compare favourably with 2023/24 and with years prior to 2022-23, before the introduction of the various temporary business rates reliefs that have been applied/or removed since the pandemic.

There has been an increase in debts being written off due to voluntary bankruptcy orders and petitions, individual voluntary arrangements and debt relief orders. The level of write-offs continues to be closely monitored.

13 How Are We Doing Performance Summary

13.1 The Council monitors performance and progress towards achieving the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027. The report is for 2025/26 Q3.

13.2 Performance management is instrumental in all council activities as it helps us to keep track of how well we are performing and enables any potential issues to be identified at an early stage so remedial action can be taken. It also informs our decision making processes which underpin the delivery of our Corporate Plan.

13.3 The Council has a number of processes in place to monitor our performance including:

- Corporate Plan Actions
- Corporate Risks and associated actions
- Leading Measures – looking forward at future outcomes
- Lagging Measures – looking back to see whether improvement actions achieved the outcomes or outputs expected

13.4 This report provides a strategic overview of the performance for quarter three and focusses on the activities and achievements that support our priorities in the Corporate Plan.

13.5 Corporate Priority One - Economic growth and regeneration

We will:

- Regenerate central Kidderminster including completion of Future High Streets and Levelling Up Fund projects.
- Redevelop former Crown House site, Lionfields and other brownfield sites we own – mainly for housing.
- Progress the redevelopment of Bridge Street site, Stourport.
- Work with High Streets Task Force to develop and implement a vision for the regeneration of central Stourport.
- Work with partners to improve skill levels and make sure they are the skills employers need.
- Make sure business support services are available to help businesses grow.

Key Activities in Quarter Three:

- Piano building handed to the council in November. The team actively managed ICT, compliance and tenant interfaces while beginning early work to ensure strong post-completion asset performance and income generation.
- Lion Fields (Joint Venture) - The project progressed from feasibility into commercial structuring, with the Council positioning itself as an active and ready commercial JV partner. Lion Fields – specialist consultancy support appointed in December.
- Town Hall project to give £3M boost to local economy- Kidderminster Town Council has reported that the Town Hall Transformation project is delivering more than twice the agreed social value for the project. It has been achieved by contractors Speller Metcalfe giving direct employment to 8 local employees, engaging 17 local subcontractors full time for the duration of the project and sourcing local suppliers for employees and subcontractors.
- The Old Court site in Kidderminster, where many original features are have been preserved. We're pleased to share some progress images of our regeneration project to revive one of Kidderminster's historic buildings, the former Magistrates' Court. Some of the works have included reinstating the beautiful internal stained-glass windows and restoring original curb-side window railings, pictured.
- Brinton Park - Programme, cost and funder-compliance controls were embedded while scope and cost risks (including the Sons of Rest building) were mitigated and delivery confidence was assured to NLHF.
- Bewdley Museum- Contractor appointed for Bewdley museum construction work. A heritage-sensitive approach was applied, managing conservation risks alongside specialist requirements and stakeholder expectations. Work is due to complete by March 2026.
- Stourport (Bridge Street/regeneration): Site-specific options were aligned with wider regeneration plans, and preparatory work supported clear member decision-making for the next phase.
- Skillsboost Worcestershire has finished due to all grant funding being allocated. All targets met or exceeded.
- Careers Worcestershire continues to provide skills advice to young people in the district from its base at 'The Point' at Kidderminster College and growth hub performance in our district is strong.
- BetaDen have completed the second cohort of business and met their UKSPF targets for 2025/26. They have also agreed to continue providing provision from The Old court into 2026/27 and will be delivering another cohort of businesses next financial year.

13.6 Corporate Priority Two - Securing financial sustainability for services the local communities value

We will:

- Increase net income from our commercial activities.
- Increase the visits to our nature reserves and make them more accessible.
- Complete the redevelopment of Brinton Park, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- Investigate options for developers to make bio-diversity contributions on alternative sites.

Key Activities in Quarter Three:

- Financially, the museum has surpassed its £20k income target, achieving £27.5k with a further £8.5k expected before year-end.
- Progressed the £2.9m Brinton Park restoration, appointing contractors and preparing to begin the National Lottery–funded redevelopment. The park will get a new café and community space in the Sons of Rest Pavilion, a beautiful ornamental pond, and wildlife-friendly features like bat boxes, new flower beds,

- and woodland management! While there have been unavoidable delays and design changes, we're thrilled to see this project finally moving forward.
- Community involvement and conservation work across the district continued strongly this quarter. Members of the public planted 56 mixed-species trees at Hurcott Pools & Wood LNR during national tree-planting week, supporting new hedgerow creation. The Wyre Forest Wild project also advanced at Habberley Valley, with a new visitor welcome board and modernised way-marked routes installed to enhance accessibility, improve the visitor experience and raise awareness of the environmental importance of the reserves. Further signage improvements for Blakemarsh, Mitton Marsh and Moorhall Marsh are underway.
 - The Ranger Team showcased their work at the APSE Southern Seminar, sharing good practice with other councils. They also secured a £4,145.84 grant from The Tree Council and Network Rail's Community Tree Planting Fund, enabling the purchase of nearly 3,000 trees to restore areas at Hurcott Pools and Wood damaged by Storm Darragh, with some planting already completed by volunteers and community groups.
 - Additional improvements across the reserves included the installation of new benches at Burlish Meadows, providing scenic viewing points over Hartlebury Common and the Malvern Hills. A new grazing area is being created at Blakemarsh to reduce waste transport needs, and an extension at Burlish Top has been laid out for nature reserve management, with cattle due on site within four weeks following £5,000 of grant support. At Mitton Marsh, a new grazing cell is being established to support invasive species control.

13.7 Corporate Priority Three - A clean, safe and green place to live, work and visit

We will:

- Secure housing growth through the local plan.
- Invest more in tackling environmental crime and illegal parking.
- Invest more on clearing litter, particularly in summer months.
- Work with town councils and community groups to improve parks and open spaces.
- Help provide more cultural events.
- Increase the amount of temporary accommodation available by providing a new housing scheme.
- Produce and implement a carbon reduction plan for the district and for the council.
- Help people make their homes more energy efficient.
- Install electric charging points in car parks in all three towns.

Key Activities in Quarter Three:

- Supported the November Bonfire & Fireworks Night in Stourport, helping to deliver a safe and successful community event for residents and visitors.
- Planning enforcement action has been effective and they have successfully defended three appeals
- EV charger installations have arrived at Wyre Forest, installations will commence in January, and we're still on track for project completion by the initial scheduled date.
- Launched the Springfield Park grazing project, with meadow preparation starting on 11 November and fencing installed to support future conservation grazing by 4–8 Shetland cows from October 2025, funded through the Natural Networks programme.
- Promoted local tourism through the new Visit Severn Valley brand, publishing a popular roundup of eight scenic autumn walks to encourage more visitors to the area.
- Woven Oaks development approved (Kidderminster Eastern Extension) advancing a major Local Plan site to deliver new homes, a primary school and community facilities on land released from the green belt. Houses are already being advertised off plan following the commencement of phase 1 (395 houses) this was one of the

largest housing applications in over 40 years, supported by extensive technical work led by the case officer.

- Wyre Forest District Council took part in Keep Britain Tidy's national Fly-Tipping Fortnight campaign, making use of the national materials and toolkits while strengthening delivery through local intelligence, operational insight and tailored messaging. The Communications Team led on campaign strategy, content creation, digital delivery and engaging the public, while Community and Environmental Protection officers contributed operational data, case updates, investigations and frontline expertise. Together, these combined efforts resulted in a credible, high-impact campaign that reached residents effectively and supported enforcement outcomes.
- The Streetscene team successfully completed the chewing gum cleaning project in Kidderminster, using a £27,500 Chewing Gum Task Force grant administered by Keep Britain Tidy. Specialist equipment funded through the grant enabled the removal of gum from streets around Kidderminster College, while new eye-catching signage has been installed in the town centre to encourage responsible disposal and reduce future littering.
- In December, Wyre Forest District Council representatives was invited to showcase the Adopt a Street initiative at the APSE Northern Seminar, providing an opportunity to share the scheme with other councils and exchange ideas and good practice.
- Funding contributions were made to the town councils to support their Christmas activities, including their annual Christmas lights switch on events.
- Planning approval was secured for significant improvement works at Bewdley Museum, including new glass features, enhanced heating and ventilation, and careful floor levelling to protect historic materials, supported by major funding from the UKSPF and the Council. The Autumn Term saw exceptionally strong school bookings, fully sold out to December, driven by improved advertising and strengthened SEO for WW2 trips. Looking ahead, bookings for 2026 are also performing very well, with limited availability remaining in February and March.
- The introduction of adult craft workshops has run successfully over the year. The Sip and Create was the first evening workshop, where guests got to try three different crafts and have some drink and canapes as well. All the workshops have been very well received again, and feedback has been extremely positive.
- Warm Homes Local Grant commenced in October and by December 10 properties had work completed. Due to the quick mobilisation at the Council DESNZ have awarded us an additional 100k of funding for this financial year.

Other achievements:

- WFDC became the first district authority in England to publish audited 2023–24 accounts, achieving national top-tier performance by securing Statement of Accounts sign-off as 7th out of 315 principal authorities (top 2%).
- Supported the Chairman's Christmas Foodbank Collection, with council staff donating items to help local families during the festive period.
- Enhanced the Wyre Forest Heritage Trail app by installing new green GPS checkpoint markers across Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport, enabling visitors to access augmented-reality local stories and boosting tourism engagement.
- Bewdley Bridge has been removed from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register following the implementation of the Flood Defence by the Environment Agency, where Planning played an important role.
- Delivered three free Over-50s Showcase events, held on 10, 17 and 22 October, promoting local services and support for older residents in partnership with Age UK and Simply Limitless, with council teams on hand to offer advice on financial inclusion and disabled facilities grants.

- Delivered the “Park for Free After 3” Christmas offer, providing free parking from 3–6pm on weekdays across all council-owned car parks between 2–24 December, in addition to the ongoing one-hour free parking scheme in Batemans Yard, Gardners Meadow and Vale Road.

13.8 Organisational Health

Organisational Health - includes information on turnover of staff, sickness absence, organisational health related investment areas and other performance measures requested by committee. There has continued to be a focus on investing in organisational health related areas, for example ICT infrastructure, implementing the Organisational Development strategy and related projects.

14 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

- 14.1 Information relating to complaints is correct at the time the data is produced at the end of each quarter. Subsequently complaints can move through further stages so reported figures are subject to change.
- 14.2 The information below gives a summary of the authority’s performance in respect of complaints. In quarter three the Council received 45 complaints. This compares with 25 during 2025 quarter two.
- 41 complaints (91%) were resolved at stage 1
 - 20 complaints (44%) were upheld or partially upheld
 - 4 (9%) complaints were escalated to Stage 2
 - 1 complainant was taken directly to the LGSCO and this complaint outcome by the LGSCO was 'Not Investigated'
- 14.3 A comprehensive report, which provides greater insight into the complaints received and the outcome, is considered by Audit Committee every 6 months.
- 14.4 Improved complaints standards were rolled out to managers in February 2024 and, although the number of complaints recorded is expected to rise, we continue to use this as an opportunity to drive a positive complaint handling culture where data can be used to drive service improvements.
- 14.5 During quarter three we received 7 compliments.
- 14.6 The total customer contact recorded via the hub customer service team for quarter three was 9,622. This was 1,462 visitors, 702 emails & 7,458 phone calls.

15 LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The Local Government Act 2003 (sections 25–29) placed additional duties on Local Authorities on how they set and prioritise budgets.
- 15.2 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 Cabinet currently reviews performance and spend against the Budget on a quarterly basis.
- 15.3 Our External Auditor Bishop Fleming makes an assessment based on the annual programme of external audit work. The focus is on ensuring there are proper arrangements in place for securing financial resilience and that the organisation has proper arrangements for challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and

effectiveness.

16 IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- 16.1 Equality, Climate Change and Health and Wellbeing Impact assessments will be undertaken as appropriate as part of reviews of service delivery arrangements and implementation of new models. This is a financial and performance monitoring report, there are no proposals in this report that require an assessment.

17 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 17.1 A number of corporate risks are perceived to have increased in recent months. The inability to deliver a balanced budget is one of the Council's key corporate risks and has been adversely impacted by high inflation in recent years this is now feeding through to current year procurements. The Budget Risk Matrix has been reviewed to reflect the current assessment of risk. A copy is enclosed for information as Appendix 3 and further update on risks will be given to Audit Committee in September.

18 CONCLUSIONS/ACTION

- 18.1 The information contained within Appendices 1 to 5 provides Members with an overview of financial trends and performance within the period to 31st December 2025. Appendix 5 provides detailed information on performance to supplement the summary in section 12.
- 18.2 The estimates and assumptions included in this report will continue to be updated and refined as more information becomes available.

19 CONSULTEES

Corporate Leadership Team Cabinet
Service Managers and the Managers Network

20 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Budget setting papers Council 26th February 2025
Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025-28

Budget setting papers Council 25th February 2026
Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-29

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

REVENUE BUDGET TOTAL REQUIREMENTS - DISTRICT COUNCIL PURPOSES (excluding Cabinet proposals)

SERVICE	2025/26		2026/27			2027/28			2028/29		
	Original Estimate £	Revised Estimate £	At Nov.24 Prices £	Inflation £	TOTAL £	At Nov.24 Prices £	Inflation £	TOTAL £	At Nov.24 Prices £	Inflation £	TOTAL £
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL	2,806,520	3,053,830	3,408,840	78,190	3,487,030	3,747,370	140,010	3,887,380	3,700,800	207,650	3,908,450
COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT	6,255,000	6,583,120	7,038,480	259,620	7,298,100	7,465,470	477,180	7,942,650	7,962,050	692,860	8,654,910
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION	564,200	452,190	273,840	51,060	324,900	53,690	98,330	152,020	(170,950)	139,680	(31,270)
RESOURCES	1,945,430	1,568,830	1,142,460	29,500	1,171,960	1,133,810	69,400	1,203,210	1,119,470	105,530	1,225,000
REVENUES, BENEFITS & CUSTOMER SERVICES	1,903,770	1,901,230	1,964,180	68,630	2,032,810	1,985,200	115,760	2,100,960	1,979,130	164,180	2,143,310
STRATEGIC GROWTH	2,619,230	2,589,730	2,719,350	90,620	2,809,970	2,689,550	150,040	2,839,590	2,631,840	208,580	2,840,420
LESS: CAPITAL ACCOUNT	16,094,150	16,148,930	16,547,150	577,620	17,124,770	17,075,090	1,050,720	18,125,810	17,222,340	1,518,480	18,740,820
INTEREST RECEIVED	627,000	388,800	342,910	3,860	346,770	233,120	6,610	239,730	364,060	9,260	373,320
	(1,036,110)	(1,236,110)	(838,350)	0	(838,350)	(780,220)	0	(780,220)	(780,220)	0	(780,220)
TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE ON SERVICES	15,685,040	15,301,620	16,051,710	581,480	16,633,190	16,527,990	1,057,330	17,585,320	16,806,180	1,527,740	18,333,920
CREATION OF EARMARKED RESERVE	0	719,730			600,000			600,000			0
LESS: RESERVES	(90,360)	293,060			(262,870)			(1,288,110)			(1,172,750)
NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT	15,594,680	16,314,410			16,970,320			16,897,210			17,161,170
LESS: REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT	(178,440)	(178,440)			(3,173,940)			(3,191,290)			(3,192,290)
GRANTS ROLLED INTO RSG (included in net budget requirement)	0	0			299,000			299,000			299,000
TRANSITIONAL FUNDING (additional RSG)	0	0			(65,350)			0			0
BUSINESS RATES INCOME	(4,973,800)	(4,973,800)			(2,789,840)			(2,854,000)			(2,911,400)
ADJUSTMENT SUPPORT GRANT	0	0			(332,030)			0			0
RECOVERY GRANT	(400,190)	(400,190)			(400,190)			(400,190)			(400,190)
COLLECTION FUND (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT	239,070	239,070			70,000			0			0
NEW HOMES BONUS	(312,990)	(312,990)			0			0			0
EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY GRANT	(1,021,000)	(1,740,730)			(1,420,000)			(1,200,000)			(1,000,000)
NATIONAL INSURANCE GOVERNMENT FUNDING	(92,330)	(92,330)			0			0			0
GENERAL EXPENSES -											
COUNCIL TAX INCOME	8,855,000	8,855,000			9,157,970			9,550,730			9,956,290
COUNCIL TAX LEVY		250.58			258.08			265.80			273.75
COUNCIL TAX BASE		35,338			35,485			35,932			36,370

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025-26 - Quarter 3 Position

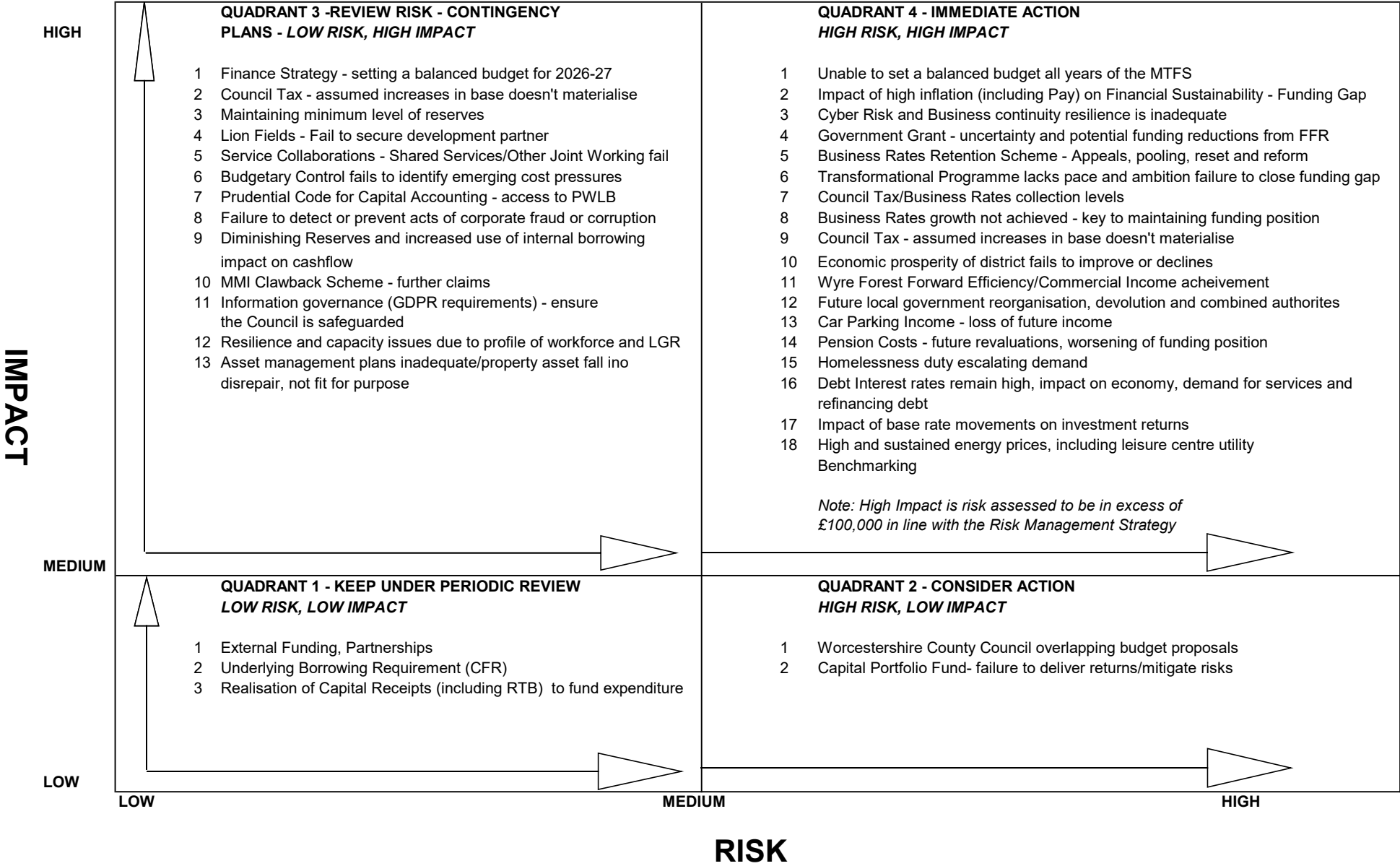
Capital Scheme	Corporate Priority*	2025-26 Original Budget including slippage from 2024-25 £	2025-26 Revised Budget £	2025-26 Qtr 3 Actual £	Slippage to 2026-27 identified at Q3 £	Progress Notes at Q3 2025-26	Total Scheme (all years) £	Total spend (all years) £	% Complete (Full Scheme)
COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES									
Improvement to Car Parks (Replacement Parking Machines 2025-26)	1,2,3	150,940	150,940	-	-	Procurement under way but delays with the tender process may result in the possibility that the scheme may slip to Q1 2026-27.	594,500	443,560	75%
Stourport Riverside	3	36,440	36,440	-	-	Final elements of upgrading play equipment, pathways and introducing additional trees commenced.	150,000	113,560	76%
Brinton Park HLF Scheme	3	2,817,730	1,700,000	723,949	-	Major works under way.	3,060,000	966,219	32%
Bewdley Museum - UKSPF	1,2,3	190,570	190,570	3,942	-	Scheme anticipated to complete by end of financial year.	190,570	3,942	2%
Bewdley Museum - Evergreen Investment Fund	1,2,3	100,000	100,000	-	-		100,000	-	0%
Innovation Fund - Capital	2	336,330	87,080	80,000	-	Food waste vehicle delivered.	431,000	174,670	41%
Community Safety CCTV Upgrade (Grant Funded)	2	4,460	4,460	3,551	-	Final elements of this scheme to be completed during this financial year.	24,860	23,951	96%
Food Waste Collection (funded by Defra grant)	2	1,154,900	1,154,900	-	1,154,900	Unlikely to receive additional Government funding to fully support the introduction of the scheme before April. Budget slipped to 2026-27.	1,154,900	-	0%
Adaptive Play Equipment	3	62,490	62,490	3,600	-	Procurement under way but delays with the tender process may result in the possibility that the scheme may slip to Q1 2026-27.	100,000	41,110	41%
SUB TOTAL		4,853,860	3,486,880	815,042	1,154,900		5,805,830	1,767,012	30%
STRATEGIC GROWTH									
Housing Strategy: Better Care Fund (BCF) - Disabled Facilities Grants	3	4,193,530	2,127,390	978,528	400,000	Scheme ongoing. Additional grant awarded of £127k - added to revised budget.	Rolling programme		
BCF- Energy Efficiency	3	173,440	173,440	34,700	73,000	Scheme ongoing. This fund supplements and provides an alternative to government capital funding where it cannot be applied or homes need additional support.	730,000	261,260	36%
BCF- Disabled Adapted Units	3	240,000	240,000	-	-	Awaiting grant of planning permission and finalisation of contract.	300,000	60,000	20%
Housing Assistance - Private Sector Measures (including Decent Homes Grant)	3	194,030	100,000	928	85,000	Scheme ongoing. Review of landlord engagement under way.	2,376,120	2,182,090	92%
Castle Road Development	3	85,640	85,640	-	-	Retention relating to the construction contract is due to be paid by the end of the financial year.	3,860,210	3,774,570	98%
Raven Street Conversion	3	7,150	460	455	-	Scheme complete.	78,010	78,005	100%
Bridge Street Flats Conversion	3	15,910	1,000	1,007	-	Scheme complete.	22,090	22,097	100%
Stourport on Severn Property Conversion	3	130,000	130,000	3,315	120,000	Scheme under way. Planning permission and contractor procurement likely to slip into 2026-27.	130,000	-	0%
Flood Relief	1,3	28,410	13,410	-	-	Potential projects identified but timescales are dependent upon partner agencies including Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water.	199,000	170,590	86%

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025-26 - Quarter 3 Position

Capital Scheme	Corporate Priority*	2025-26 Original Budget including slippage from 2024-25 £	2025-26 Revised Budget £	2025-26 Qtr 3 Actual £	Slippage to 2026-27 identified at Q3 £	Progress Notes at Q3 2025-26	Total Scheme (all years) £	Total spend (all years) £	% Complete (Full Scheme)
Warm Homes Local Grant	3	265,440	350,440	23,707	-	Scheme ongoing. A further £85k has been awarded - added to revised budget.	1,360,000	-	0%
Future Investment Evergreen Fund	1,2,3	921,210	921,210	-	-	Budget will slip if no business cases are proposed.	1,363,090	441,880	32%
Acquisition of Land at Horsefair, Kidderminster	3	49,590	49,590	-	-	Start of project delayed as Registered Provider unable to commit resources at the time.	50,000	410	1%
Capital Projects Fund	1,2,3	8,267,750	800,000	800,000	-	Loan has been repaid in full.	8,267,750	800,000	10%
North Worcestershire Property Flood Resilience Project	3	170,330	170,330	-	140,330	Start of project slightly delayed due to a delay in the release of grant by funding body.	2,300,000	-	0%
SUB TOTAL		14,742,430	5,162,910	1,842,640	818,330		21,036,270	7,790,902	37%
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION									
Levelling Up Fund	1,2,3	3,927,780	3,842,780	3,984,860	-	Piano Building Scheme now complete. Contract retention has been slipped to 2026-27.	17,900,000	17,957,080	100%
Capital Portfolio Fund (unallocated)	1,2,3	6,050,830	-	-	-	Scheme slipped to 2026-27	22,805,450	16,754,620	73%
Future High Streets Fund - The Old Court	1,2	244,310	244,310	14,994	-	Retention relating to the construction contract is due to be paid by the end of the financial year.	17,822,110	17,574,834	99%
Future High Streets Fund - Creative Hub (Capital Portfolio allocation)	1,2	1,250,000	-	-	-	Scheme slipped to 2026-27	1,250,000	-	0%
Future High Streets Fund - Public Realm/Connectivity	1,2	2,823,260	2,717,070	2,403,603	-	Contract works are in progress with an estimated completion date of February/March 2026. Contract retention slipped to 2026-27.	9,923,930	9,522,233	96%
SUB TOTAL		14,305,780	6,804,160	6,403,457	0		69,761,490	61,859,167	89%
RESOURCES									
ICT Strategy	1,2,3	1,064,930	514,930	83,528	-	Various projects underway. Potential for further slippage due to fluctuations in project delivery timetable.	6,003,120	4,840,718	81%
SUB TOTAL		1,064,930	514,930	83,528	0		6,003,120	4,840,718	81%
VEHICLE, EQUIPMENT & SYSTEMS RENEWAL SCHEDULE									
Vehicles & Equipment & Systems Renewal Schedule	1,2,3	2,867,190	2,670,440	104,996	-	Procurement is progressing on scheduled renewals. Potential for further slippage due to extended procurement lead times. Budgets to remain in 2025-26 in the event that some vehicles are delivered prior to the end of the financial year as delivery dates are currently unknown.	Rolling programme		
SUB TOTAL		2,867,190	2,670,440	104,996	0				
TOTAL COMMITTED EXPENDITURE		38,247,800	18,639,320	9,249,663	1,973,230				

2025-26 Capital Budgets unspent at Q3 9,389,657

BUDGET RISK MATRIX 2026-29



WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
8 April 2026

BUDGET MONITORING THIRD QUARTER 2025-26

ANALYSIS OF OUTSTANDING DEBT

This appendix details the Council’s income collection position at the end of Quarter 3 (31st December 2025).

Sundry/ Property Debt

As at 31 December 2025, the Council’s total outstanding debt (including amounts still within payment terms) stands at £1,763,830. This represents a **7% reduction** compared to the same point in the previous year (£1,898,040).

- Sundry Debt reduced from £1,313,240 to £1,130,710 — a notable decrease reflecting improved collection activity.
- Property Debt increased slightly, rising from £584,800 to £633,120, suggesting some pressures in commercial rent or lease-related payments.

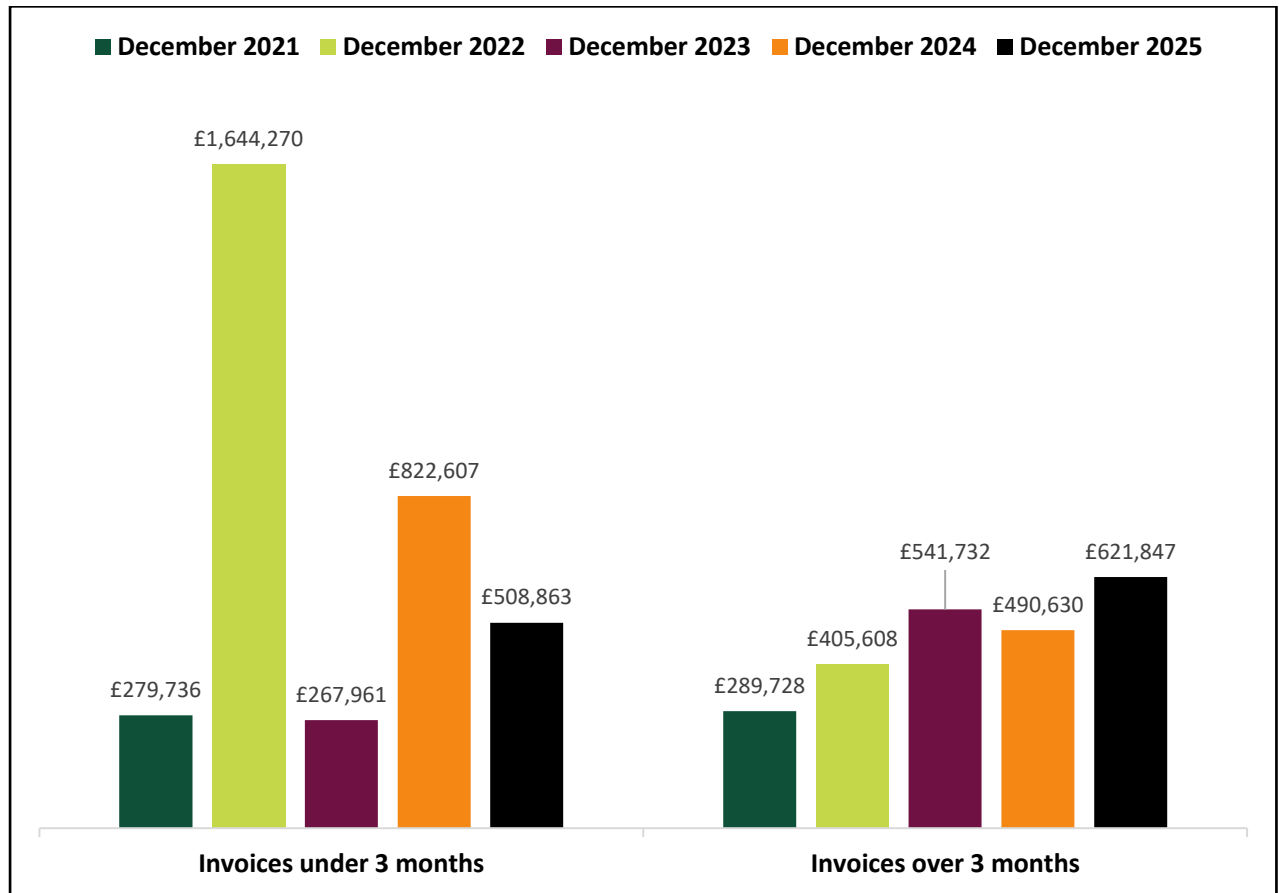
However, despite the reduction in total outstanding debt, arrears over 3 months have increased significantly—from £695,650 in 2024 to £863,530 in 2025 (24% increase). This indicates that although overall debt is reducing, a greater proportion is ageing into longer-term arrears, making recovery more challenging and resource-intensive.

The table below shows the Aged Debt outstanding for invoices older than 3 months from 2022 to 2025:

Invoices Overdue (older than 3 months)	Quarter 3 2022 £	Quarter 3 2023 £	Quarter 3 2024 £	Quarter 3 2025 £	Movement £
Sundry Invoices	405,700	542,000	490,630	621,850	131,220
Property Invoices	196,300	217,000	205,020	241,680	36,660
Total Invoices	602,000	759,000	695,650	863,530	167,880

The position relating to Sundry Debtor and Property Invoices are as follows:

Sundry Debtors



Although short-term Sundry Debts (under 3 months) have fallen notably, the over-3-month category continues to grow, rising to £621,847.

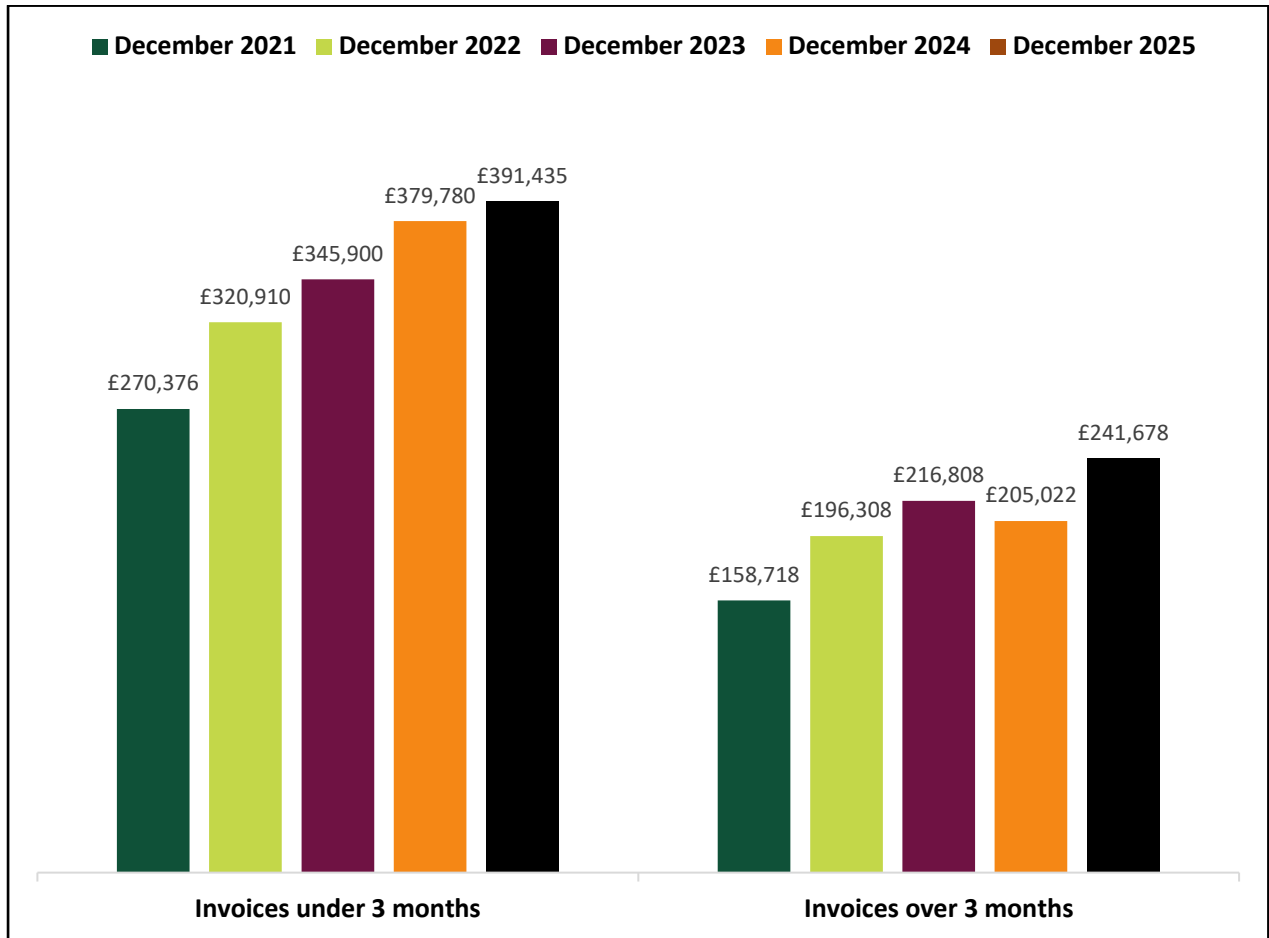
In general this suggests:

- Invoices are not being recovered as quickly as expected,
- Some customers may be experiencing cashflow issues, delaying their payments,

However, closer investigation shows that the arrears balance (over 3 months) includes over £100k outstanding from local government partners in 2025 and apparent increase over 2024 position is due to timing of invoices and reporting period cut-off dates.

This movement of debt between categories explains why the overall reduction in Sundry Debt is relatively modest, despite improvements in short-term collection.

Property Invoices and Debt



Property debt under 3 months has remained stable over the years, with a slight increase in 2025. Over-3-month debt also increased, rising to £241,680.

The main reasons include:

- Several small invoices totalling £26,500 raised during 2025–26 which remain unpaid,
- Seasonal fluctuations in commercial tenant payments,
- And ongoing economic pressures affecting rent collections.

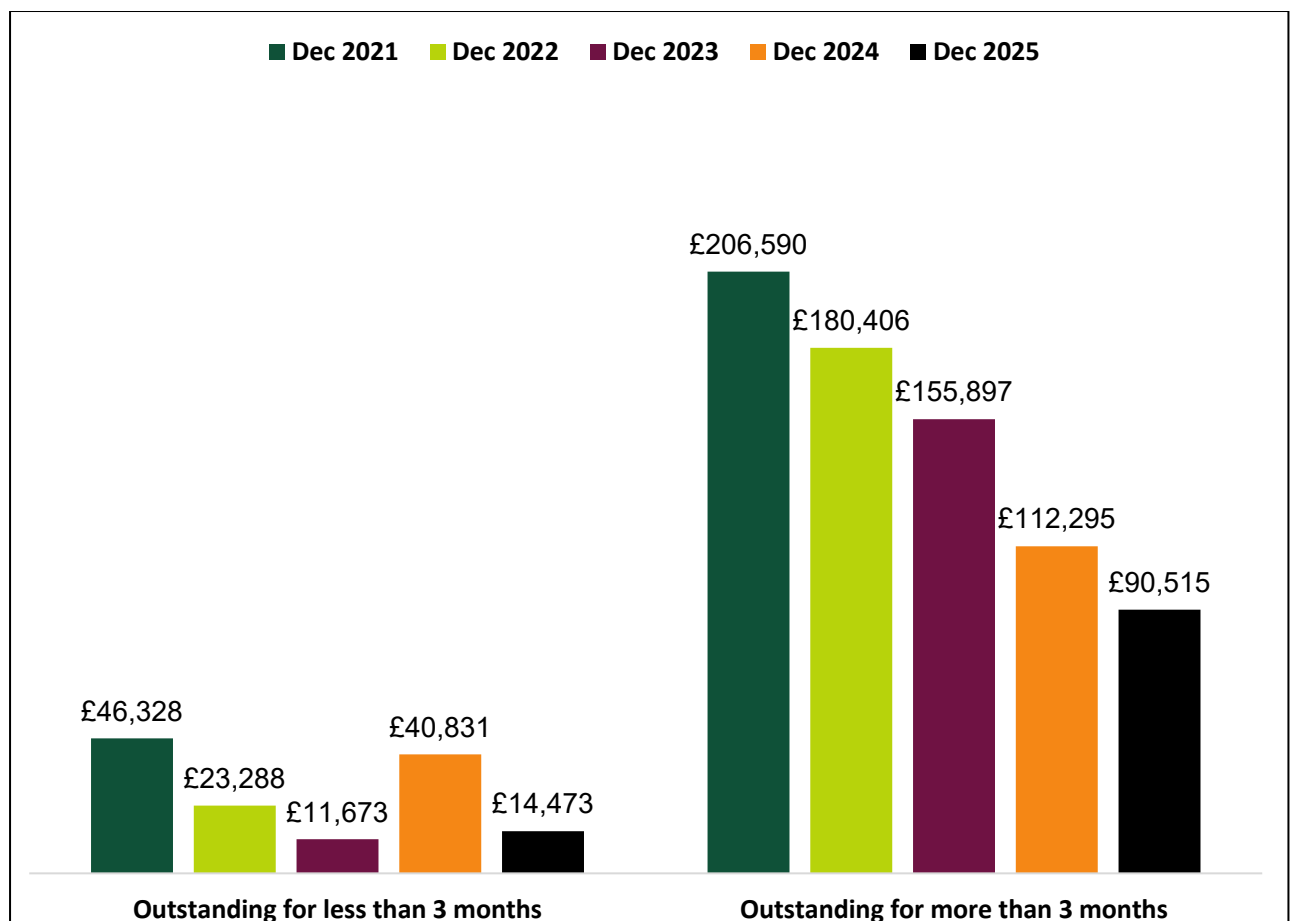
These invoices now require targeted follow-up from the Finance and Property teams to prevent further ageing and potential bad debt write-off.

Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery

Where customers have a change in their circumstances and we are later made aware of this, any Housing Benefit that has been overpaid is due for repayment. A change in circumstances transfers the customer to Universal Credit and the overpayment is recovered via a customer invoice. Customers who remain on Housing Benefit and have received an overpayment, have a deduction from their on-going benefit.

The position relating to Housing Benefit overpayment is shown in the next two graphs:

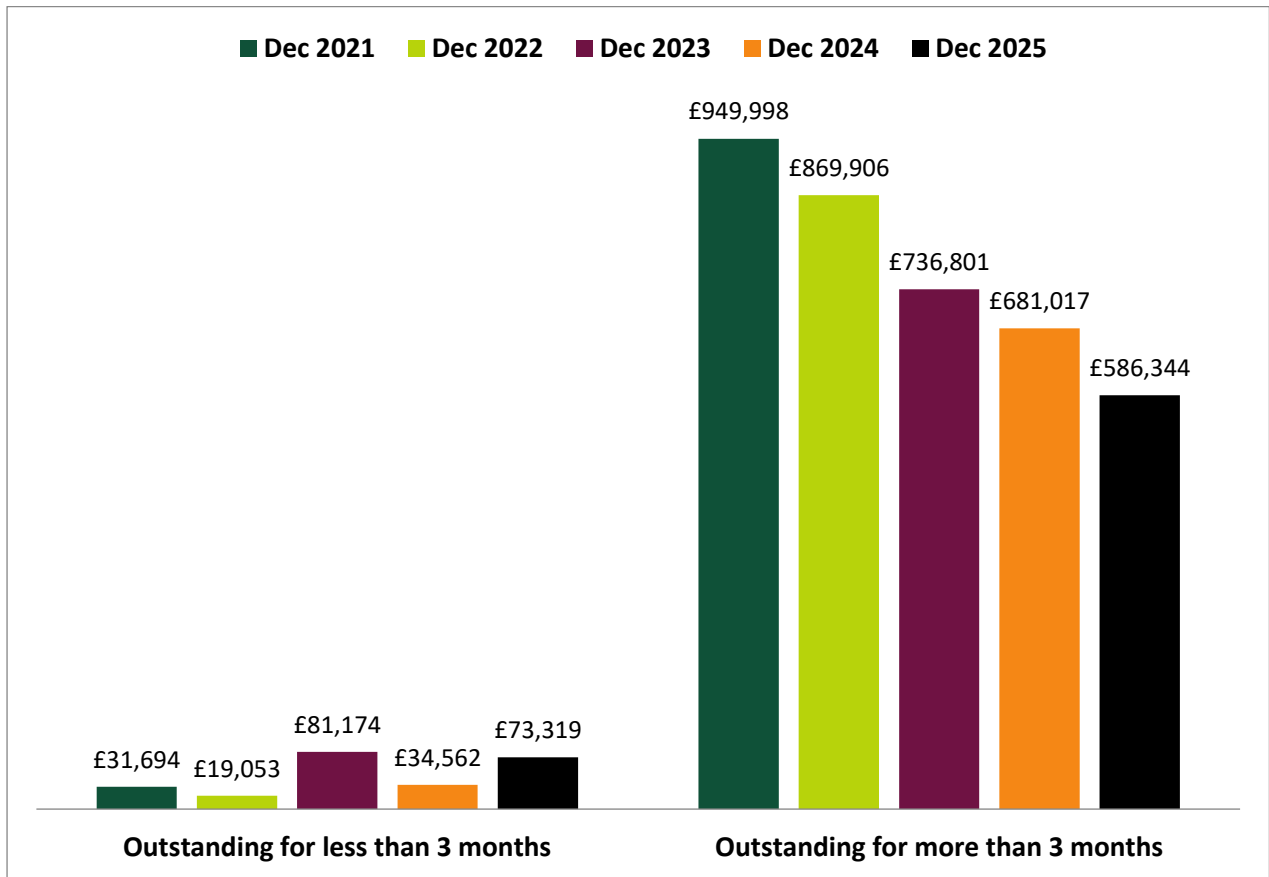
Recovery by On-going Benefit



Overpayments recovered through ongoing deductions have continued to decrease, reflecting the reduction in people receiving Housing Benefit due to ongoing rollout of UC, and improved accuracy in benefit assessments.

Amounts outstanding over 3 months fell from £112,295 to £90,515, showing steady progress in long-term recovery.

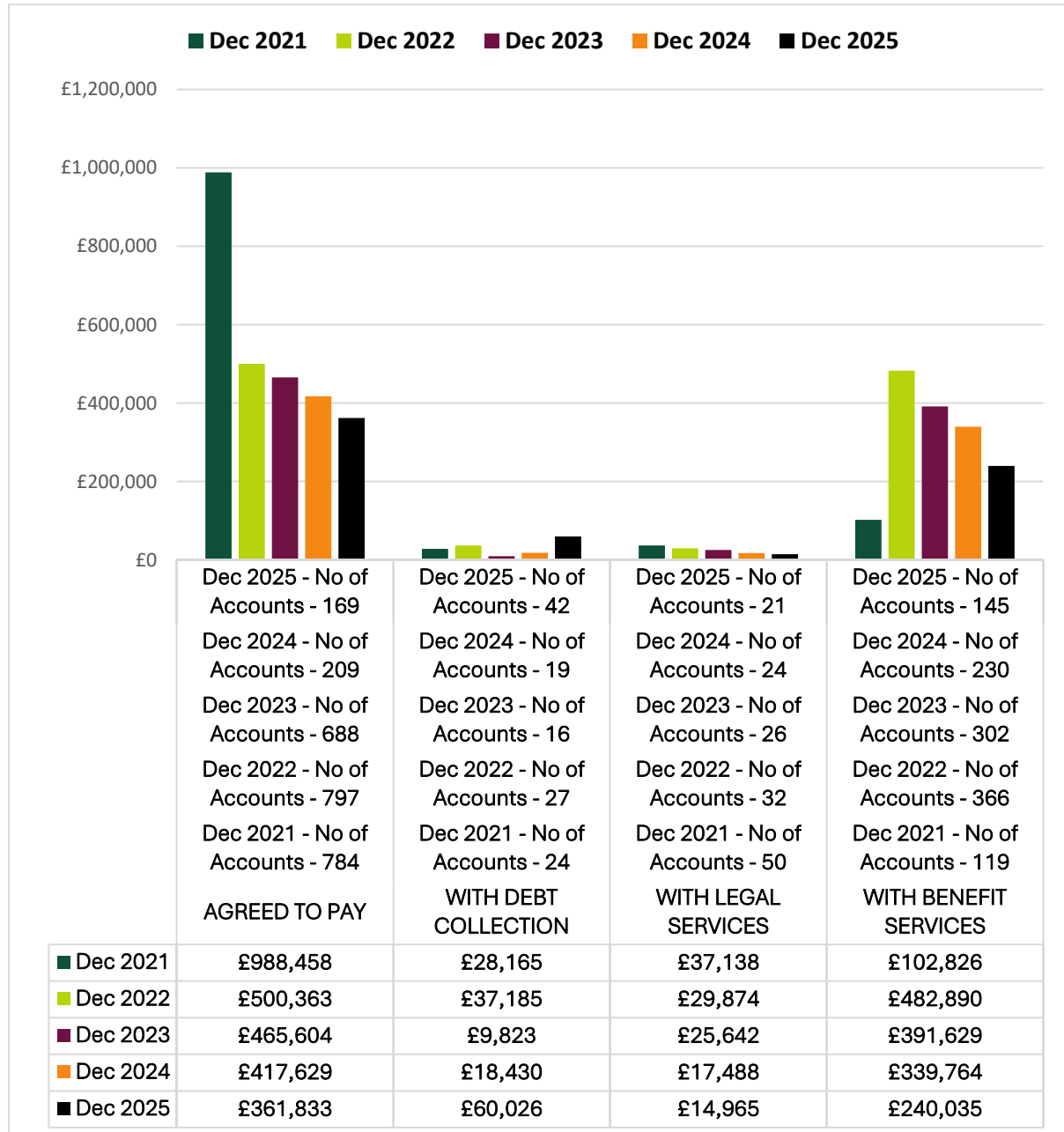
Recovery by Customer Invoice



The value of overpayments being recovered through invoices has reduced for the third consecutive year. This shows that although new overpayments still arise, historic debt is being resolved effectively.

Any Housing Debts over three months old have either agreement in place to pay, have been referred to the Council’s Legal Services, or remain with the Benefit Service to pursue. The Council employs the Debt Collection Agency Dukes Ltd. As at December 2025 debts of £1,495.47 have been recovered at a cost of £224.32 (2024-25 debts of £1,504.40 at a cost of £225.66). The number of accounts, the value outstanding and how this will be collected in shown in the following graph:

Value and Number of Housing Benefit Overpayments Accounts and Status



The total debt outstanding at 31st of December 2025 is £764,651 which represents a 12% decrease over the balance outstanding at the end of Quarter 3 in 2024-25. The number of cases where there is an agreement to pay or our Benefit/ Legal Services are dealing with, the cases are 335 (463 in 2024-25) a decrease of 128 cases. Cases referred to an external

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APPENDIX 4

debt collection agency have increase to 42 from 19 showing a firmer approach to non-payment.

The introduction of Universal Credit in November 2018 has reduced the number of customers claiming Housing Benefit and the occurrence of overpayment and its collection via on-going benefit.








Corporate Plan 2025/26






Economic growth and regeneration

Title	Description	Managed By	Due Date	Title	Latest Note	Progress Bar	Status Icon
A. Regenerate central Kidderminster including completion of Future High Streets and Levelling Up Fund projects.	Delivery of LUF programme Delivery of FHSP programme	Ostap Paparega	31-Mar-2026	Piano building redevelopment	The main contract works have been completed, and the building was handed over to WFDC on 21 October 2025. The final ICT package/cabling (WFDC's part of scope) is scheduled for 16th January 2026. A delay has been experienced due to ongoing issues between BT and Openreach, despite WFDC placing the order in June 2025.	<div style="width: 98%;"><div style="width: 98%;">98%</div></div>	
				The Old Court (Creative Hub)	Work on the former Magistrates Court project completed on 6 th February 2025.	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;">100%</div></div>	
				Town Centre Connectivity Project completion	Delays are caused by various factors related to infiltration drainage works. The programme was also impacted by the need to first resolve wall foundation design issues between McPhillips and McBains, followed by the National Grid substation works and associated Party Wall matter. The revised completion date has been updated to 27th Jan 2026.	<div style="width: 84%;"><div style="width: 84%;">84%</div></div>	
				Refurbishment and redevelopment of Kidderminster Town Hall	The official opening took place on 7th November 2025.	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;">100%</div></div>	
B. Redevelop former Crown House site, Lionfields and other brownfield sites we own – mainly for housing	Delivery of Lionfields Housing scheme Delivery of the former Crown House site	Ostap Paparega	31-Mar-2026	Delivery of Lionfield's Housing scheme	The feasibility study (RIBA Stage 0) has been completed. The Cabinet approved the approach to procure a Joint Venture development partner in September 2025. The approval has since been secured to appoint specialist consultants via the SCAPE Consultancy Framework to support the JV	<div style="width: 15%;"><div style="width: 15%;">15%</div></div>	




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Title	Description	Managed By	Due Date	Title	Latest Note	Progress Bar	Status Icon
	Delivery of Market Street site				procurement process. A kick-off meeting with the appointed consultants is planned for early January 2026.		
				Delivery of Market Street site	Feasibility study completed. Potential collaboration to be explored.	<div style="width: 90%;"><div style="width: 90%;">90%</div></div>	
C. Progress the redevelopment of Bridge Street site, Stourport	Explore options for redeveloping the site.	Ostap Paparega	31-Mar-2027	Bridge Street car park redevelopment	No bids were submitted under the asset of the Community value process by the 12 th of August. The project is now being progressed across the RIBA 0–7 cycle, whereas it was previously scoped only through RIBA Stages 0–2. The project is currently at RIBA Stage 2. The draft consultation material is being prepared, with pre-planning and stakeholder engagement planned for of January/February 2026.	<div style="width: 20%;"><div style="width: 20%;">20%</div></div>	
D. Work with High Streets Task Force to develop and implement a vision for the regeneration of central Stourport	Develop and implement a vision for the regeneration of central Stourport	Ostap Paparega	31-Mar-2026	Vision completed by Summer 2025	Vision has been completed and endorsed by WFDC Cabinet in December 2025.	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;">100%</div></div>	
				Implementation plan to be developed Spring 2026	District Council officer will work with the Town Council officer on the implementation of the plan.	<div style="width: 0%;"><div style="width: 0%;">0%</div></div>	
E. Work with partners to improve skill levels and make sure they are the skills employers need	Approval of UKSPF Projects	Ostap Paparega	31-Mar-2026	Community Prospect	Unfortunately, Community housing decided to close the contract due to uncertainty in long term funding streams and other districts focusing elsewhere in 2025/26. Community Prospects, Community Housing liquidated the provision, so WFDC had no alternatives.	<div style="width: 0%;"><div style="width: 0%;">0%</div></div>	
				Upskill Worcestershire & Careers Worcestershire	Agreements now in place with WCC for the delivery of Careers Worc and Skills Boost. Reports show significant progress towards target, particularly with Skillsboost.	<div style="width: 50%;"><div style="width: 50%;">50%</div></div>	
				Get Worcestershire Working	Working with other partners to form the 10-year skills strategy for Worcestershire.	<div style="width: 20%;"><div style="width: 20%;">20%</div></div>	







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Title	Description	Managed By	Due Date	Title	Latest Note	Progress Bar	Status Icon
F. Make sure business support services are available to help businesses grow	Allocation of the UK SPF to provide business support initiatives	Ostap Paparega	31-Mar-2026	BetaDen	Agreement in place and both cohorts completed. Entering into a new agreement for digital/ai events in Q4.	<div style="width: 50%;"><div style="background-color: #4f81bd; height: 10px;"></div>50%</div>	
				WCC Business support programmes	Agreements in place to continue the start up support programme.	<div style="width: 50%;"><div style="background-color: #4f81bd; height: 10px;"></div>50%</div>	
				Worcs Growth Hub	Agreements in place to continue support in 2025/26.	<div style="width: 50%;"><div style="background-color: #4f81bd; height: 10px;"></div>50%</div>	







Securing financial sustainability for services communities value

Title	Description	Managed By	Due Date	Title	Latest Note	Progress Bar	Status Icon
G. Increase net income from our commercial activities	Rental reviews and actions to obtain extra income	Ostap Paparega/ Nick Purewal	31-Mar-2026	Rent Reviews – complete all outstanding rent reviews and ensure current and future rent reviews are completed on time	Good progress is being made on negotiating the rent reviews. Ongoing process to ensure rent reviews/ lease renewals are completed on time.	<div style="width: 99%;"><div style="background-color: #4f81bd; height: 10px;"></div>99%</div>	
				Reduce number of vacant units	Oxford Street/ Worcester Street – we have started the process of reconnecting the utilities and have now started the procurement process to replace the roof and upgrade the building. 30th June 2026 35% Agenda Item No. 4 81- 82 Worcester St - Foodbank will take temporary occupation until 66 Worcester Street is ready (saving of c. £1,000 PCM).	<div style="width: 90%;"><div style="background-color: #4f81bd; height: 10px;"></div>90%</div>	
				Review service charge accounts for each property and create efficiencies where possible	Started the process across the portfolio and have already completed the review for WFH and the Capital Portfolio Fund. Stratford Court – Re-assessing the accounts again to find further savings.	<div style="width: 20%;"><div style="background-color: #4f81bd; height: 10px;"></div>20%</div>	










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Title	Description	Managed By	Due Date	Title	Latest Note	Progress Bar	Status Icon
				Let office space and F&B units in the Piano Building	Letting agents instructed. In discussion with 3 parties for the Food and Beverage units.	0%	
				Let office space in The Old Court	Lease being prepared for 2 offices on 1st floor.	60%	
H. Increase the visits to our nature reserves and make them more accessible	Delivery of the Wyre Forest Wild project.	Adam Hamilton	31-Mar-2027	Wyre Forest Wild project - to enhance local nature reserves through branding, improved visitor facilities, and sustainable commercial opportunities	All Nature Reserves have annual plans – New plans in place for 2025/26. Development plans for 2024/25 all completed now working on 2025/2026 plan to be completed April 2026.	100%	
				Development / Accessibility of Nature Reserves - to include paths, signage, transportation links, inclusive access, habitat improvement, etc.	New revised entrance boards being installed in all nature reserves. Habberley valley sign, Waymarkers and pathways all in place. Blakemarsh, Moorhall marsh and Mitton marsh all in design stages (end of Jan completion). Rest of sites being put into a procurement project, currently sat with the procurement.	40%	
I. Complete the redevelopment of Brinton Park, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.	Deliver Brinton Park project as per National Lottery Heritage Fund plan	Kathryn Underhill	31-Mar-2026	Formally discharge preplanning conditions	All preplanning conditions have been discharged. Capital works started on site 28/07/25. Programme to run until July 2027.	100%	
				Renewed risk with the Son's of Rest building currently reviewing impact to projects spend	Planning application was approved on 23/09/25. Construction of new SOR commenced November 2025.	30%	







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Title	Description	Managed By	Due Date	Title	Latest Note	Progress Bar	Status Icon
J. Investigate options for developers to make bio-diversity contributions on alternative sites	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) unit sales – Secure the legal framework, identify the areas of land to be allocated and develop the sale and promotion of these units	Adam Hamilton	31-Mar-2026	Map all 15 nature reserves by habitat	All nature reserves have been mapped for BNG.	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;">100%</div></div>	
				Investigate options for developers to make bio-diversity contributions on alternative sites	In progress - One site now has an updated survey enabling an up to date BNG unit evaluation to be made. There are in the region of 40 units on 8ha. Working on the Habitat management plan but need a firm decision on how much land is going to be put forward initially before I can progress and procure the responsible body.	<div style="width: 20%;"><div style="width: 20%;">20%</div></div>	
				Undertake financial assessment of these assets	In progress – As noted above, further review of the system has highlighted that several land parcels were previously undervalued, while others included in earlier assessments would be uneconomical to bring forward. Updated valuations have now been obtained for the land adjacent to Burlish Top and Burlish Meadows. We have two interested responsible bodies. The work remains on schedule for completion by 31 March.	<div style="width: 70%;"><div style="width: 70%;">70%</div></div>	
				Appoint a governing body for land management	Can not be progressed until a firm decision is given regarding which land should be put into the scheme potentially by March 31st 2026.	<div style="width: 0%;"><div style="width: 0%;">0%</div></div>	
				Confirm and approve sale units and locations; align with corporate policy	In progress	<div style="width: 25%;"><div style="width: 25%;">25%</div></div>	
				Develop a market-ready, credible product for promotion and trade	In progress	<div style="width: 25%;"><div style="width: 25%;">25%</div></div>	

A clean, safe and green place to live, work and visit

Title	Description	Managed By	Due Date	Title	Latest Note	Progress Bar	Status Icon
K. Secure housing growth through the local plan	Support Sustainable Housing Delivery via Local Plan Implementation	Kate Bailey	31-Mar-2027	Achieve 276 housing units per annum	1,547 residential units YTD (1,460 for Q3) received planning permission. Work commenced on the commissioning the evidence base for the Local Plan review. Planning Obligations SPD and the Green Infrastructure SPD were approved by Cabinet in November following consultation.	<div style="width: 75%;"><div style="background-color: #4F81BD; height: 10px;"></div></div> 75%	
N. Work with town councils and community groups to improve parks and open spaces.	Support localism by empowering town councils and community groups to lead improvements in parks and open spaces, ensuring developments reflect community needs and priorities	Kathryn Underhill	31-Mar-2026	Annual programme of Town/Parish council meetings	In this period meetings held with Chaddesley Corbett PC, Bewdley and Stourport TCs.	<div style="width: 75%;"><div style="background-color: #4F81BD; height: 10px;"></div></div> 75%	
				Transfer of assets to Worcestershire Football Association	Report to be considered by Cabinet/CLT in February 2026 regarding options of freehold/leasehold transfer to WFA.	<div style="width: 80%;"><div style="background-color: #4F81BD; height: 10px;"></div></div> 80%	
				Transfer of assets of Kidderminster Town Council	In progress with phase 1. Phase 2 is in progress to transfer core parks in Kidderminster along with other secondary assets.	<div style="width: 50%;"><div style="background-color: #4F81BD; height: 10px;"></div></div> 50%	
				Transfer of assets of Stourport Town Council	Work is underway to complete transfer of specific assets by April 2026.	<div style="width: 75%;"><div style="background-color: #4F81BD; height: 10px;"></div></div> 75%	
				Transfer of assets of Bewdley Town Council	Work is underway to complete transfer of specific assets by April 2026.	<div style="width: 75%;"><div style="background-color: #4F81BD; height: 10px;"></div></div> 75%	
P. Increase the amount of temporary accommodation available by providing a new housing scheme	Progress on the Build program for Castle Road.	Kate Bailey	31-Mar-2026	Development of Castle Road, Kidderminster	The building was handed over in February 2025 and letting of the rooms has commenced.	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="background-color: #4F81BD; height: 10px;"></div></div> 100%	
Q. Produce and implement a carbon reduction plan for the district and for the council	Explore opportunities to utilise solar PV on council owned buildings	Kate Bailey	31-Mar-2027	Complete the solar PV project feasibility study	Feasibility study completed.	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="background-color: #4F81BD; height: 10px;"></div></div> 100%	
				Solar PV project business case	Due to external grant funding the scheme is currently with the s151 officer who is determining if the	<div style="width: 50%;"><div style="background-color: #4F81BD; height: 10px;"></div></div> 50%	

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Title	Description	Managed By	Due Date	Title	Latest Note	Progress Bar	Status Icon
				considered	scheme is viable with internal funding and capital borrowing. It is hoped a decision will be reached in early 2026.		
R. Help people make their homes more energy efficient	Use the Warm Homes Local Grant to assist residents in enhancing their home's energy efficiency	Kate Bailey	31-Mar-2026	Completion of initial works to properties.	Completed.	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;">100%</div></div>	
				Completion of HUGS project.	HUGS project is in progress. Completion date March 2025.	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;">100%</div></div>	
				Complete 12 properties as part of Warm Homes Local Grant	Warm Homes Local Grant commenced in October and by December 10 properties had work completed. Due to the quick mobilisation at the Council DESNZ have awarded us an additional 100k of funding for this financial year.	<div style="width: 90%;"><div style="width: 90%;">90%</div></div>	
S. Install electric charging points in car parks in all three towns	Install Electric Vehicle Charging Points across car parks in Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley	Ian Miller	31-Mar-2026	Complete Pre-Contract Tender Process	Completed.	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;">100%</div></div>	
				Begin installation process	The final set of site visits will be completed by 9th of February. Once this is complete, installations for Wyre Forest House and Green Street Depot can commence. The estimate commence mid-February and to be completed by the end of April 2026.	<div style="width: 0%;"><div style="width: 0%;">0%</div></div>	
				All EV charging points installed	EV charger installations have arrived at Wyre Forest, installations will commence in January and be done in 3 phases with phase 1 installation on Green St Depot and Wyre Forest House, phase 2 installation in Kidderminster car park and phase 3 installation in the Bewdley and Stourport car parks. We're still on track for project completion by the initial scheduled date.	<div style="width: 50%;"><div style="width: 50%;">50%</div></div>	

Performance indicators for 2025/2026 V2

Corporate Plan Priority	Corporate Action	Code	Owner	Measure	2024/25	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Securing financial sustainability for services that local communities value	Monitor council tax base to increase income	LA103	Lucy Wright	Percentage council tax collected	97.04%	29.19%	57.30%	85.09%		
		LA104	Lucy Wright	Percentage business rates collected	96.93%	25.79%	55.10%	81.02%		
Securing financial sustainability for services that local communities value	Monitor customer contacts to improve service provision	LA116	Helen Adderley	Number of customer contacts via hub (phone, email & visit)	45,406	11,130	10,712	9,622		
		LA117	Helen Adderley	% customer contacts that are of value	82%	80%	79%	84%		
		LA112	Helen Adderley	Number complaints received	111	31	25	45		
		LA8	Helen Adderley	Number of compliments received	89	20	23	7		
A clean, safe and green place to live, work and visit	Secure housing growth through the local plan	LA045	Kate Bailey /Helen Hawkes	Number of people presenting themselves in need of housing advice	11,762	2,692	2,570	2,198		
		LA054 a	Kate Bailey /Helen Hawkes	Number of new housing units approved in planning applications** <i>*open market and affordable housing</i>	191	73	14	1,460		
		LA039	Kate Bailey /Helen Hawkes	Number of affordable new build houses completed	199	24	28	19		
		LA106	Kate Bailey/Helen Hawkes	Percentage of applicable planning applications	16.66%	13.88%	0%	26.9%		

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				approved that will deliver Green Infrastructure						
		LA115	Kate Bailey/ Helen Hawkes	Percentage of non-major planning applications decided within 8 weeks or with an extension of time agreement	97.52%	97.19%	96.5%	88.64%		
		LA118	Kate Bailey/ Helen Hawkes	Percentage of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or with an extension of time agreement	100%	100%	100%	80%		
		LA120	Kate Bailey/ Helen Hawkes	Number of planning appeal decisions received	25	0	7	8		
		LA127	Kate Bailey/ Helen Hawkes	Percentage of planning appeal decisions not upheld	26.2%	0	57%	50%		
		LA128	Kate Bailey/ Helen Hawkes	Number of biodiversity net gain units secured by planning permission	0	0.097	0.326	1.19		
		LA129	Kate Bailey/ Helen Hawkes	Number of accessible, adaptable and wheelchair user properties approved in major planning applications	268	0	0	80		
		LA130	Sam Hawkins	Number of open planning enforcement cases	251	62	59	80		
A clean, safe and green place to live, work and visit	Support provided to low-income households	LA102	Kate Bailey/ Lucy Wright Sarah Cox	Amount spent on hardship/welfare support	£577,827	£142,144	£159,505	£59,136.49		
		LE144	Lucy Wright	Number of households on council tax reduction scheme	-	7,405	7,351	7,442		
		LE145	Lucy Wright	Number of households on housing benefit	-	2,656	2,439	2,297		

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		LA146	Lucy Wright	Average days to process new housing benefit claims	24.59 days	21.91 days	19.54 days	18.29 days		
		LA147	Lucy Wright	Average days to process new council tax reduction scheme claims	72.58 days	25.72 days	28.35 days	24.93 days		
		LA148	Lucy Wright	Average days to process housing benefit change of circumstances	9.68 days	8.28 days	6.95 days	5.5 days		
		LA149	Lucy Wright	Average days to process council tax reduction scheme changes of circumstances	22.26 days	12.04 days	11.33 days	8.12 days		
A clean, safe and green place to live, work and visit	Contribute to making the district a clean, safe and green place to live, work and visit	LA150	Dave Johnson	Number of cyber security incidents detected from various sources and systems <i>including emails, endpoints and web browsing</i>	-	1,368,266	75,103	175,361		
		LA071	Sharon Clifford-Smith /Lesley Bayliss	Number of fly-tipping incidents	832	194	302	251		
		LA107	Sharon Clifford-Smith /Lesley Bayliss	Number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued	110	18	31	33		
		LA151	Sharon Clifford-Smith /Lesley Bayliss	Number of Fly-tipping Prosecution Secured	-	0	0	0		
		LE011 a LE011 b	Sharon Clifford-Smith /Lesley Bayliss	Number of Penalty Charge Notices issued Off street On street In total	2,528 3,585 6,113	608 727 1,335	424 827 1,251	544 1,082 1,626		

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		LE016	Amy Smith	Number of visitors to Bewdley Museum	220,245	72,878	79,507	56,904		
		LE032	Faye Parrett	Number of visitors to Wyre Forest Leisure Centre	596,305	150,260	142,232	138,364		
		LA108	Oliver Price/ Adam Wright	Number of new trees planted	10,270	0	0	1,070		
		LA044	Kate Bailey /Sarah Cox	Number of residents who experience a positive health outcome because of a housing improvement intervention	275	38	44	72		
		LA152	Kate Bailey /Jennifer Moreton	Tonnes of CO2 equivalent from WFDC fleet and operations – yearly	964.12t CO2e	-	-	-		
		LA153	Richard Osborn	Number of homes and business receiving flood risk reduction measures	-	6	0	10		
		LA154	Oliver Price	Total Household Waste Collected – kg per household	38	39.58	34.06	38.11		
		LA155	Oliver Price	Total Household Recycling Collected – kg per household – yearly figure	15	-	-	-		
		LA065	Oliver Price	Percentage of household waste reused / recycled / composted – yearly figure	35%	-	-	-		

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Cabinet
Wednesday 8 April 2026**

**Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Thursday 5 March 2026**

Budget and Performance Monitoring Quarter Three 2025-26

The Committee considered a draft of a Cabinet report from the Head of Resources and s151 Officer, which briefed members on the Council's financial and other performance at the end of Quarter 3 ending 31st December 2025 and to present the emerging budget pressures and known variances that are likely to have an impact on the outturn position for the 2025-26 financial year.

The Principal Finance Manager and Deputy s151 Officer presented the first part of the report and gave members the opportunity to ask questions and make comments. The Head of Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services then presented the performance part of the report. Members were invited to raise questions and comments.

Recommendation: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the information in the report and recommend to Cabinet to NOTE:

- **The projected budget variations, virements and comments within this report and Appendices 1 to 4 of the report.**
- **The performance against measures and actions as set out in the report and Appendix 5 of the report.**
- **The recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 March 2026.**

Background papers:

See the report on page 10 of the pdf at this link:

https://forms.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/council/docs/doc61186_20260305_o_and_s_committee_agenda.pdf

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET REPORT

8th April 2026

Contract for the provision of Measured Term General Building Maintenance & Electrical Services

Open	
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor David Ross, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Faye Parrett, Head of Commercial Services
CONTACT OFFICERS:	James Leach – Ext. 2717 Facilities Manager James.leach@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 – evaluation criteria

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek approval for the tender evaluation model proposed for the procurement of measured Term contracts for General Building Maintenance and Electrical Services.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 **Cabinet is asked to:**

- **Approve the procurement and tender evaluation model contained in appendix 1 of this report.**
- **Delegate authority to award the contract to the Head of Commercial Services in consultation with the Solicitor to the Council, Head of Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Finance and the Capital Portfolio.**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council's existing Building Maintenance Contract for planned and reactive maintenance of the Council's property portfolio expires on the 10th October 2026, and the existing contract for electrical services expires on 30th November 2026.

3.2 To ensure that the Council's property assets continue to be maintained it is essential that new repairs and maintenance contract(s) are entered into. The scope of the contract(s) will cover planned and reactive maintenance. Planned maintenance will take place over the length of the contract(s) according to stock condition schedules.

- 3.3 Gas plant and mechanical maintenance, including the maintenance of the ground source heat pumps at Wyre Forest House, have previously been tendered as separate contracts and are therefore not included in this report. However, this contract is due to expire on 31 July 2026, due to the value of this contract this will not require Cabinet approval.
- 3.4 As the contract value is over £170,000, the procurement is being carried out in accordance with The Procurement Act 2023, which is subject to a strict procurement timetable and advice will be sought from the Procurement team and Solicitor to the Council.
- 3.5 It is proposed that the Tender be evaluated on a 'Price' and 'Quality' basis – 40% Price and 60% Quality. The detailed evaluation and assessment criteria can be found in appendix 1.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The new measured term general building maintenance contract is proposed to be for a period of 3 years with the option to extend for another 1 year plus the option to extend for a further 1 year (5-year maximum contract).
- 4.2 Both contracts will be advertised as one tender, encompassing two lots. Both lots may be awarded to a single contractor or two separate contractors.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Revenue budgets are available for each of the Council's property assets to meet the service requirements included in the scope of this tender.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As stated in the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules Cabinet Approval is sought for procurements where the value of the purchase is estimated to be in excess of £170,000.
- 6.2 The successful tenderer will be required to enter into a formal contract prepared by the Council's Contract Solicitor.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Failure to implement a new Measured Term contract for General Building Maintenance and Electrical Services will jeopardise the health, safety and welfare of Council employees, their visitors and general public who enter Council owned land and buildings. It will also impact on the condition of the Council's property assets and the resources required to enter contractual arrangements for each item of maintenance required, and on the Council's ability to have urgent work completed.
- 7.2 The contractor will be required to provide an out of hour's service for urgent, unforeseen work, which could be essential to the Council's business continuity.
- 7.3 There is a financial risk if the tender submissions are higher than the allocated budget, this will be monitored through the process.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT (EIA)

8.1 This report relates solely to the procurement of contractors to deliver works for Wyre Forest District Council so there is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment. The fundamental principles of no discrimination and transparency relate to all procurement exercises.

8.2 Climate Change: Environmental factors are incorporated into the weighting criteria for selection of contractors.

8.3 Health and Wellbeing – ensuring the Health and Wellbeing of our staff within Council buildings has been considered.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 It is essential that the relevant contracts are in place to commence upon expiry of the existing contracts, to enable continuity of provision of a repair and maintenance service to the Council's property portfolio.

9.2 Building maintenance budgets are in place and are monitored by the Officers in charge of the Council's property with support from the Facilities Manager.

10. CONSULTEES

10.1 Corporate Leadership Team
Head of Commercial Services
Contracts Solicitor
Procurement Officer
Finance Officer
Facilities Manager

Appendix 1 – Evaluation Criteria

It is proposed that the Tender be evaluated on a ‘Price’ and ‘Quality’ basis – 40% Price and 60% Quality.

The quality elements of the Tender in each Lot will be evaluated in accordance with the criteria below –

Question Title	Percentage Weighting
1) Works Order Processing	15
2) Quality Control & Standards	20
3) Response Times & Out of Hours Service	20
4) CDM 2015 Compliance	10
5) Extra-Schedule Works	20
6) Added Value Proposals	15

Questions

1) Works Order Processing

Explain your works processing system from receiving a works order from a customer through to completion detailing how the flow of information is communicated.

Please show how the Council can track work requests issued through your system.

Please state whether the Council’s works requisition form is compatible with your system and clarify whether any amendment would be required, providing a sample of your works request form if necessary.

2) Quality Control & Standards

Please provide details of measures taken to ensure that the quality of works meets the required standards and how standards are monitored and maintained including performance indicators.

Please provide details of any training or supervision policies in place.

Please provide details of management systems in place for the management of subcontractors.

Please provide details of any proposals you have for recruiting employees/apprentices within the Wyre Forest area.

3) Response times and Out of Hours Service

Please provide examples of your current priority coding and response times. (The Council’s current immediate call out time is 2 hours; emergency call out time 24 hours; urgent 7 days; routine call 21 days; and planned maintenance within 56 days).

Please explain your out of hours emergency call out procedure.

Please provide any evidence that you have the ability to meet the responses set out above.

4) CDM 2015 Compliance

Please provide a sample Method statement and Risk Assessment for replacing a second-floor external window in a two story listed building which verges on a public footpath.

Please provide details of your proposals for submission/agreement of method statements and risk assessments prior to commencement of the work.

5) Extra Schedule Works

The successful contractor shall be required to provide quotations for nonstandard works (items not included in the Schedule of Rates), please explain your processes and timescales for returning completed quotations. (The minimum requirement of the Council is that quotes under £1,000 are returned within a week and those over £1,000 to be returned within 2 weeks).

6) Added Value Proposals

Please provide any further information which has not specifically been requested but is relevant to how you would perform the services to the standards required.

Please provide details of any further benefits you would provide or improvements you would make to the delivery of the contract objectives.

Assessment Matrix

The following matrix illustrates how responses to the evaluation criteria will be assessed. The scores for each question will be used to calculate a percentage weighting based on the weightings attributed to each question in the qualitative assessment.

Performance	Judgment	Score
Exceeds all expectations	Exceptional	10
Exceeds almost all expectations	Outstanding	9
Exceeds most expectations	Very good	8
Above Expectations	Good	7
Slightly exceeds expectations	Fair	6
Meets expectations	Average	5
Satisfactory but below expectations	Below average	4
Below expectations	Poor	3
Well below expectations	Weak	2
Almost Unacceptable	Very Weak	1
Unacceptable		0

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

8 APRIL 2026

Bewdley Conservation Area Character Appraisal

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Dan Morehead, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Localism
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Kate Bailey, Head of Strategic Growth
CONTACT OFFICER:	Jamie Richards, Conservation Officer
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 - Draft Bewdley Conservation Area Character Appraisal

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the Draft Bewdley Conservation Area Character Appraisal and agree that it be consulted upon.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is invited to:

- 2.1 Review and approve the draft Bewdley Conservation Area Character Appraisal and agree to a 4-week public consultation between the 13th April and the 10th May.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The current Bewdley Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA) dates from 2001 (other than a partial update in 2015 to reflect changes to national and local policy) and requires updating to reflect the latest guidance from Historic England.
- 3.2 The updated Bewdley Conservation Area Character Appraisal has been prepared through a detailed review of the existing appraisal, combined with site surveys and an assessment of changes that have occurred within the Conservation Area since the previous document was produced. This included reviewing buildings, streetscape features, public realm works and recent developments, as well as considering completed projects such as flood defence works and building restoration schemes. The document has also been updated to reflect current national planning policy and guidance, including that produced by Historic England.

3.3 At this stage the draft appraisal has been prepared by officers as an evidence-based update. Engagement with relevant local groups will take place as part of the formal consultation process. Bewdley Town Council and Bewdley Civic Society will be invited to review and comment on the draft document during the consultation period. There will also be the opportunity to hold meetings or discussions with these groups, and with members of the public if required, to gather feedback and ensure local knowledge and perspectives can inform the final version of the appraisal before adoption.

4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 In accordance with the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 it is necessary to take stock of the significance of the Bewdley conservation area and also set out the actions to preserve and enhance its special architectural and historic interest.

4.2 The Bewdley Conservation Area is 42.8 hectares in extent and is made up of a wide variety of buildings dating from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Historic streetscape and vernacular architecture in Bewdley represents some of the most significant within Wyre Forest.

4.3 The area has suffered from flooding historically and has undergone a significant programme of works to defend against this. Moreover, there has been restoration work to buildings within the area which is not reflected in the current appraisal.

4.4 It is proposed that a four-week consultation be held between 13 April and 10 May 2026. The following measures will be taken to publicise the consultation:

- Displaying information on the District Council's website
- Press release
- Targeted consultation with Bewdley Town Council and Bewdley Civic Society
- Providing electronic or hard copies of the consultation document in the WFDC offices.

4.5 All responses received will be reported to this committee in due course alongside the final version of the character appraisal. It is anticipated that the documents will be adopted in the summer/autumn of 2026.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The costs of reviewing and subsequently adopting the CACA relate to staff time. These will be met by existing planning budgets.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATION

6.1 The document has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Equality – an Equality Impact Screening Assessment has been undertaken (please see [EqIA - Bewdley Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Recommendations | Wyre Forest District Council](#)) and concluded that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.
- 7.2. Health – it is considered that the management recommendations included in the Character Appraisal will, if enacted, have a positive impact on the well-being of the local population
- 7.3 Climate Change – n/a

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 The existing Character Appraisal needs updating to reflect the latest guidance and changes to policy. Also, the current document does not contain any management recommendations or assess the significance of the Conservation Area.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Members are requested to agree to a 4-week consultation on the draft document between 13 April and 10 May 2026

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 CLT
- 10.2 Planning Manager

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 N/A

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This appraisal concerns the Bewdley Conservation Area, located in the town of Bewdley, Worcestershire. The Conservation Area was first designated in 1968 and subsequently reviewed in 1976. It extends across approximately 42.8 hectares (105.7 acres) and includes the town centre, adjoining residential streets, sections of the River Severn and its riverfront landscapes, as well as part of the historic settlement of Wribbenhall. The built character largely reflects development from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, although the origins of settlement in the area are earlier.

Comments within this appraisal cover both Enhancement Sites and Neutral Sites, which provide a snapshot of conditions at the time of writing, while other observations on the overall character of the Area are intended to remain more enduring.

A map at the end of this document illustrates the Conservation Area boundary along with key features referenced in the text.

2.0 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The legal definition of a Conservation Area is set out in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as:

“an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”

Under this legislation, local planning authorities have a duty to designate areas which meet this definition and to ensure that their special character is protected through the planning process.

Section 72 of the Act places a further statutory duty on local planning authorities, requiring that in the exercise of planning functions within a Conservation Area:

“special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”

This duty is central to the planning system's approach to the historic environment. It requires decision-makers to give careful consideration to the impact of development proposals on the character and appearance of a Conservation Area and to ensure that these qualities are preserved or enhanced wherever possible.

The meaning of “preserve” in this context has been clarified through case law. The courts have established that preservation does not necessarily require improvement; development which leaves the character or appearance of a Conservation Area unharmed can be considered to preserve it. At the same time, the courts have made clear that greater care and stricter control over development is expected within conservation areas than elsewhere.

More recent judgments have reinforced the importance of the statutory duty. In particular, the courts have confirmed that decision-makers must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area when determining planning applications.

National planning policy supports this legislative framework. The National Planning Policy Framework recognises the historic environment as an irreplaceable resource and requires that heritage assets, including Conservation Areas, are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets when considering development proposals that may affect them.

The National Planning Policy Framework also emphasises that the significance of heritage assets can be harmed or lost through inappropriate development within their setting or

through alterations that fail to respect their historic character. As such, proposals affecting Conservation Areas should demonstrate a clear understanding of their significance and respond positively to the qualities that justify their designation.

Historic England provides further guidance on the designation, appraisal and management of Conservation Areas. This guidance encourages local planning authorities to prepare detailed appraisals in order to identify the features which contribute positively to the special interest of each area. By clearly defining these characteristics, conservation area appraisals provide an important framework for managing change and ensuring that future development respects the historic environment.

This appraisal therefore seeks to identify and describe the key elements which contribute to the special architectural and historic interest of the Bewdley Conservation Area. In doing so, it provides a clear basis for the careful management of change within the area and will inform future planning decisions, conservation policies, and potential measures such as boundary reviews, Article 4 Directions, design guidance, and enforcement action where appropriate.

3.0 MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Bewdley Conservation Area possesses considerable architectural and historic significance, reflecting the town's development as an important crossing point of the River Severn and a prosperous centre of trade from the medieval period through the Georgian period. The quality and coherence of the townscape, together with the close relationship between the built form, the river, and the surrounding landscape, give the area a distinctive and recognisable character. The continued preservation and enhancement of these qualities should therefore remain the principal objective of future management.

The majority of buildings within the Conservation Area remain in good or fair condition and continue to contribute positively to its historic character. However, there remain opportunities to enhance the area where modern alterations, intrusive materials, or unsympathetic developments have eroded the historic qualities of the townscape. Addressing these issues gradually through careful management and sensitive redevelopment will help reinforce the architectural integrity of the Conservation Area and ensure that its special interest is maintained.

One of the more common issues affecting the character of the Conservation Area is the incremental alteration of historic buildings through the introduction of modern materials and features that are not in keeping with their original design. Alterations such as the installation of uPVC windows and doors, inappropriate rooflights, cement-based pointing, and the painting or rendering of previously exposed brickwork can diminish the authenticity and visual coherence of the historic environment. External fixtures such as satellite dishes, modern signage, and other fittings attached directly to historic masonry can also detract from the architectural character of buildings and, in some cases, cause physical damage to the historic fabric. Where opportunities arise, efforts should be made to reverse such alterations and encourage the reinstatement of traditional materials and detailing that reflect the established character of the area.

Commercial frontages within the town centre also present opportunities for enhancement. In some cases, modern shopfronts, fascias, and display windows have been introduced which fail to respect the historic proportions and detailing of the buildings to which they are attached. Over time, the gradual replacement of these features with more sympathetic designs would help to restore the architectural rhythm and visual harmony of the street. Improvements may include the use of traditional materials, appropriate fascia proportions, and detailing that reflects the historic character of the host building and the wider streetscape.

There are also a small number of sites within the Conservation Area that make a neutral or limited contribution to its character. These include certain twentieth-century buildings and utilitarian structures which, while not significantly harmful to the area, do not reflect the historic architectural qualities that define much of Bewdley's built environment. Should

opportunities for redevelopment arise, these locations offer potential for enhancement. Any new development should respond positively to the surrounding historic context through the careful use of appropriate scale, materials, and design.

The public realm plays an important role in shaping the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Elements such as modern street furniture, signage, and extensive areas of standard tarmac surfacing can detract from the historic setting. Opportunities should therefore be explored to improve the quality and appearance of the public realm over time. This may include the introduction of more sympathetic paving materials, improved lighting columns designed with regard to the historic environment, and the rationalisation of unnecessary signage and street clutter. Any such improvements should be carefully designed to complement the historic character of the town.

The landscape setting of Bewdley is one of its defining characteristics. The relationship between the historic town and the River Severn, together with views towards the surrounding countryside and wooded hillsides, contributes significantly to the character of the Conservation Area. The preservation of these views and the protection of open spaces along the river corridor are therefore important considerations in the management of the area. Mature trees and historic planting also make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the town and should be retained and managed appropriately.

Landscape management may also present opportunities to reinforce the historic character of the area. In certain locations, the reintroduction of traditional planting associated with the riverside environment may help to strengthen the historic setting. Equally, care should be taken to ensure that new planting does not obscure important views or alter the historic spatial relationships between buildings and open spaces.

The updated Conservation Area Appraisal will serve as an important tool in managing change within Bewdley. By clearly identifying the elements that contribute positively to the significance of the area, including its historic buildings, street pattern, public spaces, and landscape setting, the appraisal will provide a framework for assessing future development proposals. This will help ensure that alterations, new development, and public realm works respect the established character of the town in terms of scale, materials, and architectural detailing.

Through careful management, sensitive redevelopment, and the gradual removal of unsympathetic alterations, the special architectural and historic character of the Bewdley Conservation Area can be preserved and enhanced. In doing so, the area will continue to reflect the rich history of the town while remaining an attractive and distinctive environment for residents, businesses, and visitors.

4.0 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

4.1 Setting and Topography

Several aspects of the setting and topography, both within and adjoining the Conservation Area, contribute significantly to its character:

a) The Conservation Area occupies the historic core of Bewdley, a town that sits within and is partly screened by unspoilt, undulating countryside. The Area covers a substantial portion of the town and, in some places, adjoins open countryside, making the rural setting an integral part of its character. Much of this surrounding landscape was designated in the Worcestershire County Development Plan of the 1950s as an *Area of Great Landscape Value*, and successive Local Plans have continued to recognise its high landscape quality. To the west, north, and south lies the Wyre Forest and its associated landscapes, acknowledged as being of national importance for nature conservation. On the opposite side of the River Severn, the urban fringe is entirely designated as Green Belt. Safeguarding this rural setting

is essential to conserving the character of both the town and the Conservation Area, with careful attention given to the interrelationship between the Area and its wider landscape context.



*Rural setting of Bewdley,
looking south from Trimpley Lane*

The River Severn cuts a broad valley through the centre of both the town and the Conservation Area, forming one of its most defining features. Within this stretch the channel varies between about 40 and 55 metres in width. For much of its length, the riverbanks are faced with natural sandstone blocks, historically forming the town's quaysides. The river serves to draw the countryside directly into the heart of the town, particularly where the settlement narrows towards the river to the north and south. With only a single bridge crossing within the town centre and Conservation Area, views up and downstream from the bridge and adjoining quaysides remain open, uninterrupted, and strongly connected to the surrounding landscape.



*Severn Bank House (right) and the Old School buildings (left)
adjoining the south east side of Lax Lane*

Either side of the river lie natural floodplain terraces or shelves. On the south-west bank the terrace extends for roughly 100 metres, and on the north-east side it is slightly wider. These areas were largely developed before the twentieth century to create the historic town centre, while later development tended to occupy higher ground, encouraging the town to grow east-west rather than along the river terraces. As a result, much of the riverside has remained as open meadows, providing immediate and valuable links between the Conservation Area and the wider countryside. From a conservation perspective, it is important to safeguard these areas from further built development, recognising that the zone of character extends beyond the current Conservation Area boundary to include the meadows and riverside footpaths.

The area of interest also encompasses several historic buildings outside the existing boundary. These include properties along the south-east side of Lax Lane, Mill House (formerly Severnside Mill), Springfield Villas and Springfield Place on Riverside North, and No. 21 Stourport Road. The land and buildings at the south-east end of Riverside North form a visually prominent site and play an important role in the immediate setting. Here, late nineteenth-century buildings such as Springfield Villas and Springfield House integrate reasonably well into their surroundings, whereas three late twentieth-century commercial buildings in the same location appear out of keeping and visually intrusive.

Beyond the river terraces the land rises into a series of small hills, significantly higher than the town centre, which provide a strong sense of natural enclosure to the Conservation Area. Key features include:

- **East side of the River:**

- **Maypole Piece:** This largely undeveloped hill is a highly visible feature, especially from the Severn Valley Railway and from the main eastern approach into Bewdley along Kidderminster Road. It is also prominent in views looking north-east from the central bridge, from the northern end of Lax Lane, Severnside South, and Venus Bank. Despite lying well within the modern town boundary, its open, undeveloped character lends a rural quality to the area and helps to separate the eastern edge of the Conservation Area from later development in northern Wribbenhall.

The upper slopes and the land adjoining the northern edge of the Severn Valley Railway Station are characterised by substantial tree and shrub cover, which enhances both the visual and ecological value of the hillside. By contrast, housing development on the lower western slopes, particularly around Maypole Close, integrates poorly with the character of the Conservation Area.

From a conservation perspective it is important to resist any further built development on Maypole Piece and to ensure that existing vegetation is maintained. The area of character interest here extends beyond the current Conservation Area boundary, particularly across the ridgeline and the adjoining slopes to the south-east and north-east.

Clarence Way/Gloucester Way and The Summer House: This partially developed hillside forms a key link to the open countryside to the north-west and is highly visible from multiple viewpoints, including the Severn Valley Steam Railway, the main eastern approach along Kidderminster Road, the central bridge, the River frontages on the south-west bank, and rising ground to the west such as Venus Bank.

The slopes are densely wooded, predominantly with deciduous species, while scattered along the crest are several specimen conifers planted within the grounds of The Summer House, a large, isolated period property that occupies a prominent position on the skyline. Late twentieth-century housing on the eastern side of the slope contrasts with the historic character and integrates poorly with the surrounding landscape.

From a conservation perspective, it is important to maintain the undeveloped nature of the crest and western slopes, as well as the direct visual and physical link to the open countryside to the north-west.



Wooded hilltop associated with the Summer House, from Severnside South, with Beales Corner to the fore

West side of the River:

Venus Bank and Patchetts Hill: This hillside, located to the north-west of the Conservation Area, is partially developed. Development on the lower and middle slopes of Venus Bank generally integrates well with the character of the Area, with many buildings following historic plot patterns and reflecting the scale and style of older properties. By contrast, housing on the upper slopes (particularly off Church View and Woodthorpe Drive) has been less successful in blending with the historic character. Modern houses on Church View appear conspicuous on the skyline when viewed from key vantage points, including the central River bridge.



Venus Bank viewed from the central bridge

From a conservation perspective, it is important to preserve the remaining undeveloped land at the south-east end of Church View and off Richmond Road, and to prevent further infill or intensification across the hillside. The area of character interest at this location extends beyond the current Conservation Area boundary to include the undeveloped land at the end of Church View, which contributes significantly to the wider setting and should be retained in its natural state.

Vegetation and Parkland: Mature vegetation is an important element of the Conservation Area's setting and can be seen from a number of vantage points, including the railway station at Wribbenhall, the public car park off Lax Lane, riverside walks, and in views south-east along High Street. These wooded areas link with the historic parkland and gardens of Kateshill House and Winterdyne House, the latter being recognised by the Hereford and Worcester Gardens Preservation Trust as a site of local importance.

The area is characterised by a wide variety of trees, hedgerows, shrubs, and ornamental planting, all of which contribute significantly to its visual interest and landscape character. A further distinctive feature is Red Hill, the narrow road leading to the hamlet of Ribbesford, which for a short section is cut directly into the sandstone bedrock. This cutting is a notable characteristic of the area and adds to its historic and scenic quality.

From a conservation perspective, it is important that this area remains free from further built development, that the existing vegetation is preserved, and that the distinctive character of the roadway is maintained. At this point the area of character interest extends beyond the present Conservation Area boundary, particularly to include Winterdyne House and its associated parkland.

Winbrook: This twisting gully, with a road running along its base, forms the main approach into and out of the western side of the Conservation Area. Its steep slopes and the gradient of the road create a strong sense of enclosure and movement. Although now within the town boundary, the gully sides retain undeveloped areas both inside and beyond the Conservation Area, which contribute to a distinctly rural character. A narrow, winding footpath runs along the upper northern slope, linking land within the Area to that beyond its boundary.

Retention of these undeveloped areas is important, and they could be considered for designation as Urban Open Space. Several historic buildings and plots of interest also lie just beyond the current boundary in this location, and their preservation is desirable. The area of character interest here therefore extends beyond the Conservation Area, particularly to include the older buildings and open land adjoining the footpath north of Cleobury Road (between the footpath and Cleobury Road) and stretching westwards to the junction with Merricks Lane.

Later expansion of the town: The historic core of Bewdley has expanded over time with suburban development on both sides of the River predominantly along an east–west axis. To the west, this growth largely occurred during the twentieth century, while to the east it took place during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. On the eastern side, the area of character interest extends beyond the current boundary to include buildings along both sides of Kidderminster Road, culminating with All Saints Church. Further east, a group of mid-nineteenth-century dwellings located at the south-west end of Habberley Road and along the Kidderminster Road form an important historic gateway corridor into the town.

4.2 Historic Evolution

The Conservation Area encompasses the historic core of Bewdley and its adjoining landscape. While prehistoric and Roman artefacts have been discovered here, the surviving built fabric dates largely from the medieval period onwards.

Bewdley itself is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, although Wribbenhall appears under the name "Bailiwick," recorded as part of the manor of Kidderminster. The

earliest surviving reference to Bewdley, then called “Beaulieu,” dates from 1304, when it was associated with a manor on the west bank of the River Severn.

The town’s location has long been shaped by its role as a key crossing point of the Severn, a factor likely central to its origins. A ford probably existed here from an early date, followed by a ferry service first documented in 1336. The first bridge was built in 1447.

During the late 14th and 15th centuries Bewdley expanded, with ferry profits increasing and the number of free tenants rising steadily. The first burgage was recorded in 1367, and in 1376 permission was granted for a market on Wyre Hill. By the mid-15th century, a marketplace had been established in Load Street. Around this time the settlement evolved from a linear village along Wyre Hill and the ford approach into a planned town with a chapel (c.1450) in Load Street, laid-out streets, and gates (now lost). Bewdley’s prestige was enhanced in the 16th century by the presence of Tickenhill, a royal palace built by Henry VII for his son Arthur, where the Court of the Marches often spent summers. A number of timber-framed buildings from this period survive.

The timber bridge of 1447 was rebuilt in 1460, and replaced with a stone bridge in 1483, which remained until the current bridge was constructed in 1798.

By the late medieval and early modern periods, Bewdley had grown into a prosperous inland port, facilitating trade between the Upper Severn Valley, the Black Country, and Bristol. The town also became a focus for nonconformist religious groups, many of whom established chapels tucked away from the main streets in accordance with restrictions of the time. As a market and trading centre, Bewdley supported a wide variety of crafts and industries including cloth, leather, and rope making. The navigable river and nearby Wyre Forest, rich in natural resources, enabled the town to attract trade well beyond what might be expected for a settlement of its size.

By the mid-18th century, Bewdley ranked as one of the country’s most important inland ports. Its strategic location made it a centre for the trans-shipment of bar-iron and other goods from Wales and the west, either overland to the growing industries of Birmingham or downstream to Bristol. Prosperity at this time was reflected in an impressive building programme: elegant Georgian houses, remodelled façades, and substantial merchants’ residences overlooking the town. Many of these still stand, though often subdivided. While Bewdley’s medieval origins remain visible, Pevsner (writing in the mid-20th century) described it as “the most perfect small Georgian town in Worcestershire,” underlining the enduring significance of this later architectural legacy.

The town’s fortunes declined in the late 18th century with the arrival of canals, particularly the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal (c.1771), which created the rival port of Stourport-on-Severn just a few miles south. Thereafter Bewdley remained a market town but lost its wider trading importance. The arrival of the railway in the mid-19th century, linking Wribbenhall with Kidderminster and Bridgnorth, did little to reverse this. Unlike many towns, Bewdley largely escaped extensive Victorian redevelopment. With reduced commercial activity, it retained much of its historic form into the 19th and early 20th centuries, helping preserve its architectural character.

The town is also notable as the birthplace of Sir Stanley Baldwin, later Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, who served as Prime Minister three times in the early 20th century. His birthplace, 15 Lower Park, still survives, though now divided into flats.

In the later 20th century, the introduction of modern planning controls coincided with substantial suburban growth around both Bewdley and Wribbenhall, much of which failed to integrate with the historic townscape. In 1986 the construction of a southern bypass, including a second crossing of the Severn, eased pressure from through traffic within the historic core, helping to protect the character of the Conservation Area.

4.3 Land Uses

a) Residential – Flats and apartments above shops in Load Street, together with dwellings in all other streets. Many of the larger historic properties have been subdivided into smaller units over time. Notably, a significant proportion of shops are occupied by small independent businesses rather than national chains, which contributes to the town's distinctive local character and interest.



Dwellings in Lax Lane

- b) Leisure, recreation and tourism; including a museum, small hotels, pubs, restaurants and footpaths.
- c) Ecclesiastical buildings in High Street and the centre of Load Street.
- d) Railway station and railway infrastructure dating from the mid-nineteenth century, in Wribbenhall. This is now part of the Severn Valley Steam Railway.

Traditional uses which have now ceased, but for which surviving buildings and structures remain, include:

- a) Riverside quays and warehouses – Examples include Nos. 8–13 Stourport Road and Ricketts Place, which have since been converted into residential flats and dwellings.
- b) Leather tanning in Severnside South (now Telford Court flats).
- c) Rope making in buildings between Westbourne Street and Stephenson Place.
- d) Horn works/workhouse to the rear of No. 64 High Street.
- e) Bakeries and small workshops, including to the rear of properties, for example, to the rear of Nos. 14 & 20, High Street
- f) Court, town jail and foundry, in the current town hall and museum complex, Load Street
- g) Almshouses, which are all still in residential use, for example Burltons almshouses in Park Lane and Cooke's Almshouses in Park Lane.
- h) School buildings in High Street, Lax Lane and Westbourne Street.

It is important that historic buildings and structures, such as those noted above, are retained as they provide tangible reminders of the town's evolution. In some cases, sensitive adaptation to new uses may be appropriate, provided that this is compatible with the character and integrity of the original building or structure.



Former warehouse (now flats) adjoining Stourport Road in Wribbenhall

Outside the Conservation Area but within the wider town, there is a notable absence of large-scale industrial premises, major retail units, or other sizeable modern buildings. This absence contributes significantly to the character of the area, helping Bewdley to retain the scale and atmosphere of a small town despite later expansion. Beyond the town, the surrounding landscape remains predominantly agricultural and wooded, reinforcing the historic relationship between settlement and countryside.

4.4 Colours

The principal colours within the Area include:

- a) Black or dark brown timber framing with white or cream infill panels characteristic of 15th–17th century buildings;
- b) Reddish-plum brickwork with white mortar typical of Georgian and later buildings;
- c) White-painted window and door frames;
- d) White or cream rendered walls and painted brickwork;
- e) Red and yellow-green tones of natural sandstone;
- f) Reddish-brown handmade clay roof tiles;
- g) Occasional grey tones of natural slate roofs;
- h) Grey tarmac surfaces of roads and pavements;
- i) Greens of grass, shrubs, trees, and the undeveloped hillsides;
- j) Greys and browns of deciduous trees during their leafless seasons;
- k) Deep greens of scattered coniferous trees present year-round;
- l) Reflected colours on the surface of the River.

Beyond the Conservation Area, dominant colours are those of the wider landscape: vibrant greens of grass and trees in summer, shifting to gold, grey, and brown tones as deciduous trees change with the seasons.

4.5 Climate

Climate exerts several influences on the character and development of the Area:

- a) Roofs are typically pitched rather than flat, designed to shed rainwater efficiently. Coping on free-standing walls is often semi-circular to assist drainage and reduce frost damage. Doorways frequently feature pediments or simple pointed canopies, and eaves commonly project slightly, both to deflect rainwater and as a modest decorative device.

b) There is little evidence of trees being shaped by wind pressure, or of buildings having been deliberately designed with blank elevations to face prevailing winds.

c) Few buildings appear to have been orientated specifically to maximise sunlight; instead, their alignment follows the established street pattern.

d) A major and recurring climatic issue for the town is flooding from the River Severn. During winter the river can rise by more than fifteen feet, threatening the lower levels of the town. This may explain why some of the earliest buildings were located on higher ground, such as at Wyre Hill, Winbrook and Welch Gate. However, the convenience of riverside trade meant that many older buildings, including warehouses, were still constructed close to the river's edge.

The problem of annual flooding is now partly addressed through the Bewdley Flood Alleviation Scheme, begun in 2001 and completed in September 2025. The scheme provides a demountable aluminium flood barrier along Severnside North during high-risk periods. While effective, the silver colour of the barrier appears discordant with the Area's traditional palette, and the permanent ground fixtures, bridge fittings and walling on the edge of the Conservation Area are also visually intrusive. Nevertheless, the completed scheme is expected to provide long-term protection for many historic buildings from repeated flood damage.

4.6 Trees

Tree cover within the Area is extensive and makes a significant contribution to its character. Most trees are situated within private gardens or in public gardens and open spaces, while roadside planting is not generally a defining feature.

Some of the most notable concentrations of trees include:



Important trees comprising the woodland of the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Gardens

- a) Along the east bank of the River Severn, stretching between Beales Corner and Millside Court/Sevenside Mill, and continuing along the riverbanks beyond the Conservation Area boundary.
- a) In the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Gardens and the woodland adjoining its southern corner.
- c) In the Lychgate Gardens off Westbourne Street.
- b) Trees between Pleasant Harbour and the eastern end of the central bridge.
- c) Within the majority of domestic gardens, except for those properties located along Load Street.
- d) On the surrounding hillsides and ridgelines—particularly east of Northwood Lane and around The Summer House; to the rear of High Street; around Tickenhill (including its extensive holly boundary hedge); Kateshill and Winterdyne; Maypole Piece; and in private gardens on Venus Bank.
- e) Along Redhill and Kateshill, where the canopy almost completely encloses the roadway, creating a distinctive tunnel-like effect in summer.
- f) Following the watercourses south of Tickenhill. This area has been identified by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust (and in the District Local Plan) as a Special Wildlife Site.

Smaller clusters of trees and shrubs are often glimpsed from the streets, visible through alleys, archways, and above boundary walls. Whether in small groups or larger stands, their presence is vital in softening the edges of the built form and in enriching the visual character of the Area.

The extensive hillside grounds are largely planted with mature, dense groups of native deciduous species. These provide substantial cover to the slopes, while still allowing important outward views from the houses to remain open. Interspersed within these native plantings are occasional specimen conifers. In winter, these conifers stand out strongly against the bare branches of deciduous trees, adding colour and structure to the views. In summer, the native trees dominate the scene, yet without wholly concealing the conifers. A number of the most significant trees within the Area are protected by Tree Preservation Orders.

A small group of three non-native deciduous trees has been planted on the quayside in front of No. 3 Sevenside South. Their presence appears out of keeping in this historically open setting. Ideally, these trees should be removed to restore the area's historic character, to maintain clear views of the adjoining buildings from the central bridge and Beales Corner, and to avoid the potential for future root-related damage to the quayside structure.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable loss of traditional riverside willow trees along the east bank adjoining the Millside Court and Sevenside Mill housing development. The replanting and retention of willow trees in this location would be desirable, both to help stabilise the riverbank and to provide seasonal screening of the Sevenside Mill development, which is of a relatively inconspicuous and less sympathetic design.

By contrast, the area of open embankment in front of Beales Corner remains largely free of trees. This open character should be preserved, as introducing new tree planting here would obscure important views of the Beales Corner buildings when seen from the central bridge and the opposite bank of the River Severn.

4.7 Historic Street Pattern and Movement

Town Plan and Street Pattern

The overall plan of Bewdley is defined by two distinct parts lying on either side of the River Severn and its central bridge, with the historic parish of Bewdley on the north-west bank and Wribbenhall on the south-east bank.

The basic plan of the town centre (on the western bank) is broadly rectangular, its long axis aligned parallel with the river. Within this framework, Sevenside South forms the lower riverside route and High Street the higher route above, the two being connected at either end

by Load Street to the northwest and Lax Lane to the southeast. Immediately north of this rectangle lies a triangular extension comprising Severnside North, which turns west along Dog Lane to reconnect with the western end of Load Street.

From the north-west and south-west corners of the town's core, a number of roads radiate outward: Dowles Road, Welch Gate, Winbrook, Wyre Hill, Park Lane, and Richmond Road from the north-west, and Lower Park from the south-west, following sinuous routes into the surrounding countryside. To the north-east, the river bridge connects Load Street to a short network of streets and alleys forming Wribbenhall on the opposite bank, which converge towards Kidderminster Road (east) and Stourport Road (south-east).

The Bridge and Early Development

The first bridge across the Severn was constructed in 1447, rebuilt in timber in 1460, and in stone in 1483. The latter collapsed in 1795 and was replaced by the current bridge, designed by Thomas Telford and completed in 1801. Notably, Telford's bridge was aligned with the north-east end of Load Street rather than the slightly more southerly prominence on Severnside South, where the bandstand now stands.

It is suggested that the earliest route to the river from the west followed the valley of the Winbrook, with Wyre Hill (formerly High Street) developing as a focus of settlement in the 15th century as the town grew. Wyre Hill and Lax Lane likely formed the principal axes of early habitation prior to the construction of the first bridge. Documentary evidence from 1472 refers to Dog Lane, High Street (now Wyre Hill), Over Street (now High Street), and Lax Lane, along with Bridge Gate, Welch Gate, and Dog Lane Gate (possibly the medieval Welsh Pool Gate). Tinkers Gate or Lax Gate likely also dates from this period.

The formation of the town's street system, therefore, occurred largely in the mid-15th century, linked to Bewdley's rapid development and a shift of focus from the earlier ford and Lax Lane towards the new bridge and riverside quays. Severnside and Load Street likely originated at this time, although they are not recorded in documents until the 1530s.



Central Bridge, designed by Thomas Telford

Medieval and Post-Medieval Development

Medieval Bewdley was enclosed by four gates, Welch Gate, Bridge Gate, Tinkers (or Lax) Gate, and Dog Lane Gate, all substantial timber structures with rooms above. The remains of

Dog Lane Gate were uncovered in 1959, though no above-ground remains of any survive today. The curved alignment of Dog Lane may indicate the line of a former town ditch. Richmond Road and Dowles Road are also likely to be of medieval origin.

The route from Bewdley to Ribbesford (now Red Hill) currently passes through land once forming part of the royal park attached to Tickenhill Palace. It is improbable that a public highway would originally have traversed a royal park, suggesting that the medieval route may instead have skirted the park's boundary along the edge of the Severn's floodplain. The street pattern in the post-medieval period represents a natural extension of this medieval framework. Park Lane is first recorded in 1595, though it may be earlier. A market range including the barley market, shambles, and butter cross once stood in the centre of Load Street but was demolished in 1783. Wyre Hill remained the principal western route until 1753, when a turnpike road to Cleobury Mortimer was established along the Winbrook valley. The road south from Bewdley, passing the lodge to Winterdyne, likely postdates the break-up of Tickenhill's medieval park in the late 17th century.

On the east bank, the Kidderminster Road through Wribbenhall probably originated as an old packhorse route between Bewdley and Kidderminster, while the Stourport Road was constructed in 1820.

Historic Footpaths and Routes

Several historic footpaths within the Conservation Area remain important features of its townscape and setting. Some continue to provide access to residential properties, while others link the town with surrounding countryside. These include:

- a) Park Alley, linking High Street with open countryside.
- b) The Racks, running parallel to the north side of Winbrook and Cleobury Road.
- c) The Gob, connecting the lower end of Sandy Bank and Winbrook.
- d) Venus Bank.
- e) The path running parallel to the south-west side of High Street, linking Park Lane with Park Alley.
- f) The path skirting the east and south sides of Tickenhill's current grounds.
- g) The track linking the south-west end of Lower Park with Kateshill and the open countryside beyond.
- h) Three paths leading from High Street, Severnside South and Lax Lane into and out of the Silver Jubilee Gardens.
- i) The riverside walks along Severnside North, Severnside South, and the east bank—linking the town centre with the countryside and incorporating two regional long-distance trails: the Worcestershire Way (west bank) and the Severn Way (east bank). Preserving the character, setting, and views along these routes is particularly important.
- j) Pewterer's Alley in Wribbenhall.
- k) The footpath encircling the northern edge of Winterdyne Park.

With the exception of Load Street, most roads and footpaths within the Area are relatively narrow. Road junctions typically take the form of "T" or "Y" intersections, and there are no roundabouts, either historically or at present. In several locations, the footpaths are slightly raised above the adjoining carriageway, such as at the western end of Wyre Hill, the eastern end of Sandy Bank, along the south side of Welch Gate, and in front of Nos. 72–78 Kidderminster Road.

It is particularly important to preserve the historic street pattern within and adjoining the Conservation Area — including the routes, widths, gradients, junction arrangements and traditional footpath characteristics — all of which form a key part of the Area's special architectural and historic interest.

a) Vehicular Movement

There is a continuous flow of vehicular traffic using the central bridge and, consequently, the streets leading to it. The historic layout of Load Street provides sufficient width to accommodate on-street parking on both sides, while still permitting two-way traffic and a stacking lane for vehicles entering the short-stay car park.

At the upper end of Load Street, the carriageway divides to pass around St Anne's Church. Immediately beyond the church, Load Street meets High Street, Park Lane and Dowles Road in close succession before rising further into Welch Gate. The convergence of these multiple routes creates the point of greatest vehicular congestion within the town centre. This is compounded by the merging of through and local traffic flows towards the bridge and by the proximity of the Dowles Road junction, which serves as the principal access to the main car parks.

On the east side of the river, Kidderminster Road carries the heaviest traffic volumes, with its sharply turning junction with Stourport Road being an occasional congestion point.

b) Pedestrian Movement

Load Street forms the retail and commercial heart of the town, and many local residents access its facilities on foot via High Street, Park Lane, Welch Gate and Kidderminster Road.

Tourist activity is largely concentrated along the riverfront—particularly Severnside North, Severnside South, Beales Corner, the bridge, and Load Street—while Lax Lane, High Street and Welch Gate also attract frequent pedestrian use. The bridge itself, where heavy vehicular flows converge with pedestrian movements from both tourists and residents, can become a point of hazardous conflict.

There are also substantial pedestrian flows between the public car parks (to the rear of Load Street and off Dog Lane) and the town centre and riverside areas.

c) Public Realm Elements

Recent enhancements have included the installation of modern but traditionally styled black-painted metal railings along the riverfronts at Severnside North, Severnside South (part), and Beales Corner. Similarly, traditionally designed metal litter bins have been installed at various locations throughout the Area, including Load Street.

4.8 Night Time Character and Appearance

During the evening and at night, Bewdley retains a lively and attractive atmosphere, enhanced by the interplay of street lighting, the subtle illumination of individual frontages, and the activity generated by numerous small bars and restaurants. This creates a pleasant environment for sightseeing and leisurely evening walks by both residents and visitors, particularly during the summer months.

However, many existing streetlights are of designs and materials that are unsympathetic to the character of the Conservation Area, and most emit a yellow-toned light that produces an artificial glow inconsistent with the historic setting. Wherever street lighting is installed or replaced, it should emit a soft white light that is more sympathetic to the town's period character. Fittings should be of a design appropriate to the historic setting, preferably black-painted metal lamp posts in a traditional nineteenth-century style. In some key locations, the reintroduction of gas-style lighting could be considered, provided modern safety and efficiency standards are met.

a) Town Centre and Riverfront

The town centre and riverside areas experience the highest levels of evening activity. Although Bewdley has no cinema or nightclub to act as a single focal point, the evening economy naturally centres around Load Street, Severnside North, and Severnside South. Together, these areas form a broad focal zone, drawn by the riverside walks and the concentration of public houses, restaurants, and cafés, particularly along Load Street, High Street, and Welch Gate.

Street lighting along Load Street is provided mainly by lamps fixed close to building frontages. These are regularly spaced and produce a modest, even spread of illumination across the pavements. The lighting of individual buildings is generally restrained, with most frontages subtly rather than conspicuously lit. The church tower is gently illuminated, providing a quiet landmark feature.

Along Severnside North and South, traditional-style free-standing lamps contribute to an attractive and distinctive waterfront character, particularly when viewed from the bridge or from Beales Corner. In contrast, the street lighting within Load Street itself is largely modern and unsympathetic in appearance. A number of removable metal poles have also been installed in the pavements to support seasonal flower baskets and Christmas illuminations; while functional, these are not of a design that complements the historic character of the Area.

b) Wribbenhall

Beales Corner is more modestly illuminated than the town centre, with street lamps creating small pools of light that produce attractive reflections on the river when viewed from Severnside South. This softer lighting contributes to the area's charm and reinforces its visual relationship with the river.

However, the adjoining petrol filling station on Kidderminster Road is brashly and intensely illuminated. The brightness of its forecourt lighting overwhelms nearby features and detracts from the otherwise subdued and historic character of the surrounding street scene. Measures to reduce glare and improve visual containment of lighting at this site would significantly enhance the appearance of the area at night.

c) Maypole Piece

Maypole Piece, which remains largely undeveloped and without street lighting, becomes almost completely dark after nightfall. The absence of illumination helps maintain its rural and undeveloped character and contributes to the contrast between the town's lit urban core and its darker, more natural edges.

d) Red Hill

Along Red Hill, free-standing lamp standards are set among mature tree canopies, with the foliage concealing the light fittings and creating regular pools of light along the pavement. In other areas, where the lamps are more exposed and irregularly positioned on either side of the road, the lighting appears less consistent. Overall, the partially screened lighting along Red Hill complements its verdant, enclosed character and provides an attractive visual effect, particularly in the summer months.

4.9 Views

a) Views into the Area

The surrounding topography of Bewdley, with its undulating hills and wooded slopes, generally limits opportunities for distant views into the Conservation Area. Nevertheless, a number of important vantage points exist — most notably from Trimley Lane to the south; from the hillsides north of the town, including Northwood and Hill Farm; and from the elevated ground at Blackstone looking northwards.

From these positions, the higher parts of the historic core can be seen, along with the sides of the river valley, the central bridge, and parts of the modern suburbs on the west bank. The wider landscape setting, including the Wyre Forest to the northwest, provides a picturesque and contextually rich backdrop to the town.

b) Views out of the Area

Due to the same topographical enclosure that limits views into the town, long-distance views out of the Conservation Area are also relatively restricted. The most significant outward views are from the central bridge, looking both upstream and downstream along the River Severn. These views take in tree-lined riverbanks and distant wooded hillsides interspersed with open fields and hedgerows, extending several kilometres beyond the Conservation Area boundary. The character and integrity of these distant views are an essential component of the town's historic setting and should be carefully preserved.



Distant views from the central bridge looking south (left) and north (right)

Other views outward are generally limited to the middle distance, constrained by the surrounding hills that frame the town centre. These views typically comprise wooded hillsides, some crowned with substantial period dwellings or more modern residential development—most noticeably on the upper slopes of Venus Bank. The wooded character of both the middle- and long-distance views reinforces Bewdley’s identity as a small town set within a predominantly rural landscape. Views to open countryside form an essential part of the Area’s character, helping to preserve the impression of a compact settlement nestled within its natural surroundings.

c) Views within the Area:

Almost every street and turning within the town offers a notable view—whether of the riverside, groups of buildings rising along sloping streets, or individual structures of architectural and historic interest. The Severn Valley Railway’s steam-hauled trains also contribute to the town’s visual appeal, providing both a distinctive element in outward views and a unique vantage point from which to appreciate Bewdley’s riverside setting. The most significant views include the following:

- From the central bridge, there are wide and striking vistas encompassing the building frontages along Severnside North and South, Beale’s Corner, and the southern end of Kidderminster Road. Views also extend into Load Street and towards the surrounding hillsides, providing a strong visual connection between the town’s historic core, the river, and its wider landscape setting.

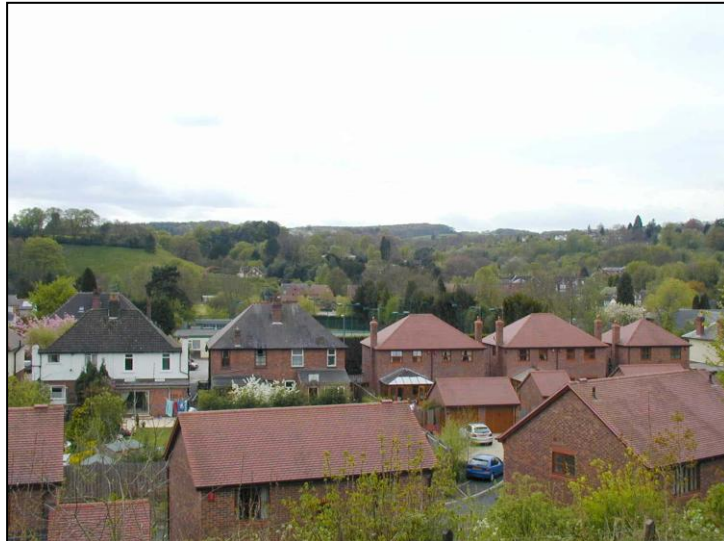


*Severnside North (left) and Severnside South (right)
from the central bridge*

- From the quay and river sides on either bank looking directly across the river towards the fronts of buildings and landscape features on the opposite banks, and towards the central bridge.
- From High Street looking north east into and across the Queen Elizabeth II Gardens.
- Within the Queen Elizabeth Gardens looking along the footpaths and outwards towards the backs of surrounding buildings and the tower of St. Anne's Church in Load Street..
- From Bark Hill (off Winbrook) Venus Bank/Church View and the eastern end of the Racks, looking east and south east over the roofscape of the town.

The most significant views within the Area include:

- The vistas along the narrow, enclosed frontages visible from both ends of High Street and Lower Park.
- Along the intimate and tightly enclosed pedestrian route of Parkes Passage, off High Street.
- From various points within the town towards the Severn Valley Railway and its steam-hauled trains.
- From the valley south of Tickenhill looking northwards towards the southern edge of the town.
- From the Severn Valley Railway station and line, looking across adjoining rooftops towards the slopes of Maypole Piece and the hillside crowned by the Summerhouse.
- From the Severn Valley Railway station and line, looking towards the buildings on the south-west side of the river and the rising green landform of Red Hill, Kateshill and Winterdyne.



*Redhill and Kateshill,
looking south from the Severn Valley Steam Railway
Station*

- From the footpaths surrounding Tickenhill looking southeast across the valley towards Kateshill House, Redhill and Winterdyne and reverse.



*Kateshill House and Redhill,
looking southeast from Tickenhill*

- From the footpaths in the fields to the rear of Lower Park looking towards Tickenhill.
- From the footpath at the rear of High Street looking northeast into and over rear elevations and gardens.
- Looking southeast along High Street and Lower Park and southwest from the Gardeners Meadow car park to the sudden backdrop of undeveloped farmland that comprises the hillside of Red Hill at the northwest end of Winterdyne.

4.10 Pattern and Density of Buildings

The pattern and density of buildings and plots within the Conservation Area strongly reflect their medieval origins, as follows:

- a) The prevailing pattern of development consists of buildings arranged along the length of streets in long, narrow plots set at right angles to the street axis. Many of these may represent surviving burgage plots, the earliest of which were recorded in the fourteenth century.
- b) Plot boundaries are typically defined by walls.
- c) In some cases, adjoining plots have been amalgamated; however, such unification is undesirable in character terms as it erodes the historic pattern.
- d) The principal building on each plot is usually positioned directly on the street frontage and faces the street. These are often accompanied by smaller ancillary buildings or ranges to the rear, historically used for domestic or small-scale industrial purposes. These subservient structures are usually of a reduced scale and extend back at right angles to the street within the narrow plot.
- e) In many cases, buildings are accessed via side alleys or tunnel archways leading through from the street. This traditional pattern remains evident today, particularly when viewed from behind the main frontages.
- f) Where buildings occur, there is a strong impression of high-density development. Buildings are generally of individual design or appear in small terraced groups, though they often adjoin to form longer terraces, creating an almost continuous street frontage.



Terrace of individually constructed houses adjoining the Kidderminster Road in Wribbenhall

- a) Set within the tightly knit pattern of development, and occasionally on its periphery, are larger plots historically associated with wealthier families or individuals holding prominent community positions. The houses occupying these sites are notably larger and of superior architectural quality. Notable examples include The Redfern on High Street and the Old Vicarage on Lower Park, both of which date from the Georgian period or incorporate Georgian remodelling of earlier buildings.



*Old Vicarage in Lower Park;
a substantial house set in extensive ground*

4.11 Style of Buildings

There are three particularly important styles of buildings within the Area, as follows:

- a) A number of vernacular timber-framed buildings of late medieval to 17th century origin survive within the Area. The larger buildings usually incorporate jettied upper floors, close studding, mid rails and front facing gables. Some include elaborate quatrefoil panels and carved brackets. The smaller and/or less elaborate buildings usually incorporate square framing.



Variations of timber framing in the Conservation Area

- b) The predominant architectural style of buildings surviving within the Area is Georgian, characterised by classically inspired façades, symmetrical proportions, and a sense of polite formality. These buildings vary in quality from modest “courts” and workers’ cottages that adopt simplified classical features, to grander houses and public buildings displaying a richness of architectural detailing and ornamentation. Many Georgian façades conceal earlier timber-framed cores, often revealed through contrasting rear elevations or exposed structural timbers in gable ends. Such features make an important contribution to the Area’s historic character and should be preserved wherever they occur.



Variations of Georgian style with the Conservation Area

- c) To a lesser extent, there are also nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings, ranging from modest cottages to larger houses, expressed in a variety of styles. Some of these structures draw upon the vernacular traditions of timber framing, others reflect the polite formality of the Georgian period, while a number incorporate mixed influences, including Gothic revival detailing. There are also examples of late twentieth-century development, though few display a genuine understanding of, or sympathy with, the earlier architectural character of the town.

It is particularly important that any new development within or adjoining the Conservation Area reflects and harmonises with the established vernacular and Georgian styles characteristic of the locality.

4.12 Size and Morphology of Buildings

Buildings within the Area are predominantly of two or three storeys in height. Load Street is almost entirely composed of buildings of three or four storeys; Severnside North, Dog Lane and Westbourne Street are characterised by two-storey development; Lax Lane contains a number of one- and one-and-a-half-storey cottages (the latter often incorporating later dormer windows); and Welch Gate is mainly of two and two-and-a-half storeys. There is little tradition of single-storey buildings within the Area, other than small rear ranges or those historically associated with specific industrial or service uses.

With the exception of High Street, most streets are of equal or greater width than the height of their adjoining buildings, creating a sense of space and openness. In contrast, Westbourne Street, High Street and parts of Welch Gate are notably narrower, contributing to a more enclosed character.

Building massing within most streets is varied, reflecting differences in storey numbers, individual floor heights and the natural changes in topography. This results in an irregular but generally harmonious roofscape, with varied eaves and ridge lines adding visual interest. In Welch Gate, however, the massing is more consistent, stepping up rhythmically with the rising gradient into Winbrook.

The foregoing characteristics contribute to an overall sense of harmony and compatibility with the human scale, allowing the pedestrian to feel comfortable within the townscape. Only in parts of High Street and Load Street, particularly in the vicinity of St Anne's Church, does the combination of building massing, height, and alignment begin to overpower the human scale.

Windows and doors are generally arranged with a degree of regularity, creating a strong sense of rhythm that enhances the visual coherence of the street scene and complements the overall alignment of buildings. In Welch Gate and Dog Lane, this rhythm is less apparent, while in Lax Lane, the ground-floor openings form a distinct pattern. In Lower Park and Park Lane, rhythm tends to occur within individual facades rather than extending uniformly along the street.

Georgian buildings of three bays typically exhibit symmetrical facades, while those of two bays are usually symmetrical above the ground floor.

The predominant roof form throughout the Area is with ridges aligned parallel to the street. A number of buildings, particularly in Load Street, have hipped roofs facing the street, while many pre-seventeenth-century structures are arranged with ridges running perpendicular to the road, a characteristic still visible in rear elevations. Timber-framed buildings often feature front-facing gables, reinforcing the vernacular character.

Roof pitches are generally steep or of medium-steep inclination. In Load Street, and among many of the Georgian buildings elsewhere, roofs are partially concealed behind parapets; elsewhere, parapets are largely absent, especially on vernacular or smaller polite buildings. Dormer windows are a common feature throughout the Area, particularly in Lax Lane and High Street, where they are typically gabled to the street with simple clipped verges and plate-mounted construction. In contrast, Dog Lane and Park Lane are notably free of dormers. Modern rooflights, such as Velux types, are occasionally seen, often as later additions rather than original features, and can appear somewhat incongruous within the historic roofscape. Chimneys remain a consistent feature across the Area, typically well-proportioned and of sturdy form, contributing significantly to the overall silhouette.

The varied and historic roofscapes are of particular visual interest, especially when viewed from elevated vantage points such as Venus Bank and Church View, from which the complex interplay of roofs, ridges, chimneys, and materials forms one of the most distinctive and picturesque aspects of the town.

4.13 Materials and Construction

a) Walls:

The predominant material used in the Area's timber-framed buildings is oak, originally left unpainted but now often seen with natural light red-brown tones or cream-washed infill panels. The structural timbers are expressed externally and typically comprise studs, braces, wall plates, mid-rails, end rafters (with or without bargeboards), and the lower ends of principal rafters forming modest projecting eaves. Upper floors are frequently jettied, and in some cases, the exposed timbers are moulded. Corners and changes in plane are often articulated with carved wooden brackets, while smaller brackets commonly support the undersides of projecting window ledges. Traditional wooden pegs are generally used to secure the joints, a detail that contributes to the authenticity and craftsmanship evident in these historic structures.



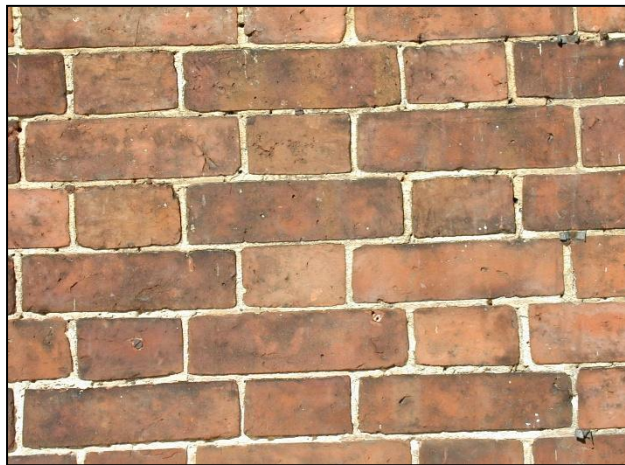
Ornate detailing on timber framed buildings

The predominant walling material for post-seventeenth-century buildings is a locally produced, plum-coloured, well-fired brick. These bricks typically display an open texture, with irregular surfaces and arrises that contribute to the richness and depth of the façades. They

are traditionally laid in Flemish bond with narrow joints and finished with white lime putty mortar, usually flush to the face. Older or lower-status buildings often employ more irregular English bond, combining stretcher and header courses. The natural variation and surface irregularity of the bricks create a distinctive visual texture across the townscape.

Buildings of higher status are constructed in a more evenly fired soft red brick, often featuring gauged rubbed brick window heads and arches, and decorative details such as painted corner quoins. Subtle darkening of some bricks caused by uneven firing adds further character and patina to the façades. In several cases, brickwork is complemented by plinths, doorsteps, or other features formed in locally quarried red sandstone.

Painting of brickwork, however, detracts from the quality and character of this material and should generally be avoided. Georgian buildings frequently incorporate sandstone or rendered quoins for visual emphasis, while there is no local tradition of decorative brick banding in contrasting colours. The use of deep brown or heavily uniform modern bricks, such as those seen at Eastham Court, Severnside South, is particularly inappropriate within this historic context.



Brickwork with a traditional Flemish bond

Free standing brick walls are traditionally capped with semi-circular shaped coping bricks or semi-circular shaped sandstone.



Traditional semi-circular coping to the top of a wall

b) Roofs:

The predominant roofing material within the Area is the small, red-brown plain clay tile, typically darker in tone than the accompanying brickwork. These handmade tiles often display slight natural curvature, creating a subtly uneven surface that adds warmth and texture to the roofscape, qualities that are not replicated by modern, machine-made equivalents. While some buildings have been re-roofed in grey slate, this material is generally less sympathetic to the historic character of the Area. Pantiles are not traditional to Bewdley and should be avoided in future repairs or development. No examples of thatch survive within the Area today.

Buildings dating from the Georgian and Victorian periods predominantly feature simple double-pitched roofs, terminating either in gable ends with flush verges sealed by a mortar fillet or, less commonly, being hipped on all sides. These buildings typically have no front-facing gables or significant eaves overhangs. Where bargeboards occur, they are infrequent but often finely detailed, featuring pierced or cusped ornamentation. In contrast, timber-framed buildings characteristically display bargeboards along their gables, while verged gables are otherwise rare within the Area.

Brick dentilling is the most common form of eaves treatment, though parapets, cornices and modillions are also used. Enclosed soffits are not traditional and should be avoided in any new or replacement work.



Saw tooth dentilling (top left), Hit and miss header dentilling (top right), High quality eaves treatment (bottom)

Lead is the traditional material for flashing, cut to step with and into brick mortar courses, rather than the modern trend of setting into disc-cut grooves in the brickwork.



Lead flashing stepped with the mortar courses

Chimneys are a prominent and characteristic feature throughout the Area. They are typically tall, square or rectangular in plan, and constructed in brick to match the main building fabric. The most common position is ridge-mounted, set at right angles to the ridge in the case of rectangular stacks, although a number are located mid-slope. Chimneys frequently occur at party divisions within terraces or at gable ends, where they are built into the wall thickness rather than applied externally. Most retain modestly detailed cappings, and many still display their original clay pots, which contribute to the historic roofscape.

c) Doors and Windows:

Door and window openings are generally rectangular in form. Windows to timber-framed buildings are typically horizontally proportioned, whereas those to later brick buildings, particularly the more formal Georgian examples, are vertically proportioned. Timber is the universal material for windows and door joinery, left natural or stained on timber-framed buildings and painted (most commonly white) on later structures. Many doors retain ornate period metal fittings, including handles, letter plates, and knockers. Original window glass is still present in a number of cases and should be preserved wherever possible.

Few original doors to timber-framed buildings survive; those that do are usually of unpainted oak, with substantial iron hinges, strapwork, nails, and fixtures. Later doors are frequently panelled, with higher quality Georgian examples displaying six panels and brass fittings. More modest cottages and working buildings often feature simple boarded doors of vertical planks with cast iron furniture.

With the exception of Severnside North, Dog Lane and Park Lane, many of the better post-medieval and particularly Georgian and Victorian buildings include classically inspired doorcases, typically incorporating side columns, pediments (or bracketed canopies), and box or fanlights. Some terraced properties retain tunnel entrances giving access to rear plots, while certain former courts have communal archways from which front doors open. Many entrances are approached by stone steps and accompanied by cast-iron shoe scrapers set into the ground.



A variety of doors/entries in the conservation area, representative of the diverse styles and phases of architecture found in Bewdley.



Metal shoe scraper

Window openings in timber-framed buildings are exclusively flat-headed and incorporate both transoms and mullions. These windows would originally have been fitted with shutters rather than glass, later replaced by side-hung casements with small leaded lights, typically arranged in rectangular or diamond-patterned lattices. In some cases, openings have been extended through the mid-rail, likely representing later and less sympathetic alterations. Occasionally,

windows are set within projecting frames supported on timber brackets, particularly where positioned directly beneath a jettied upper floor.



*Transom and mullion casement windows (left)
and a projecting window with supporting brackets (right)
on timber framed buildings*

For later buildings, the most common form of window head is flat, although segmental (arched) brick heads are almost as frequent, particularly on more modest buildings. This treatment is especially evident in Welch Gate, Lax Lane and Dog Lane. Flat heads to post-seventeenth-century buildings typically incorporate rubbed and gauged brick voussoirs, sometimes with a projecting central keystone, or applied headers painted white. Voussoirs are always individually gauged, contrasting with the unsympathetic modern practice of using ungauged rectangular bricks with a gauged brick at each end supported on a concealed lintel. Applied headers are often ornamented, commonly with rustication.

Among the finer Georgian buildings, there are notable classically inspired variations in window design, including Venetian windows (a central semi-circular-headed window flanked by two flat-headed openings with arched glazing bars to the central light), thermal windows (semi-circular) to upper floors, and near-square windows with semi-circular heads. In general, the top-storey windows of formal post-seventeenth-century buildings are more nearly square in proportion than those on lower floors, which are vertically elongated.

In these later buildings, windows are either recessed within the reveal and framed with a narrow wooden architrave, or set flush with the wall face with a wider architrave—both arrangements occurring with roughly equal frequency. Cills are of projecting stone or timber, commonly painted white, though higher-status Georgian and Victorian examples tend to have stone cills. By contrast, some late twentieth-century buildings feature unpainted concrete cills, which are unsympathetic to the historic character of the Area.

The better-quality Georgian and Victorian buildings generally retain vertically sliding sash windows, with timber glazing bars dividing the openings into vertically proportioned rectangles. Where side-hung casements occur, they often feature horizontal or both horizontal and vertical glazing bars, dividing the aperture into rectangular panes. A small number of modern or adapted older buildings have casement windows without glazing bars, a treatment that is particularly inappropriate in character terms. Horizontally sliding sash windows also occur occasionally, especially to upper storeys.



A selection of Georgian sash windows found within the Area, with gauged headers (top left) gauged headers & keystones (bottom), and in the Venetian style with applied headers (top right)

Dormer windows are a frequent feature throughout the Area. They generally have pitched roofs with gabled, rather than hipped, forms and lead-clad sides. The predominant type is plate-mounted, although a small number are off-plate or purlin-mounted. There is no historic tradition of rooflights within the Area; however, a few examples have been inserted into roofs in Wribbenhall, to the detriment of the buildings' historic character and overall appearance.



Plate mounted dormer windows

d) Shopfronts

The Georgian and mid-Victorian examples, with their multiple glazing bars and finely detailed joinery, are the most sympathetic to the historic character of the Area. Later Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts introduced larger panes of plate glass, reflecting changes in retail display practices. A number of former shops, particularly along Welch Gate have since reverted to residential use but have retained their traditional shopfronts, providing valuable evidence of the Area's commercial past.



A selection of traditional shop fronts found within the Area

e) Watergoods:

Cast iron is the predominant material used for rainwater goods, including gutters, hoppers and downpipes. In Load Street, there are particularly fine and ornate examples, with some hoppers also formed in lead. These traditional materials contribute to the historic character and should be retained or reinstated wherever possible. The use of grey plastic rainwater goods is inappropriate within the Conservation Area.

4.14 Survival of Architectural Features

The Conservation Area has retained a substantial number of original architectural features. This is almost certainly due to the high proportion of listed buildings, where statutory controls have prevented indiscriminate losses. However, many unlisted buildings of interest also survive with original details, although in some cases such features have been altered or lost. Important surviving architectural features include the following:

- a) Pitched roofs, plain clay roof tiles and original chimneys.
- b) Timber sash and side-hung casement windows (often incorporating leaded lights and/or horizontal glazing bars).
- c) Gauged, applied rusticated, and segmental brick window headers.
- d) Traditional timber doors, either panelled or boarded, with original metal fixtures and fittings.
- e) Structural plinths, front door steps, boot scrapers, and other traditional entrance details.
- f) Exposed timber framing to older buildings, including beneath later façades.
- g) Unrendered brickwork.
- h) Traditional plain roofing tiles and natural slates.
- i) Undeveloped rear gardens.
- j) Plot-dividing walls and historic outbuildings.
- k) Traditional shop fronts, particularly in Load Street and the lower end of Welch Gate.
- l) Traditional railings to the fronts of dwellings, especially in High Street.
- m) Small archways and tunnel entrances leading to rear spaces.
- n) The historic pattern and form of highways.
- o) Old metal street signs and cast-iron court number plates on doors.

Notable losses or damage to architectural features include:

- a) Repointing with cement-based (often coloured) mortars instead of lime putty mortar, and the use of inappropriate pointing techniques.
- b) Replacement of cast iron rainwater goods with PVCu alternatives.
- c) Application of modern stains or inappropriate paint colours to timber joinery.
- d) Replacement of original timber doors with unsuitable modern alternatives.
- e) Painting of historic brickwork.
- f) Replacement of timber framing, particularly to ground floors, with modern brickwork.
- g) Installation of inappropriate shop canopies and unsympathetic frontage treatments.
- h) Use of inappropriate street furniture, highway surfacing, lighting columns and highway signage.

Although these unsympathetic alterations have not yet caused widespread harm to the architectural and historic interest of the Area, it is important that remedial and preventative measures continue to be taken where necessary to preserve its special character.

4.15 Wyre Hill

Wyre Hill is almost a hamlet in its own right and is perhaps the oldest part of the town. It has an overwhelmingly vernacular character, defined by humble cottages of timber-framed construction, some of late medieval origin, and later brick-built cottages. The area is approached from the town centre via Welch Gate and Sandy Bank, the latter rising steeply across the contours for about half a kilometre, bordered on the south side by important undeveloped wooded banks. Wyre Hill begins just before the hillside crests onto a plateau high above the town.

The road is narrow and winding, lacking pavements in its lower reaches. A few houses sit tight against the road on the Winbrook valley side, while opposite lies a steep, wooded bank. As the upper settlement begins, pavements reappear, rising to levels high above the road. In these sections, road and pavements are separated horizontally by grassed banks, creating generous space between building frontages and the carriageway. This open character gives Wyre Hill a comfortable, human scale and distinctive spatial quality. Gaps between short terraces of cottages allow gardens to reach the pavement edge and contribute to the street's charm; these open breaks are important to preserve free from infill development.

The historic settlement forms a linear ribbon approximately 300 metres in length. The Conservation Area boundary coincides with the extent of the historic core, beyond which the settlement continues with incongruous modern residential development on three sides. Buildings are uniformly two storeys in height and date predominantly from the 18th and 19th centuries. They are positioned at the back of the pavement and orientated towards the street. The presence of earlier timber-framed cottages amongst later brick structures indicates the early foundation of the settlement. Window and door openings generally have a vertical emphasis, though the rhythm along the street is irregular due to the steep contours. This creates a picturesque stepping effect in eaves and ridgelines, exposing gable profiles and enhancing the area's visual interest.

The principal walling material is a dark reddish-orange brick, though some cottages have been painted white, an unsympathetic later alteration. Roofs are mostly of reddish-brown plain clay tiles, with a few in natural grey slate. Brick dentil detailing is common at the eaves, and ridge-mounted chimneys typically crown the gabled ends. Window and door openings are more often cambered than flat-headed, with white-painted timber frames set flush with the wall face. Architectural features generally survive well, though the introduction of uPVC rainwater goods represents a noticeable intrusion.

Wyre Hill demonstrates a similar pattern of historic growth to the town centre, evolving from medieval to Georgian and Victorian periods. It shares a close relationship with Welch Gate, particularly in the way the road and pavements have been formed in response to the steep topography.

4.16 Landmarks, Focal Points and Special Features

There are numerous landmarks, focal points and special features within and adjoining the Conservation Area that are of particular importance in conservation terms. These features contribute significantly to Bewdley's visual identity, legibility, and sense of place.

a) Landmarks

Landmarks are buildings, structures or natural features whose size, design, or position makes them particularly prominent or distinctive within the townscape. They act as visual reference points and play a key role in defining the character and spatial experience of the area. Special care is therefore required in their management and any proposals affecting their setting. The River Severn itself, together with the surrounding elevated ground, form the most significant natural landmarks within and adjoining the Conservation Area. In addition to these, a number of man-made landmarks contribute to Bewdley's distinctive character, including:

- The full lengths of the Severnside frontages, the central bridge, quaysides, and buildings at Beale's Corner, all of which have collective value as landmarks.
- St. Anne's Church in Load Street.
- Hill top buildings and their settings, including Tickenhill, Kateshill House, The Summer House and Winterdyne (outside Area).

Particularly important buildings in larger groups, including as follows:

- Load Street: Town Hall, Nos. 14, 15 (formerly HSBC) & 17, George Hotel, 70 & 71.
- High Street: No. 11 (Redfern) & 62 (Manor House).
- Lower Park: No. 1 (The Rectory) & 15 (Lower Park House).
- Severn Valley Steam Railway viaduct over Kidderminster Road and Black Boy Hotel.



Viaduct over the Kidderminster Road

- All Saints Church (Wribbenhall) outside the Area but comprising an important gateway feature.

b) Focal Points:

Focal points are buildings, structures or areas, that are important because of their position in view lines; or because they are the centre of well frequented public activity. Special care is needed in the treatment of focal points because they are particularly noticeable to the public.

It is difficult to isolate individual sites or buildings within an area so rich in interest and appeal but they include the following:

Landmarks are buildings, structures, or natural features that, by virtue of their size, design, or position, are particularly prominent within the townscape. They serve as visual reference points and contribute to the distinct identity and legibility of the Conservation Area. The River Severn itself, together with the surrounding elevated ground, forms the principal natural landmark. Several man-made landmarks are also of considerable importance, including:

- **The full lengths of Load Street and the Severnside frontages, the bridge, and Beale's Corner** – collectively forming the town's most prominent visual ensemble and acting as a principal focal point within views both along and across the river.
- **Queen Elizabeth II Gardens** and the adjoining **public car parks behind Load Street and Lax Lane**, which provide open breaks within the dense urban grain and afford important public views of the townscape.
- **Individual landmark buildings**, including:
 - **St Anne's Church** and **No. 15 (formerly HSBC)**, Load Street – a dominant architectural pairing at the heart of the town.
 - **Town Hall and Museum**, Load Street – a civic focal point of strong historical and architectural presence.
 - **Nos. 42 and 62 (Manor House), High Street** – fine examples of substantial Georgian houses.

- **Nos. 7 and 8, Lower Park** – notable for their scale and historic character within the riverside setting.
- **The Railway Viaduct** over Kidderminster Road – an impressive engineering structure of historic and visual significance.
- **Nos. 34 and 35, Kidderminster Road** – prominent Wribbenhall buildings forming a distinctive entrance to the town from the east.
- Outdoor market to the rear of Load Street, which becomes a focal point by virtue of associated public activity on market days.



*Load Street seen from the central bridge,
with the landmarks and focal points
of former HSBC (Left of Centre)
and St. Anne's Church (centre)*

Many other smaller buildings act as focal points where they terminate, line or close view lines, particularly looking along roads, pathways and in the vicinity of highways junctions.

c) Special Features:

The Conservation Area contains 267 statutory list entries, relating to approximately 550 listed buildings and structures, together with several other buildings of local architectural or historic interest, primarily dating from the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries. While some of these later buildings have experienced unsympathetic alterations, such as window replacements or the application of render, none are beyond sympathetic repair or reinstatement, which should always be favoured over redevelopment.

In general, the retention and careful repair of all historic built fabric, particularly that dating from the medieval period through to the early twentieth century, should be regarded as a key conservation priority.

Particularly special features include the following:

- The bridge, together with its associated balustrades, quaysides, and river edgings.
- The range and variety of period architectural detailing and traditional construction

techniques representing different historic phases of the town's development.

- The historic street pattern of roads, footpaths, and alleyways, including those providing pedestrian-only access and the narrow roadways flanking St Anne's Church.
- The distinctive town plan, which narrows or "pinches" towards the river, forming a unique spatial relationship with the waterfront.
- The authentic roofscape, characterised by varied pitches, materials, and historic chimney forms.
- Traditional railings to the fore of many properties (for example, at No. 62 High Street).
- Extensive views to surrounding hillsides and open countryside, providing a vital landscape setting.
- Open spaces within and adjoining the Area, and the close proximity of open countryside, notably along the river frontages, and to the south of High Street, Lower Park, Winterdyne, and Tickenhill; as well as across Maypole Piece and along Northwood Lane.
- Numerous trees and hedgerows, including the holly hedge enclosing Tickenhill and the woodland adjoining the south-east corner of the Jubilee Gardens.

Importantly, at least ten medieval buildings survive within the modern town. These include 15th-century timber-framed houses and possibly a market building on Wyre Hill; 15th-century timber-framed houses on Winbrook, Welch Gate, High Street, and Lax Lane; and a 14th-century timber-framed hall with cross-wing on Stourport Road. It is also likely that further medieval structures survive concealed behind later facades.

Notably, four 15th-century framed bays belonging to the medieval palace survive within the 18th-century Tickenhill Manor. In Wribbenhall, a partially reconstructed medieval cross stands on the site of the chapel built in 1719.

In addition, there are numerous buildings dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries that are of architectural and historic interest, contributing to the depth and continuity of Bewdley's built heritage.



No. 14, Lower Park; not listed but of interest

4.17 Open Space

Open spaces are areas with little or no built development. They include public or private gardens, undeveloped hillsides, expanses of water, and street squares. The Conservation Area contains numerous open spaces, both large and small, which reveal themselves through archways, over boundary walls, along rising slopes, and between buildings.

These spaces provide visual breaks and contrast to the geometric form of the built environment. Many contain trees that add further visual interest and opportunities for shade, enclosure, and seating from which various views of the Area can be enjoyed. Open spaces often form an important part of the Conservation Area's setting, particularly where they abut its boundaries or feature prominently within key view lines and vistas.

The principal areas of open space include the following:

- a) Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Gardens, together with the woodland adjoining its south-east corner.
- b) River bank adjoining Severnside South (north-west end), the central bridge area (including the bandstand), and Gardeners Meadow car park, the first and last of which extend beyond the current Conservation Area boundary.
- c) Cricket pitch and adjoining riverside meadows to the south-east of Gardeners Meadow car park, extending beyond the existing boundary.
- d) Red Hill and Winterdyne parkland to the south-east, within and extending beyond the Conservation Area.
- e) Kates Hill and parkland, within and extending beyond the Conservation Area.
- f) Tickenhill, including land to the south-west, south and south-east, within and extending beyond the Conservation Area.
- g) Hillsides adjoining Winbrook and Cleobury Road, within and extending beyond the Conservation Area.
- h) Land adjoining Gibraltar House (Dowles Road).
- i) Riverside meadows extending north-west from Severnside North (north-west bank of the river), beyond the existing boundary.
- j) Boundary along the western side of Dog Lane car park.
- k) Riverside meadows and bowling green off Riverside North (north-east bank of the river), extending beyond the Conservation Area boundary.
- l) Hillside and summit in the vicinity of the Summer House and Gloucester Way, Wribbenhall.
- m) Lychgate Gardens, off Westbourne Street and Stourport Road, Wribbenhall.
- n) Maypole Piece, Wribbenhall, including the hill, hillside, and the undeveloped gap between All Saints Church and the petrol filling station.
- o) River bank at Beales Corner, and the stretch from Millside Court through to Bewdley High School on the north-east side of the River, both within and extending beyond the existing Conservation Area boundary.
- p) Wooded area adjoining the north-east side of the central bridge land arches at Beales Corner.
- q) Numerous private gardens and undeveloped plots (not all identified on the map), including the extensive garden surrounding the Rectory in Lower Park.

It is particularly important that these spaces are retained free from built development or intrusive structures, as they contribute significantly to the Area's character, setting, and sense of openness.

It would be desirable to investigate opportunities for public access and the creation of a viewing point at the top of Maypole Piece, from which the town, river, and surrounding landscape could be appreciated.

4.18 Ground Surfaces

There are four principal types of surface treatment across the Area, each having a distinct impact on its visual quality and historic character:

a) *Modern tarmac* is by far the most common surfacing material for both roads and pavements. While practical, it is historically and visually inappropriate within the Conservation Area. Its uniform appearance, ranging from weak to medium grey depending on whether it is dry or wet, offers little visual texture or relief, and detracts from the historic character of adjoining buildings and spaces.

b) A short stretch of old moulded blue clay setts laid in a criss-cross pattern survives along the eastern end of *The Racks* (parallel to Winbrook). Limited areas of historic cut stone setts or cobbles also remain in front of both the *Town Hall* and *Phipps and Pritchard* (Load Street), and within the wagon entrance to *No. 21 Load Street*. Small patches of uncut pebbles or cobbles survive in parts of *High Street* and before *Nos. 1–9 Kidderminster Road* (off the vehicular highway).

Traditional-style paving materials, such as square grey slabs, have been introduced throughout *Load Street*. However, their regularity of size and uniform texture lacks the subtle irregularities that give genuine historic paving its character. In *Sevenside North*, semi-traditional road setts (Marshall Tegula) and riven stone paving slabs were installed by the County Council during the 1990s. Occasionally, kerbs are defined in traditional stone, though most are formed from modern pre-cast concrete, which is visually intrusive. In parts of *High Street*, the erosion of modern tarmac has revealed older stone-edged gutters, providing a glimpse of the street's earlier construction and surface treatments.



*Uncut pebbles or cobbles (left)
and cut stone setts or cobbles (right)*

- a) Some properties incorporate traditional style metal railings to their fore, whilst in other cases traditional style railings enclose or delineate other spaces and features.



Traditional style railings in Westbourne Street (top left), adjoining the River (top right) and to the fore of a house in High Street (bottom).

b) Grass is present both in small private gardens and in larger communal open spaces throughout the Area. In smaller patches, it contributes texture, colour, and visual relief, softening the hard edges of buildings and paving. In larger expanses, grass plays a more significant role by tempering the dominance of built and hard-surfaced elements within the townscape. It achieves this in two key ways: firstly, through the natural irregularity of growth and mowing, which introduces a sense of softness and informality; and secondly, by following the land's natural contours and varied shapes, helping to contrast with surrounding buildings and streets while reinforcing a comfortable human scale and spatial balance within the landscape.

c) Water is present most prominently in the broad expanse of the River Severn, which forms a defining feature of the town's setting, and in the ornamental pool within the Jubilee Gardens. Together, these elements add significant visual interest and variety to the Area, their changing colours, surface movement, and reflections enhancing both atmosphere and aesthetic appeal. Water also acts as a natural focal point, drawing the eye and reinforcing the Area's relationship with its landscape context.

Any proposed development situated where it may be reflected in the river or other water surfaces should be carefully considered, with conscious attention to how its mirrored image might either enhance or detract from the overall townscape character.

4.19 Tranquil and Active Areas

The Conservation Area contains both tranquil and active areas, each contributing in different ways to its overall character and sense of place.

Tranquillity refers to the peace of a place where the sights, sounds, and smells of human or mechanical activity are minimal or absent. Such areas are increasingly rare within town centres and are particularly valuable for providing contrast and respite from busier spaces. It is therefore important to retain their quiet, reflective character.

Tranquil areas include:

a) The Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Gardens and the network of backland plots behind Load Street, Severnside South, Lax Lane, High Street, and Lower Park.

b) The network of backland plots, footpaths, and open land to the south-west of High Street and Lower Park, and to the south of Tickenhill, including:

- Park Alley and the footpaths leading up from there to Tickenhill and open countryside.
- The footpath on the south-eastern slopes of Tickenhill.
- The footpath leading west from the bottom of Red Hill.

c) Lychgate Gardens in Wribbenhall.

d) Parts of the footpath running parallel to the north side of Winbrook and Cleobury Road.

In these areas it is possible to become detached very quickly from the noise, movement, and general activity of the town centre, and to appreciate the more natural and reflective qualities of the Area.

Active areas are those characterised by a high level of movement and interaction, or where focal points attract people for social, commercial, or recreational purposes.

The most active areas include:

a) The main roads and pavements where there is frequent vehicular and pedestrian movement — including Kidderminster Road, the River Bridge, Load Street, Severnside South, Welch Gate, Winbrook, and the car parks off Dog Lane. In these locations, traffic noise and emissions are noticeable environmental detractors.

In Welch Gate, Winbrook, High Street, and on either side of St Anne's Church in Load Street, the narrow pavements can cause conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. While the restricted carriageway widths contribute positively to the historic character, they present modern challenges for accessibility and pedestrian safety.

b) The open-air market between Dog Lane and Load Street, which generates regular activity and contributes to the vitality and social character of the town centre.

c) The Silver Jubilee Gardens, which, although accessible only on foot and free of vehicular traffic and ball games, remain highly popular with both residents and visitors. This space therefore combines qualities of both tranquillity and activity, particularly during the tourist season.

4.20 Noise

There are several types and sources of noise within the Conservation Area, some of which detract from its character, while others contribute positively to its distinctive sense of place.

Detracting noises include:

a) Motor vehicle traffic, which is the most significant source of intrusive noise. The impact is greatest along Kidderminster Road, Beale's Corner, the central bridge, Load Street, Welch Gate, Winbrook, and around the Dog Lane car parks. Although traffic noise is an environmental detractor, it is an inevitable consequence of the town's road network and its function as a local centre, where through-traffic cannot be entirely avoided.

b) Late-night music emanating from some of the public houses within the Area. Noise occasionally intrudes into nearby residential areas, particularly in High Street, associated with the Talbot and Little Packhorse public houses.

More acceptable and characteristic sounds contribute positively to the Area's atmosphere and reinforce its historic and natural setting. These include:

- a) Birdsong in the outer parts of the Area, particularly within the Silver Jubilee Gardens, adjoining woodlands, and private rear gardens.
- b) The calls of geese, swans, ducks, and gulls along and over the River Severn.
- c) Human voices from casual conversation on the streets and riverside walks, contributing to a sense of vibrancy and community.
- d) Church bells, which mark the passage of time and maintain a traditional aural link with the town's historic identity.
- e) The whistles and sounds of steam trains arriving and departing from the Severn Valley Steam Railway station in Wribbenhall, which form a distinctive and evocative feature of the local soundscape.

4.21 Smells

Certain odours within the Conservation Area detract from its character and amenity. These include the following:

- a) Vehicular fumes, particularly along Kidderminster Road, Beale's Corner, the central bridge, Load Street, Welch Gate, Winbrook, and around the Dog Lane car parks. In these locations, emissions from traffic are a notable environmental detractor, diminishing air quality and the overall experience of the public realm.
- b) Cooking odours from restaurants and takeaway premises in Load Street and Welch Gate. Extraction equipment, including external ducting and fans, often installed on rear elevations, can be visually intrusive. Such installations are frequently finished in bright metallic colours that contrast harshly with traditional materials and tones. Where possible, ductwork should be discreetly located and finished in a subdued, recessive colour (such as dark red or black) to reduce visual impact and better integrate with the surrounding built fabric.

4.22 Alien Features

Alien features are elements that were introduced after the Area's prevailing historic architectural character had been established, and which do not reflect its traditional forms, materials, detailing or methods of construction. The following features are considered to detract from, or sit uncomfortably within, the established character and appearance of the Conservation Area:

- a) Lampposts, pedestrian crossing lights, bus shelters and railings of unsympathetic style and finish.
- b) Excessive or poorly designed traffic signage and street clutter detract from the character and visual coherence of the Conservation Area. This includes oversized or unnecessary signage, such as the yellow parking directional signs at either end of the central bridge, which disrupt key views and the historic setting.
- c) The use of tarmacadam for pavements and road surfacing within sensitive historic locations, together with prominent yellow road markings, erodes the traditional appearance of the streetscape. More recessive surfacing treatments and lighter-toned line markings would better preserve the character and appearance of the Area.
- d) Overhead telephone wires and associated infrastructure interrupt important views and detract from the historic roofscape, notably in Lax Lane and Welch Gate. The presence of a modern metal telegraph pole in Westbourne Street is similarly visually intrusive within the street scene.
- e) Modern telecommunications kiosks and other standardised street furniture that do not reflect local character, such as the telephone box adjoining the Load Street car park, detract from the Area's historic quality.

- f) The installation of satellite dishes on prominent elevations or roof slopes visible from the public realm harms the visual integrity of buildings and the wider townscape.
- g) Unsympathetic modern materials and architectural products diminish architectural authenticity and detailing. These include uPVC windows and doors, standard off-the-shelf replacement doors, concrete window cills and lintels, proprietary roof lights set flush within historic roof slopes, and repointing in hard cement mortar rather than breathable lime mortar.
- h) Inappropriate shopfronts, fascias and display windows that fail to respect historic proportions, materials or detailing, particularly along Load Street, disrupt the architectural rhythm and coherence of the commercial frontage.
- i) Fixtures, signage, lighting and other fittings bolted or screwed directly into historic brickwork or masonry cause lasting damage to building fabric and should be avoided.
- j) The painting of previously unpainted brickwork, or the use of inappropriate colours on timber elements, erodes architectural integrity and can undermine the uniformity and group value of terraces and building clusters.

4.23 Enhancement Sites

Areas and features that would benefit from enhancement include the following:

- a) The car park between Load Street and Dog Lane forms a visually open and functional space within the Conservation Area. While it provides important parking provision, it offers a limited contribution to local character.
- b) The south-west facing elevations of the late twentieth-century three-storey town houses at Millside Court (Nos. 1, 2, 20 and 21), which adjoin the east bank of the River Severn, are particularly prominent in views from Severnside South and from the opposite bank. Due to their scale, profile and contemporary detailing, these elevations contrast with the form, materials and colour palette of the surrounding traditional buildings. This visual prominence has been increased by the removal of several willow trees along the adjoining riverbank, reducing natural screening. The loss of vegetation has not only exposed the buildings more fully in long views but has also resulted in areas of topsoil erosion and diminished riverbank planting.



*Riverside elevations
of Millside Court, Wribbenhall.*

- a) Unsympathetic shop fronts, including the following:

- No. 16 Load Street (formerly HSBC) has benefited from a generally well-executed programme of restoration to the upper floors and wider building fabric, which has significantly enhanced its contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. However, the ground floor shopfront remains unsympathetic in its current form. The proportions and detailing of the windows, the treatment of the brickwork, and the entablature course do not reflect the building's historic architectural language or the prevailing character of Load Street.
- There remains scope for enhancement at ground floor level, potentially through the reintroduction of a more classically composed frontage. This could include reinstating door openings (which may be expressed architecturally rather than functionally) with appropriately detailed doorcases and pediments, the introduction of glazing bars, the use of rubbed gauged brick headers to window openings, and selective brick replacement or repair to achieve a closer match to the historic fabric. Such measures would complete the building's restoration and further strengthen its presence within the streetscape.



*Unsympathetic alterations to the ground floor
of former HSBC in Load Street*

- No. 40 Load Street (Carpet Shop) retains a flat roof introduced during the mid-twentieth century, which contrasts with the traditional pitched and tiled roofscape characteristic of the street. There would be scope, should the opportunity arise, to reinstate a pitched tiled roof more in keeping with the prevailing architectural form.
- At No. 49 Load Street (formerly Jackson's Butcher), the previously prominent blue glazed tiles to the shopfront have now been removed, improving the building's appearance within the streetscape. Continued enhancement of the ground floor frontage, through a more traditionally proportioned and detailed shopfront and appropriately designed signage or blind, would further strengthen its contribution to the character of the Area.

- Nos. 50 and 51 Load Street (formerly Co-op) are currently unoccupied. The existing shopfront treatment remains of a late twentieth-century style that does not fully reflect the traditional proportions and detailing of neighbouring premises. The vacancy presents an opportunity for future reinstatement of a more historically informed shopfront design. In addition, alterations to the first-floor Venetian window at No. 50 have diminished its architectural integrity; reinstating traditionally detailed sash windows and glazing bars would enhance the building's upper façade.
- Nos. 57 and 58 Load Street retain recessed shopfronts of a modern style that sit somewhat at odds with the traditionally front-mounted rhythm of the street. There would be potential, in the longer term, to reinstate front-mounted shopfronts more closely aligned with historic precedents.
- No. 65 Load Street features fascia lettering that is bold in colour, scale and style relative to the surrounding historic context. Replacement with more restrained, traditionally proportioned hand-painted signage would better complement the building and wider streetscape.
- No. 1 Sevenside South has a ground floor shopfront and associated alterations that do not fully reflect the building's historic character, including painted brickwork, simplified detailing to the first-floor canted windows and a modern plastic door canopy. Opportunities remain to enhance the frontage through a more traditionally detailed shopfront, reinstatement of appropriate cornices to the canted windows, and removal of the plastic canopy.

In addition to the enhancement of the specific sites and features identified above, the wider character and appearance of the Conservation Area would benefit from a coordinated programme of public realm improvements. This could include the gradual replacement of tarmac surfaces and concrete kerbs with more sympathetic, high-quality materials appropriate to the historic setting; the introduction of street lighting columns, signage poles, roadside railings and bus shelters of a design better aligned with local character; and, where feasible, the rationalisation or undergrounding of overhead cabling.

4.24 Neutral Sites

A neutral area is defined as a part of the Conservation Area whose character does not conform to that of its immediate surroundings. Such areas may detract from the overall quality and cohesion of the Conservation Area but can often be improved through sensitive management and redevelopment.

Remedial approaches typically involve ensuring that, where an existing use is to continue, any proposals for alteration or redevelopment should be:

- a) Confined to parts of the site not visible to the public realm, thereby minimising visual intrusion; or
 - b) Designed to incorporate discreet and subtle references to the predominant materials, scale, and design features of the surrounding historic environment.
- Ideally, where feasible and appropriate, uncharacteristic or intrusive features should be removed and replaced with new structures or landscaping of a scale, form, and appearance consistent with the character of the Conservation Area. However, careful consideration should always be given to ensure that an uncharacteristic feature is not, in fact, an important remnant of the Area's historical development which, despite its incongruity, may merit retention.

Identified Neutral Site:

- a) Texaco Petrol Filling Station and Shop, Kidderminster Road.



*Texaco petrol filling station and shop,
Kidderminster Road*

- b) Lock-up garages to the rear of Police Station, Kidderminster Road.
- c) Extensions to the north east corner of St. George's Hall (Load Street) and Lavatories to the rear of No. 69 Load Street (unsympathetic late 20th century buildings).



*Extension to St. George's Hall (right)
and lavatories to the rear of No. 69 Load Street (left)*

- d) Telephone exchange, Dowles Road, and in particular the northeast facing mono pitch roof, dark brickwork, uncharacterful fenestration and satellite dish.



Telephone Exchange, Dowles Road

- e) Unsympathetic twentieth century dwellings in Maypole Close and Telford Drive (adjoining the Conservation Area but in sensitive locations); and Park Close, Kidderminster Road (Nos. 27 to 33) and No. 63a High Street (within the Conservation Area and in sensitive locations).
- f) Bridge House and adjoining commercial buildings in Riverside North. (Adjoining the Conservation Area but in a prominent position).



Bridge House

4.25 Condition of Buildings and Structures

Most buildings and structures within the Conservation Area are in good or fair condition and continue to contribute positively to its character and appearance. A small number of buildings have historically required intervention due to vacancy, vulnerability to flooding or general deterioration. Those that have been included in previous appraisals include:

- a) No. 3 Beale's Corner, a vacant timber-framed dwelling in an area formerly prone to seasonal flooding, has long been identified as vulnerable. The completion of the town's flood defence works has significantly reduced flood risk within this part of the Conservation Area, improving the prospects for the building's repair, sustainable reuse and long-term conservation.
- b) The former Old Workhouse to the rear of No. 63 High Street is a substantial three-storey building that had remained vacant for some time. Planning permission has now been granted for its rebuild and conversion, securing a viable new use and enabling the retention of its historic form and character. The implementation of this approved scheme represents a positive step toward safeguarding the building's significance and reducing the number of heritage assets at risk within the Area.



Old Workhouse, High Street. A programme of restoration has been agreed.

- c) 63 High Street itself is in a poor state and is continuously deteriorating. Its poor condition is at odds with the rest of Load Street and is a detriment to the conservation area.



63 High Street

- d) Outbuildings (possibly former washhouse and bakery) rear 14 & 15 High Street.
- e) Nos. 2 and 3 Severnside South continue to require regular maintenance attention. Rainwater goods are prone to blockage, largely due to persistent pigeon activity, necessitating frequent clearance to prevent water ingress and associated fabric decay. Elements of external timberwork also require ongoing repair and redecoration to ensure their long-term preservation and to prevent incremental deterioration.
- f) The central bridge, including its principal balustrades and those extending towards Beale's Corner, has now undergone a comprehensive and sympathetic programme of restoration. Previous concerns included intermittent vehicle damage, weathering of stonework, and the use of inappropriate repair materials such as non-stone copings and concrete footings to certain piers. The land arches on the north side adjoining Beale's Corner had also required attention. The completed restoration works have addressed these issues using appropriate materials and conservation techniques, resulting in a significant enhancement to the structure's condition and appearance. The quality and extent of the works were sufficient to secure the removal of the bridge and its balustrades from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register, representing a notable achievement in the stewardship of this key landmark within the Conservation Area.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Bewdley Conservation Area possesses considerable architectural and historic significance. The town's origins lie in its strategic position as a principal crossing point of the River Severn during the medieval period which, combined with its role as an inland port, established Bewdley as a thriving centre of trade and commerce. This prosperity continued into the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and is reflected in the town's rich and varied built fabric.

Many of Bewdley's buildings, particularly those dating from the late medieval and Georgian periods, display a high degree of craftsmanship and architectural quality which together define the town's distinctive and recognisable character. These buildings establish an

important benchmark for the scale, materials and detailing of any new development or alteration within the Conservation Area.

The arrival of the railway in the mid-nineteenth century introduced additional layers of character, most notably through the Victorian architectural influences visible in parts of Wribbenhall and around the station. Together, these successive phases of development have created a townscape of considerable historic depth and visual richness.

The preservation and careful management of this historic environment is therefore essential. The Conservation Area designation seeks to ensure that change within Bewdley is appropriately managed so that its architectural integrity, historic character and important relationship with the River Severn and surrounding landscape are maintained. The appraisal provides a clear understanding of the elements which contribute positively to the significance of the area and will serve as a guiding framework for future development, ensuring that Bewdley's distinctive character is preserved and enhanced for future generations.

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
8 April 2026

LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Dan Morehead, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Localism
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Kate Bailey, Head of Strategic Growth
CONTACT OFFICER:	Helen Hawkes, Planning Manager
APPENDICES:	Appendix A – Local Plan Timetable

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to publish the Local Plan timetable and Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan preparation.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is invited to:

- 2.1 AGREE the Local Plan Timetable set out in Appendix A and publication of the Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan preparation;**
- 2.2 DELEGATE to the Head of Strategic Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Localism and Solicitor to the Council to make any amendments required to the Local Plan Timetable from time to time, including as a result of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Wyre Forest District Council Local Plan was adopted in April 2022 and the Council has a statutory duty to keep the Local Plan updated. The current Local Plan will be considered out of date in April 2027 and therefore it is imperative that the Council updates the Local Plan. The timetable for doing so has been set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) which was agreed by the Cabinet in March 2025. This envisages evidence gathering / sustainability appraisal scoping from June 2025; consultation on the Issues and Options paper in June 2026; and Plan writing from July 2027 to August 2028. However, adhering to the LDS programme is proving challenging, in large part due to procurement of specialist consultants to undertake the updated assessments and loss of capacity from the planning policy team in the second half of 2025.

- 3.2 Apart from the Local Plan being nearly five years old, the other main driver for the preparation of the Local Plan is to identify housing sites to enable the Council to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply (5YHLS) against the local housing need assessed using the Government's 'standard method'. In the absence of a 5YHLS, the presumption in favour of sustainable development (or 'tilted balance') set out in the current NPPF (paragraph 11) will apply to planning applications for housing. While the Council can currently show a robust 5YHLS, this can quickly change due to committed housing sites building out more slowly than envisaged or Lea Castle taking longer to obtain planning permission due to the current challenge by the applicant to submit a financial viability appraisal. It may therefore be necessary in the last quarter of 2026 to prepare a Housing Delivery Action Plan/ Interim Policy to address issues holding back existing committed sites and to set out how the Council will consider speculative development proposals involving other sites if the Council is in a position where it does not have a 5YHLS or it has an out of date Local Plan. The interim policy would be a material consideration in decision-making but would not have the status of development plan policy: the weight to be applied to the policy would be for the local planning authority to decide.
- 3.3 The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 ("The 2023 Act") sets out fundamental reforms to plan-making and introduces a rigidly structured process. There would be Planning Inspectorate input at three clear checkpoints ('Gateways'), giving greater certainty that the timetable for preparing Local Plans can be met within a 30 month fixed timescale compared to the existing system in which Local Plan preparation can take several years. The current Local Plan took several years to prepare before being adopted in 2022.
- 3.3 The new 30-month plan-making process will be required under Part 2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ("PCPA 2004") (once amended by Schedule 7 to the 2023 Act). This will come into effect on 25 March 2026.

4. LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE / NOTICE OF INTENTION TO COMMENCE LOCAL PLAN PREPARATION

- 4.1 The first two steps in the new system are to prepare a local plan timetable that outlines the anticipated and actual dates for key plan-making stages (as shown in Appendix A) and a notice of intention to commence local plan preparation which will bring the timetable into effect. The notice of intention would be issued in April with formal triggering of the 30 month period planned for August 2026 when the self-assessment of readiness would be issued to the Planning Inspectorate (Gateway 1).
- 4.2 The purpose of the local plan timetable is to make the plan-making process more transparent for communities and other stakeholders so that they know when a local plan will come forward and when they can get involved. It is also intended to ensure local planning authorities prepare their local plan timetable consistently, and that they report against the same, defined plan-making milestones. These milestones will include when plan-making steps are undertaken; when consultation

periods begin and end; and when outputs following gateways or examination are published.

4.3 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 require the local plan timetable to be revised when (but not limited to):

- when the Gateway 1 self-assessment summary is published
- when observations and advice by a gateway assessor, or the examiner’s report, is published
- if the local planning authority has to repeat Gateway 3, as soon as is reasonably practicable after seeking further observations and advice

4.4 The regulations also require local planning authorities to review their timetable on a monthly basis and revise their timetable to bring it up to date, where necessary.

4.5 The timetable must be made available before or alongside the publication of the notice of intention to commence local plan preparation.

4.6 The notice of intention to commence local plan preparation must be published on the Council’s website at least four months before publishing the gateway 1 self-assessment summary which is anticipated to be August 2026. The notice must include:

- details of the local planning authority which has prepared the notice, including the area to which their local plan will apply
- where the local plan timetable is published
- if the local plan is to be a joint plan, which other authorities are participating in its preparation. (There is no intention to prepare a joint plan. It will be seen from the timetable that the bulk of work on the plan will be done before reorganisation in April 2028 and only final amendments following the examination in public and formal adoption will fall to the successor unitary authority. This plan therefore represents the final opportunity for WFDC councillors to shape development in the district for some years beyond reorganisation.)

Next steps

4.7 The following activities have been or will be undertaken in getting ready for the formal start of the new Local Plan process.

Call for sites	Completed, December 2025
Appraisal of sites submitted in call for sites	January - March 2026
Commission remaining evidence/ updates of existing evidence	March – April 2026

Agenda Item No. 8.2

Review and update where necessary current Local Plan policies	March - October 2026
Prepare and publish a Local Plan timetable in line with the data standards and provide a copy to MHCLG and publish on Council's website (this report)	April 2026
Confirm project management and governance arrangements through the preparation of a new Project Initiation Document (using the PAS template)	April 2026
Publish notice of intention to commence the new plan making process	April 2026 at least 4 months before formal start (Gateway 1)
Run a new call for sites for Gypsy and Traveller Pitches	April/May 2026 (tbc)
Run a scoping consultation to seek input from stakeholders	April/May 2026
Set up Local Plans Review Panel regular meetings to discuss key matters	May 2026
All-Member Briefing	June - July 2026
Town and Parish Council Briefing	July 2026
Update information online and send to stakeholders and consultees	July 2026
Prepare an Engagement Strategy in consultation with Local Plans Review Panel	July 2026
Prepare self-assessment information required to pass through Gateway 1 to formally start the 30-month process	August 2026
Finalise the draft vision and outcomes and explore high level options and policies for delivering these	August/September 2026

Issues and Options public consultation for 6 weeks	October-November 2026
Make completed evidence available online	October - November 2026
Commission draft Strategic Environmental Assessment scoping document, setting the framework for assessing environmental impacts	November 2026
6 week public consultation on the proposed Local Plan content and evidence and draft vision	January – February 2027
Recruit Programme Officer (18 month) for final stages	April 2027
8 week public consultation on the detailed draft Local Plan and its supporting documents	June/August 2027

5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Budget provision is in place to support the preparation of the Local Plan. An advert has been placed to appoint a Principal Planning Policy Officer to build staff capacity within the planning policy team, or potentially a consultant will be used until recruitment is successful. Staff costs are accounted for annually through the establishment budget but may rise if a consultant is required. In addition to staff costs, professional services that will be commissioned to undertake local plan evidence assessments/reviews and participate in local plan examination will be covered by established budgets or earmarked reserves.
- 5.2 The Council was successful in bidding for the digital funding grant (£50k) which will be used to cover costs incurred to standardise data formats and obtain user-friendly digital software tools.

6. **LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Section 15B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the Council to prepare and maintain its local plan timetable. Under section 15B(8), to bring the local plan timetable into effect, the Council must publish it, together with a statement that the timetable is to have effect. The Council will then be under a duty to comply with the local plan timetable although there is a requirement in accordance with the 2026 Regulations to amend the timetable in certain circumstances.

- 6.2 In line with arrangements for production of previous local plans, the Local Plan Review Panel will be resurrected with the Council's AGM in May being invited to agree terms of reference and membership. The Panel group will have input at key stages and all-member and town/parish council briefings will also be held at those stages. The draft Local Plan will be reported to Cabinet before the Full Council is asked to agree that it is submitted for examination. Following the receipt of the Inspector's report, the Local Plan must be adopted by the Full Council.

7. IMPACTS and IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The timetable for the Wyre Forest District Local Plan preparation does not in itself have any direct equality implications, and it has been concluded that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. An Equality Screening Assessment will be carried out on the Local Plan as it is developed. No adverse impacts are expected on climate change or health from preparing a plan – indeed the next plan could enable developments that enhance arrangements for responding to climate change or facilitate additional green infrastructure or other facilities that provide more opportunities for healthy living.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 The new-style Local Plan will be prepared quickly and is intended to reduce the risks inherent in the existing Local Plan making system.
- 8.2 It should be noted that a failure to satisfy the Duty to Cooperate is no longer a risk as the Government has removed this legal requirement (although LPAs are still expected to engage on cross-boundary issues and this will be formalised through new arrangements for strategic planning).
- 8.3 The principal risks are considered to be:
- 8.3.1 ability to stick to the timetable. This relates primarily to capacity within the planning team and also availability of internal and external support to progress the local plan. Legal support will be required, and specialist support will be needed on procurement matters and planning matters including representing the Council through the examination of the Plan. The Council will seek to mitigate this through recruitment of a Principal Planning Policy Officer and West Mercia Police will provide support on procurement. A Programme Officer and Planning Barrister will be instructed to support the Council through the examination process.
- 8.3.2 likelihood of opposition to content of local plan from residents. The much higher target for housing growth imposed by the Government in the NPPF in December 2024 will mean – unless there is a desire to build tower blocks – a need to review the green belt and release further green belt land for development. This will be a contested process and will require councillors to take unpopular decisions if a local plan that is compliant with the housing target in the NPPF is to be delivered. Within this, the allocation of land for additional gypsy and traveller sites is likely to be a

further focus for opposition from residents. Again, councillors will have to take potentially unpopular decisions to meet the assessed need.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The Cabinet is invited to approve the recommendations in section 2 of this report.

10. CONSULTEES

10.1 CLT

10.2 Planning Manager, WFDC

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#)

11.2 Government announcement, 6 March 2026 [New plan-making system: regulations and content roadmap - GOV.UK](#)


Appendix A – Local Plan Timetable – Wyre Forest

April 2026

This is the Local Plan Timetable for the district of Wyre Forest, which has been prepared by Wyre Forest District Council in accordance with section 15B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The local plan will address all matters that must be covered by a local plan except for waste and minerals, which are the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council.

Wyre Forest District Council does not intend to produce any supplementary plans. It intends to comply with section 15F(1) of the 2004 Act by incorporating a design code within the local plan. The Council does not intend to produce a joint local plan.

The timetable for the preparation of the local plan for Wyre Forest is set out in the table.

Key steps in new Local Plan system		Local Plan timetable	Month in formal process	
	Publish local plan timetable	The timetable must be kept up-to-date and set out the anticipated and actual dates for key plan-making stages.	April 2026	
	Publish notice of intention to commence local plan preparation	Publication of notice which commences a minimum 4-month notice period so that stakeholders are aware plan-making is beginning.	April 2026	
	Scoping consultation	Inviting feedback from stakeholders on how to engage with them and what the plan should contain.	April/May 2026	
	Gateway 1: self-assessment of readiness	Publication of a document setting out details of how you have got ready for plan-making, marking formal commencement of plan-making for the purposes of the 30-month timeframe.	August /September 2026	1
	Consultation: proposed local plan content and evidence	Minimum 6 week consultation on the proposed local plan content and evidence, including a draft version, not including the outcome to the call for sites.	Jan-Feb 2027	4 - 5
	Gateway 2	Seeking observations and advice from PINS to support the early resolution of potential soundness issues and progress towards the 'prescribed requirements'.	April 2027	9
	Consultation: proposed local plan	Minimum 8-week consultation on the proposed local plan and its supporting documents.	June/August 2027	11 – 13
	Gateway 3	Testing if the proposed local plan has met the 'prescribed requirements' and can proceed to examination.	March 2028	20
	Examination	Examination of the local plan against the tests of soundness, to be set out in national policy.	July-December 2028	24 – 29
	Adoption	Publication of the local plan and adoption statement.	Jan 2029	30

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
8 April 2026

Local Plan – further call for gypsy and traveller sites

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Dan Morehead, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Localism
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Kate Bailey, Head of Strategic Growth
CONTACT OFFICER:	Fred Stuart, Planning Policy Officer
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1: 2025 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment Executive Summary

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present a summary of the 2025 needs assessment and the need to undertake a further call for sites for gypsy and traveller accommodation for the next local plan.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to agree that a further call for sites for gypsy and traveller accommodation should be undertaken from 20 April to 13 July 2026.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The requirement to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople, is established through national guidance contained in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (MHCLG, December 2024).
- 3.2 The Government revised the PPTS to make policy clearer, fairer, and more inclusive and reversing some of the narrower definitions used previously. This meant that more gypsy and traveller families would be included within Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments (GTANAs). As part of the updated PPTS, councils must maintain a five-year supply of deliverable Traveller sites and GTANAs must reflect changing policy requirements. Authorities are revisiting accommodation evidence more frequently which is leading to revised and generally increased need. Moreover, the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) tightened expectations on local authorities to plan proactively for long-term need of gypsy and traveller pitches, consider unmet needs in local plans and identify specific site allocations in development plans. Because planning authorities must now demonstrate evidence of need and show policies to meet it, more areas are finding and reporting higher requirements for Traveller pitches.
- 3.3 A GTANA is a formal study carried out by local authorities to assess the current and future housing and site needs of Gypsy Communities, Traveller Families and Travelling Showpeople. The assessment helps councils understand how many

pitches or plots are required. The Council undertook an assessment in 2025 and the executive summary is presented in appendix 1

- 3.4 The purpose of this assessment is to quantify the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople and Boat Dwellers in the Wyre Forest local authority area between 2025 and 2046. This was achieved by looking at the current supply of existing authorised sites, private and public sites and temporary or transit sites. The current need is assessed by investigating overcrowding, unauthorised developments and households on waiting lists, using these findings alongside household growth, new family formation and migration patterns to assess the future need of the district. Finally, the need from bricks and mortar housing is assessed through looking at the gypsies and travellers living in conventional housing who wish to move back to sites.
- 3.5 The researchers used a number of data sources, which included a review of secondary information including national and local planning policies and recently undertaken GTANAs; and analysis of the most recent published MHCLG Traveller Caravan Count (January 2025) to determine trends in the population of Gypsies and Travellers. An online survey was completed by stakeholders from the local authority and neighbouring authorities. This survey provided qualitative data regarding the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. In addition, there was consultation with Gypsies and Travellers, which covered a range of issues related to accommodation and service needs.

4. KEY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The 2025 GTANA identifies a requirement for 133 pitches across the period 2025–2046, with the majority of need arising in the early part of the plan period. The higher level of assessed need in the 2025 GTANA is a direct consequence of the Government’s planning policy, over which the Council has no control. The GTANA shows that 68 pitches are required between 2025–2030, followed by 18 pitches between 2030–2035, 20 pitches between 2035–2040, and 27 pitches between 2040–2046. The concentration of need within the first five years places immediate pressure on the Council to identify and deliver suitable sites in the short term. This is particularly significant given that Wyre Forest District Council has recently lost three planning appeals due to the absence of a demonstrable five-year supply of Gypsy and Traveller pitches, highlighting the risk of further speculative applications and adverse appeal decisions if sufficient provision is not identified promptly.
- 4.2 In the short term, the allocated site at Zortech Avenue can meet 16 of the 68 pitches required in the 2025-2030 period.
- 4.3 As part of the recent call for sites exercise, only five submissions identified Gypsy and Traveller pitches as a potential use, representing a combined site area of approximately 6.29 hectares. This total area could potentially accommodate up to 75 pitches. However, there are many constraints that may reduce this number - potentially by a significant amount - which include site suitability, different types of pitches required, green belt policy, flood zones, tree preservation orders and biodiversity constraints.
- 4.4 This limited response demonstrates that the current supply of potential sites will not meet the identified need of 133 pitches over the plan period. There is a shortfall of

at least 42 pitches (133 – 16 - 75) but potentially much more than that depending on the outcome of the assessment of suitability of the five sites that have been proposed, for reasons mentioned in the previous paragraph. That assessment will not be completed for several months.

- 4.5 As a result, the Council needs to undertake a further targeted call for sites focused specifically on Gypsy and Traveller pitches to broaden the pool of potential locations. This will help ensure that sufficient, deliverable sites can be identified for the local plan to meet the GTANA requirement and strengthen the Council's position in planning decisions and appeals.
- 4.6 Paragraph 155 of the NPPF highlights that, where development needs cannot be met within urban areas or on non-Green Belt land, local authorities should consider whether lower-quality or previously developed areas of Green Belt - often referred to as "grey belt" - could be appropriate for development, provided this would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the Green Belt. For Wyre Forest District Council, this means that if evidence such as the GTANA identifies an unmet requirement for a particular development type, the Council may need to consider whether suitable grey belt locations within the Green Belt could contribute towards meeting that need through the plan-making process.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The costs of returning for a Gypsy and Traveller specific call for sites process are minimal and mostly relate to staff time. These will be met by existing budgets.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Under regulation 18 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 local planning authorities must review local plans at least once every 5 years from their adoption date to ensure that policies remain relevant and effectively address the needs of the local community. The local plan will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the 2026 Regulations, other relevant legislation and national planning policy including the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.2 The call for sites forms part of the evidence base to inform the local plan and does not determine site allocation. All sites will be assessed against agreed planning and technical criteria in line with national and local policy requirements. This process will be overseen by the Council's Local Plans Review Panel which will commence its work after the AGM in May.
- 6.3 GTANA 2025 has been prepared to comply with the requirements set out in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (December 2024).

7. IMPACTS and IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An equality impact assessment screening exercise has been undertaken and it has been found that there are no negative impacts in conducting a further call for sites.
- 7.2 The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment is considered to have a positive impact by ensuring that the Council has an up-to-date understanding of

the accommodation needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities within the district. This evidence will support the Council in planning for sufficient pitch provision and promoting fair and appropriate access to accommodation.

- 7.3 Climate change and health impacts – not applicable. The preparation of the GTANA and the call for sites process form part of the Council's evidence gathering and plan-making process and do not in themselves result in direct climate or health impacts. The local plan will address how it mitigates climate change and promotes healthy living opportunities.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Maintaining an up-to-date Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment helps to mitigate the risk of the Council relying on outdated evidence when planning for future accommodation needs. A robust and current evidence base strengthens the Council's ability to plan positively for identified needs and supports decision-making through the local plan process.
- 8.2 There is a risk that the Council will be unable to demonstrate a sufficient supply of deliverable gypsy and traveller pitches if suitable sites are not identified through the call for sites process and subsequent site assessment work. A lack of identified supply may weaken the Council's position in determining planning applications and at planning appeals, increasing the likelihood that proposals for Gypsy and Traveller sites may be allowed on appeal in locations that have not been assessed through the plan-making process. Where a clear unmet need is identified but insufficient sites are allocated or delivered, this can significantly weaken the Council's position at appeal. In such circumstances, planning inspectors may give substantial weight to the identified need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, meaning that proposals on suitable sites - including those within grey belt areas of the Green Belt may be more likely to be allowed on appeal. As a result, if the Council cannot demonstrate a clear strategy to address an ongoing shortfall in provision, it may face an increased risk of losing further planning appeals for Gypsy and Traveller development.
- 8.3 These risks will continue to be managed through the local plan preparation process, including further evidence gathering, site assessment work, and ongoing monitoring of the Council's ability to meet identified accommodation needs.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The GTANA identifies a future need for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches within the district which cannot be met from allocations in the existing plan and the sites that have been submitted through the recent process. A targeted call for additional sites for Gypsy and Traveller pitches is therefore necessary to ensure that the Council is able to plan positively for identified needs and identify suitable and sustainable locations for future provision.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Cabinet
10.2 CLT
10.3 Planning Manager, WFDC

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (MHCLG, 2024)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites>
- 11.2 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment
www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/GTANA26

Appendix One

Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Boat Dweller Assessment - Executive Summary

Introduction

- S1. Wyre Forest District Council commissioned *RRR Consultancy Ltd* to undertake a Gypsy, Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Boat Dweller Accommodation Assessment for the period 2025-2046. The results will be used as an evidence base for policy development in housing and planning and to inform the allocation of resources.
- S2. The requirement to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople, is established through national guidance contained in Planning Policy for Travellers (MHCLG, 2024), and for boat dwellers in the DCLG's Review of housing needs for caravans and houseboats: draft guidance (March 2016).
- S3. To achieve the study aims, the research drew on a number of data sources, including:
- Review of secondary information: a review of national and local planning policies and recently undertaken GTAAs, and analysis of secondary data. This included analysis of the most recently published (January 2025) MHCLG Traveller Caravan Count to determine trends in the population of Gypsies and Travellers.
 - An online survey with stakeholders from the local authority and neighbouring authorities. This provided qualitative data regarding the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and boat dwellers.
 - Consultation with Gypsies, Travellers and boat dwellers covering a range of issues related to accommodation and service needs. This key methodology determined an extensive range of data, enabling accommodation needs to be determined.

Policy context

- S4. The government published the latest Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) in December 2024. It was last updated in December 2023 and before that in August 2015. In PPTS 2023, the government changed the definitions of Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople in response to a legal judgment. PPTS 2015 removed the word 'permanently' from the planning definitions of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople contained in PPTS 2012. This meant that local planning authorities (LPAs) were no longer obliged to consider the accommodation needs of Gypsy and

Traveller and Travelling Showpeople households who had permanently ceased to travel.

- S5. In the 2023 update, the PPTS reverted to the definition of Gypsies and Travellers used in PPTS 2012. This change was in response to a Court of Appeal judgment in *Smith v SSLUHC & Others* (October 2022). PPTS 2024 includes a revised definition of Gypsies and Travellers which includes households who have permanently ceased to travel as well as ‘...all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan...’ (PPTS 2024, p.11). This means that individuals who may not currently travel but belong to communities with a cultural tradition of nomadism or living in caravans are still recognised in planning policy and their accommodation needs must be considered. The definition of Travelling Showpeople in PPTS was amended in 2023 with the word ‘permanently’ inserted after ‘temporarily’. This remains the definition in PPTS 2024.

Population Trends

- S6. The 2021 Census suggests there were 451 Gypsies and Travellers residing in Wyre Forest representing about 0.44% of the total population. The 2021 Census also records a total of 154 Gypsy and Traveller households residing within the local authority area of which 35 (23%) were residing in a caravan or mobile home and 119 (77%) were living in bricks and mortar accommodation. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) January 2025 Caravan Count shows there were 181 Gypsy and Traveller caravans located in the Wyre Forest local authority area, consisting of 155 on authorised pitches and 26 on unauthorised pitches. When population size is considered the proportion in the Wyre Forest local authority area is 177 caravans per 100,000 population compared to an average of 120 in Worcestershire.
- S7. As of July 2025, within the Wyre Forest local authority area, there is a provision of 114 Gypsy and Traveller pitches consisting of 66 privately owned pitches, 22 local authority pitches, 20 unauthorised development pitches and 6 pitches with temporary permission. Regarding Travelling Showpeople, there is one Travelling Showpeople yard comprising 4 plots with temporary planning permission. There are four marinas in the Wyre Forest local authority area, consisting of around 180 moorings. However, there are no marinas with permanent residential moorings.

Stakeholder Consultation

- S8. Stakeholder consultations conducted in June 2025 gathered qualitative insights into the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, and boat dwellers, both within the local area and neighbouring authorities. Participants identified a continuing shortage of suitable and affordable sites, despite allocations proposed in the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review. Overcrowding, site loss, limited access to council-owned provision, and the emergence of new households

(households with members who are over 15 and anticipated to require their own pitch within the next five years) were key drivers of demand. For boat dwellers, concerns were raised about the availability of residential moorings, although hard data on need remains limited. Respondents emphasised the importance of locating new sites and moorings close to services and transport links, while avoiding environmentally or planning-constrained areas. However, land availability, planning restrictions (including high levels of Green Belt areas in Wyre Forest District Council), high land values, and local opposition remain persistent barriers.

- S9. Travel patterns vary, with Gypsy and Traveller families often moving seasonally for work or cultural reasons, while boat dwellers' movements reflect access needs to schools, waste facilities, and repairs. Most stakeholders observed little change in the number of unauthorised encampments or moorings in recent years. Views were mixed on the need for new transit or temporary provision, with some authorities planning sites in response to repeated unauthorised encampments, but others reporting no clear evidence of need. Community relationships were described as generally stable, though tensions relating to when households submit planning applications were noted.
- S10. Barriers to service access were identified, particularly in education, where school exclusions and lack of engagement by some academies with Traveller Education Teams were highlighted. There was also a general lack of awareness about available services, though local liaison officers were seen as helpful in overcoming this. Inter-agency cooperation was reported as inconsistent, with some councils demonstrating strong internal coordination, while others lacked clarity about roles and responsibilities. Good practice examples included Local Plan allocations that integrate provision for Traveller groups, NHS outreach to sites, and membership of professional networks such as the National Association of Gypsy and Traveller Officers to share expertise and support effective service delivery.

Accommodation need

- S11. Accommodation need in the Wyre Forest local authority area was assessed using analysis of primary data (collected first-hand for the specific assessment) and secondary data (information obtained from existing sources). The accommodation needs calculation steps are based on a model in accordance with both previous (DCLG 2007) and recent planning policy (MHCLG 2024). Although the 2007 guidance was withdrawn in 2016, it remains useful as a model to determine accommodation needs given that it outlines the basic principles to be applied when undertaking GTAAs. It contains seven basic components; five assessing need and two assessing supply, which are applied to each sub-group, based on primary data.
- S12. Table ES1 summarises permanent accommodation need over the period 2025-46. It is important to note that the figures shown in Table ES1 include all need as of 2025, including any which may have been identified by previous GTAAs but remained

unfulfilled by 2025. The table shows that 133 new permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches are needed over the period 2025-2046 in the study area.

Table ES.1: Gypsy and Traveller permanent accommodation need (pitches)

Period	No.
2025-2030	68
2030-2035	18
2035-2040	20
2040-2046	27
2025-2046	133

Source: GTAA 2025

- S13. Table ES.2 indicates that an additional 11 permanent Travelling Showpeople plots are required over the same period.

Table ES.2: Travelling Showpeople permanent accommodation need (plots)

Period	No.
2025-2030	8
2030-2035	1
2035-2040	1
2040-2046	1
Total 2025-2046	11

Source: GTAA 2025

- S14. In relation to transit provision, the GTAA recommends that the local authorities adopt a negotiated stopping policy. This involves caravans being sited on suitable specific pieces of ground for an agreed and limited period of time, with the provision of services such as water, waste disposal and toilets. The advantages of this approach are set out in detail in Chapter 5.
- S15. In relation to boat dwellers, it is estimated that there is a need for 50 permanent residential moorings across the local plan period.

Conclusions

- S16. The results from this assessment supersede any previous GTAA (including any accommodation need calculated prior to this assessment). This assessment identifies an overall accommodation need in the Wyre Forest local authority area over 21 years for 133 additional pitches. There is also a need for 11 additional Travelling Showpeople plots and 50 permanent residential moorings during the same period. It is recommended that the local authority incorporate a policy to address negotiated stopping places for transient and/or visiting Gypsy and Traveller encampments.

- S17. It is also recommended that the local planning authority considers the accommodation needs that might materialise over the plan period from households (Gypsies, Travellers, Travelling Showpeople and boat dwellers) not considered by this assessment. This could include households residing on unauthorised developments, unauthorised encampments, due to in-migration, and those living in bricks and mortar accommodation. This accommodation need should be considered separately from the need identified below and could be met through windfall applications.
- S18. In addition to the above, in order to meet the specific accommodation need of the different community groups, the report recommends the following:
- In relation to Gypsies and Travellers, it is recommended that the local authority works closely with the families to determine how their accommodation needs can best be met.
 - Also, for the local authority to provide pre-planning application advice to households who have identified land to help determine if it is suitable to address accommodation need.
 - To meet the accommodation needs of Showpeople, it is also recommended that the local authority works closely with the occupiers of the yard to meet their current and future accommodation needs.
- S19. As well as quantifying accommodation need, the study also makes recommendations on other key issues, including:

Planning policy:

- To identify a range of specific sites in sustainable locations to be developed only for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople homes.
- To consider how the accommodation needs can be met by expanding existing provision and/or providing new sites, yards or moorings, but primarily to meet the need for those on the existing site or related to the current occupants / owners.
- To consider alternative options for developing new sites, yards and moorings such as developing them on a cooperative basis e.g. community land trust, shared ownership, or small sites owned by a local authority but rented to families for their own use.
- To consider alternative site funding mechanisms such as: site acquisition funds; loans for private site provision through Community Development Financial Institutions; and joint ventures with members of the Gypsy and Traveller, Showpeople and boat dweller communities.
- Prior to action being taken against sites or yards being used without planning permission, the local authority, in partnership with landowners, occupants and relevant agencies (e.g. Showmen's Guild and National Federation of Gypsy

Liaison Groups, the National Bargee Travellers Association (NBTA), and the Canal and River Trust (CRT) to review its current, historic and potential planning status, and review the most effective way forward.

- To consider safeguarding Gypsy and Traveller site and Travelling Showpeople yards with permanent planning permission for their current use unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer needed to meet identified need.
- Implement a corporate policy to provide negotiated stopping arrangements to address unauthorised encampments for set periods of time at agreed locations.
- To liaise with owners of the sites and yards to determine how they could expand the number of pitches to meet the family's accommodation needs.
- To work closely with the Canal and River Trust (CRT), Severn River Trust (SRT) and the National Bargee Traveller Association (NBTA) to meet the needs of the boat dwellers and constant cruisers across the study area.
- To liaise with marinas and boat yards in the area to see which could accommodate permanent residential moorings (including converting some of their leisure moorings to permanent).
- The population size and demographics of the Gypsy, Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and boat dweller communities can change rapidly. As such, their accommodation needs should be reviewed every 5 to 7 years.

Management:

- Housing organisations need to consider the type of housing allocated to Gypsies and Travellers residing in bricks and mortar in order to minimise the cultural implication and feelings of isolation.
- Develop a holistic vision for work concerning Gypsies, Travellers, Showpeople and boat dwellers and embed it in Community and Homelessness Strategies, Local Plans and planning and reporting obligations under the Equality Act 2010.
- Provide training and workshop sessions with local authority and service provider employees (and elected members) to help them to further understand issues relating to the Gypsy and Traveller, Showpeople, and boat dweller communities.
- In liaison with relevant enforcement agencies such as the police to develop a common approach to dealing with unauthorised encampments.
- Encourage local housing authorities to include Gypsy and Traveller categories on ethnic monitoring forms to improve data on population numbers, particularly in housing.
- Better sharing of information between agencies in relation to Gypsy, Traveller, Showpeople and boat dweller communities.

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

8 April 2026

Worcestershire’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026-2031

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Chris Rogers, Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Kate Bailey ext 2560
CONTACT OFFICER:	Kate Bailey
APPENDICES:	Appendix One: Strategy and Action Plan Appendix Two: Homeless Review https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/housing-and-homes/homelessness/worcestershire-homelessness-review-2025-draft-v3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To agree that the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2026-31) is publicly consulted on in advance of adoption.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is invited to:

- 2.1 **Agree the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Homelessness Review 2026-31 are publicly consulted on for 6 weeks starting on the 10 April until 22 May at 5pm.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Local Authorities have a duty to publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (Homelessness Act 2002 as amended by Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) every five years. It must include the local authority’s plans for the prevention of homelessness and for ensuring that sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so. Prior to the publication of new strategies, local authorities must undertake a review of homelessness in their area. The review is a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of homelessness, developed by analysing homelessness data and the views of customers and partner organisations (please see appendix two).
- 3.2 The previous strategy was approved on 13/09/2022 and was extended until the end of 2026 on the 11/11/2025 whilst officers awaited the new Government homeless and rough sleeping strategy. The primary focus was on prevention, intervention and recovery. Further details on the outcomes from the strategy are provided in the new

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy at 1.1. on page four titled “Achievements of last strategy” (please see Appendix One).

- 3.3 Local Authorities have a duty to improve the health of the people in the local area (Health and Social Care Act 2012) and should therefore be mindful of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 3.4 The strategy has been developed by an operational group of officers from across five Local Housing Authorities (Bromsgrove, Redditch, Malvern Hills, Wychavon and Wyre Forest). In developing this strategy, a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of homelessness across the local authority areas was carried out by analysing homelessness data and taking account of the views of customers and partner organisations. Worcester City has decided to develop its own strategy because their members believe that Worcester City faces very different demands and pressures and has a very different housing market to the other Worcestershire districts. In the previous iteration there was a shared homelessness strategy but Worcester City developed a separate action plan. With the current strategy nearing expiry, a decision has therefore been made to undertake a Worcester City homelessness review and to develop a Worcester City strategy which focusses on the specific circumstances and needs of the city.
- 3.5 A consultation event was held on 30 September 2025 with partners and stakeholders, to consider housing from both a strategic and client-based perspective. This event included partners from a variety of statutory and voluntary organisations as well as delegates with lived homelessness experience. A follow up event was held just within Wyre Forest with our local organisations through the Homeless Forum to gain their perspective. Both events considered impacts on particular groups including young people, domestic abuse, homeless families, rough sleepers and a focus on homelessness and health.
- 3.6 Service users were also consulted and supported to complete a questionnaire to feedback on their experiences including those in temporary accommodation, young people, rough sleepers and victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The National Plan to End Homelessness, published by the Government in December 2025, is a long-term strategy with the overarching vision that: Homelessness should be rare, brief and non-repeating and that people who do become homeless should receive support quickly and effectively. Local authorities are expected to move from crisis to prevention. A key requirement will involve greater collaboration across government departments. There are five pillars of the strategy –
 1. Universal Prevention
 2. Targeted Prevention
 3. Preventing Crisis
 4. Emergency Response
 5. Recovery and Stability
- 4.2 The National Plan expects closer collaboration between housing, health, social care, children’s services, prison and probation and voluntary sector partners. Better

case-sharing, data exchanges and joint pathways, particularly for people with complex needs.

- 4.3 The strategy sets out how councils will invest in early intervention and support systems to stop homelessness before it happens, strengthen cross-service collaboration (health, jobcentres, criminal justice, social care) to identify risks early and endorse a new 'duty to collaborate' for key public services (planned through future legislation) to support this approach.
- 4.4 The National Strategy and future legislation will require local authorities to eliminate unlawful use of B&Bs for families (beyond statutory short stays), improve the quality of temporary accommodation and aim to halve long-term rough sleeping. Local authorities are also expected to tackle the structural causes of homelessness by building more affordable and social homes and support the reform of the private rented sector working with landlords and tenants to help them to sustain their accommodation where at all possible. The new Crisis and Resilience fund will be key to providing welfare support to those who have experienced an income shock or unexpected bill.
- 4.5 The strategy has aligned its approach to homelessness with these national priorities with a plan to shift from Crisis to Prevention. The Strategy focuses resources upstream, supporting people earlier (before accommodation loss). The shared action plan has measurable targets based on the national outcomes framework which will include six metrics relating to homelessness and rough sleeping that will be reported through the quarterly performance reports to Councillors.
- 4.6 Each of the local authorities will develop their own action plan which will sit under the overarching, shared action plan, by the end of 2026.
- 4.7 Consultation responses will be considered by officers and amendments made to the strategy and then the strategy will come back before Cabinet in July to be adopted.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Government is providing nearly £3.5bn funding for homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services from 2026/27–2028/29 and have amalgamated funding streams into a new Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant. Of this funding the Council will receive £812,607 (please note this also includes new burden funding for the Renters Rights Act) in 2026/27 and has been allocated £273k through the Local Government Finance Settlement to contribute to the costs of temporary accommodation.
- 5.2 The consolidation of funding into a single grant over a three year period gives the local authority and its partners greater stability and flexibility to prioritise local needs (e.g., rough sleeping services, domestic abuse related housing support). However, the separation out of temporary accommodation funding and moving it into the LGFS is a potential disadvantage as WFDC actually spent more on prevention than has been assumed by the Government. Officers have worked with the Head of Resources and 151 Officer and her team to ensure sufficient resource is available to maintain current service provision.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There is a legal requirement to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper strategy under the Homelessness Act 2002.
- 6.2 The new funding places some additional requirements on Local Authorities including that local authorities must have an action plan in line with paragraph 2.11 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance which must be published (except where specified below or in guidance) by Autumn 2026 and regularly updated. This will include the requirement to set targets in line with the Local Outcomes Framework and this work will be undertaken once the detail around these has been published and will come back to members as part of an updated action plan.

7. IMPACT AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Screening Assessment has been undertaken <https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/equality-impact-assessments-eia/eqia-homeless-and-rough-sleeper-strategy/> and this indicates there are no adverse effects of this decision on any groups with protected characteristics so a full EIA is not required. The strategy seeks to deliver a range of services for homeless households that will have a beneficial impact on those suffering from health conditions, disabilities and financial disadvantage.
- 7.2 Climate Change: Not applicable.
- 7.3 Health and Wellbeing: the action plan includes services and projects that have a positive impact on health and wellbeing through tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Failure to deliver on the objectives in the strategy, particularly in reducing the reliance on Bed and Breakfast relates to the Corporate Plan Priority: Securing financial sustainability for services communities value and Corporate Risk SR08.
- 8.2 The Council is required to have a strategy in place. Without it, it is likely that more households who are threatened with homelessness, or who are in housing need, will have limited options for support to sustain their accommodation or find alternative suitable accommodation that meets their needs. If they have to make a homeless approach this could lead to the following negative outcomes:
- Increased B&B costs
 - Increased rough sleeping in the District
 - Impacts on physical and mental health, educational achievement, ability to work and similar through increased homelessness

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The new homeless and rough sleeping strategy 2026 – 2031 has been developed by five local authorities in Worcestershire and considers the local homelessness issues in the area, the views of stakeholders and service users and the national homelessness strategy.

9.2 The strategy will go out to consultation for a six week period and will then come back to Cabinet in July for approval.

10. CONSULTEES

10.1 CLT.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 National Plan to end Homelessness, December 2025
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness>



Wyre Forest
District Council

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 - 2031

Our Vision - to end homelessness and rough sleeping and where it has not been possible to prevent it from occurring, ensure that it is rare, brief and non-recurring

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Foreword

Chair of Worcestershire Housing Board

I am proud to introduce this shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-31 for Bromsgrove District Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Wychavon District Council and Wyre Forest District Council.

Homelessness and rough sleeping remain among the most visible and urgent challenges facing our communities today. They are stark reminders of inequality, vulnerability, and the need for collective action. It is not simply the absence of a home, but the absence of security, dignity, and opportunity. Every child should grow up with the security of a home, and every adult deserves a safe place to live that provides stability and where they have a chance to thrive.

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping continues to be of utmost importance for each of the councils involved in developing and delivering on this strategy.

Our vision, aligned with the Government's national strategy, will focus on 5 pillars to end homelessness:

Universal prevention: tackling the root causes of homelessness across the whole population.

Targeted prevention: providing tailored support to people who are more likely to face homelessness.

Preventing crisis: early identification of people who need help and putting in place personalised interventions that meet their needs.

Improving emergency responses: to ensure that if people do become homeless, they receive high quality support and that homelessness is brief.

Recovery and preventing repeat homelessness: helping people rebuild their lives with the right support.

This strategy will also take a renewed approach to the support and intervention for families with children in temporary accommodation to minimise the associated risk and long-term impact this has on them.

We recognise that homelessness is not simply a housing issue, but a complex social challenge shaped by health, employment, family breakdown, and wider economic pressures. Tackling homelessness requires collaboration across government, local authorities, health and social care, the voluntary sector, and communities themselves. That is why we have developed this strategy in collaboration with a range of stakeholders, which is essential to the successful implementation of our vision, as well as with the voice of those with lived experience of homelessness.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the organisations and individuals who have contributed towards the development of this strategy.

Governance will sit with the Worcestershire Housing Board- recognising that tackling homelessness not only benefits the individual but also benefits the economy, the health of our population, reduces crime and disorder and reduces costs for the taxpayer.

This strategy will govern our approach for five years and will see us beyond Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). However, given our experiences over recent years in tackling homelessness and the ever-changing landscape, it is vital that it remains responsive and will be kept under constant review.



Vic Allison, Chief Executive of Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils and Chair of the Worcestershire Housing Board

1. Introduction

Our vision is to **end homelessness and rough sleeping and where it isn't possible to prevent it from occurring, ensure it is rare, brief and non-recurring.**

We will tackle homelessness and rough sleeping through our work on the 5 pillars to end homelessness in line with the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness: universal prevention, targeted prevention, preventing crisis, improving emergency responses and recovery.

The district councils collaborating on the development and implementation of this strategy have a proven track record of working closely together to prevent and tackle homelessness across our districts. This is the third shared homelessness strategy to be developed, and the achievements of our last strategy are highlighted below.

1.1 Achievements of the last strategy

The previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 - 2025 was developed by all six Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) in Worcestershire and focused on the then three main tenets of the national strategy: *prevention, intervention and recovery* as well as increasing the supply of temporary and permanent accommodation.

- Established a **countywide Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Group**.
- Developed a **Prison Leavers Protocol** and the pre-release homeless panel.
- Developed **stakeholder involvement and People With Lived Experience (PWLE) in reviewing services** through regular countywide meetings, bespoke focus groups, and questionnaires.
- Quarterly **reviews of data collection and deep dives into client groups** to inform decision making and share learning.

- **Joint training** in homelessness, Mental Capacity Act, psychologically informed environments, Care Act 2014, Complex Adults Risk Management framework, self-neglect etc.
- Support for those with mental health illnesses through development of **Mental Health Link Worker posts** and non-medical interventions
- **Delivery of the Rough Sleeper initiative** (target 563 p.a):
 - 2024/25 - **637 people supported**
 - 2023/24 - **837 people supported**
 - 2022/23 - **713 people supported**
- **Housing and support plans developed for the Target Priority Group (TPG)** (the most complex rough sleepers)
- **Cost of living plans, welfare assistance and bespoke support** to reduce homelessness developed across the county
- **Safe accommodation units set up for survivors of domestic abuse**
- **Supported provision of domestic abuse support services** including through the Domestic Abuse Support Service (West Mercia Women's Aid), Sanctuary Scheme and Domestic Abuse Coordinator and specialist Housing Officers (all councils)

There are also some actions from the previous strategy that are still underway at the time of writing this strategy including:

- Undertaking a **review of peer support models** in place in some areas of the county to share learning and best practice and explore whether the models could be expanded.
- **Explore opportunities for a greater range of supported and step-down accommodation** available following the supported housing needs assessment and strategy. The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 has yet to be implemented so this action was deferred.

1.2 The current situation: homelessness review

To inform and provide the evidence base for the strategic objectives and actions within this strategy, a homelessness review was undertaken.

The review includes a compilation of homelessness data and trends, mapping of services and analysis of gaps in provision, service provider feedback and the feedback of People With Lived Experience (PWLE). We also held a stakeholder engagement event in September 2025 to gather the views of statutory and voluntary sector organisations and co design the strategy.



1.3 The plan to prevent and tackle homelessness in our districts: long-term vision and short-term priorities

In line with the Government’s national strategy, our long-term vision is to end homelessness and rough sleeping and where it isn’t possible to prevent it from occurring, that it is rare, brief and non-recurring.

Our strategy and action plan are centred around the 5 pillars to end homelessness as set out in the national strategy:

1. Universal prevention: tackling the root causes of homelessness across the whole population.
2. Targeted prevention: providing tailored support to people who are more likely to face homelessness.
3. Preventing crisis: early identification of people who need help and putting in place personalised interventions that meet their needs.

4. Improving emergency responses: to ensure that if people do become homeless, they receive high quality support and that homelessness is brief.
5. Recovery and preventing repeat homelessness: helping people rebuild their lives with the right support.

The action plan defines our priorities over the next 5 years to achieve our vision, and contains short-, medium- and long-term priorities.

1.4 Strategy structure

The strategy firstly explores the local issues that need to be addressed against each of the five pillars in the national strategy, based on the Homelessness Review undertaken in 2025.

Secondly it defines how we will take action to address local issues through the Strategy Action Plan, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Group and local homelessness partnerships, and comprehensive governance arrangements under the Worcestershire Housing Board.

Finally, it outlines the funding and resource available to implement the strategy and deliver services.

1.5 Partnership working to codesign the strategy

The LHAs recognise the role our statutory and voluntary sector partners play in supporting the work we do, and how they go beyond the delivery of our statutory services through providing complimentary statutory and non-statutory services. However, this strategy is focused primarily on the role of LHAs and in meeting their legal responsibilities. It is a legal obligation of the LHAs to have a strategy in place and for it to be compliant with the Homelessness Act 2002. In developing the strategy, we have followed the legislative and good practice guidance and reviewed homelessness strategies from across the country.

2. Pillar 1: Universal prevention – tackling the root causes of homelessness

2.1 Increasing the supply of social and affordable housing

The Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2023-40, developed by the six Worcestershire LHAs and partners provides a long-term housing strategy for Worcestershire centred around four priority areas:

- Economic growth and jobs
- Quality and standards
- Health and wellbeing
- Net zero carbon and climate change

Specifically in relation to housing growth, the focus is on developing a 5+ year public sector pipeline of development sites, and the development of housing delivery capacity e.g. the exploration of direct delivery housing models for those LHAs who do not currently have this capacity.

There are two established delivery groups working to implement Housing Strategy actions and these are overseen by the Worcestershire Housing Board, which also oversees the implementation of this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This arrangement will ensure synergy between the two strategies.

In terms of permanent housing all the councils collaborate with developers and registered providers to deliver market and affordable housing across the county. This work is underpinned by the councils Local Plans which identify a wide range of tenures and types of housing including low-cost home ownership and social/ affordable rent properties.

There is a shortage in the supply of housing, particularly in the provision of affordable housing with an annual requirement of all housing tenures of approximately 1,911 per annum across the districts that share this strategy.

Local Plan numbers are informed by a combination of the standard methodology requirement, Housing Market Assessments and Housing Needs Surveys to determine the required mix of housing.

2.2 Making the best use of existing housing and that it is allocated to those who need it most

All LHAs sharing this strategy have their own allocations policies to ensure that much needed affordable housing is allocated to those who need it most. In each LHA area, the demand for affordable housing far outstrips supply. At the time of writing, Local Government Reorganisation could see the abolition of all six district councils in Worcestershire and the introduction of one or two unitary authorities and with it the requirement to develop new allocations policies for the new organisation(s).

Feedback from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Stakeholder Event indicated that partners felt that the “managed move” process whereby Registered Providers (RPs) move households within their own stock and therefore negating the need for a homelessness approach could be an area to try to seek consistency on. This would mean less upheaval for households and reduced service demand on local authority housing teams.

The councils also collaborate with registered providers to ensure best use is made of existing stock including tackling under occupation and low demand schemes.

Whilst evictions from social housing are relatively low locally as they are nationally, there are more opportunities to prevent homelessness from social housing tenancies at an earlier stage through the establishment of pre-eviction panels and improved collaborative working. The government references a new toolkit in the National Plan to End Homelessness to provide advice for providers and councils on strengthening tenant engagement to reduce homelessness risks.

2.3 Supported housing

As with general needs affordable housing, the demand for supported housing is far higher than the supply locally and nationally. People need supported accommodation for a range of reasons e.g. young people needing support with life skills, people with mental health needs, people with substance misuse needs, survivors of domestic abuse. Some cohorts of homeless households will need more than just a housing solution to lift them out of homelessness and will require a sustainable, supported, and appropriate environment.

The Government's new Social and Affordable Homes Programme includes new flexibility for accommodation where the level of design and adaptation results in higher costs and calls on providers to produce ambitious bids for new supported housing.

The Worcestershire Housing Strategy delivery groups are exploring opportunities with RPs to deliver supported housing.

To improve standards across existing supported accommodation and tackle rogue landlords the government is introducing a new licensing regime following the consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023. As part of the implementation of this Act, the councils will be required to develop a Supported Housing Strategy by 31st March 2027.

2.4 Private rented sector accommodation

The Renters Rights Act seeks to give more security to tenants by abolishing section 21 'no fault' evictions which has been a significant cause of homelessness across the districts. The Act also brings with it a range of other measures to strengthen tenants' rights e.g. empowering tenants to challenge unreasonable rent increases, bringing an end to rental bidding and reducing barriers to accessing private rented accommodation such as outlawing discrimination against prospective tenants with children or who receive benefits, and preventing landlords from charging high rent in advance payments.

Making sure both tenants and landlords understand their rights under the Act will play an important part in reducing the risk of homelessness.

For the first time, the Act also includes the provision for councils to issue civil penalties against landlords who evict their tenants illegally.

Whilst the local authorities sharing this strategy welcome the intention of this legislation, there remains concern that the Act will lead to private landlords exiting the market prior the major implementation milestones e.g. no-fault evictions being removed in May 2026, which may lead to a spike in homelessness. Measures to mitigate this situation are considered within the strategy action plan.

As there is not enough social housing to meet demand, helping people to access private rented accommodation remains a priority across the districts - through rent deposits, bonds and private sector leasing schemes.

The councils will also be considering as part of this strategy how they can build relationships with private landlords to both improve access to private rented accommodation and prevent homelessness from private rented accommodation e.g. by encouraging landlords to work with the councils if they have a tenant who is at risk of homelessness.

Work with private sector landlords and letting agents also enables councils to meet some housing needs in parts of the county, although local housing allowance rates do make this challenging. The councils have been innovative in attracting landlords to provide accommodation through landlord forums, the use of rent bonds and deposits, social letting agencies and private sector leasing schemes, and this will continue during the lifetime of the strategy.

It should be noted that in some areas of the county, there are particular pressures on private sector accommodation with both Home Office and criminal justice providers looking to purchase/lease private rented sector accommodation for asylum seekers and prison leavers. In some cases, this has led to homelessness situations as existing tenants are served with notice and has led to reducing private sector accommodation available to homeless households.

2.5 Maximising income, financial inclusion and welfare assistance

Supporting low-income households to be able to pay their rent and other essential living costs to sustain their accommodation is critical to preventing homelessness. Recent years funding from the Household Support Fund, and Discretionary Housing Payments have led to some positive outcomes locally in the face of the cost-of-living crisis. It is expected that the new Crisis Resilience Fund will build on this bespoke approach.

Some councils involved in this strategy also have specialist Financial Inclusion Officers who work directly with people making homeless approaches due to rent arrears who are struggling with the cost of living. Their role is to ensure that their income is maximised

through ensuring they are receiving correct benefit entitlements, assistance to apply for benefit back payments and working with local services to increase their income through quality employment. Help is also provided by tenancy sustainment or support workers on issues like budgeting and maximising benefit entitlement,

Continuing to provide discretionary welfare support to ensure low-income households do not become homeless is a key priority for this strategy and action plan.

3. Pillar 2: Targeted prevention – targeted support for people at risk of homelessness

3.1 Collaboration to prevent homelessness

The LHAs and partner agencies have a proven record of working collaboratively to prevent homelessness. The Worcestershire Housing Board comprises of senior officers from across sectors who oversee the implementation of housing and homelessness strategies. A countywide Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy Group has been in existence for many years comprising of LHAs, MHCLG, statutory and voluntary sector partners.

Feeding into the countywide group, each LHA has a local homelessness partnership. This arrangement will continue to provide assurance that the strategy action plan is implemented, outcomes are achieved against the strategy targets - and that people that are at risk of homelessness are identified early and linked into the right housing and support services.

The government intends to introduce a new ‘duty to collaborate’ requiring public services to work together to prevent homelessness and support those at crisis point. Locally we developed a ‘commitment to refer’ which goes beyond the existing ‘duty to refer’ which requires certain public bodies to notify the LHA should they identify a household who may become homeless within 56 days. This is in recognition that there are many partners who will identify a potential homelessness situation and not just those included in the legislation.

It is the intention of this strategy to scrutinise adherence to the duty to refer locally and prepare for the new ‘duty to collaborate’.

3.2 Addressing barriers to accessing services

Some groups of people face barriers to accessing services because they may not be delivered in a way that meets their needs. For example, an action in the previous homelessness strategy was to understand the barriers for women rough sleepers in accessing services that are often communal provisions for both male and female rough sleepers. This work is ongoing at the time of writing this strategy. We also know that young people, care leavers, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, disabled people and LGBT+ people also face barriers.

For young people and care leavers the LHAs and Children’s Services work closely together and have developed a longstanding Care Leavers Protocol and a 16/17-year-old Protocol to clarify joint working arrangements. Each district has supported accommodation for young people, which in recent years has been at risk due to a change in funding structures and has meant LHAs have needed to meet the shortfall in County Council funding. It is a priority for supported accommodation to be in place for homeless young people in order for them to have a safe and supported environment for them to develop the necessary life skills needed to live a successful future life. In 2021 Wychavon District Council bought and refurbished a 10-room property to provide supported accommodation for young people and have also committed to purchasing a further property in its latest council plan.

Locally we also know that people with a physical disability can find it hard to access adapted temporary accommodation due to the lack of availability. This can then lead to extended stays in hospital and a delay in discharge. Wyre Forest District Council opened a new temporary accommodation facility in 2025 which includes a small number of fully adapted rooms. Our intention is to explore opportunities to work with colleagues across the health system to increase the availability of adapted temporary accommodation.

We also know locally that people with multiple and complex needs face barriers to accessing accommodation, for example those that are using drugs and alcohol and with mental health support needs. Worcestershire Public Health have developed a Memorandum of Understanding between services to address this issue.

Working with People With Lived Experience (PWLE) of homelessness and accessing services is also a priority for this strategy as it is critical that we design accessible, inclusive and culturally sensitive, trauma informed services.

We already regularly undertake lived experience engagement with certain groups, for example survivors of domestic abuse and rough sleepers. However, we are seeking to go further with this strategy and ensure PWLE are contributing to, and overseeing, the strategy actions and performance via the Countywide Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group.

3.3 Interventions to prevent homelessness for higher risk groups

There are many challenges that affect the higher risk groups and these include a severe housing shortage, silting up or undersupply of supported accommodation especially for those with complex needs and some poor-quality supported accommodation.

3.3.1 Single people

Single homeless households make up 57% of all housing register applicants across the districts, with the largest group being single adults aged 35-65 (26%).

Between 2022-2025, 54% of applicants owed a homeless duty were single adults:

65% were already homeless (relief duty)
37% were threatened with homelessness (prevention duty)

Single homeless people often face multiple needs: mental ill health, substance misuse, social isolation, and barriers to employment. Many do not qualify as having a priority need under legislation, limiting access to settled housing and statutory support. They are overrepresented among rough sleepers and those in insecure arrangements (e.g. sofa surfing), leading to poor health, social exclusion, and instability. Even those without vulnerabilities struggle due to unaffordable rents and precarious finances.

This homelessness strategy aims for early intervention, clear routes to housing, and multi-agency collaboration (local authorities, housing providers, health, probation, voluntary sector).

The LHAs use national homelessness funding to provide both accommodation-based and floating support, rent deposits and rent in advance to help access accommodation and No First Night Out/No Second Night Out provision and access to furniture.

3.3.2 Prison leavers

A small but significant number of homeless applications are from those leaving prison. We hold fortnightly prison meetings to ensure that where a Duty to Refer has been made, individuals are provided with a homelessness assessment prior to release wherever possible.

However, housing options are often limited due to the individual not meeting the priority need threshold under homelessness legislation. With limited supported accommodation available, Community Accommodation Service (CAS3) accommodation has provided a much-needed lifeline for those who otherwise might be released without an accommodation offer which may result in rough sleeping.

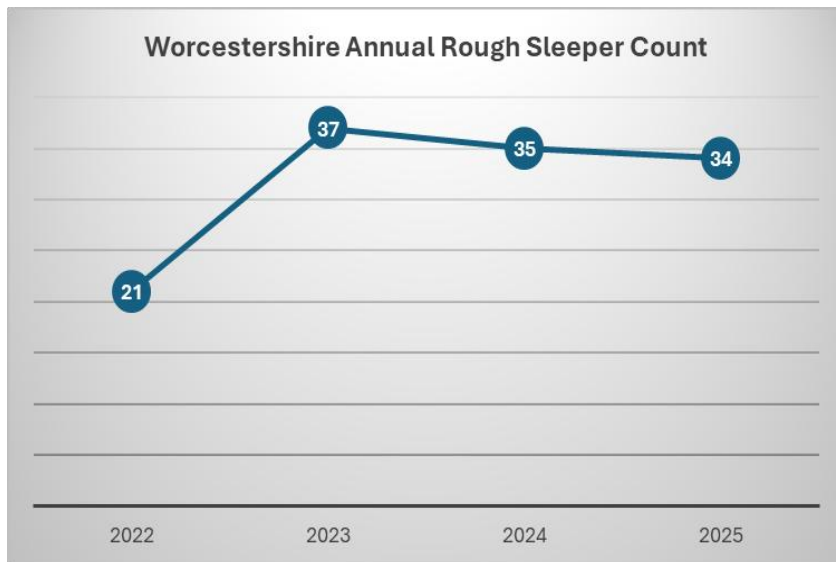
Recalls from this accommodation remain a concern (circa 50%) and a

positive housing pathway from CAS 3 accommodation needs to be explored.

3.3.3 Rough sleepers/those at risk of rough sleeping

Rough sleeping can be a dangerous and isolating experience. People who sleep rough are more likely to be victims of crime and violence. The longer a person remains on the streets, or actively engages in street life culture, the more likely it will have significant implications on their physical and mental health. Female rough sleepers are particularly at risk and may require specialist or women only services to address their needs. Safeguarding is therefore particularly relevant to these groups.

The Worcestershire official street count held each year shows fluctuating levels of rough sleeping across the county, with numbers in recent years remaining fairly static.



Rough sleeper data is collated each week improving our local intelligence of the flow, return, and stock of individuals and the reason behind their homelessness. Regular rough sleeper/prevention meetings and multi-agency meetings are held at a local level enables

the co-ordination of services and information sharing to develop partnerships with all organisations and individuals committed to ending rough sleeping and homelessness. This includes a consideration of any safeguarding issues that need to be flagged with partners or referred to the Adult Safeguarding Team. All five councils have rough sleeper outreach teams providing intensive support and routes into accommodation such as No First / No Second Night Out, Housing First/Led and other services.

Progress has been made in tackling health inequalities with increased access to health services and countywide drug and alcohol support, including harm reduction teams. Outreach teams have strengthened their practice by signing up to Homeless Link's outreach principles and undertaking learning and development.

Although Supported Housing providers in Worcestershire work within a trauma informed, person centred approach, those clients with substance misuse, serious mental health conditions and/or a history of arson may find themselves waiting for a suitable placement due to stringent accessibility criteria. There is also limited availability of rapid access supported accommodation resulting in an individual's only accommodation option being outside of the county.

We will also expand the multi-agency work on Target Priority Group rough sleepers and expand the Mental health and Homelessness Group so that multi-agency working is consistent across all districts and there is effective cross boundary working.

Therefore, the strategy will continue to promote collaborative working with health partners, housing providers and other organisations to improve access to services for rough sleepers including early intervention for those at risk and accommodation for those with complex needs.

3.3.4 Young people and care leavers

Homelessness for young people remains significant issue. This includes from people aged 16-17, Care Leavers and young parents. Many young people will have support as well as accommodation needs as they leave home for the first time.

Changes to the benefits system together with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and the number of young people in low paid work, has seen a rise in the number of those at risk of homelessness.

For young people the data indicates that the most common causes of homelessness in Worcestershire are family or friends being no longer willing to accommodate, the loss of private rented accommodation and relationship breakdown with partner (non- violent breakdown).

Whilst services do work closely together, there is still more to be done to prevent young people from becoming homeless. It is a focus of this strategy to enable more upstream homelessness prevention through family mediation and identifying potential homelessness situations at the earliest stage e.g. via schools and other relevant sectors/organisations.

3.3.5 Families with children

Worcestershire continues to be an attractive place to live and work, inevitably leading to high rents and house prices. This means some families are unable to afford to own or privately rent a home. Changes to the benefits system together with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the number of people in low paid work has seen a rise in the number of families at risk of homelessness.

We want to prevent homelessness by identifying the key risk factors/triggers in families lives that can lead to a family being at risk of homelessness at the earliest possible stage.

Families in Worcestershire access social housing registers for a variety of reasons, often reflecting both long-term housing challenges and immediate triggers that place them at risk of homelessness. The key reasons include:

- **Relationship Breakdown**
Non-violent relationship breakdowns, particularly involving partners, remain a significant factor. Families in this situation often require alternative accommodation to prevent homelessness or unsafe living conditions.
- **Domestic Abuse**
Domestic abuse is a major reason families seek housing support. Increased awareness of available services and support pathways has led to earlier reporting and engagement with housing services.
- **Loss of Private Rented Accommodation**
The end of an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector, whether due to eviction, rent increases, or landlord decisions, continues to trigger housing register applications.
- **Financial Hardship and Housing Affordability**
Rising rents, high house prices, low wages, and changes to the benefits system contribute to families' inability to secure or sustain accommodation.
- **Other Factors**
Other, less frequent reasons include overcrowding, unsuitability of current accommodation (e.g., health/accessibility needs), and the need to move closer to education, employment or support networks.

As of June 2025, there were 4,955 families on the housing registers across the councils' areas which equates to 43% of all applications.

Analysis of trends shows that relationship breakdown, domestic abuse and the loss of private rented tenancies remain the leading immediate triggers for applications, emphasising the importance of early intervention and targeted prevention support.

3.3.6 Survivors of domestic abuse

Domestic Abuse continues to be one of the primary drivers of homelessness across Worcestershire, with a profound and lasting impact on victim/survivors, families, and communities. Since the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, LHAs and Worcestershire County Council have worked collaboratively to strengthen housing pathways, deliver on new statutory duties, and create a coordinated, trauma-informed response using a whole family approach for those fleeing abuse.

The establishment of the Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, a domestic abuse and housing coordinator, specialised domestic abuse housing officers and the provision of safe accommodation has led to more consistent standards of support across the county. Housing teams, alongside commissioned domestic abuse providers, now play a critical role in early identification, prevention, and sustaining safe accommodation for survivors.

Data and Trends

Data highlights that domestic abuse remains a significant cause of homelessness presentations across Worcestershire over the last three years. Of those owed a homelessness duty in 2024/25, 30.8% of households presented due to domestic abuse.

	Prevention (%)	Relief (%)	Total (%)
2022/23	8.3%	18.4%	26.7%
2023/24	9.7%	18.8%	28.5%
2024/25	7.1%	23.7%	30.8%

In 2024/25 over 10,000 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes were recorded by police in Worcestershire. This total includes both crimes and non-crime incidents. According to Worcestershire County Council’s Operation Encompass page, which summarises West Mercia Police’s Q4 2024/25 Performance Monitoring Report, around 25% of all recorded crimes in the county were classified as domestic abuse related.

While West Mercia Police data for the same period indicates a statistical decrease in domestic abuse incidents across the force area, the figures for Worcestershire demonstrate that domestic abuse remains a significant issue locally.

Despite improved reporting, local insight suggests that many survivors still do not disclose abuse, indicating ongoing unmet need. Across the county, domestic abuse-related approaches accounted for a significant proportion of homelessness applications. The majority were women with dependent children, though a growing number of single survivors, male victims, and individuals with complex needs have been identified.

Sanctuary Schemes and Safe Accommodation

LHAs across Worcestershire, work in partnership to deliver safe accommodation, including, refuge spaces, dispersed units, and sanctuary schemes to enable survivors to remain safely in their homes where appropriate.

Sanctuary Scheme Referrals (September 2024 - August 2025):

District	2024/25
Bromsgrove	3
Malvern Hills	15
Redditch	8
Wychavon	32
Wyre Forest	47

Between 2024-2025 a total of 105 referrals were made to sanctuary schemes across all 5 local authorities. Overall referrals have decreased

across most districts, with some localised increases, highlighting variation in demand and referral pathways.

There has been much progress across the LHAs since the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 statutory duty across LHAs including the expansion of the Domestic Abuse Community Champions network through Worcester Community Trust and West Mercia Women's Aid, delivery of trauma-informed housing training to frontline staff, specialist Domestic Abuse Housing in each council (who have received positive feedback from service users) and strengthened partnership working between housing, police, and support providers through regular MARAC coordination and attendance at DRIVE meetings.

All the housing teams work in partnership with Sanctuary Schemes to help victim-survivors of domestic abuse stay safely in their homes by providing tailored security measures, reducing the need to move.

The introduction of the Domestic Abuse Housing Coordinator role to work closely with Domestic Abuse Housing Officers has ensured training and knowledge remain up to date.

3.3.7 Veterans

Instances of homelessness amongst veterans are low locally, however there is action to be taken to further tackle this. LHAs are currently working with the Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant team to ensure that there is a good understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant in housing services and ensure that organisational policies reflect the needs of the Covenant e.g. that local connection rights (for the purposes of social housing allocation) are embedded in policy.

3.3.8 Refugees and migrant homelessness

Worcestershire has provided a sanctuary to refugees from Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan through the government's resettlement schemes, including Homes for Ukraine, the [Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme](#) (ACRS) and [Afghan Relocations and Assistance](#)

[Policy](#) (ARAP), as well as a small number of arrivals through the Community Sponsorship Scheme. Accommodation has been provided by a combination of private hosts, the private rented sector and, where appropriate, social housing.

The Home Office is responsible for providing accommodation for asylum seekers, whilst their asylum claims are being processed. Home Office accommodation is provided in Worcestershire in both contingency hotels and dispersal accommodation (usually self-contained family accommodation or houses of multiple occupation). However, asylum seeker numbers in Worcestershire are currently relatively low in comparison to other areas of the UK.

Once asylum has been granted, a refugee is required to leave their Home Office accommodation, with notice to quit currently at 56 days. A process is in place for information to be shared with the local housing authority of notice to quit local Home Office accommodation, to ensure housing advice can be provided.

Homelessness amongst this cohort is relatively low locally due to fewer asylum seeker numbers than other areas of the country and the fact that those placed in Worcestershire often look to relocate to areas where cultural or religious needs are better met or nearer to family members once asylum has been granted. However, it still remains a challenge to be able to respond to the needs of refugees and migrants. In particular, we are seeing an increase in approaches for those with No Recourse To Public Funds, where options for support are extremely limited, and LHAs need to work closely with our partner VCSE organisations to respond to this.

3.3.9 Hospital discharge, substance use and Adult Social Care support

“Discharge from hospital into poor quality, insecure housing or, in the worst cases, onto the streets is a deeply harmful outcome. When combined with unmet mental health needs and substance use needs, it can severely undermine people's recovery and increase the risk that

their health deteriorates further and makes them even more vulnerable.” [A National Plan to End Homelessness, MHCLG, 2025.](#)

The government is committed to a target that no one eligible for assistance is discharged to the street after a hospital stay and will be working with the NHS and councils to implement the [Discharging people at risk of or experiencing homelessness guidance published in 2024.](#)

In preparation for this, our strategy will commit to exploring local opportunities with colleagues across the health system to promote early identification of housing issues and planning from admission both for accommodation needs but also any ongoing health and care needs.

The LHAs do not provide any supported temporary accommodation and therefore it is essential that if people do need to access temporary accommodation that the necessary support and care package is provided to reduce the risk of a harmful outcome.

Sadly, district councils have seen a rise in the number of homeless people harming themselves, and others, in temporary accommodation and an increase in the number of deaths in temporary accommodation through people dying by suicide or overdose. Although the numbers are small, they are increasing and this desperately needs to be addressed to safeguard people and prevent this from happening.

At the time of writing this strategy a roundtable event was being organised to bring together senior officers from housing, health, social care, registered housing providers, and safeguarding to focus on the issue of supporting people with complex needs in unsupported accommodation. It is expected that the recommendations from that event will feed into this strategy and the action plan.

3.3.10 Neurodivergence and homelessness

People with a range of neurodivergent needs, including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, learning disabilities and other cognitive differences, may face additional barriers and challenges when navigating housing services or experiencing homelessness. These barriers often relate to communication differences, difficulties with unfamiliar and changing environments, sensory needs, and the cumulative impact of unmet support needs.

To better support local residents with neurodiverse needs, Local Housing Authorities have introduced training for housing officers to improve understanding of neurodivergence and to help staff recognise when individuals may require tailored approaches, including those who do not have a formal diagnosis. This training aims to ensure that interactions are accessible, supportive, and responsive to individual needs rather than relying on assumptions or labels.

LHAs are also reporting increasing numbers of households requesting additional bedrooms where, for example, children with neurodivergent needs are unable to share bedrooms with siblings. This often reflects genuine challenges relating to sleep, safety, behaviour regulation, or sensory differences. These pressures contribute to growing demand for larger family homes within an already limited social housing stock.

4 Pillar 3: Preventing crisis – helping people stay in their homes

Identifying and preventing homelessness at the earliest possible stage is the best outcome for households, LHAs and the public purse. However, where it has not been possible to prevent homelessness, services need to work together quickly and effectively to ensure that it is as brief as possible.

4.1 Preventing homelessness at the earliest stage

‘Too often, households are known to one service, such as a voluntary or community organisation, without that information being shared with the council or other relevant partners. To deliver truly coordinated and preventative support, everyone must work together, with clear referral pathways and shared responsibility for identifying and responding to risk early.’

[A National Plan to End Homelessness, MHCLG, 2025](#)

Locally as well as nationally, we want to increase the proportion of households who are supported to stay in their own homes or helped to find alternative accommodation - to prevent homelessness and the need for temporary accommodation.

Details of the Government’s new Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant were announced in December 2025 as part of a provisional multi-year settlement. The intent of this grant is to simplify homelessness funding and allow for greater flexibility in spend according to local need.

The provisional 3-year allocations will allow for longer term strategic planning to commission or directly provide homelessness services/initiatives on a longer-term basis, rather than annual allocations in recent years.

To inform this strategy, a mapping exercise was carried out as part of the homelessness review which identified what services are available across Worcestershire and what gaps in provision there might be. A summary of this is contained within the homelessness review and an action within the plan is to explore what services are required to be commissioned or directly provided by LHAs based on the findings of the review.

The LHAs already provide a number of services to help prevent homelessness or to ensure suitable alternative accommodation is available at the prevention stage. This includes access to funding for rent deposits/bonds and rent in advance, welfare assistance, working with landlords and families to resolve issues and mediation for young people and their families.

4.2 Accessing the right support at the right time

It is vital that people get the support that they need, when they need it, to prevent homelessness. Housing and homelessness systems can be complex by the very nature of legislation, geographical location, differences in funding and associated criteria, whether they are provided by statutory or voluntary services and as such it can be challenging for people to navigate them or understand what support is available.

The need to raise awareness of what services are already available was a key theme arising from partners who attended the strategy stakeholder event held in September 2025. The mapping exercise outlined in the previous section will be useful in raising awareness but the LHAs are keen to work with partners to build further on this through improved communication and joint training across organisations and sectors. Joint work with the Adult Front Door and the Community Directory are actions within the strategy action plan.

To proactively identify and predict where households may be at risk of homelessness, we want to improve our use of data to enable us to target high-risk households 3-6 months before they potentially reach crisis point. To address this, we want to explore using a predictive analytics model utilising a range of different data to target our homelessness prevention work.

4.3 Person-centred support to prevent rough sleeping

The councils have worked closely together for many years to tackle rough sleeping and have developed a range of initiatives such as No First Night Out (emergency bed spaces for those that are new to the street), Housing First/Led models (intensive support linked to accommodation), outreach support, bespoke funding and person-centred packages of support. A Rough Sleeper Coordinator has also been in post for several years to oversee the councils' strategic approach to tackling rough sleeping and unblock barriers to accommodation for those with a poor tenancy or offending history.

We will aim continue providing bespoke funding for outreach teams and the Rough Sleeper Coordinator to find a housing solution for those at risk of rough sleeping and rough sleepers.

5. Pillar 4: Improving emergency responses – improving temporary accommodation and making people’s experiences better if they do become homeless

Whilst the aim is to prevent homelessness at the earliest possible stage and negate the need for temporary accommodation, it will always be needed as a safety net for households at crisis point.

LHAs have a duty to provide temporary accommodation in certain circumstances to homeless households. They can also utilise a discretionary duty to accommodate others, where no duty is owed but they are accommodated under wider policy initiatives such as No First Night Out/No Second Night Out to prevent rough sleeping or to support rough sleepers coming off the streets.

If temporary accommodation is required then it must be safe, affordable, of a decent standard and stable. B&B accommodation is not suitable for families with children, but we recognise that it may be the only option at crisis point.

Over the previous three years the number of placements ending has steadily declined from 1121 to 734 and the same for placements with children 339 to 235. Which means that households are spending longer in temporary accommodation. This is due to increasing pressure on housing availability impacting on the ability to house people into permanent accommodation. Correspondingly in the five districts the length of stay in temporary accommodation over 12 weeks has risen from 18% in 2022/23 to 26% in 2024/25 and a corresponding increase of length of placements for the longer timescales (or static numbers over the last three years).

For all the councils the most used type of temporary accommodation is Bed and Breakfast but the amount this is used varies from 46% of all

placements in Redditch to 59% in Wyre Forest in 2024/25. There has been a decrease in use of Bed and Breakfast between 2023/24 and 2024/25 in all of the councils except Bromsgrove where the percentage of placements in B&B have increased from 42% to 48%.

This shows positive work undertaken by many councils to bring other forms of temporary accommodation into use including from Registered Providers and councils’ own stock. When considering the use of temporary accommodation for households with dependent children, WFDC and MHDC still mainly use Bed and Breakfast (53% and 72% respectively). However, both WDC and BDC use more temporary accommodation provided by Registered Providers than B&B (39% and 56% respectively) and RBC mainly use their own housing stock (61%).

The availability of different types and numbers of temporary accommodation differs across the county and can range from ad hoc used of emergency accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast to accommodation owned and managed by the Councils directly. See the table below for more information on temporary accommodation across the districts.

Placements into:	22/23	23/24	24/25
TA within RP Stock	89	89	72
TA within your own stock	113	115	98
Any other type of TA	27	28	76
Made own arrangements for TA	36	13	3
Other nightly paid, privately managed accommodation	165	92	69
Private sector TA leased council / Registered Provider	29	43	12
Bed & Breakfast	633	578	395
Temporarily remains in property	5	3	3
Other: e.g refuge	24	13	6

The new government strategy has a strong focus on households in temporary accommodation and particularly those with dependent children. There is now a body of research around the health impacts of temporary accommodation on people’s health including infant mortality and councils are expected to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast style accommodation for families over the lifetime of this parliament.

All the LHAs have support workers who can provide additional support to households in need, but the resource is limited and it is critical that the councils utilise other support and care providers where relevant.

LHAs want to increase the amount of good quality self-contained accommodation, which will provide a better experience for homeless households but is also better value for money and less expensive than nightly paid accommodation.

We will work with education providers and GPs to ensure they are aware and can support those households in Temporary Accommodation where appropriate.

6. Pillar 5: Recovery and preventing repeat homelessness – ensuring people don't experience homelessness more than once and halving long term rough sleeping

With the right support people can rebuild their lives after experiencing the trauma of homelessness and break the cycle of repeat homelessness.

6.1 Ensuring people don't experience homelessness more than once

Preventing repeat homelessness is achieved through a variety of ways depending in part on the client group. Ensuring households are supported through the transition from temporary into permanent accommodation and working with households to make them tenancy ready whilst in temporary and supported accommodation has proved beneficial.

Some repeat homeless can arise through households not being able to access health interventions when needed. Locally some LHAs have funded Mental Health Link workers to work with housing teams and households approaching for homelessness assistance. This has proved a valuable resource to enable homeless households to access mental health support and assisting them to access existing mental health services at the right time.

Through regular meetings, agencies collaborate on policy development, share data and good practice, and coordinate funding opportunities. This joined-up approach strengthens the county's ability to deliver sustainable solutions and improve outcomes for those at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.

Further work needs to be done to better understand why repeat homelessness for survivors of domestic abuse and larger families with complex needs is high and we will work with those with lived experience to see if we can develop workstreams to tackle this.

6.2 Tackling long term rough sleeping

The Government's funding programmes have enabled LHAs to implement a number of service offers for rough sleepers including Housing First/Led, No First/Second Night Out, outreach workers and access to personalised budgets. This approach has supported the most entrenched rough sleepers, some of whom had previously been on the streets for many years, to maintain social housing/private rented tenancies. Through the use of personalised budgets for meaningful activities and engagement opportunities councils have been able to help rough sleepers and former rough sleepers to sustain their accommodation, make their property a home, build positive routines and strengthen community connections.

By offering bespoke interventions, the personalisation budget helps to break the cycle of homelessness and reduce the likelihood of individuals returning to the streets. It empowers frontline staff to respond quickly and creatively to barriers faced by rough sleepers, ensuring that support is not only practical but also person-centred.

This strategy is committed to maintaining this robust approach to tackling and reducing rough sleeping.

6.3 Access to specialist health services: mental health, physical health & substance use

“What needs to be considered is the traumatic experience of being homeless. And that doesn't stop the moment you come out of homelessness... Even if you didn't have mental health issues going into homelessness, you are guaranteed 100 million percent [to have mental health issues after experiencing homelessness]. I have no doubt in my mind at all that everybody goes through a homelessness journey will experience trauma if being homeless and that needs to be considered because even if you've got no recovery to deal with, no official mental health diagnosis or

any compound need, you are going to have an adjustment and, you know, adjustment from that trauma”

MHCLG (2025) Lived Experience Forum Report, recommendations from people with lived experience for the cross-Government homelessness strategy, Revolving Doors, Groundswell, Justlife Foundation

Project Bright Path supports people who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping and experiencing mental health challenges, both diagnosed and undiagnosed. The programme provides rapid, relational and trauma-informed support through short-term, focused interventions and better connection into mainstream services. Its purpose is to help people stabilise at times of crisis and access the right mental health and housing support at the right time. A key development during the year was the appointment of two Band 7 mental health practitioners, one based in Herefordshire and one in Worcestershire. Their specialist clinical input has already made a difference, supporting people with complex needs, helping unlock access to formal mental health assessments and diagnosis, and strengthening the ability of frontline workers to navigate mental health systems.

The project also delivers a training programme which is delivered in partnership with a wide range of organisations, including LHAs, housing providers, rehabilitation centres and voluntary sector partners. Content has continued to evolve, with additions including trauma-informed approaches, neurodiversity awareness and clearer pathways for mental health and homelessness support.

In developing this strategy, housing and health colleagues have been engaging in more detailed discussions around the links between mental health, physical health and homelessness and what could be done locally to address poor health and inequalities via the countywide Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy group, the Worcestershire Housing Board, the Housing and Health Group, the district health collaboratives, and the Health Inequalities Prevention Personalisation Care Board. This strategy is committed to ensuring access to specialist services for homeless

households and specific actions will be defined in conjunction with housing and health.

6.4 Community support and services

The LHAs recognise that peer support can be invaluable in tackling and preventing homelessness. Those that have lived experience will often be able to engage complex homeless households more effectively as they know first hand what it is like to experience homelessness and disadvantage.

Homelessness peer support models are in place in some areas of the county and there remains a commitment from the previous strategy to review peer support models and identify good practice with a view to potentially increasing or upscaling peer support.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy Group continues to learn from those with lived experience of homelessness through ongoing feedback, workshops and questionnaires.

The service mapping exercise carried out as part of the Homelessness Review and the [Community Services Directory](#) are also useful to highlight the community support services available. Ongoing discussions on how to harness community support continue to take place at local homelessness forums.

We will continue to engage with other services that can support households into education, employment and training and those that assist people with managing finances such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

7. Governance arrangements

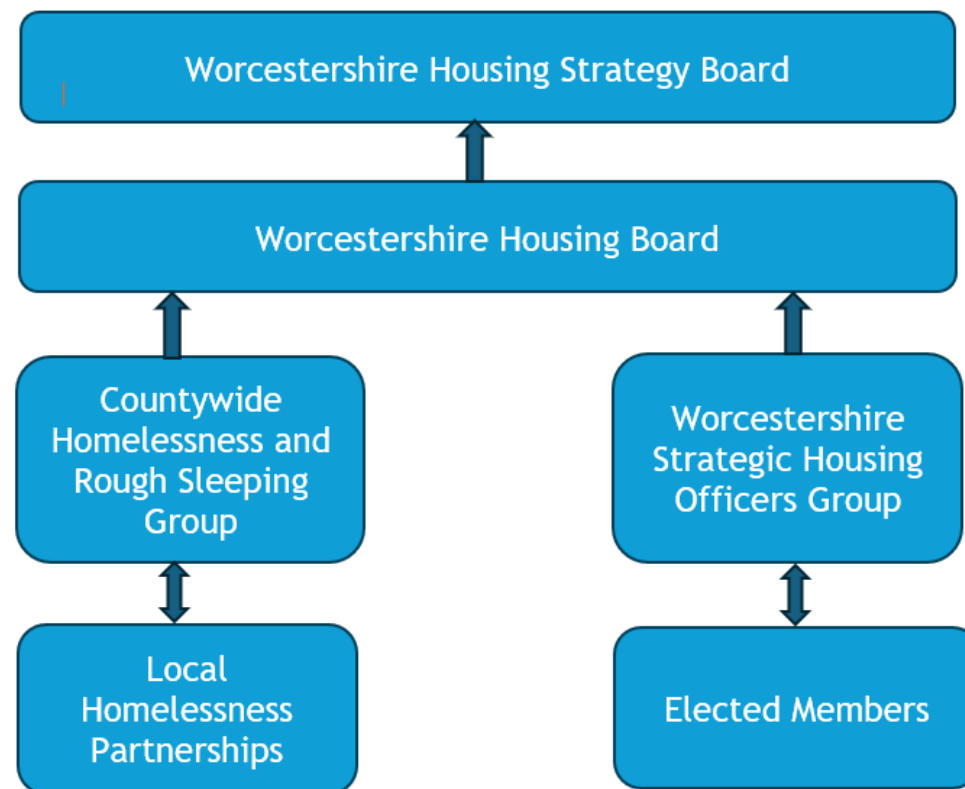
7.1 Oversight, delivery and monitoring

Worcestershire Housing Board is responsible for ensuring that the commitments within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy are realised. The partnership is a multi-agency and cross-sector partnership, ensuring delivery of the strategy is supported across relevant organisations. The Housing Board reports to the Housing Strategy Board comprised of Chief Executive or senior officers from LHAs, Registered Providers, NHS and Public Health.

The Strategy will be overseen by the Countywide Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group, a public and voluntary sector partnership that brings together statutory agencies, housing teams, health services, and community partners to ensure a coordinated response to homelessness across the county. The chair of that group will attend the Housing Board regularly to report on outcomes achieved and progress against actions.

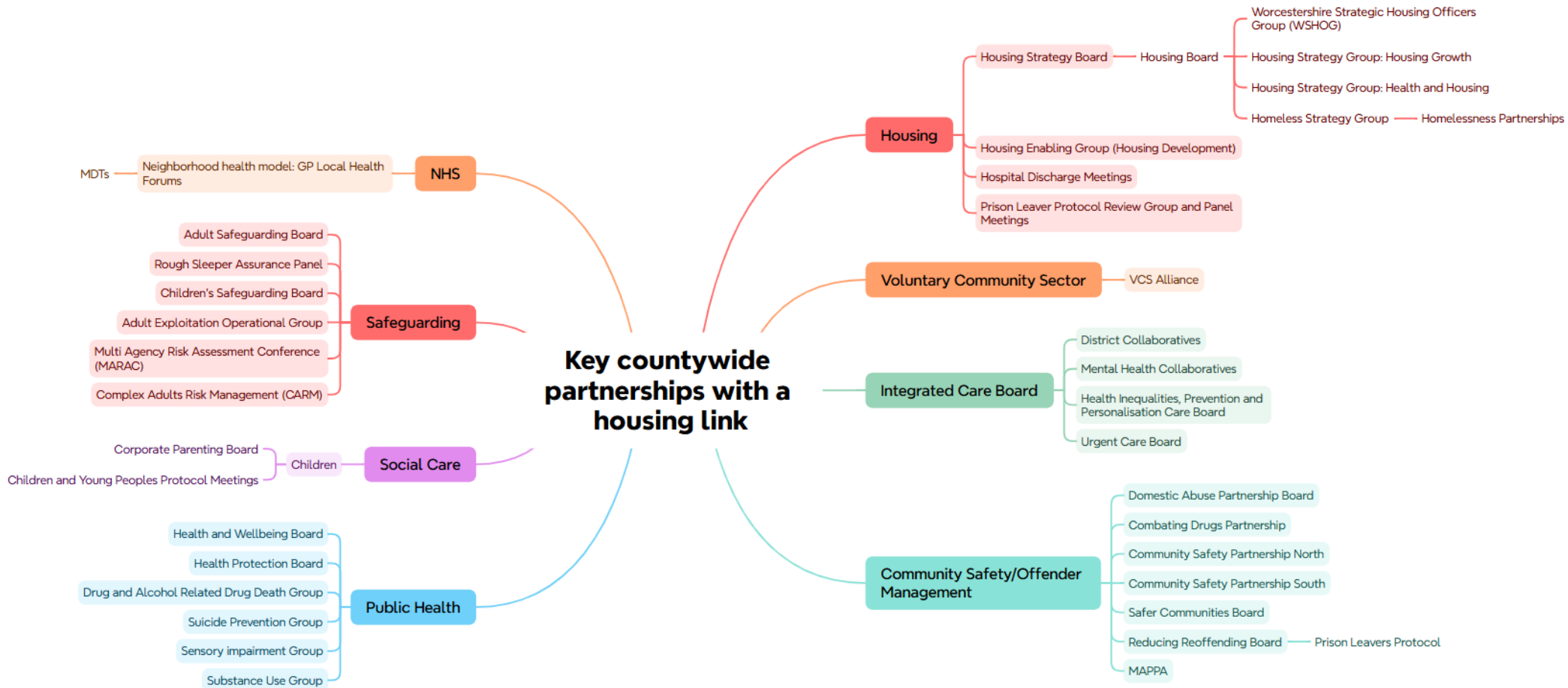
Each LHA has its own local homelessness partnership, consisting of local statutory and voluntary partners which will oversee and deliver on homelessness services and the strategy at a local level and feed into the Countywide Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group.

The LHAs are responsible for meeting their own statutory duties in relation to preventing homelessness. The Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (WSHOG) will be responsible for the operational delivery of the LHA elements of the strategy. Each LHA will have their own separate mechanism for reporting back to elected members on outcomes and progress including committees and member briefings to ensure there is political oversight on the delivery of the strategy and services.



8. Partnerships

Partnerships are essential to the delivery of the strategy as many organisations have a role to play in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the wider context.



This is not a definitive or exhaustive list of all partnerships but highlights some key groups and inter-relationships. There are also localised partnership and strategic groups within each LHA that are not included in this section.

ICB and health partnerships

The advent of the Integrated Care Boards and review of the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board has led to a new way of working within the health, social care and wider partnerships including greater district level working with Primary Care Networks.

Integrated Care System - Taking collective action to tackle health inequalities.



Reducing Re-offending Group & MAPPA Strategic Management Board

The Reducing Re-offending Board oversees the development and delivery of the criminal justice pathway and protocol across the county, following on from work commissioned by Public Health and the LHAs. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) were introduced in 2001 under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 and subsequently strengthened by the Criminal Justice Act 2003 as the statutory arrangement for managing sexual and violent offenders. It provides a mechanism whereby the agencies involved can better discharge their responsibilities and protect the public in a coordinated way. The responsible authority for MAPPA in each criminal justice area consists of the police, probation, and prisons. LHAs have a duty to cooperate with MAPPA arrangements in assessing and managing the risks posed by MAPPA-eligible offenders and the Board oversees the process.

Adult Safeguarding Board and the Assurance Panel

The main purpose of Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) is to promote wellbeing and reduce the risk of harm for people with care and support needs. Rough sleepers specifically are overseen by an Assurance Panel. The LHAs are represented on the Board and Panel at Senior Officer level.

Corporate Parenting Board (CPB)

The CPB provides leadership and a governance structure for corporate parenting to drive forward the outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. It oversees the Board's strategy and promotes the voice of

children and young people. It also provides challenge and scrutiny to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for children in care and care leavers. LHAs are represented at CPB by officers from WSHOG.

Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (DAPB)

The DAPB consists of key partners with an interest in tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims, including their children. The DAPB has been created to support Worcestershire County Council in meeting its duty under Part IV of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and to expand upon the wider community-focused work of the Worcestershire Forum against Domestic Abuse.

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Pillar 1: Universal Prevention - tackling the root causes of homelessness

Action	Measure	Lead	Timescale
<p>1.1 Prevent homelessness from private rented sector tenancies by building relations with landlords to identify those at risk of homelessness at an earlier stage, utilising funding where appropriate and available and take action to sustain tenancies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Countywide landlord forum established. - “Help to Stay” scheme established. - Tenancy Sustainment Officers in place (funding dependent). - Decrease in households becoming homeless due to end of a private sector tenancy for a negative reason. - Prevention panel established with landlords - Utilise funding such as the Crisis Resilience Fund and homeless funding to sustain tenancies 	<p>Housing Advice Team Leaders/Housing Strategy Officers/Private Sector Housing Teams</p>	<p>March 2027</p>
<p>1.2 Ensure more legal support is available for tenants facing eviction by expanding partnerships with organisations who already undertake this work so that services have sufficient resource, knowledge, expertise and capacity to robustly defend evictions based on grounds under Renters Rights Act.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training on Renters’ Rights Act undertaken for LHA staff. - Established referral mechanisms are in place with the Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service - Decrease in households becoming homeless due to end of a private sector tenancy for a negative reason. - Increase in tenancies sustained in the private rented sector following intervention. 	<p>Housing Advice Team Leaders/Housing Strategy Officers/Private Sector Housing Teams</p> <p>Registered Housing Providers</p>	<p>December 2026</p>
<p>1.3 Develop an integrated tenancy sustainment approach, bringing together housing, community organisations/hubs, employment and financial inclusion partners and develop stronger links to online support, to identify tenancies at risk and deliver coordinated support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Tenancy at Risk” protocol with Registered Providers is explored. - Coordinated support packages in place including income maximisation, debt advice, financial literacy training, and flexible crisis prevention/ discretionary welfare funding. - Decrease in households becoming homeless due to end of a tenancy for a negative reason. 	<p>Housing Advice Team Leaders/Housing Strategy Officers and Community Services</p>	<p>March 2028</p>
<p>1.4 Review the Duty to Refer data and prepare for the new Duty to Collaborate to ensure that any potential homeless cases are referred to the local housing teams by partner agencies at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Duty to refer data is reviewed. - Increase in the number of Duty to Refer referrals 	<p>Housing Strategy Officers/All statutory agencies</p>	<p>March 2027</p>

	- Increase in the proportion of cases approaching for homelessness assistance at prevention stage, or earlier.	required to refer	
1.5 Use data and lived experience to track and evaluate progress against the strategy (and inform service delivery) using key performance indicators and regular reviews. Consider how we can implement “big picture” reporting to demonstrate and understand homelessness prevention activity across all sectors/organisations.	- Data dashboard and baseline statistics developed and monitored at countywide homelessness strategy meetings. - Summary reporting mechanism developed to show homelessness prevention work across all sectors/organisations. - PWLE attending/providing feedback to the Homelessness Strategy Group.	Research and Intelligence Officer/Housing Strategy Officers	September 2028
1.6 Improve shared understanding of the work of all partner agencies in preventing homelessness through promoting the Community Services Directory, and joint training and awareness sessions.	- Joint training undertaken and increased awareness of roles and responsibilities. - All homelessness prevention services are signed up to the community services directory.	County Council, Housing Advice Team Leaders/Housing Strategy Officers, Homelessness Partnerships	September 2027
1.7 Develop and implement clear referral guidance and processes between agencies (housing, health, education, social care) for early identification of at-risk individuals.	- Referral guidance and process defined and promoted. - Individuals are not released from institutions into homelessness.	Housing Strategy Officers, Health, Education and Social Care Leads	March 2029
1.8 Explore opportunities to develop and deliver homelessness education programmes in schools	- Review service offered by Nightstop in WF and roll out across other district (funding dependent)	Housing Strategy Teams	March 2029
1.9 Make better use of existing social housing by exploring opportunities to better match disabled households with adapted housing and by tackling under occupation of larger properties	-Current demand for adapted housing and best practice in maximising use of existing stock reviewed	Housing Strategy Teams	March 2028

Pillar 2: Targeted Prevention - targeted support for people at risk of homelessness

Action	Measure	Lead	Timescale
2.1 Explore the feasibility of a predictive homelessness risk model that pulls data from a range of sources to identify and target support to people at greatest risk of becoming homeless before they reach crisis point.	- Predictive analytics system developed and implemented. - Data driven services/provision are developed. - Increase in homelessness prevention. - Decrease in TA placements.	Research and Intelligence Officer	March 2029

Rough sleepers and single homeless households:			
<p>2.2 Review and strengthen the rough sleeper support/accommodation options (All services and interventions that tackle rough sleeping) and commission or directly deliver services required utilising the new multi-year homelessness funding arrangements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carry out a needs assessment and develop a Supported Housing Strategy - Number of services newly commissioned or expanded (if required) - Map unmet needs identified through outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WSHOG - Housing Advice/strategy Teams, - Outreach Services, - Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinator 	July 2027
<p>2.3 Investigate the ability to provide bespoke funding Outreach teams and the Rough Sleeper Coordinator to develop tailored solutions for individuals who have previously been unable to secure or maintain accommodation, subject to funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in rough sleeping. - Number of individuals housed through the funding - Tenancy sustainment 6 months + - Number of individuals supported through the funding to address unmet needs - Reduction in repeat presentations to outreach services - Building relationships with Registered Providers to overcome barriers into accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator - Outreach Services - Housing Advice/Strategy Teams 	rch 2029 (pending funds)
<p>2.4 Expand the online multi-agency work on Target Priority Group rough sleepers Implement outreach and support services TPG online group across all districts to improve cross-boundary coordination and case management. Learning from good practice and promoting joined up working.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online multi-agency TPG group working effectively across boundaries+. - Reduction in the number of TPG rough sleepers. - Increase in TPG rough sleepers accessing services and accommodation - Number of districts consistently using the TPG platform - Number of cross-boundary cases successfully resolved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinator/Housing Advice Teams 	September 2026
<p>2.5 Extend the Mental Health & Homelessness Group to all districts to enable discussion/referrals into mental health services for those at risk of or experiencing rough sleeping</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental Health and Homelessness group expanded across all districts to ensure consistent access to mental health services. - Increased number of districts participating - Number of rough sleeping cases discussed - Increased access to mental health support for rough sleepers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Advice/Strategy Team Leaders - Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinator 	rch 2027
<p>2.6 Understand factors leading to returns to rough sleeping Using data to identify repeat patterns, implement targeted interventions, and redesign support offers, subject to funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced support offer in place for those who return to rough sleeping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinator - Outreach Services 	April 2027

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work undertaken with Registered Providers to reduce the no. of people refused housing due to poor tenancy history - Reduction in recurring rough sleeping - Number of individuals enrolled in enhanced support - Tenancy sustainment following re-engagement 	- Housing Advice/Housing Strategy Teams	
<p>2.7 Set up a Lived Experience involvement process to ensure people who have experienced rough sleeping or homelessness are able to put forward ideas or feedback. Use this feedback to make changes to services and improve everyday practice, subject to funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People with lived experience involved in service development and improvement - Number of people with lived experience taking part in a way that meets their needs - Feedback collected and recorded - Number of service changes or improvements made because of the group's feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinator - Outreach Services 	October 2026
Children, young people and care leavers:			
<p>2.8 Pilot the “Upstream” model in partnership with schools, specialist youth and family support services e.g. Centrepoin model (should funding be available). This would include a review of family intervention and mediation services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevention initiatives developed across the Councils leading to a reduction in youth homelessness. - The causes of youth homelessness and what interventions can be made to sustain accommodation and positive relationships with family/friends are better understood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Advice/Strategy Team Leaders - Children's Services - Youth Services - Schools 	December 2027
<p>2.9 Review the Care Leavers Protocol in light of new legislative requirements that state that care leavers will no longer be deemed intentionally homeless in the case of accommodation breakdown.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care leavers protocol updated to be compliant with the legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Advice/Strategy Team Leaders - Children's Services 	December 2026
<p>2.10 Agree a Memorandum of Understanding with providers of young persons supported accommodation to facilitate movements to alternative supported accommodation where relationships between residents have broken down</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Memorandum of Understanding in place across providers to respond to potential homelessness situations where the relationship between residents has broken down. - Fewer crisis situations in which a suitable move cannot be found 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Advice/Strategy Team Leaders - Supported Housing Providers 	December 2027
<p>2.11 Work with partner organisations (e.g. DWP) to explore services provided to address youth unemployment and ensure they can be connected with prevention/mediation/budgeting/debt advice services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in youth homelessness - More young people managing their money and able to live independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Advice Team Leaders - DWP 	March 2027

<p>2.12 Work with partners to understand the links between homelessness and neurodiversity in young people and how homelessness prevention services can meet their needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in youth homelessness. - Officers trained to ensure that neurodivergence is recognised and services are adapted to meet needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Advice Team Leaders -County Council 	<p>March 2027</p>
<p>Families with children:</p>			
<p>2.13 Identify the key risk factors in families that lead to homelessness to ensure targeted intervention at the earliest stage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review best practise around early intervention and prevention for families including risk factor identification. - Increase in homeless prevention for families with children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Advice Team Leaders and Housing Strategy Officers - Research and Intelligence Officer 	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Homelessness and health:</p>			
<p>2.14 Commission a homelessness and health audit to understand the health needs of homeless households, reduce health inequalities for rough sleepers and improve life expectancy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The health needs of homeless households are understood and services commissioned or adapted to meet need and prevent homelessness. - Health inequalities experienced by rough sleepers are reduce and life expectancy is increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WSHOG 	<p>September 2026</p>
<p>2.15 Improve joint working across housing, health and social care to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Prevent unnecessary hospital admissions for those who are homeless/at risk of homelessness (ii) remove barriers to hospital discharge for those who cannot return to their home or who are homeless (iii) Develop and implement the Duty to Collaborate for hospital admission, discharge, and step-down care that ensure a housing plan is in place before discharge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved pathway into accommodation to ensure that discharges are planned in partnership with housing options services and that appropriate support is in place. - Reduced unnecessary hospital admissions for homeless households - Reduced delays in hospital discharge for homeless households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -WSHOG -Integrated Care Board -NHS 	<p>September 2027</p>
<p>2.16 Explore opportunities to provide a flexible approach to medical appointments to meet the needs of those with complex needs/chaotic lives and ensure follow up care is provided- example of health care worker in local day centres.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health Bus service locations are near rough sleeper locations wherever possible. - All rough sleepers have access to a GP and substance use services where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -WSHOG -Integrated Care Board -NHS 	<p>December 2026</p>
<p>2.17 Enhance the collaborative approach with partners to effectively manage the risk to those with complex and multiple needs in temporary accommodation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing support and ongoing care and support processes are reviewed. - Reduction in serious incidents in unsupported TA/housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worcestershire Housing Board - WSHOG 	<p>April 2027</p>
<p>2.18 Integrate mental health services more deeply into homelessness prevention and intervention strategies. E.g. outreach teams should have improved access to mental health professionals to provide immediate support to those in crisis, and ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current mental health services (and their capacity) are mapped, gaps are identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outreach Teams - Mental Health Services 	<p>June 2028</p>

support is provided for those in unsupported temporary accommodation.	- Those in TA can access appropriate mental health support		
2.19 Develop more fully accessible permanent and temporary housing through Disabled Facilities Grant and Homes England Funding (dependent on funding)	- Increase in the number of accessible/healthy homes delivered by Developers and RPs - Increase in the number of accessible temporary accommodation units.	-WSHOG -Worcestershire Housing Adaptations Service	June 2030
2.20 Investigate the ability to provide flexible budgets to prevent homelessness especially for non-priority/intentional cases or individuals facing severe mental health issues. This could be used to help cover emergency needs.	- Funding identified - Data captured on “what works” to prevent homelessness for this cohort to inform future service delivery	-Housing Advice Team Leaders/Housing Strategy Teams	December 2026
Domestic abuse			
2.21 Sustain and expand safe accommodation options (funding dependent) to minimise the use of B&B for DA survivors.	- Increase in the number of safe accommodation options	-DA Coordinator -Public Health -Housing Providers	September 2027
2.22 Review best practice in preventing homelessness due to domestic abuse at an earlier stage through early interventions with households at risk of homelessness due to DA.	- Those are risk of homelessness and experiencing domestic abuse approach for homelessness assistance at an earlier stage e.g. prevention stage, not relief/crisis stage - Decrease in homelessness approaches due to DA - Greater awareness and take up of Sanctuary Scheme options	- DA Coordinator - DA Housing Officers - Research and Intelligence Officer	March 2027
2.23 Develop a protocol for Registered Providers to access relevant survivor information (with consent) to deliver trauma-informed housing offers and minimise re-traumatisation.	- Improved accommodation offers due to greater understanding of needs and risk - Reduced repeat homelessness for DA survivors	- DA Coordinator - Registered Housing Providers - DA Housing Officers	June 2027
2.24 Develop dedicated housing pathways for survivors with multiple needs and those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)	- Reduced homelessness levels due to DA - Improved partnership working with schools and health and holistic support available to whole family.	- DA Coordinator - DA Housing Officers	June 2027
2.25 Strengthen communication and engagement with schools and health professionals to support early identification and safeguarding and ensure children affected by domestic abuse are linked to appropriate support services to prevent future victimisation or perpetration.	-Processes are defined and embedded	- DA Coordinator - DA Housing Officers	July 2027

Prison leavers:			
2.26 Review supported and transitional accommodation capacity and barriers to accommodation to ensure that there are pathways into accommodation prior to release.	- Reduced homelessness due to leaving prison	- Housing Advice/Strategy Team Leaders - Prison and Probation Service	September 2027
2.27 Improve data capture: referrals to Prison Release meetings, homeless assessments before release, and accommodation pathways including CAS3 accommodation.	- Improved understanding of housing needs - Increased accommodation options and improved process for prison leavers	- Housing Advice/Strategy Team Leaders - Prison and Probation Service	December 2026
2.28 Increase the number of housing assessments undertaken within prisons to identify a housing solution before release.	- Increased accommodation options and improved process for prison leavers	- Housing Advice/Strategy Team Leaders - Prison and Probation Service	June 2027
2.29 Work with partner housing providers to develop a positive pathway from CAS3 accommodation	- More individuals moving on from CAS3 into settled or supported accommodation	- Strategic Housing Senior Officers	March 2027
2.30 Review Worcestershire Criminal Justice Housing and Support Protocol	- Protocol is updated to reflect current legislation and service provision	- Strategic Housing Lead	March 2028
Asylum seekers and refugees:			
2.31 Collaborate with community, voluntary, and faith organisations to develop tailored, culturally appropriate information and guidance for asylum seekers, refugees and those with No Recourse to Public Funds, enabling them to access necessary support.	- Comprehensive and culturally appropriate guidance developed.	-Homelessness Partnerships	September 2027
Veterans:			
2.32 Continue to work with the Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership to ensure that there is a good understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant in housing and that organisational policies reflect the needs of the Covenant	- Armed Forces Covenant embedded in housing services (where relevant) - Housing staff received training on the Armed Forces Covenant.	-WSHOG	Ongoing

Pillar 3: Preventing crisis - helping people stay in their homes

Action	Measure	Lead	Timescale
3.1 Use the findings of the Homelessness Review Service Mapping to explore funding services required to be commissioned or directly provided by LHAs to sustain accommodation.	- Gaps are defined, business case developed. - More homelessness cases are prevented	Housing Advice Team Leaders and Housing Strategy Officers	December 2026

<p>3.2 Ensure that homelessness services are well connected to services offering support through the new Crisis and Resilience Fund.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CRF fund outcomes analysed to inform “what works” - Report on outcomes that have prevented homelessness without the need for a homeless approach to housing services. - Homelessness Services are aligned with the local delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund and support is available to those in crisis and facing homelessness. 	<p>WSHOG</p>	<p>March 2027</p>
<p>3.3 Utilise funding to ensure services such as accommodation and floating support, and help with housing costs are targeted to reduce homelessness through prevention</p>	<p>-Number of households prevented from becoming homeless increases</p>	<p>Housing Advice Team Leaders and Housing Strategy Officers</p>	<p>December 2026</p>
<p>3.4 Make use of the government toolkits to aid prevention of homelessness (when available)</p>	<p>-Number of households prevented from becoming homeless increases</p>	<p>Housing Advice Team Leaders and Housing Strategy Officers</p>	<p>March 2028</p>

Pillar 4: Improving Emergency Responses - improving temporary accommodation and making people’s experiences better

Action	Measure	Lead	Timescale
<p>4.1 Increase the number of high-quality, self-contained, TA units for families with children through working with Registered Housing Providers and considering options such as leasing or purchasing accommodation (funding dependent). Minimise the use of B&B, and other forms of shared accommodation and out of area placements for families with children.</p> <p>4.2 Improve the transition of households moving out of TA and into settled accommodation by providing an assessment of support needs and referring families into the appropriate support. This would include sharing the needs assessment with housing providers (with consent) so they can provide a trauma informed housing offer.</p> <p>4.3 Create family-centred TA solutions: reevaluate the model for families in TA, ensuring that placements consider the impact on children’s schooling, health, and support networks and help children, families and young people in TA to maintain connections to services and support networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in the number of suitable TA units - Reduction in the average length of stay in temporary accommodation - Reduction of the number of households with children in temporary accommodation - Reduction in the number of families with children in B&B over 6 weeks - Reduction in temporary accommodation costs - Increase in successful move-ons per quarter - PWLE feedback from families who have experienced TA is gathered and analysis on a regular basis 	<p>Housing Advice Team Leaders and Housing Strategy Officers</p>	<p>March 2028</p>

<p>4.4 Jointly review social housing allocations policies once government’s new guidance is available to try to prevent the need for TA or move people on into settled accommodation more quickly if they do need to access TA.</p> <p>4.5 Develop a resilience plan to address the impacts of rising temporary accommodation use, accommodation costs, and the anticipated loss of grant funding. This will include a review of block booking contracts, introduce dynamic purchasing and reduce the use of spot purchasing</p> <p>4.6 Work with PWLE to analyse the barriers to accessing temporary accommodation and implement solutions e.g. increased security measures, provisions for pets.</p> <p>4.7 Explore opportunities to work with colleagues across the health economy to increase the availability of adapted temporary accommodation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Barriers to TA are understood and action taken to overcome barriers 		
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Pillar 5: Recovery and Preventing Repeat Homelessness - ensuring people don’t experience homelessness more than once and having long term rough sleeping

Action	Measure	Lead	Timescale
<p>5.1 Take action to tackling long term rough sleeping through reviewing: Accommodation-based and floating support/Rough sleeper outreach and intensive support/Rent deposits and rent in advance/No First Night Out Accommodation/Furniture projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All activities to prevent and tackle rough sleeping locally are reviewed and defined, gaps identified and services commissioned. - Reduction in rough sleeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Advice/Strategy Team Leaders - Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinator 	March 2027
<p>5.2 Review opportunities to develop and implement community and peer support models</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in tenancy sustainment - increase in engagement of service users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Advice/Strategy Team Leaders - Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinator 	March 2028
<p>5.3 Review opportunities to strengthen advocacy services: increase the availability of independent advocates, particularly for vulnerable groups like young people, those with mental health issues, and DA survivors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy services are defined and strengthened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Advice/Strategy Team Leaders - Outreach Services - Housing Advice 	December 2027
<p>5.4 Investigate with PWLE why there is a high level of repeat homelessness in certain homeless cohorts e.g. DA survivors, rough sleepers, families with complex support needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repeat homelessness is minimised - Drivers of repeat homelessness are understood and minimised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research and Intelligence Officer 	March 2028
<p>5.5 Develop mechanisms for referring temporarily accommodated households (with consent) to medical professionals, schools etc (subject to Government guidance)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repeat homelessness is minimised and households are safeguarded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WSHOG 	December 2028

Stakeholders identified a number of suggestions that are business as usual and as such do not feature in the action plan but will still be delivered. The strategy action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis, and this will include a review of current actions and identification of any new actions required for future years.

Appendix 2 - Funding the strategy

Homelessness Prevention Grant

Homelessness services across the districts have previously been funded through a combination of district council general fund budgets and targeted grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), most notably the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG).

The HPG was a ringfenced funding stream required to be deployed in line with national policy objectives. Its strategic purpose was to strengthen early intervention and prevention activity, ensuring full and consistent implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, while contributing to the ambition of ending rough sleeping through increased prevention of single homelessness.

The HPG also intended to reduce reliance on temporary accommodation, particularly for families. This included maximising opportunities for family homelessness prevention, reducing the overall number of families placed in temporary accommodation, and eliminating the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families beyond the statutory six-week limit.

Strategic deployment of HPG focussed on targeted prevention, effective use of temporary accommodation alternatives, and system-wide approaches that delivered sustainable housing outcomes while reducing financial and operational pressures on local authorities.

The allocations in 2025/26 were as follows;

Housing Authority	Grant (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	383,917
Malvern Hills District Council	402,595
Redditch Borough Council	776,429
Wychavon District Council	811,670
Wyre Forest District Council	664,560

This funding supported the delivery of a range of coordinated interventions across the county aimed at preventing and reducing rough sleeping. These included No First Night Out and No Second Night Out emergency accommodation, designed to minimise the number of nights individuals spend sleeping rough; housing pathways, intervention and transition worker roles that provided targeted support to secure and sustain accommodation; a countywide Rough Sleeping Coordinator role operating across the districts to ensure strategic oversight of rough sleeping interventions, partnership working and system alignment; and the delivery of Housing-Led and Housing First accommodation to

provide settled housing with appropriate wraparound support for individuals with complex needs.

At the time of writing this strategy the Government had recently announced the new homelessness and rough sleeping funding arrangements for 2026/7-2029/30. This section will be updated in due course.

Domestic Abuse Act Funding for Domestic Abuse Housing Officers 2025/6

Housing Authority	Grant (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	33,666
Malvern Hills District Council	33,666
Redditch Borough Council	33,666
Wychavon District Council	33,666
Wyre Forest District Council	33,666

Funding for domestic abuse services is essential to ensure the provision of dedicated, specialist officers who can effectively respond to victims and survivors. These officers play a critical role in early intervention, risk assessment, safeguarding, and multi-agency coordination. Sustained investment will allow for improved response times, consistent victim support, enhanced offender management, and better outcomes for families affected by domestic abuse. Funding will support recruitment, specialist training, and retention of officers, ensuring victims receive trauma-informed, timely, and effective protection while reducing repeat incidents and long-term harm within communities.

Domestic Abuse Act Funding 2025/6(to implement the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021)

Housing Authority	Grant (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	35,774
Malvern Hills District Council	34,742
Redditch Borough Council	35,697
Wychavon District Council	34,855
Wyre Forest District Council	33,835

Household Support Fund (2025/26)

HSF 7 Allocation April 25 - March 26

District Council 12 month allocation	General allocation	Food/warm space allocation	Total
Bromsgrove	£171,321.39	£18,000.00	£189,321.39
Malvern Hills	£235,312.23	£18,000.00	£253,312.23
Redditch	£329,900.14	£18,000.00	£347,900.14
Wychavon	£230,918.03	£18,000.00	£248,918.03
Wyre Forest	£328,625.52	£18,000.00	£346,625.52
Total	£1,296,076	£90,000	£1,386,076

The Household Support Fund (HSF) is intended to provide targeted financial assistance to vulnerable households who are struggling to meet the cost of essential living expenses. The fund aims to prevent crisis, reduce hardship, and support households to maintain stability.

Discretionary Housing Payments (2025/6)

Housing Authority	Grant (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	62,332
Malvern Hills District Council	75,651
Redditch Borough Council	79,296
Wychavon District Council	112,099
Wyre Forest District Council	110,242

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) provide short-term financial assistance to households who require additional help with housing costs and are in receipt of Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit. The fund aims to prevent homelessness, sustain tenancies, and support households during periods of financial difficulty.

Appendix 3 - Glossary of terms

CAS3 : Community Accommodation Service	11
DAPB: Domestic Abuse Partnership Board	24
DRIVE: A domestic abuse partnership that protects victims by disrupting, challenging and changing the behaviour of those who are causing harm.....	14
LGR: Local Government Reorganisation	2
LHAs: Local Housing Authorities	4
MHCLG: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government.....	9
MARAC: Multi agency risk assessment conference.....	14
PWLE: People with Lived Experiencee	4
RPs: Registered Housing Providers	6
TPG: Target Priority Group (most complex rough sleepers).....	4

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**CABINET REPORT****8 April 2026****Property Flood Resilience projects - contractor procurement**

OPEN	
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Chris Rogers - Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Kate Bailey Ext 2560 Head of Strategic Growth
CONTACT OFFICER:	Richard Osborne Ext 2564 Principal Environmental Health Officer
APPENDICES:	None

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed procurement approach for the provision of flood resilience works for properties as part of the North Worcestershire Property Flood Resilience Scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to DECIDE that:

- 2.1 **Approval is given to use the existing Environment Agency Property Flood Resilience Framework for securing a construction contractor to deliver property flood resilience measures to properties as part of the two North Worcestershire Property Flood Resilience Schemes.**

AND

- 2.2 **Delegated authority is given to the Head of Strategic Growth, in consultation with the Solicitor to the Council, Head of Resources and s151 officer and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing to award the contracts to undertake the works required.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 North Worcestershire Water Management (NWWM), a shared service hosted by Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC), including Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), is leading two separate Property Flood Resilience (PFR) schemes to protect against property flooding. The first scheme, Upper Cole Catchment PFR scheme, includes 67 properties that are modelled at significant flood risk or/and flood on a regular basis in the Hollywood and Wythall area of BDC. The second scheme, North Worcestershire PFR scheme, includes 69 properties, including a number anticipated to be within Wyre Forest, that have all flooded internally on at least one occasion and modelled between significant and low flood risk across all three councils. PFR includes retrofitting individual properties with flood resistant features such as flood doors/barriers, self-sealing airbricks, pumps, and remediation works to the building structure such as re-pointing mortar and sealing with silicone.

- 3.2 The Upper Cole PFR scheme is funded in part by DEFRA with Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) to the value of £195,539 and the Trent Regional Flood and Coastal Committee with Local Levy funds to the value of £837,712. Of these funds, £57,251 has been allocated for PFR property surveys and £876,000 for PFR construction. The North Worcs PFR scheme is funded solely by the English Severn and Wye Regional Flood and Coastal Committee with Local Levy to the value of £999,620. Of these funds, £54,238 has been allocated for PFR property surveys and £828,000 for PFR construction. The remaining funds are allocated to NWWM officer costs.
- 3.3 Delivery of the PFR projects, property surveys, and construction are to be procured through a direct award using the Environment Agency's (EA) PFR framework. The framework provides a robust delivery mechanism for local authorities to ensure an efficient and high quality service whilst ensuring adherence with the Code of practice for property flood resilience (C790), and the British Standard (BS 851188) Kitemark for flood protection products. The framework has been provided specifically to ensure the successful delivery of PFR schemes and maximise flood protection at the property level. There have been cases of local authorities delivering PFR outside the framework resulting in products not complying with British standards or the code of practice, and subsequently failing in a flood event.
- 3.4 Under the EA PFR framework there are Lots 1 and 2. Lot 1 includes the pre-and-post installation survey requirements and contractors; Lot 2 includes the construction requirements and contractors. WFDC, BDC and RBC are situated within the Midlands area of the framework and include the following contractors: Lot 1 – RAB consultants (Primary), FPS environmental (Reserve). Lot 2 – Whitehouse construction (Primary), Apex Flood Solutions (Reserve). These contractors have undergone rigorous EA procurement procedures to be assigned within the framework. Surveying work, utilising this framework Lot 1 has been approved by the relevant CLT member due to the value of the service. Under the terms of the framework, selection criteria have already been applied. There is no choice between potential alternative contractors to be made. Therefore, there is no need for mini-competition and evaluation criteria and weighting is not needed that may be relevant for selection of contractors from other frameworks.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 It is necessary to select construction contractors under Lot 2 of the framework and the sums involved mean that Cabinet approval is required. The PFR schemes are bound by various challenging timescales. The allocated funds are separated by financial years and need to be spent within the allocated year. Both projects need to be completed by the end of March 2028, requiring delivery to 142 properties across a 2-year period. Maximum delivery of better protected properties are required by March 2027 in line with the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management six-year capital investment programme.
- 4.2 The business case for the Upper Cole PFR scheme has been approved. Funds allocated for pre-construction property surveys are required to be spent or allocated before March 2026; RAB consultants have confirmed that they will start undertaking surveys in March 2026. The surveys then enable the actual works to properties to take place based on the findings. The business case for the North Worcs PFR scheme, which has based PFR delivery using the EA PFR framework has been approved with funds ready to draw down in April 2026.
- 4.3 Delivery of a PFR scheme within the allocated timeframe would be difficult without the EA PFR framework. There is a risk of incorrect surveying and installation, resulting in failed property protection and an unsuccessful scheme.

4.4 The proposed project stages for the Upper Cole PFR scheme and North Worcs PFR scheme are provided in table one and two respectively.

Table One: Upper Cole PFR scheme project stages

Project stage	Project stage description	Estimated start date	Estimated end date	Responsible organisation	Budget required (£)
1	Business case development and approval	01/04/25	15/09/25	NWWM and EA	£0
2	Officer costs	01/04/25	15/03/28	NWWM	£100,000
3	Lot 1 – surveys	01/03/26	01/05/26	RAB	£40,191
4	Lot 2 – supplier installation	01/07/26	01/01/28	Whitehouse	£876,000
5	Lot 1 – installation audit	01/09/26	01/03/28	RAB	£17,060
6	Project closure	01/01/28	15/03/28	NWWM and DEFRA	£0

Table Two: North Worcs PFR scheme project stages

Project stage	Project stage description	Estimated start date	Estimated end date	Responsible organisation	Budget required (£k)
1	Business case development and approval	01/04/25	30/01/26	NWWM and EA	£0
2	Officer costs	01/04/25	15/03/28	NWWM	£100,000
3	Lot 1 – surveys	05/04/26	05/06/26	RAB	£38,080
4	Lot 2 – supplier installation	05/09/26	01/01/28	Whitehouse	£845,336
5	Lot 1 – installation audit	05/08/26	01/03/28	RAB	£16,158
6	Project closure	01/01/28	15/03/28	NWWM and DEFRA	£0

Rationale for direct awards using the EA PFR framework

4.5 The EA PFR framework streamlines the PFR delivery process and will ensure project deadlines are met. The framework provides process guidance and templates for all necessary documents such as call off contracts, homeowner legal agreements, schedules and award letters. The procurement process is already completed with Lot 1 and 2 contractors already assigned to the Midlands region. The framework ensures the projects are compliant with the PFR code of practice, British standards and the minimum technical requirements, leaving little room for error and high confidence in scheme success.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications for the council as this project is fully funded from external funds. The projects will be funded with FDGiA and Local Levy funds, provided by DEFRA and the Trent/English Severn and Wye RFCC committees. The funds allocated to the Upper Cole PFR scheme total £1,033,251 and £999,620 for the North Worcs PFR scheme. The funds are inclusive of officer costs, Lot 1 survey costs and Lot 2 construction costs.
- 5.2 These grant schemes have already been reported to Cabinet on 8th July 2025 and agreement given to amend the capital programme according to funding provided and a delegated mechanism to adjust for consequential amendments.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 set up the Regional Flood and Coastal Committees that distribute the funds and set out terms for their use. The council has the power to provide assistance to any person for the purpose of enabling that person to adapt or improve living accommodation. This is set out in article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. The Council exercises these functions on behalf of BDC and RBC as part of the shared service.

7. IMPACT AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise was completed at the time of the funding award. There were positive impacts identified in that there may be persons with financial or health (including mental health) vulnerabilities who would not have been able to support themselves to achieve getting the needed works done who will be assisted by the project.
- 7.2 Climate Change: This report is in relation to funding so not applicable.
- 7.3 Health Impact: Increasing the resilience of properties from the adverse effects of flooding may have a beneficial health impact on the beneficiaries.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 It is critical to undertake the procurement in a correct and timely manner to ensure the Council can provide these works to the benefit of communities across North Worcestershire.
- 8.2 The funds are assured. The main risk is that the grant uptake is not as high as predicted. This risk is mitigated due to the community engagement work already undertaken and the timescale over which work can be delivered allowing for people to consider and be encouraged by others taking up the grant. The overall scale of the scheme can be adjusted over time if there is not sufficient take up. Potential additional properties/ demand are considered and a further scheme bid will be considered if there is sufficient interest by households in properties in a lower flood risk category than those being covered by this scheme.
- 8.3 Historically flood resilience measures for properties have a mixed record of success and there is a risk that individual property measures do not achieve protection or resilience. This is mitigated by reliance upon the professional surveys, the Environment Agency framework and the use of kite marked products, along with clear information, instruction and advice on use and maintenance by householders.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Council will be providing much needed support for households vulnerable to flooding across north Worcestershire. This can be done using a known and nationally used framework developed by the Environment Agency to give an assured level of competency of contractors and quality of products that is crucial for property flood resilience measures.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 CLT