

**Open**

# **Cabinet**

# **Agenda**

**6pm**  
**Tuesday, 22nd October 2013**  
**Council Chamber**  
**Wyre Forest House**  
**Finepoint Way**  
**Kidderminster**



## Cabinet

### **The Cabinet Members and their responsibilities:-**

<b>Councillor J-P Campion</b>	<b>Leader of the Council</b>
<b>Councillor M J Hart</b>	<b>Deputy Leader, Environmental Services</b>
<b>Councillor N J Desmond</b>	<b>Resources and Transformation</b>
<b>Councillor I Hardiman</b>	<b>Community Well-Being</b>
<b>Councillor A Hingley</b>	<b>Place-Shaping</b>

### **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 6<sup>th</sup> November 2013.*

Councillors wishing to "call in" a decision on this agenda should contact Sue Saunders, Committee and Electoral Services Officer, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster. Telephone: 01562 732733 or email [susan.saunders@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:susan.saunders@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)

### **Urgent Key Decisions**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **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 Sue Saunders, Committee and Electoral Services Officer, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, DY11 7WF. Telephone: 01562 732733 or email [susan.saunders@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:susan.saunders@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](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/council/meetings/main.htm)

### **WEBCASTING NOTICE**

This meeting is being filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's website site ([www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk)).

At the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed.

You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 1998. The footage recorded will be available to view on the Council's website for 6 months and shall be retained in accordance with the Council's published policy.

**By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to be filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and or training purposes.**

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.

If any attendee is under the age of 18 the written consent of his or her parent or guardian is required before access to the meeting room is permitted. Persons under 18 are welcome to view the meeting from the Stourport and Bewdley Room.

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

Wyre Forest District Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 22nd October 2013

Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster

Part 1

Open to the press and public

<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page Number</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interests by Members</b>  In accordance with the Code of Conduct, to invite Members to declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's) and / or Other Disclosable Interests (ODI's) in the following agenda items and indicate the action that they will be taking when the item is considered.  Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's Constitution for full details.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes</b>  To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on the 17 <sup>th</sup> September 2013.	7
<b>4.</b>	<b>CALL INS</b> a verbal update will be given on any decisions which have been "called in" since the last meeting of the Cabinet.	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Items Requiring Urgent Attention</b>  To consider any item which, in the opinion of the Chairman requires consideration at the meeting as a matter of urgency.	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Public Participation</b>  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 14 <sup>th</sup> October 2013. (See front cover for contact details).	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Leader of the Council</b>	
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Leader's Announcements</b>	

<b>8. Securing the Economic Prosperity of the District/ Delivering Together, With Less/ Improving Community Well-Being</b>		
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Councillor J-P Champion</b> <b>Development of New Corporate Plan 2014/19</b>  To consider a report from the Chief Executive which recommends to Council the draft Corporate Plan for the period of 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019. To also consider the recommendations from the Strategic Review Committee meeting on 9 <sup>th</sup> October 2013.	10

<b>9. Securing the Economic Prosperity of the District/ Delivering Together, With Less/Improving Community Well-Being</b>		
<b>9.1</b>	<b>Councillor N J Desmond</b> <b>Development of Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/19</b>  To consider a report from the Chief Financial Officer which seeks Cabinet's consideration of the workable options for the medium term financial strategy that have been developed by the Strategic Review Committee. To also consider the recommendations from the Strategic Review Committee meeting on 9 <sup>th</sup> October 2013.	20

<b>Delivering Together, With Less</b>		
<b>9.2</b>	<b>Councillor N J Desmond</b> <b>National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) Relief</b>  To consider a report from the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place which details responses to the consultation that has been undertaken and to agree to a new scheme of NNDR relief from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2014. To also consider the recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2013.	39

<b>10. Securing the Economic Prosperity of the District/ Improving Community Well-Being</b>		
<b>10.1</b>	<b>Councillor A Hingley</b> <b>Revised Local Development Scheme (2013-16)</b>  To consider a report from the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place which recommends to Council proposals for the revision of the Local Development Scheme (Project Plan), which will guide the future production of the District's Local Plans. To also consider the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2013.  <i>The appendix to this report has been circulated electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request. (See front cover for details.)</i>	51

<b>11. Recommendations from Committees</b>		
<b>11.1</b>	Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2013	
	(a) Community Infrastructure Levy	55
	(b) Wyre Forest Health Action Plan Update	56

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.	
13.	<p><b>Exclusion of the Press and Public</b></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

<b>14.</b>		<b><i>A Well Run and Responsive Council</i></b>
<b>14.1</b>	<p><b>Councillor I Hardiman</b></p> <p><b>New Leisure Centre for Wyre Forest</b></p> <p>To consider a report from the Director of Wellbeing and Environment which updates Cabinet on the New Leisure Centre for Wyre Forest.</p>	-
15.	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

17TH SEPTEMBER 2013 (6.00PM)

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**Present:**

Councillors: J-P Campion, N J Desmond, I Hardiman, M J Hart and A T Hingley.

**Observers:**

Councillors: C Brewer, H E Dyke and M Price.

**CAB.17 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**CAB.18 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.19 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CAB.20 Call Ins**

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

**CAB.21 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

**CAB.22 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader of the Council reported that he would make an announcement about the Landsbanki investments at Council on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

**CAB.23 Annual Report on Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2012/13**

A report was considered from the Chief Financial Officer which recommended to Council approval of the actual 2012/13 Prudential and Treasury Indicators and to consider the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation informed Members that no indicators had been broken and the Council had complied 100% with the strategy. The Council had received £89,000 in interest compared to the original budget of £66,000.

He also advised that the contract with the Council's Treasury Management advisors – Capita Asset Services - Treasury Solutions, had been extended for an additional two years with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013. Members had also recently received Treasury Management training by Sector which had been welcomed.

**Decision:**

**Recommended to Council:**

- 1. The actual 2012/13 prudential and treasury indicators in this report to Cabinet be approved.**
- 2. The annual treasury management report for 2012/13 be noted.**

**CAB.24 Budget Monitoring First Quarter 2013/14**

A report was considered from the Chief Financial Officer that outlined the monitoring of the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003.

Members were informed that the projected outturn at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 was an overspend of £124,500 but as it was only the start of the year, there were no undue worries and Cabinet, together with the Corporate Management Team would continue to monitor the situation.

**Decision: The projected budget variations and comments outlined within this report to Cabinet and appendices 2 to 6 be noted.**

**CAB.25 Community Housing Group – Right To Buy Receipts**

A report was considered from the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place which recommended to Council new arrangements in respect of preserved right to buy receipts for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

Members were pleased with the recommendation as they felt it was the right thing for the Council to progress and this would be presented to the next Council meeting for debate. The Chairman of the Housing Review Panel welcomed the recommendations.

**Decision:**



**Recommended to Council:**

1. **Subject to clarification from the Secretary of State regarding a variation to the original transfer deed, preserved right to buy receipts in the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 be shared equally between the Community Housing Group and Wyre Forest District Council.**
2. **The receipts retained by CHG will be invested in affordable housing in Wyre Forest, with the mix of affordable housing units concerned being agreed with WFDC.**

**CAB.26 West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park – Planning Brief and Masterplan**

A report was considered from the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place which reported on the final version of the West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park – Planning Brief and Masterplan and to seek approval for the document as an appropriate basis for meeting the policy requirements of the Council's recently adopted Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan. To also consider the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

The Leader of the Council acknowledged the work of the Local Development Framework Review Panel and reported that he was proud of the way the Council had used its policy to progress forward.

Members were pleased with the plans for the future and the linking up of major attractions in the district.

**Decision:**

1. **The West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park Planning Brief and Masterplan (as set out at Appendix 1 to the report to Cabinet), be approved as a suitable framework to meet the policy requirements of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan (Policy SAL.GPB5)**
2. **If any minor amendments are proposed to the Brief and Masterplan that delegated authority be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to agree the final form of the wording of the document with West Midlands Safari & Leisure Park.**

The meeting closed at 6.29 pm.

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL****CABINET**  
**22<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2013****Development of New Corporate Plan 2014/19**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:</b>	All
<b>CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY:</b>	All
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor J-P Campion
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Chief Executive
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Alison Braithwaite - Ext 2781 Alison.braithwaite@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1 – Summary of Consultation Results Appendix 2 – Draft Corporate Plan 2014/19

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report sets out the draft Corporate Plan for the period of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND to Council that:**

- 2.1 **The draft Corporate Plan 2014/19, as set out in Appendix 2, be adopted.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council's existing Corporate Plan was adopted in 2011 for the three year period to 31 March 2014. It contains a high level vision and three priorities (Securing the Economic Prosperity of the District, Delivering Together with Less and Improving Community Wellbeing) which are underpinned by a number of strategic actions.
- 3.2 The Corporate Plan and Priorities Working Group was established in June 2013 (as a sub group of the Strategic Review Committee) to lead the process for developing a new Corporate Plan.
- 3.3 The working group comprised of:
- Councillor R Bishop
  - Councillor E Davies
  - Councillor H Martin
  - Councillor B McFarland

- 3.4 Since June 2013 the Corporate Plan and Priorities Group has met on nine occasions to manage and deliver the various stages of the Plan's development.
- 3.5 During September 2013 a comprehensive three week programme of consultation was undertaken to determine the views of the community on future service and spending priorities. This involved twenty one focus groups being held with various sectors of the community (Residents, Businesses, Partners, Town and Parish Councils, Young People) as well as with council staff. An online survey was also published for this period which was promoted through the local media. Paper copies of the survey were placed in key community outlets for people to complete.
- 3.6 An executive summary of the consultation results is set out in **Appendix 1**. A copy of the responses from the focus groups (which involved over 150 people and 41 different agencies) and the survey (which was completed by 629 respondents) is available at [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/spendingpriorities](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/spendingpriorities)
- 3.7 The results on the service priorities have been reviewed by the Corporate Plan and Priorities Working Group in order to help shape the priorities and strategic actions for the draft Corporate Plan.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 A copy of the draft Corporate Plan (2014/19) is set out in **Appendix 2**. Given the council's budgetary pressures, the Strategic Review Committee agreed that the Corporate Plan should only have two priorities.
- 4.2 In light of the consultation results, the two priorities are proposed as follows:
- **Support you to contribute to a successful local economy**
  - **Support you to live in clean, green and safe communities** (previous wording of 'Keep my place safe and looking good' was revised to reflect the strong support that there was for access to affordable housing across all age ranges).
- 4.3 The Priorities are underpinned by a series of Strategic Actions. These will support the delivery of a range of outcomes for our communities and also contribute to the Plan's vision of '**Wyre Forest – where people have the opportunity to enjoy a good quality of life and want to live, work, visit and invest**'.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The work undertaken by the Strategic Review Committee on workable options for the medium term financial strategy 2014/19 takes into account the proposed two priorities. Whilst we should not expect service reductions in these priority areas that does not mean these services should continue to be organised and funded as at present. All service areas need to contribute to making the council's financial situation sustainable. There is also the opportunity for both priorities to support income generation.

**6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications. From a policy perspective the workable options paper for the medium term financial strategy 2014/19 takes into account the two priorities that are set out in the draft Corporate Plan.

**7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An initial screening equality impact assessment has been undertaken. There are no equalities issues arising from the draft Corporate Plan 2014/19.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 The affordability of the draft Corporate Plan has been supported through the identification of two priorities and not three. The Plan will be kept under review during its five year term to ensure we take stock and reflect on the successes and changes and new challenges that we face.

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 These are times of major change but also of opportunity. There are clear challenges as we go into the future, however the strategic direction of the new Corporate Plan will support us to remain focus on our priorities and ensure we use our resources to best effect to improve the quality of life for our communities.

**10. CONSULTEES**

On this report:

- 10.1 Councillor Ian Hardiman, Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing.  
10.2 Strategic Review Committee  
10.3 Corporate Management Team

On service priorities:

- 10.4 Members of the Public  
10.5 Focus Groups

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Agendas and Minutes of the Strategic Review Committee and Corporate Plan and Priorities Working Group meetings.  
11.2 Full Consultation Results from Focus Groups and Survey  
[www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/spendingpriorities](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/spendingpriorities)

## **SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

### **SERVICE AND SPENDING PRIORITIES CONSULTATION**

**SEPTEMBER 2013**

#### **Consultation Methods**

- **Online Survey** – from 2 to 24 September – 629 responses (which includes the paper copies completed at various community outlets across the District)
- **Focus Groups** – 21 held which involved over 150 people and 41 local organisations / businesses

#### **Your service priorities (Online Survey)**

##### **Q1 – Most Important – respondents were asked to select three (Top Ten):**

- Refuse and Recycling (43.40%)
- Street Cleaning and Litter Collection (25.60%)
- Housing (23.21%)
- Economic Regeneration and Tourism (20.99%)
- Parks, Play Areas and Open Spaces (20.03%)
- Environmental Health (13.99%)
- Public Toilets (12.08%)
- Customer Service Centre (11.92%)
- Welfare Support (11.29%)
- Communications and Information (10.81%)

##### **Q2 – Least Important – respondents were asked to select three (Top Ten):**

- Events for Adults and Families (36.38%)
- Play Development (26.59%)
- Communications and Information (23.82%)
- Leisure Centre (22.19%)
- Community Leadership (18.43%)
- Health and Sustainability (18.27%)
- Sports Development and Coaching (17.78%)
- Bewdley Museum (17.62%)
- Bulky Waste Collection and Garden Waste (14.85%)
- Sports Pitches (14.19%)

#### **Top Two Priorities (Focus Group Exercise)** (number of times ranked 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> choice)

- Support me to contribute towards a successful economy - (1<sup>st</sup> - 11) and (2<sup>nd</sup> - 3)
- Keep my place safe and looking good – (1<sup>st</sup> - 9) and (2<sup>nd</sup> - 1)
- Support me to have access to a good quality and affordable home (1<sup>st</sup> – 7)
- Help me to improve my health and wellbeing (1<sup>st</sup> – 1) and (2<sup>nd</sup> – 2)
- Give me a Voice (1<sup>st</sup> – 1)
- Help me with my Financial Situation (1<sup>st</sup> – 1)
- Provide me with the Information I need (1<sup>st</sup> – 1)
- Make Good Development Happen (2<sup>nd</sup> – 1)

**Savings Options**

Respondents were asked to choose their 10 preferred savings options from a list of 16 for contributing towards the council's savings. The chart sets out the % number of respondents choosing the different options and also ranks the top 10 most preferred options (1 = the most popular choice).

Savings / Income Generation Options	% (Survey)	Key Headline Messages (from survey and focus groups)
A. Further significant cut in support services in the council (administration support, finance, ICT etc)	43.12%	Not a significant amount of support. Generally felt that further cuts in support services will be too far. It was felt that managers are already spending considerable time doing admin as there isn't sufficient capacity to support them. From a political perspective Support Services is an easy option compared to front line services which are visible vote winners. It is acknowledged that as the council gets smaller so will the back office support. However, don't compromise governance arrangements by reducing support services too far. There is a tipping point.
B. Cut costs by creating more shared services and shared management post with other councils	65.84% (5)	Full support for entering into more shared services and having shared management posts including at a Chief Executive and Director level. The shared management between Bromsgrove and Redditch Council was given as an example we should follow. Services mentioned for entering into new shared arrangements included: Revenues and Benefits, ICT, Finance, Property and other Support Services. Must also look at selling services to the private sector. Moving to either a Unitary Council for Worcestershire or a North Worcestershire Council was also raised.
C. Stop providing subsidised playing pitches – maintenance to be done by sports clubs / users	67.83% (4)	Mixed views. Some respondents fully support stopping subsidised playing pitches and/or transferring them to be run by sports clubs. Others felt some middle ground needs to be found. This could include getting sponsorship for the pitches. There was concern that clubs outside the District get the current subsidy too. Important that the playing pitches are retained for the district due to the health and wellbeing implications for people of all ages.
D. Increase income by reducing subsidises for other services, increasing existing charges above the planned increases of 5% a year and introducing new charges where possible	42.29%	Mixed views. There was a clear message that respondents wouldn't support reducing subsidies which might impact on the elderly or vulnerable members of the community. Without a specific list of the types of services where the charges would be increased or introduced, the focus group respondents felt it was difficult to agree or disagree.
E. Reducing running costs and increase incomes by building houses on loss making car parks and selling or transferring various play areas, small parks and pieces of land	52.57% (8)	Mixed views. On the whole general support for building homes on loss making car parks although some respondents felt a better option would be to sell them off for a peppercorn amount to nearby facilities or transfer to Parish or Town Councils. This would help to ensure parking doesn't become an issue for these areas. In the focus group discussions there was little support for selling or transferring various play areas, small parks and pieces of land. It was felt these should be retained to protect them from being used for housing or other development in the future. Some respondents have suggested transferring the management of the parks and green spaces to, for example, a social enterprise or a community interest company.

## Agenda Item No. 8.1

Savings / Income Generation Options	%(Survey)	Key Headline Messages (from survey and focus groups)
F. Secure more income to meet running costs of Kidderminster Town Hall by holding more profit making events and letting spaces to private sector companies	79.93%  (2)	A lot of support for the idea. Suggested that the function should come under the Events Team of the Council and not Facilities Section. Some respondents suggested the Town Hall should be sold. Other comments focused on people's personal experiences of the sell out comedy nights and the need to get an experienced business manager who is commercially driven to manage the facility so the income is maximised. The council's culture of running things at a loss and for the good of the community cannot continue.
G. Increase income by creating a major investment fund to invest in housing, property, companies and development projects	56.88%  (7)	Mixed views. Generally perceived to be too high risk given the council's current financial situation. Would need a watertight approach to business costs which may involve buying in expertise (where's the profit in that?). Also big profit = big risk and this is income from local people. Others felt it could work with 'safe bets' e.g. some of the new medical practices in the District.
H. Significantly reduce expenditure on public toilets by closing expensive or less well used sites and introducing community toilet schemes in pubs, restaurants etc	52.57%  (8)	Overall support for the principle of a community toilet scheme and the savings it would deliver. Concern about getting the buy in of local pubs and restaurants and how sustainable this would be. Suggested that for certain types of new businesses it could be a pre-planning condition to address the sustainability issue. Bewdley Town Council has already done some work on the viability of such a scheme.
I. Reduce cost of property occupied by the council by sharing a depot, reducing costs of museum storage and letting space to others at Wyre Forest House	75.79%  (3)	Full support for reducing property costs of the council. A range of sites for the potential relocation of the depot are set out in the focus group and survey commentaries. Very few views expressed about Museum Storage other than it has already been looked at. The principle of letting space to others at Wyre Forest House was fully supported – must maximise the use of our assets. However the council needs to be realistic in how much it charges and market the available space properly.
J. Secure funding for economic regeneration work from the local Enterprise Partnerships' single local growth fund	64.18%  (6)	Overall support for drawing in as much external income from this funding stream as possible. Do not underestimate the importance of income generation through external funding; it shouldn't all be about cuts. Certain teams already bring in sufficient sums of grant funding. However, due to a lack of officer capacity for bid writing we don't maximise the amount that could potentially be secured.
K. Significantly reduce or end expenditure on arts, play and sports	48.42%  (10)	Mixed views. A number of respondents gave their overwhelming support for these activities based on having experienced them. Important that arts, play and sports are available to the community. However, other ways of delivery should be explored to reduce operating costs. This included commissioning the work from community groups, charities or parishes, together with providing them a set amount of funding. Other respondents felt the council should continue delivering these activities but charge a small fee to cover costs. Some people said they should be stopped completely given the council's severe financial situation.

## Agenda Item No. 8.1

Savings / Income Generation Options	% (Survey)	Key Headline Messages (from survey and focus groups)
L. Stop activities on health, sustainability and awards schemes	48.26%	Mixed views. Some respondents questioned why we deliver health and sustainability activities as there are other bodies doing similar activity. Commissioning others (community groups, Wyre Forest Clinical Commissioning Group) to deliver the work at a lower cost should be looked at. Others felt we should continue the activity as the amount that would be saved is small in comparison to the savings needed.
		There were very few views expressed about the awards with reasons both for and against put forward. It was also suggested they could be externally funded.
M. Reduce cost of democracy – for example by holding elections every 4 years or by reducing councillors' allowances	88.39%  (1)	Full support for reducing the cost of democracy. Unanimous agreement at all focus groups except for one for holding elections every 4 years and for reducing councillors' allowances. This option is the most popular savings choice of those respondents completing the survey.
N. Transfer services to the private sector or mutual companies owned by staff	33.83%	Mixed views. General message is we shouldn't rule anything out. However, the views of council staff focused on looking at more options for generating income or selling services to the private sector. A plethora of ideas for income generation are set out in the focus group and online survey commentaries.
O. Reduce council tax discounts for poorer working age residents	31.68%	No support from the focus groups as it was strongly felt this would affect some of our most vulnerable members of the community who we need to support, not make their lives worse. The saving that this would generate was also felt to be an insignificant amount for the impact it could have on people's quality of life. This was also the least favoured option of the 16 savings ideas.
P. Reduce spending on existing shared services such as Worcestershire Regulatory Services (environmental health and licensing): accept that service standards would reduce	44.78%	Mixed views. Recognised that shared services should be scrutinised like all services regarding future delivery levels. Important that any reduction in expenditure should be considered on a case by case basis together with a full risk assessment so the implications can be fully assessed. Specific concern was raised over how you could cut licensing without putting people and the economy at risk.

This summary version should be read in conjunction with the full responses to both the survey and focus groups.

### **Council Tax Question**

Respondents were asked if they would support a council tax freeze if it meant the council would have to find additional savings of £130,000 by 2015 and £260,000 in total once the Government grant for freezing council tax comes to an end.

**Yes = 30.51%**

**No = 54.85%**

**Don't Know = 14.81%**



**Age Profile of respondents to Survey**

17 or under = 3.19%	35-44 = 18.44%	65-74 = 13.65%
18-24 = 8.16%	45-54 = 20.74%	75+ = 4.79%
25-34 = 12.59%	55-64 = 18.62%	

**Geographical Profile of respondents to Survey**

Kidderminster = 54.97%   Bewdley = 17.72%   Stourport-on-Severn = 18.63%   Other = 8.86%

Draft Corporate Plan 2014/19

**Wyre Forest District**

**Vision:** Wyre Forest – where people have the opportunity to enjoy a good quality of life and want to live, work, visit and invest

**Our Values:** We will

- Be confident and honest in expressing our views
- Work as one team and support each other
- Put our customers first
- Be innovative and flexible in the ways we work
- Invest in giving people the skills to do the job
- Celebrate good performance

<b>Our Priorities</b>	
<b>Support you to contribute to a successful local economy.</b>	<b>Support you to live in clean, green and safe communities.</b>
<b>Our Strategic Actions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with partners to create the conditions and certainty to foster a growing and sustainable local economy</li> <li>• Bringing forward regeneration and development opportunities and the infrastructure to support them</li> <li>• Creating new job opportunities and improving skills</li> <li>• Helping new businesses to start up and existing businesses to grow</li> <li>• Attracting inward investment and accessing alternative funding sources</li> <li>• Promoting the District as a great place to invest in, live in and visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a greener and cleaner local environment</li> <li>• Supporting the provision and maintenance of high quality public spaces</li> <li>• Working with partners to reduce crime and the fear of crime</li> <li>• Working towards meeting current and future housing needs, with an up-to-date local development plan that provides for growth in the number of houses</li> <li>• Preventing and reducing homelessness</li> </ul>
<b>Our Actions will support</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A community with lower unemployment and improved skills</li> <li>• A diverse and well connected economy with vibrant and successful town centres</li> <li>• Successful and sustained business growth</li> <li>• Increased visitor opportunities</li> <li>• Redevelopment of redundant and under-used land and buildings</li> <li>• Improved infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean streets and quality open, green public spaces that are enjoyed by all</li> <li>• An environment that is respected and cared for, and where local people take pride in their surroundings</li> <li>• Low levels of crime and anti social behaviour</li> <li>• An increased supply of good quality and decent homes that are affordable to individuals and families</li> <li>• A reduction in the number of people becoming homeless</li> </ul>

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Cabinet  
22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013**

**Strategic Review Committee  
9<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

**Draft Corporate Plan 2014/19**

The Committee agreed recommendations to go forward to Cabinet on the draft Corporate Plan 2014/19.

**Recommend to Cabinet:**

**The draft Corporate Plan 2014/19, as attached at Appendix 2 of the report to the Strategic Review Committee, be approved.**

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL****CABINET**  
**22<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2013****Development of Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/19**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:</b>	All
<b>CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY:</b>	All
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor N J Desmond
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Chief Executive
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Tracey Southall, Ext 2100 Tracey.southall@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1 – Report from Strategic Review Committee

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report seeks the Cabinet's consideration of the workable options for the medium term financial strategy that have been developed by the Strategic Review Committee.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The Cabinet is asked to **NOTE** the workable options for the medium term financial strategy, and agree to bring forward its recommendations to Council at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The cross-party Strategic Review Committee was established by Council in May and tasked with producing recommendations for the corporate plan and medium term financial strategy for the period from 2014 to 2019. The intention is for the key decisions about the shape of the strategy to be taken by full Council in November. A detailed budget will be prepared once the Government has announced the settlement for 2014-15 before Christmas and will be approved by full Council in February 2014 when the council tax will also be set.
- 3.2 The report from the Strategic Review Committee summarises the intensive work it has done over the summer, which has been shaped by the responses to the consultation questionnaire on spending priorities and options for savings. The report highlights a large number of workable options that could form part of the medium term financial strategy and address the need for the Council to make a significant further reduction its net revenue expenditure, by increasing income and reducing operating costs.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES**

4.1 The Council has a good track record in delivering savings, with over £3.6m achieved since 2009. This includes the following reductions and savings:

- Pay Budgets reduced by £1.5m since 2010.
- Procurement - £300k since 2010.
- Shared services - savings of £540k a year.
- Waste collection - £400k a year saved since 2008.
- Grounds Maintenance/ Environmental Maintenance £220k a year saved since 2010.
- Revenues and Benefits - £180k a year.
- Wyre Forest House - savings of £645k in a full year.

The Council is on track with the Wyre Forest Forward programme of savings. Already savings of £624k have been implemented or identified against the target of £801k in 2016/17.

4.2 The Council must now go further to deal with future reductions in Government grant support. The precise figures are not yet known, and there is a wide range of assumptions that will have to be made in finalising recommendations for the medium term financial strategy. However there is confidence that the savings target that needs to be achieved over the next two years is at least £2m.

4.3 Before progressing to make recommendations to Council, the Cabinet will need to select from the options that have been identified by the Strategic Review Committee and it may wish to add some proposals of its own. Where relevant, equality impact assessments will need to be undertaken and there will also be further checking of the robustness of projected income or savings. This work will be undertaken over the next month with clear proposals being brought forward in a report for the Cabinet's meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None associated with this report. The Cabinet's proposals for the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014-19 will set out the financial implications and how they help to make the Council's financial situation sustainable. The package of proposals will include both income generation and cost reductions.

#### **6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no legal or policy implications arising from this report as no formal decisions are being sought.

#### **7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

7.1 Screening for equality impacts will be undertaken in developing the Cabinet's proposals and will be reflected in the report to Cabinet in November.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 Achieving financial sustainability is the most significant risk facing the Council. The work done by the Strategic Review Committee provides a set of workable options for further consideration by the Cabinet in making its recommendations on the medium term financial strategy.

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The Strategic Review Committee's intensive work has provided very useful ideas of workable options that might be included in the medium term financial strategy. These now need to be refined into the Cabinet's recommendations for the strategy, which will be brought forward to the Cabinet meeting in November.

**10. CONSULTEES**

On this report:

- 10.1 Cabinet.  
10.2 Corporate Management Team.

On service priorities and options for savings:

- 10.3 Members of the public.  
10.4 Focus groups.

During September 2013 a comprehensive three week programme of consultation was undertaken to determine the views of the community on future service and spending priorities. This involved twenty one focus groups held with various sectors of the community involving over 150 people (Residents, Businesses, Partners, Town and Parish Councils, Residents, Young People) as well as with council staff. An online survey and paper was also completed by over 600 people. An executive summary of the consultation results is available in the Strategic Review Committee's agenda for 9<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Agendas and Minutes of the Strategic Review Committee.  
11.2 Full Consultation Results from Focus Groups and Survey available at [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/spendingpriorities](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/spendingpriorities)

## Appendix 1

## WORKABLE OPTIONS FOR THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

## – REPORT FROM THE STRATEGIC REVIEW COMMITTEE

## The purpose of this document

1. This document sets out workable options for the medium term financial strategy for Wyre Forest District Council for the period from 2014 to 2019. It sets out broad estimates of the total income and expenditure of the council over that period, and identifies options for the main changes that should be considered in order to achieve a budget where expenditure is in line with income.

## The scale of the gap

2. The financial gap that needs to be closed is over £2m in 2016-17. In part, this is because the medium term financial strategy adopted in February 2013 was balanced by the use of general reserves to close the gap between expenditure and income. The Government has announced decisions or proposals to cut grant by 15.2% in 2015-16, to top-slice new homes bonus and to increase the employer's rate for national insurance that the council pays. The actual figures are still not available and therefore we have to use estimates and assumptions. The funding gap may rise when we know such things as the final result of the 2014 pension fund revaluation and further Government grant reductions beyond 2015-16.

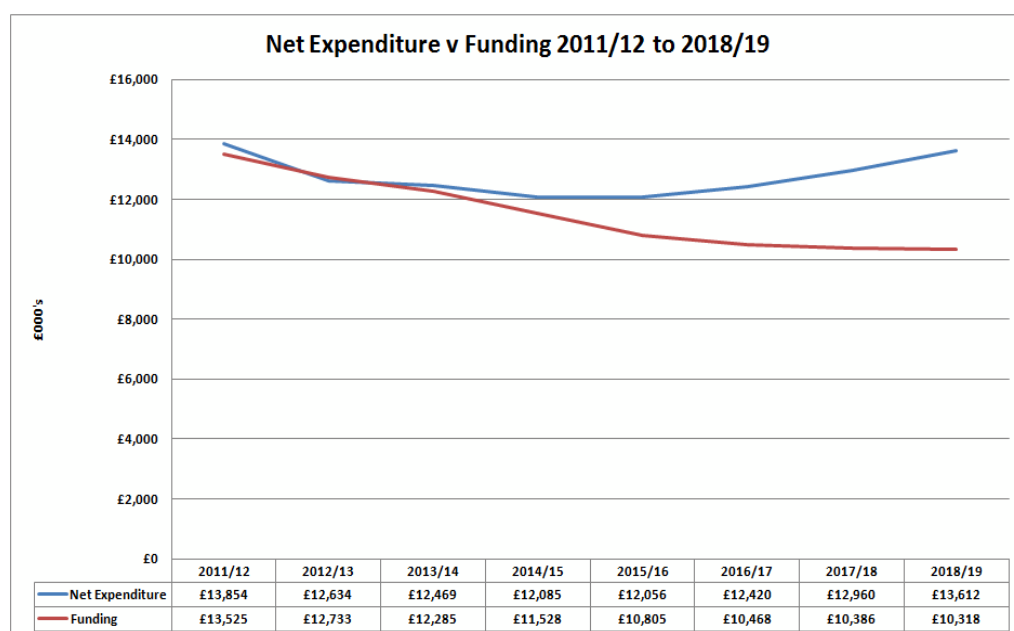
WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL							
REVENUE BUDGET TOTAL REQUIREMENTS - DISTRICT COUNCIL PURPOSES							
SERVICE	2013/14		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	Original Estimate £	Revised Estimate £	TOTAL £	TOTAL £	TOTAL £	TOTAL £	TOTAL £
CHIEF EXECUTIVE	5,384,210	5,789,970	5,770,150	5,862,380	6,065,930	6,223,270	6,455,380
COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND ENVIRONMENT	6,368,170	6,316,280	6,348,610	5,572,270	5,676,640	5,755,740	5,836,280
ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND PLACE	2,322,210	1,997,930	1,256,750	1,269,340	1,341,060	1,633,600	1,891,830
LESS: CAPITAL ACCOUNT	14,074,590	14,104,180	13,375,510	12,703,990	13,083,630	13,612,610	14,183,490
INTEREST RECEIVED	(1,131,050)	(1,472,260)	(1,082,980)	(351,960)	(247,790)	(114,570)	87,850
INCREASES IN FEES AND CHARGES	(134,320)	(162,930)	(129,600)	(109,380)	(120,420)	(133,250)	(145,310)
	0	0	(78,100)	(187,010)	(295,920)	(404,830)	(513,740)
TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE ON SERVICES	12,809,220	12,468,990	12,084,830	12,055,640	12,419,500	12,959,960	13,612,290
LESS: GOVERNMENT SUPPORT GRANTS	(6,179,120)	(6,179,120)	(5,332,000)	(4,613,000)	(4,152,000)	(3,944,000)	(3,746,900)
HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT	(108,650)	(108,650)	(108,650)	0	0	0	0
COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID/CHALLENGE	(16,400)	(16,400)	(16,400)	0	0	0	0
COLLECTION FUND SURPLUS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
COUNCIL TAX TRANSITIONAL GRANT	(28,630)	(28,630)	0	0	0	0	0
GENERAL EXPENSES - COUNCIL TAX INCOME	(5,952,120)	(5,952,120)	(6,071,090)	(6,192,470)	(6,316,260)	(6,442,450)	(6,571,360)
COUNCIL TAX LEVY		197.62	201.57	205.60	209.71	213.90	218.18
COUNCIL TAX BASE		30,119	30,119	30,119	30,119	30,119	30,119
(SURPLUS) / DEFICIT FOR YEAR	524,300	184,070	556,690	1,250,170	1,951,240	2,573,510	3,294,030

The following Reserves are available to assist the Council in meeting General Fund Expenditure 2013/19 as part of the Financial Strategy:

Reserves Statement	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18	2018/19
Reserves as at 1 April	2,168	1,984	1,427	177	(1,774)	(4,348)
Contribution from Reserves	(184)	(557)	(1,250)	(1,951)	(2,574)	(3,294)
<b>Reserves as at 31</b>	<b>1,984</b>	<b>1,427</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>(1,774)</b>	<b>(4,348)</b>	<b>(7,642)</b>

In addition the Council holds a working balance of £950k and currently holds earmarked reserves of £3.910m (as at 30 September 2013). However, it should be noted that the Council has commitments against such earmarked reserves.

The following graph shows the net expenditure against available funding (excluding reserves) and illustrates the increasing funding gap as the years progress.



### 3. Summary of main assumptions

- Government Funding – a further 1% cut in 14/15, 15.2% in 15/16, 10% in 16/17, then 5% ongoing
- New Homes Bonus reduced by 19%(2015/16 onwards), this could be as high as 35% depending on the final decision
- 2% increase in Council Tax for 2014/15 and beyond



- Triennial Pension Fund revaluation – extra £100k pa cost from 2014/15
  - £100k/year for increased National Insurance contributions from 2016
  - Pay Inflation 1.5% all years
  - Energy 3% pa, business rates 3% pa
  - Fees & charges 5% a year
  - Reduction in WCC funding for hub of, £67k from 14/15 and ending of grant for recycling £60k. Also further potential reductions in funding streams that could impact on homelessness budgets
  - Vehicle refurbishment: capital saving of £1.2m, revenue funding savings of £164k total across 5 yrs 14/15 to 18/19
  - At this early stage no increase has been assumed in the Council Tax Base, this will be reflected when the details are available
4. The table makes no allowance for headroom for additional investment in priorities. In summary, other pressures not yet known and/or not taken into account at this stage are:
- Redundancy costs of further staffing reductions
  - Final outcome of pension revaluation
  - Any reductions in other government grants
  - Impact of other WCC cuts in funding
  - Potential nationalisation of land charge searches in 2015 or 2016. Might affect some or all of income stream of £140k a year
  - Impact of welfare reforms including rising number of pensioners
  - Homelessness funding
  - Impact of qualified benefit subsidy claim for 2012/13
  - Pressure to hold higher reserves because of higher risks/decreased funding

### **The need for early action**

5. The need to take action is more urgent than 2016-17. On present projections, if the Council does nothing, it will exhaust its general reserves very early in 2016. With all out elections in May 2015, this year represents the opportunity to take the major decisions that will put the council on a sustainable financial footing.
6. In broad terms, the Council should expect its net revenue budget to fall by about 20%, to under £11m compared to the present figure of £12.8m.

### **How do we achieve this?**

7. It is apparent that a package of changes is required to grow income and decrease expenditure. There is not a single initiative that will produce change of the scale required. The public and councillors will want to protect front-line services as far as possible. They will want to consider growing income or reductions in cost that do not have a significant adverse effect on front-line services or mean that they have to be ended altogether. The options for potential changes set out below seek to follow this approach. The package needs to consider changes to:

- Grow income
- Reduce costs by further steps to improve efficiency. This will include commissioning more services from others, by sharing more services with other organisations, considering outsourcing others to the private sector, staff mutuals etc where this is at lower cost to the council and helps to transform services by eliminating waste
- Reduce costs by transferring or selling assets that cost us money to run and, in some cases, developing them for housing (which will generate new homes bonus and council tax income)
- Review the cost of the staff pay bill by further consideration of the appropriateness of changes to terms and conditions, as an alternative to further job losses or cuts in services
- Reduce or stop some services.

### Overview of the future

8. Before turning to the detailed options for the financial strategy, this section of the report sets out the context and gives an overview of what the strategy means for the future shape of Wyre Forest District Council.
9. The financial situation facing the Council is extremely challenging. The significant further cuts in local government funding announced in the Spending Review on 26 June mean that the council faces an even greater challenge in producing a fully balanced budget. The new homes bonus will be top-sliced under the Government's proposals to form part of the single local growth fund. As WFDC uses the bonus to fund its revenue activities, including important work on economic regeneration and development, this will now be put in jeopardy if the council is not successful in winning back some or all of the top-sliced money from the LEPs.

### The future

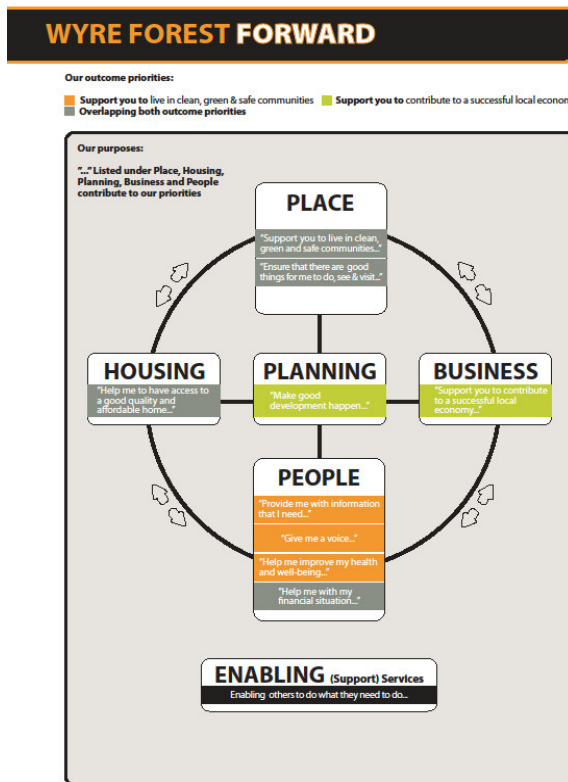
10. The priorities set out in the corporate plan for 2011-2014 were:
  - Securing the economic prosperity of the district
  - Delivering together, with less
  - Improving community well-being
11. The Strategic Review Committee has considered afresh what purposes the council exists for and which of them should be priorities. Given the financial challenge, it has concluded that there would be sharper focus if the Corporate Plan for 2014-19 had only two priorities
  - **Support you to contribute to a successful local economy**
  - **Support you to live in clean, green and safe communities**

12. The Council should not expect service reductions in these priority areas. However that does not mean that services should continue to be organised and funded as at present, as all areas need to make a contribution to making our financial situation sustainable through growing income, transformation and reviews to reduce waste. Adopting only two priorities allows the Council wider scope for seeking savings from other areas of activity – however popular and worthwhile they may be, the Council will find it difficult to remain financially sustainable if extensive areas are categorised as a priority and shielded from reductions.
13. The proposed priorities reflect the commitments in “Worcestershire Next Generation”:
  1. **Our prosperity** – making our economy stronger with more skilled jobs (working well).
  2. **Our community** – valuing our people, our health and wellbeing (living well).
  3. **Our environment** – valuing our special place and our natural resources (looking good).

And they support some of the specific targets for 2020 in “Worcestershire Next Generation” such as “Grow existing businesses”, “develop town centres that are social centres” and “close the housing gap between supply and demand”.

<http://www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk/cms/pdf/Worcs%20Next%20Generation%20A5%204pp%20v5.pdf>

14. The Council has adopted systems thinking in order to drive change to how it delivers services. We focus on the customer and meeting their needs in the most effective way possible, driving down cost by simplifying processes and reducing waste. The Strategic Review Committee’s work has identified the purposes of Wyre Forest District Council as set out in this chart:



15. We have also adopted a statement of values and behaviours which drive how staff work.

**Our Values:** We will

- Be confident and honest in expressing our views.
- Work as one team and support each other.
- Put our customers first
- Be innovative and flexible in the ways we work
- Invest in giving people the skills to do the job
- Celebrate good performance

16. Where legislation allows, the Council should raise fees, charges and other income by well ahead of inflation, rather than increasing council tax. This ensures that users of services contribute more to support those services than council tax payers as a whole.

17. In line with the strategy adopted by Council in February 2013, council tax will rise by 2% a year. At present levels of inflation, this still represents a further real terms reduction in the tax. As a result of freezing council tax for three years, local residents have already enjoyed a real terms cut worth about 10% between 2010 and 2014.

18. Increased income will help to move the Council closer towards a fully-balanced position where our expenditure matches our income. However

it will not close the gap altogether and therefore we need to reduce our expenditure. As staffing costs are a significant proportion of our expenditure, the number of staff that we employ will continue to fall.

19. It is unrealistic to expect that further reductions in staffing will allow services to continue to operate as they are. Indeed that should not be the Council's strategy. The Wyre Forest Forward programme of transforming the Council will continue and needs to deliver even more significant savings than previously assumed. Services should be reshaped in line with systems thinking principles. While the Council will seek to protect front-line services, it should change them where there are opportunities to deliver them more efficiently.
20. We will also see more shared services, and we should seek opportunities for Wyre Forest District Council to host them in line with our strengths. We also need to consider outsourcing some services, either to existing private sector companies or to mutual companies owned by staff.
21. We should make further reductions in the size of support services and the hub. We need the public to make greater use of the web-site and other self-service options: to assist, we should reshape our web site over the next 12-18 months so that it offers self-service for the most frequent transactions that the public wish to undertake. This will also include making our web-site more easily accessible to the growing number of smartphone and tablet users. We should invest in "channel shift" and accept that the hub will cease to exist in its current form. We should expect face-to-face and phone activity to reduce significantly, with face-to-face contact over time being limited to helping people with their financial situation.
22. The progress with local groups and local people taking over responsibility for local services has been slower than expected, despite the additional financial support available in 2013-14 to parish councils to enable assets and services to be transferred to them. The Council is prepared to offer ongoing financial support only where it is significantly lower than the present cost faced by the Council, so that it contributes to the overall reduction in expenditure. Where the Council cannot afford to maintain the present range of facilities, and parish councils or community groups are not prepared to rise to the challenge even though we are offering financial support to help them to do so, we should close them.

**Workable options for the medium term financial strategy**

23. First this report considers options for changes in our priority areas.

**Support you to contribute to a successful local economy**

24. We are dependent on achieving growth in order to help secure the council's financial stability. We need to ensure that the business rate tax base grows and therefore a successful local economy is essential for us.

Because of the way in which the system of business rates works, with the Treasury retaining half the benefit of any growth, this is unlikely to provide significant boosts to income, even with known or planned developments e.g. new major retail developments in Stourport and at The Glades site.

25. To help bolster our work on a successful local economy while addressing the financial gap faced by the Council, we should **seek funding from the single local growth fund from 2015-16 for economic regeneration activities**. This arises because of the Government top-slice of new homes bonus which is estimated to cost WFDC £250-490k a year from 2015. We could aim to recoup the entire sum by obtaining support from the two Local Enterprise Partnerships for the work done by North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration and WFDC on forward planning and other support for businesses, including our positive approach to processing planning applications speedily. This work will have to be pared back if the LEPs don't consider it important. While there is no certainty of success, it is safer to assume that we might achieve, say, £200k/year.

### **Support you to live in clean, green and safe communities**

26. Linked with our other priority, there is the opportunity to **redevelop some of the council's assets for housing** such as under-used car parks. This could produce one off capital receipts. The intention would be to work with one or more development partners. The benefit for revenue spending comes from reducing operating costs and generating new homes bonus and council tax income, with a total value in the range of perhaps £50-200k. The car park in Broad Street, Horsefair could be used as the exemplar for this approach which could also see redevelopment in whole or in part of a number of other car parks. With community support, there may also be the opportunity to develop small areas of underutilised land and open spaces in a sensitive way to help meet the area's need for more housing.
27. A more ambitious option would be to produce income **by creating a major investment fund**. This would involve borrowing a significant sum – it could lie between £5m and £20m, depending on how ambitious the Council wishes to be - to invest on a rolling return basis in various ways and produce a return that is greater than borrowing costs and minimum revenue provision (MRP). Investing in new housing will also generate council tax income and New Homes Bonus for the council. The primary focus for such a fund could be to work with a development partner to support good quality tenants who are looking for access to finance (e.g. new medical centres). Other options might include buying commercial properties to rent, investing in or lending to companies (either directly or via established finance houses) etc. While housing produces a higher return because of the other income that would be generated, all investments would need to achieve a return greater than the cost of the borrowing. This involves risk and therefore there would need to be a clear business case for each investment, swift investment decisions and strong governance arrangements. Borrowing costs and MRP currently stand at about 8% so we have assumed that the Council might achieve a return in the order of £50-100k/year. This represents a modest return in the range of 0.5% to a more ambitious 2% - it is unrealistic to expect a much greater return than this.

28. The specific grant that has been funding **homelessness services** comes to an end in 2014 and no provision has been made in the Council’s budget to continue them. If the Council does not continue funding many of these activities, it will face potentially very significant costs of up to £800k a year as a consequence of the need to accommodate more people via expensive routes such as bed and breakfast. The Committee **recommends** that £90k in total should be made available from 2014-15, to be used by the strategic housing service to fund the activities that will avoid the vast bulk of the potential financial impact for WFDC. This is the Committee’s sole proposal for the medium term financial strategy to allocate additional resource to an activity. It is recognised that it widens the gap as a result and other areas of expenditure will have to be reduced as a consequence.
29. Looking further ahead, the Committee feels that Wyre Forest needs to see **significant housing growth in the long term**. We are committed to 4,000 dwellings in the period to 2026. WFDC’s funding position is “safe” so long as we deliver housing growth in line with or faster than the English average. However we don’t have a good track record in growing our population over the last 20 years.

<b>Census</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>
Wyre Forest	95,000	97,000	98,000
Percentage change **	-	+2.3%	+1.1%
Worcestershire	510,000	542,000	566,000
Percentage change **	-	+6.4%	+4.4%
England	47,875,000	49,451,000	53,013,000
Percentage change **	-	+3.3%	+7.2%

\*\* compared to previous census

30. Population will always be a major driver of any Government funding that is provided. Whatever the long-term future of the new homes bonus, future projections of the bonus have already been taken into account in the financial strategy and therefore we would not see any improved funding for WFDC in the medium term unless we were to secure growth significantly in advance of the projections. The 4,000 dwellings in the local development framework for the period to 2026 would imply about 9,000 residents. This is a rate of growth over the next 13 years that would roughly match what Worcestershire and England achieved over the previous 20 years. However we have catching up to do and the probability is that our long-term population growth will continue to lag behind others, unless we change our approach. The Government’s projections suggest that the population of Wyre Forest will grow to 100,000 by 2021, growth of +3.5% from 2011. The comparable estimate for England is +8.6%.
31. Significant growth can help with our income and tax base in the long- term. We have to provide some more services (e.g. refuse collection) but many others are not elastic in response to population (e.g. museum, economic development, town centre street cleaning). More people living locally would mean greater competition and demand for some services such as parking, and therefore the ability to increase charges faster than might otherwise has been the case.
32. If the Council does not plan for further significant growth in population in the medium to long-term, there is a significant risk of losing resources over time as Wyre Forest’s population declines relative to the population of England. Significant growth could be delivered only through the next review of the local development framework which is

planned for 2015, so it is therefore highly unlikely to contribute anything significant in the 2014-19 period.

### Other purposes

33. Since they are not priorities, we expect the bulk of savings and service reductions to come from these areas, starting with reductions whose impact is primarily on internal issues relating to how the council is structured and staffed. However before looking at reductions in expenditure, there are opportunities to raise income.
34. There should be a **concerted effort to raise income** by at least £120k by a variety of initiatives, subject where appropriate to business cases to demonstrate that higher income will be achieved as a result. The options include:
  - 34.1 expanding the green waste service to about 5,200 customers. This would produce an estimated annual income of up to £100k as it would not require more vehicles to be deployed;
  - 34.2 installing entry and exit barriers at key car parks in order to eliminate avoidance of charges and reduce the cost of enforcement staff;
  - 34.3 selling services to others. The clear message from last year's staff survey is that staff have excessive workloads already. There is no significant spare capacity that we can sell. It is an option to sell services but, generally, this will involve taking on more staff. The margins are modest, and we should embark on such steps only if we're very confident about the income that can be achieved – otherwise we will have added to our problem, not reduced it;
  - 34.4 seeking more external funding, with all managers and services expected to identify and exploit opportunities. One route that is already being pursued is seeking funding from the police commissioner for CCTV;
  - 34.5 introducing the late night alcohol levy to produce some modest income to help fund street cleaning work etc in town centres – this requires a formal consultation process before adoption. Most of the levy would have to be paid to the police;
  - 34.6 increasing income by removing discounts and exemptions for pensioners and blue badge holders. This would involve removing or phasing out discounts for parking permits; and ending free parking for blue badge holders, although an additional free hour could be provided in line with the policy operated by Cornwall County Council. The Swan Centre charges blue badge holders for car parking;
  - 34.7 procure a partner to identify and exploit all opportunities for private sector sponsorship of council assets including signs, roundabouts, vehicles, buildings, household waste and other bins etc.
35. The Council could make significant further reductions in **support services** (in particular administration, hub etc) although this idea did not receive strong support in the recent consultation. Any reduction would be in addition to the 25% cut already being implemented in 2013/2015 and could potentially save up to £300k.
36. Further reductions in costs could be achieved by implementing **more shared services and shared management. This will include consideration of**



**outsourcing to the private sector** or staff mutuals. Potential savings lie in the range of £300k to £500k depending on how ambitious the council wishes to be. Proposals for shared services will be progressed through a business case to demonstrate the savings achievable and other benefits, and they will be subject to approval as set out in the shared services strategy (January 2011). A commissioning cycle should be drawn up so that there is a clear plan about when each service would be considered. In the short term, for example, active consideration is being given to joining the South Worcestershire partnership with Civica for revenues and benefits. All areas should be considered, including management and support services.

**What is commissioning?**

The commissioning process describes the activity through which Wyre Forest District Council secures the best possible outcomes for its residents. It is a continuous process through which we identify need; plan, source, deliver and manage performance of activity. While there are different interpretations of this process, they all share the same core activities.

However, there is growing tendency to misuse the term “commissioning” (see table below):

What Commissioning is	What Commissioning is not
Commissioning is a continuous process through which commissioners identify need; plan, source, deliver and performance manage activity.	Commissioning is not about:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking someone to do something for you</li> </ul> or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegating a task or action.</li> </ul>
Commissioning takes place at different levels such as strategic, locality, individual	Commissioning is not about the <b>actual</b> buying of goods, works or services (it is about identifying whether there is a need to do this)
Commissioning can take place jointly with other agencies	Commissioning is not procurement. Procurement is one possible outcome of commissioning

37. It is also an option to reduce funding for **existing shared services**, in particular Worcestershire Regulatory Services where the Council could seek a 30% reduction or £120k over 3 years. This would lead to service reductions unless the shared service can generate additional income by expanding and selling its services to other organisations.
38. There are **clear opportunities for the Council to reduce the cost of property it occupies** by at least £120k. This will involve sharing a depot, reducing the footprint required as far as possible by new approaches to storage of vehicles and equipment. Marketing is under way of 50 desk spaces at Wyre Forest House to other partners as this will reduce the net operating cost. The museum store should be relocated to empty industrial unit(s) owned by WFDC in 2016 when the present lease comes to an end. This will provide ongoing revenue savings although there would be one off costs for fit out. The amount of storage should be minimised and therefore disposal of low priority items from the reserve museum collection would be necessary in accordance with Museums Association procedures. There are opportunities to reduce the number of buildings that the Council owns and operates in the cemetery: for example, one of the chapels could be sold for conversion to housing and the other might be marketed for disposal for other appropriate uses.
39. **A more commercial approach to managing and operating the Town Hall is required.** There should be a willingness to take risks with mounting events, so long as overall activity produces a significantly greater contribution to running costs. The Town Hall costs over £300k a year exclusive of depreciation and generates genuine income of only £59k, so the true net cost approaches £250k a year. It is realistic to seek to reduce this by at least £100k. The Committee has not assumed that a Kidderminster Town Council would be created or that the more radical option of divesting WFDC of the Town Hall altogether would be pursued. There is scope to lease the space presently occupied by the hub for commercial purposes such as a restaurant or shop, and the ground floor meeting rooms for other commercial uses. This would require a market evaluation to demonstrate that there is demand and that the costs of providing alternative town centre accommodation for the hub would be less than the income generated from the part of the Town Hall that it occupies at present. There is also significant scope to increase income by running profit-generating events in the Town Hall. One option is to retain but reshape the events and arts team who would be based at the Town Hall and given stretching financial targets by reducing the grant towards running costs on an ongoing basis. They would not be able to stage as many free events in parks etc. in future. The planned closure of The Glades should assist as the Town Hall will be the only major venue in the town centre for large events. There is also a major bid in preparation to seek Heritage Lottery Funding to help refurbish the organ and fabric of the building.
40. Consultations have repeatedly shown that the public strongly support **reducing the cost of democracy**, including the cost of councillors. The number of councillors will be cut by over 20% in 2015 when the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review is implemented. Councillors' allowances have been frozen since 2008 and were reduced modestly in absolute terms in 2011: in total the value of the basic allowance has fallen in real terms by 16% over the last 5 years. The medium term financial strategy should assume that councillors' allowances will continue to be frozen, which represents a further real terms cut. The Council can look again at the option of all out elections but this would have to be before 2015 if there was a desire to produce savings before 2019.

41. Alongside a freeze in councillors' allowances, it is an option to **review the cost of the staff pay bill by further consideration of the appropriateness of changes to terms and conditions**. The alternative would be either to seek further job losses over and above those required by other changes in the financial strategy or to make further cuts to services. Possibilities for consideration include change that might provide £300k ongoing savings:
- a. pay freeze for all staff in 2014 and 2015 in place of the present assumption of a pay increase of 1.5%. This would involve moving away from the national agreement for two years;
  - b. implementation of plain time for overtime payments except overtime worked on a bank holiday which would also attract time off in lieu;
  - c. removal of long service supplements.
42. The Council is committed to working in partnership with other organisations where it produces practical results. It is an option to **bring the Wyre Forest Matters local strategic partnership to an end** in 2015 when the current grant funding ends; and to seek alternative partners to take on the administration of awards schemes. If partners cannot be found, the awards schemes will come to an end as we do not have the staff resources to maintain them.
43. The **remaining suggestions in this report involve significant changes to the way that services are provided and, in some cases, stopping them altogether**. There will need to be greater reductions in services if the preceding options are not pursued.
44. The 90% subsidy for users of playing pitches including bowling greens can no longer be sustained. It costs over £200k a year. It is an option to **transfer playing pitches or responsibility for maintaining them to sports clubs or community groups**. If this is not achievable, the Council will need radically to reduce maintenance on them. In the case of football pitches, they would cease to be pitches as there would be no markings or goalposts and there would be infrequent cutting. In the case of bowling greens, they would be closed and returned to being open grassed areas as there is no "low cost" maintenance option for surfaces that have to be intensively prepared and maintained for a playing season that represents barely half the year. The potential saving could be at least £100k-£150k.
45. A range of options exists for **arts, events, sports and leisure development activities**. These activities also contribute to the purpose of "ensure that there are good things for me to do, see and visit". The preferred idea is for the events and arts team to be refocused on driving down the net cost of the Town Hall. Alternatively, the Council could choose to commission arts, events, sports and leisure development activities from community groups, at very much lower cost. If community groups don't step forward, the activities would cease. This has a potential saving of up to £200k.
46. There is a range of options that would **reduce how much the council spends on leisure centre provision**. No contract has been signed for a new leisure centre and it is not too late therefore to look at other approaches. There are options to reduce the cost of a new leisure centre to WFDC. These are being explored already and, subject to confirmation, might reduce the net cost by up to about £200k a year. A variant would be to retain and invest in Stourport sports centre only: this might save

£500-600k/year. However the Stourport sports centre is not in the right location to serve the bulk of the district's population, and has no significant space for additional facilities. It would thus not meet fully any objectives around maximising participation, keeping people healthy and tackling obesity. The most radical option would be to close Stourport sports centre and The Glades and to make no alternative provision: this would save c£800k/year. The 2nd and 3rd options would result in some abortive one-off costs associated with the project that would have to be absorbed (c£150k); and might also give rise to other one-off costs related to termination of the present contract.

47. The **cost of public toilets can be significantly reduced by £100k/year**. This would include a variety of steps such as replacing WFDC provision with "community toilet schemes" particularly in Stourport and Bewdley town centres (Bewdley Town Council is already working with WFDC to progress this change); termination of the superloo contracts, which has already been put in hand; and the closure of some less well-used sites, if parish councils or other community groups do not wish to take over ownership and maintenance responsibility.
48. If town councils or community groups do not wish to take over responsibility for maintenance and running costs, the council could **close all paddling pools** and retain only the new splash pad in Brinton Park. The pools are labour intensive to maintain and are used for only a short part of each year; and some significant capital expenditure is likely to arise shortly. Closure would save c£40-£50k a year and avoid the need for capital expenditure.
49. There are **further opportunities to reduce WFDC's operating costs by transferring responsibility for minor assets or buildings to other organisations or by reducing maintenance undertaken by WFDC**. These areas could save £50-100k. It would involve ceasing to maintain some small parks, playing fields and other areas of land or by transferring them to other bodies, such as parish councils or community groups. Land where maintenance would cease would include land not owned by WFDC and where the council is not paid on an ongoing basis or some other mechanism to maintain the land. Parts/all of some sites could be converted into allotments (existing allotments are now managed by user groups, at a zero cost to the council apart from any one off costs such as fencing). The Council should adopt a new policy which ensures that any new parks or green spaces created as a result of developments are vested in town or parish councils, rather than WFDC, so that they bear the future costs of maintenance. It could also encourage parish councils to take over some work e.g. cleansing. Under our approach to localism, we are prepared to consider providing some ongoing revenue funding so long as the cost is significantly lower. A further option is transfer the council's freehold interest in the Elizabeth Mills Centre to its management committee and to cease providing revenue funding.
50. There are options to reduce expenditure in some areas by **commissioning services in different ways** or from other bodies. For example, it may be possible to reduce the cost of the health and sustainability team, which delivers a range of mandatory and discretionary services as well coordinating implementation of savings under our carbon management plan. The tourist information centre function might be commissioned more cheaply from other partners in Bewdley and perhaps Stourport, saving perhaps £30-40k; but there is also the option to reduce costs by fully merging it into the museum.

51. Although the response to the consultation questionnaire did not demonstrate strong support, the Council could **reduce the council tax discount for working age people** on low income/benefits below 90%. Each 5% reduction produces extra council tax income of about £200k assuming full recovery but the benefit for WFDC would be only about £25k. The lower the discount, the greater the likelihood that recipients would have difficulty in meeting their council tax liability and therefore costs of recovery could grow and the projected additional income might not materialise. This idea should be pursued only if the county council agreed to allow WFDC to retain an ongoing share of the much larger benefit that the county council would enjoy.
52. This report takes no account of the **financial savings that might be achieved by WFDC if some assets and services were taken over by a town council for Kidderminster**. Following the end of the recent community governance review, the Council has commissioned further work to be done on the options, which the Strategic Review Committee supports. The Council's extant resolution from 1993 not to apply special expenses in the district means that council tax payers in other areas are contributing towards costs of some activities in Kidderminster which they also pay for locally through their parish or town council. This leaves the perception of "double taxation". The options to be explored need to identify ways in which a fairer sharing of financial costs can be achieved.
53. Finally, this report considers the **capital programme**. The options above in respect of leisure centre provision could reduce or eliminate borrowing for this activity. The council is switching to refurbish waste collection vehicles as this costs approximately 50% of replacement. Over the next 7 years, this will reduce the revenue cost of the fleet programme by up to £30k a year and has been built into the base budget. The Council will need to consider how to invest the projected right to buy receipts which are being shared 50:50 with Community Housing Group in the period 2014-19. There will not be confidence about the level of receipts for 2014-15 until the latter part of that financial year, and it would thus be premature to allocate a specific amount. However the options include:
- disabled facilities grants, to reduce the cost of borrowing to the council; and/or
  - support for housing or other investment projects in line with the approach outlined in paragraphs 26 and 27 above or to bring empty homes back into use; and/or
  - support for economic regeneration projects in line with the proposed priority.

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Cabinet  
22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013**

**Strategic Review Committee  
9<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

**Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy**

The Committee agreed recommendations to go forward to Cabinet on the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

**Recommend to Cabinet:**

**The working option for the medium term financial strategy as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to the Strategic Review Committee be considered.**

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**  
**22<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2013**

**National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) Relief**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:</b>	Stronger Communities
<b>CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY:</b>	Delivering Together with Less
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor N J Desmond
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Director of Economic Prosperity and Place
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Mike Parker, Ext. 2500 mike.parker@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1: Proposed eligibility criteria for scheme of NNDR relief to operate from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2014 Appendix 2: Consultation responses

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider responses to the consultation that has been undertaken and to agree to a new scheme of NNDR relief from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That Cabinet DECIDES to:**

- 2.1 **Agree the operating principles for a new scheme of NNDR relief from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 as set out in paragraph 4.1 of this report.**
- 2.2 **Agree the eligibility criteria for a new scheme of NNDR relief from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 as set out at Appendix 1 to this report.**
- 2.3 **Grant delegated authority to the Director of Economic Prosperity & Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources & Transformation to decide whether to include or exclude leisure centres from the scheme once the negotiations on the new leisure centre are completed.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. The collection of NNDR is undertaken by local authorities from those who occupy non-domestic properties. Each non-domestic property has a rateable value (RV) which is normally set by the Valuation Office. The RV broadly represents the yearly rent the property could have been let for on the open market.
- 3.2. The amount of Business Rates due on a property is calculated by multiplying the RV of the property by a multiplier set by the government each financial year.

- 3.3. There are some entitlements to relief from the payment of these business rates, for example for the benefit of small businesses, occupation of a single property with a RV less than £12,000 attracts relief on a sliding scale up to 100% if the RV is less than £6,000 (this lasts until March 2014). Charities and registered community amateur sports clubs are entitled to 80% relief where the property is occupied by the charity or club and is wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes or as a sports club.
- 3.4. The local authority also has discretion to offer further relief to charities, sports clubs, non profit making organisations or in cases of hardship.
- 3.5. At the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2013 meeting of Cabinet it was agreed that the current scheme of NNDR relief would cease on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 and a new scheme would come into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. A scheme was agreed for consultation which took place between 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013.
- 3.6. All current recipients of discretionary rate relief were notified in writing before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 that the existing scheme will end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 and the new scheme will take effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.
- 3.7. The outcome of the consultation was considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> September and their recommendations will be considered alongside this report.

#### **4. THE PROPOSED SCHEME W.E.F. 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2014**

- 4.1 The basic principles under which the new scheme to take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 would operate are:
  - i. The scheme shall operate for a three year period between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017; at the end of the three year period, the Council reserves the right to review the scheme and all recipients again.
  - ii. The Council will require all recipients to submit their most recent accounts on an annual basis by 31<sup>st</sup> March of the financial year in order to confirm their continued eligibility for the following year. Failure to do so will result in the award being withdrawn.
  - iii. Upon review of the accounts submitted at iii) the Council reserves the right to notify the recipient of the withdrawal of relief if their financial circumstances are such that it is deemed that an award of relief is not considered financially necessary.
  - iv. The Council will consider requests against the agreed eligibility criteria.
- 4.2 The outcome of the consultation process is shown at Appendix 2, including respondent, their response and the officer comments and, where appropriate, proposed changes to the eligibility criteria. In addition, a recent request for support has highlighted the need to include as eligible, applications submitted for Rural Rate Relief. This relief is not often utilised but it was introduced by the Local Government & Rating Act 1997 and gives the authority discretion to grant relief to businesses that provide a benefit to the local community and are identified in the authority's



Rural Settlement List (comprising all rural settlements in this district below a population of 3,000) and have a rateable value less than £16,500.

- 4.3 The Council received 24 responses to its consultation (from 23 different bodies) and in the vast majority of instances the benefit they receive will not be affected in the new scheme. One of the beneficiaries of the current relief scheme is the Community Housing Group (CHG) and they have suggested an alternative to the Council's proposal which would have seen their relief phased out over a four year period, to offer them 50% relief for a five year period and they would agree with the Council that the value of this benefit would be put towards a scheme to improve skills and reduce unemployment across the district. Officers recommend that this proposal be accepted and that further discussions are undertaken with CHG to develop this initiative.
- 4.4 With regard to leisure centres, the consultation originally proposed that under the new scheme these be excluded with the exception of those buildings run for the Council by DC Leisure, until the current arrangement ended. For simplicity it is now proposed that reference to leisure centres be removed from the exclusion list and delegated authority be granted for officers and Cabinet Member to agree the position on leisure centres going forward, once the current arrangement ceases and the new one for the new centre comes into effect.
- 4.5 The Council still retains the power under the Localism Act 2011 to award discounts to any organisation (including businesses) whether profit making or not, wherever it lies within the district; but the authority has to fund the whole cost of such relief. The Council may, therefore, from time to time consider the economic imperative of doing this where it supports business grants and job creation for the betterment of the district.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Following the new funding arrangements around Business Rates Retention effective from April 2013 and this Council's membership of the Worcester Business Rates Pool the financial implications for national non domestic rate relief can be summarised as follows:
- Year 1 Funding for each Council from Business Rates is based on a baseline position that includes an amount of discretionary rate relief. This baseline reflects previous levels of discretionary rate relief paid using our current approved policy.
  - Where any Council pays a lower amount of discretionary rate relief, either as a result of a change in policy or less applications/approvals, the impact is that it benefits by 40% initially but the Government Levy increases so the net gain is only 20%.
  - However the impact of membership of the Worcestershire Pool means that we gain by 25p in the £ for every decrease, conversely we must pay an extra 25p in the £ for any increase in payments of either discretionary or mandatory reliefs.

- Table 1 below illustrates how this works using a notional £100k decrease.

<b>So for every increase or decrease over or above baseline WFDC's position is:</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>£100,000 decrease</b>	<b>£100,000</b>
<b>40% of this benefits the District Council initially</b>	<b>£40,000</b>
<b>Less 50% of increase additional Levy payable to the Government</b>	<b>£20,000</b>
<b>The Worcestershire Pool retains the growth that would have been paid to the Government</b>	<b>£20,000</b>
<b>Add 25% of additional retained Levy to District</b>	<b>£5,000</b>
<b>So District gets</b>	<b>£25,000</b>
<b>So for every increase the pool means we benefit by 25%</b>	
<b>County gets 25% of retained Levy</b>	<b>£5,000</b>
<b>50% of Retained Levy goes in to Pool Risk Pot</b>	<b>£10,000</b>

- As the proposed new scheme results in less discretionary rate relief being paid, the Council should benefit by 25%. However this will be part of the overall Business Rates calculation taking into account the pooling agreement; any increases in Mandatory relief and other changes compared to our business rates baseline are outside our control and could outweigh this financial benefit. The potential financial impact of the various reliefs are as follows:
- Mandatory Relief – The Council has no control or influence over the payment of mandatory relief; prior to the 1 April 2013, these costs were funded in full by the national pool so this was at no cost to the Council. From the 1 April any increase in mandatory relief above the baseline will cost 25p/£. Based on current estimates, the total mandatory relief for 2013/14 will be £1.7m, this is an increase of £150k above baseline so will cost £37,500.
- Hardship Relief - in 2012/13 we gave £65,000 costing us 25% £16,250 in 2013/14 we gave £75,360 costing us 25% £18,840 an increase of £10,360. However these payments are not ongoing and end 31/03/2014, Hardship relief will therefore depend on how many applications we receive and approve.
- Discretionary Relief – the current scheme cost the Council a total of £152,000 in 2012/13, this is effectively the baseline for the new system. For 2013/14, this is currently estimated at £97,200 for the year, a decrease of £54,800 and this will save the Council £13,700 being 25% of the reduction compared to baseline. However this will be affected by changes in the legal status of CHG and the decisions on new applications received.

To illustrate the impacts of options in relation to CHG compared to the current baseline of £44,350 (this being 25% of the total £178K):

- Option 1 – Tapered reduction in percentage relief as per Cabinet proposal; Impact: based on 2013/14 figures the estimate for 2014/15 is £133,110 and the cost to this Council would be £33,300 (25%).

This represents a net saving to Wyre Forest in year 1 of £11,050 taking into account the current baseline.

- Option 2 – CHG preferred option of 50% over 5 years; impact: approximately £89k pa, cost to the Council £22,200pa (25%). This represents a net saving to Wyre Forest in year 1 of £22,150 taking into account the current baseline.
- Option 3 – CHG switches to charitable status and receives 80% mandatory relief; impact: £142k, cost to the Council of £35,500pa (25%). This represents a net saving to Wyre Forest in year 1 of £8,850, taking into account the current baseline. It should be noted that the Council has no influence over mandatory relief.
- Now more detail is known on the new funding arrangements, the financial implications will be reflected in the new Medium Term Financial Strategy. This will include the inclusion of discretionary rate relief within the business rates pooling funding calculation and requisite updated presentation in the new Financial Strategy.

## **6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council is required to give recipients of NNDR relief twelve months' notice of the withdrawal of funding, ending on 31<sup>st</sup> March which it did.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 Failure to agree a new scheme following consultation for implementation in April 2014 will mean the Council is unable to achieve the desired budget savings.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

- 8.1 There are no significant changes to the scheme that require an EIA to be undertaken.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The Council proposes to change the basis upon which awards of NNDR relief are made from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and has consulted on a new scheme during March-May. Having considered the responses for that exercise the Council now needs to agree a scheme to operate from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

## **10. CONSULTEES**

- 10.1 Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Cabinet Review Panel 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013.  
11.2 Cabinet 19<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

**APPENDIX 1**

**Proposed eligibility criteria for discretionary National Non Domestic Rate Relief for charities and non profit making organisations and rural businesses commencing 2014/15**

Wyre Forest District Council, as a ‘charging authority’, has powers under S47 of the Local Government Act 1988 to award discretionary rate relief to charities and non profit making organisations, as well as rural businesses under the Local Government & Rating Act 199.. The following criteria are proposed to assess requests made by those organisations for discretionary rate relief from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014:

Eligible

Discretionary rate relief **may** be awarded as follows \*:

Type of organisation	Eligibility criteria	Level of discretionary rate relief
Sports and Social clubs	Sports and social clubs that provide indoor or outdoor sports facilities for the principal benefit of Wyre Forest district residents.  Eligible sports and social clubs that are not registered as Community Amateur Sports Clubs will be encouraged to do so, in order to qualify for 80% mandatory relief	Up to 50%
Development Companies	Development companies operating for the benefit of towns and villages in Wyre Forest District	Up to 100%; but a maximum of 20% if receiving Mandatory Relief
Museums	Museums that are open to the public on a regular basis, and are based in Wyre Forest District	Up to 100% but a maximum of 20% if receiving Mandatory Relief
Youth Organisations	Youth organisations that provide activities wholly or mainly for young people resident in Wyre Forest District	Up to 100%; but a maximum of 20% if receiving Mandatory Relief
Village Halls	Village Halls that are not owned by parish or Town Councils	Up to 100%; but a maximum of 20% if receiving Mandatory Relief
Other charities	Other charities that provide services solely or mainly for people resident in Wyre Forest District	Up to 100%; but a maximum of 20% if receiving Mandatory Relief
Leisure Centres	Leisure centres situated in Wyre Forest where the freehold is owned by the Council but the centres are operated by another organisation.	DC Leisure under the contract operating at 1 April 2014: Up to 100%; but a maximum of 20% if receiving Mandatory Relief  Any other operating

Type of organisation	Eligibility criteria	Level of discretionary rate relief
		contract: policy to be decided by Director of Economic Prosperity & Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources & Transformation
Rural Businesses	Situated within a settlement of the Council's Rural Settlement List and be providing a benefit to the local community	Up to 100%; but a maximum of 20% if receiving Mandatory Relief

\* Subject to:

- The total amount of rate relief granted (discretionary plus mandatory) will not exceed 100%
- Non profit organisations must submit accounts for the preceding 3 years to demonstrate that they have not made a profit or that any surplus has been re-invested in the organisation

As a matter of general principle, the following would be ineligible for discretionary rate relief:

1. Housing Associations/Registered social landlords\*\*
2. Museum collections for museums not based in Wyre Forest District
3. National youth facilities
4. National charities
5. Nurseries and playgroups
6. Shops operated by charities
7. Schools

\*\*Housing Associations/RSLs currently receiving rate relief will have that relief 'tapered out' as follows:

2014/15- 75%.  
 2015/16 – 50%.  
 2016/17 – 25%.  
 2017/18 onwards – zero

with the exception of the Community Housing Group who will continue to receive 50% relief until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

**APPENDIX 2**

**Discretionary Rate Relief Responses to the Consultation**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
Church House Charitable Trust	Checking the description we had on our records, and whether they would still be entitled to the 80% Mandatory Relief as well as the 20% Discretionary Rate Relief.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.
Emily Jordan Foundation	Querying how the proposed scheme would affect their entitlement.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.
Nonentities Society (Rose Theatre)	Querying whether they would still receive the 80% Mandatory Relief or only between 0-20% Discretionary Rate Relief in future. Also they currently have reserves which they are going to spend on a new roof.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement. (Reserves would be looked at but if earmarked for major project should make no difference to award)
Chaddesley Corbett Village Hall	Would like Authority to reconsider only giving 20% Discretionary Rate Relief	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would not affect their entitlement.
The Community Housing Group	Confirm that they have been able to absorb the impact of the phased removal of rate relief as proposed by the scheme. Acknowledged that during discussions with the Council a key priority for both organisations is investment in raising the skill levels of residents within the district and reducing unemployment through scheme run through Vestia. Working in partnership with the Council the programme can be extended to deliver the future vision and targets of both organisations. In order to do this they request that the Council grant 50% reduction per annum for the next 5 years to invest in a joint strategy to improve skills and reduce unemployment. They set out potential outcomes they feel could be achieved for an annual investment of £80,000.	The proposed scheme would look at tapering Discretionary Rate Relief down from 75% to zero over four years. This should therefore create an investment opportunity for the CHG if as they say, they have already been able to absorb the removal of rate relief. It is recommended that the Council continues to engage with CHG over their proposal as they are a key Council partner aiming to deliver mutual economic benefits to the district.

**Agenda Item No. 9.2**

<p>Arley Sports &amp; Social Club</p>	<p>Even though called Sports and Social Club they are primarily involved in the 'sports' side. Have teams playing football, cricket, snooker and archery. Indoors darts and dominoes. Are now also providing facilities for an under 12 girls football team. Would like to be considered for highest level of rate relief.</p>	<p>Receive 50% under the current scheme, will also qualify for 50% under the proposed new scheme.</p>
<p>Stourport Nursery</p>	<p>The Nursery has good links with the traveller community and liaise with the gypsy roma travellers' education team. Offer free places to travelling families to encourage engagement in education. Take in children from difficult or unsafe homes, and as befits a charity, fees are waived when it is safer for a child to be in nursery rather than at home. Believe no other nursery locally is active in both these areas so request further reduction from rates reflecting their benefit to the local community.</p>	<p>Will continue to receive 80% Mandatory Relief, however under the proposed new scheme would no longer be entitled to the 20% Discretionary Rate Relief. No change to the scheme proposed.</p>
<p>Franche Village Sports &amp; Social Club</p>	<p>France Club is a registered Sports &amp; Social Club, have numerous bowls teams and football teams, fishing club, walking/rambling club and also darts, crib and dominoes etc.</p>	<p>Receive 50% under the current scheme, under the proposed new scheme do provide significant indoor sports facilities so would continue to be eligible for the 50% Relief.</p>
<p>Clows Top Victory Hall</p>	<p>Querying how the proposed scheme would affect their entitlement.</p>	<p>Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.</p>
<p>Bewdley Girl Guides Association</p>	<p>Requesting that the Authority look on them as favourably as possible in the amount of Discretionary Rate Relief awarded. Also appreciate the consideration they have received in the past.</p>	<p>Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.</p>
<p>Kidderminster Harriers Social &amp; Supporters Club</p>	<p>Although called a Social Club they have table tennis, indoor bowling, ballroom and sequence dancing (no other venue large enough), local darts, crib and dominoes, and many other sport organisation meetings and social events.</p>	<p>Receive 50% under the current scheme, under the proposed new scheme do provide significant indoor sports facilities so would continue to be eligible for the 50% Relief.</p>

## Agenda Item No. 9.2

15th Kidderminster Scout Group	Querying how the proposed scheme would affect their entitlement.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.
Blakedown Recreation Room	Would like Authority to continue to award current level of rate relief from 2014 onwards.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.
Potteries Omnibus Preservation Society	Although main museum collection is outside the Wyre Forest district, the preserved vehicles do attend local events mainly in connection with the Severn Valley Railway. Not formally open to the public. Requesting if local interaction could be considered and a percentage of the discretionary rate relief be awarded.	Will continue to receive 80% Mandatory Relief, however under the proposed new scheme would no longer be entitled to the 20% Discretionary Rate Relief. No change to the scheme proposed.
St Michaels Scout Group	Querying whether they would still receive the 80% Mandatory Relief or only between 0-20% Discretionary Rate Relief in future.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.
Wolverley Playing Fields Association	Querying how the proposed scheme would affect their entitlement.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.
Our Way Self Advocacy	Querying how the proposed scheme would affect their entitlement. Struggling to survive currently and if they lose relief may not be able to continue offering support to over 250 vulnerable people with learning disabilities. Wish to register grave concern that this may result in the loss or reduction in their valuable work.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.
The Far Forest Society	Querying how the proposed scheme would affect their entitlement.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.
Wolverley Memorial Hall Sports and Social Club	Querying how the proposed scheme would affect their entitlement.	They would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their 50% entitlement.
	Querying as they have name only as Social Club not Sports and	On description of assessment under the new proposed scheme



**Agenda Item No. 9.2**

	Social Club. On looking at assessment it is a bowling green so amended name.	they would continue to receive 50% Discretionary Rate Relief.
Wolverley Memorial Hall	Querying how the proposed scheme would affect their entitlement.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.
Areley Kings Village Hall	Querying how the proposed scheme would affect their entitlement.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.
Mid-Severn Sea Scout Group	Querying how the proposed scheme would affect their entitlement.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.
Pound Green and Button Oak Community Hall Trust	Querying how the proposed scheme would affect their entitlement.	Still entitled to 80% Mandatory Relief and they would comply with the new proposed scheme, which would make no difference to their entitlement.

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Cabinet  
22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013**

**National Non Domestic Rate Relief (NNDR)**

The Committee considered a report which set out the responses to the consultation which was carried out during March – May 2013 regarding the new scheme of NNDR relief which is proposed for April 2014.

**Recommend to Cabinet:**

**The responses set out in Appendix 2 and the amendments to the proposed scheme set out at Appendix 1 in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be endorsed.**

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**  
**22<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2013**

**Revised Local Development Scheme (2013-16)**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:</b>	All themes
<b>CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY:</b>	Securing the Economic Prosperity of the District/Improving Community Well-Being
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor A T Hingley
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Director of Economic Prosperity and Place
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Rebecca Mayman (x2195) Rebecca.Mayman@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1 – Draft Revised Local Development Scheme (Project Plan) 2013-16.  <i>The appendix to this report has been circulated electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request. (See front cover for details.)</i>

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This paper sets out to inform the Committee of proposals for the revision of the Local Development Scheme (Project Plan), which will guide the future production of the District's Local Plans. It seeks the Committee's endorsement of the Draft Local Development Scheme, which is attached at Appendix 1.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet is asked to **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

- 2.1 **The Proposed Draft Revised Local Development Scheme (2013-16) be endorsed and published as a basis for the future production of the District's Local Plans.**
- 2.2 **Delegated authority is given to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to undertake any necessary formatting amendments to the Draft Revised Local Development Scheme prior to its publication.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Following changes brought through the Localism Bill, Councils are no longer required to submit their Local Development Schemes (LDS) to the Secretary of State. However, they must publish up-to-date information on their progress in preparing their Local Plans against the LDS.

- 3.2 The LDS was last reviewed in February 2012 and was very focussed on progressing both the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan through to adoption by autumn 2013. The District Council has now adopted both of these Plans and it is therefore considered necessary to reassess the project plan to focus resources on new priorities for keeping our Development Plan up to date during the 2013-16 time period. This will continue to provide certainty to local stakeholders, developers and communities to assist in District wide regeneration.
- 3.3 The Local Development Framework Panel considered the Revised Local Development Scheme at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Panel Members resolved to recommend its endorsement as a basis for a realistic programme on which to focus the Council's objectives for development planning over the next three years. Further to this the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Panel's recommendation and the Draft Revised LDS at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 In brief, the main areas for consideration in reassessing our priorities and resources with regard to development planning are as follows:
- The need to produce an up to date evidence base, including assessment of the District's housing need to inform the review of the Core Strategy.
  - The need to produce further site specific allocations to meet the objectively assessed need for gypsy and traveller pitch provision post 2017, as required by recommendations in the Inspector's Report and the associated modification to the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan following its examination.
  - Duty to Co-operate requirements that may arise from the metropolitan area and the potential impact on the Core Strategy Review.
  - Increasing resource requirements to help facilitate Neighbourhood Development Plans in the District.
  - The review of existing Supplementary Planning Documents and the production of more detailed guidance arising from the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan.
- 4.2 **The Revised Local Development Scheme 2013-16**  
A Draft Revised LDS (which covers the 2013-16 time period) is attached at Appendix 1 to this report and the current LDS (2012) can be viewed on the Council's website.
- 4.3 The key proposed changes in this Revised LDS are in summary:
- An update on progress with regard to milestones set out in the 2012 LDS
  - Clarification of those documents which now form the planning policy framework for the District, following the formal revocation of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy on 20<sup>th</sup> May.
  - The inclusion of timetables for the production of an Affordable Housing SPD; Review of the Planning Obligations SPD and of the Design Guidance.

- Work towards a review of the Core Strategy and production of a District Wide Local Plan (to incorporate site specific allocations for Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision) with Issues and Options Consultation scheduled for summer 2015.
- Focussing resources in assisting Chaddesley Corbett and Churchill and Blakedown Parish Councils to progress their Neighbourhood Development Plans.

4.4 Members are reminded that there will be some significant challenges ahead, particularly with regard to housing need and the Duty to Co-operate requirements. Following the successful adoption of our latest plans, there is now a need to focus on commencing a review of the Core Strategy in 2015 to ensure our Development Plans are kept up to date. The Revised LDS will need to be approved by Council at its meeting in November, prior to its publication.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Revised LDS seeks to plan appropriately for resource allocation from the LDF budget during the 2013-16 time period.

## **6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The relevant Regulations and their requirements have been instrumental in the review of the LDS. The Council's Principal Solicitor has also been consulted.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

7.1 An EIA is not required for this project plan as it is not setting out policy.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

8.1 The timetables included in the LDS have been developed following detailed consideration of resources and potential impact on consultation stages. It is considered that the Revised LDS has had appropriate regard to risk management.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

9.1 Officers and Members of the LDF Panel consider that the revised Project Plan provides a realistic programme on which to focus the Council's objectives for development planning over the next three year period.

## **10. CONSULTEES**

10.1 Development Manager/Housing Services Manager/Principal Solicitor.

10.2 LDF Panel.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 LDF Panel Agenda Item – 02/09/13.

11.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda Item – 03/10/2013.

**Wyre Forest District**  
**DEVELOPMENT PLAN**  
**REVISED PROJECT PLAN**  
**(LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME)**

2013-2016

**August 2013**

For more information contact:

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**Wyre Forest District Council**

## **JARGON GUIDE**

**AMR            Annual Monitoring Report**

An annually produced document which sets out the progress made in achieving the timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme as well as measuring the effectiveness of the development plan policies.

**CIL            Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

The Planning Act 2008 enables local planning authorities to charge a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in its area. The CIL must be set at an appropriate level to help fund strategic infrastructure for the Council and the local community to support planned growth, but not too high to render growth commercially unviable.

**CS            Community Strategy**

Local Authorities are required by the Local Government Act 2000 to prepare this, with the aim of improving the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of their areas. A 10 year Community Strategy for the Wyre Forest was adopted in April 2004 by the Local Strategic Partnership 'Wyre Forest Matters'. This group consists of representatives from public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

**LP            Local Plan**

Collective term given to all statutory documents that form the Development Plan for the District. These comprise of the Core Strategy, Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan, Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan and a Policies Map.

**SA            Sustainability Appraisal**

A tool for appraising policies to ensure that they reflect sustainable development objectives (ie. social, environmental and economic factors). Required by Act to be undertaken for all LDDs.

**SCI            Statement of Community Involvement**

This sets out the planning authority's proposals for involving the local community in plan-making. It is not a DPD but it is, however, subject to independent examination.

**SPD            Supplementary Planning Document**

These will cover a range of issues and expand on the policies contained within Local Plans. They are, however, not part of the development plan and will not be subject to independent examination.



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## **1. PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT PLAN**

- 1.1 This project plan (previously known as the Local Development Scheme) provides up to date information for stakeholders and the general public about the status and coverage of Development Plan Documents and the Council's intention for their future preparation. It sets out:
- a) Which Planning Policies are currently in force in the District
  - b) What the Council's intentions are for the plan making framework over the next three years to 2016
- 1.2 The project plan includes information relating to timescales and resources, the content of new plans and their scope and coverage.

### **Background**

- 1.3 Councils should continue to prepare and maintain a "Local Development Scheme"(project plan), specifying the documents that will make up their Development Plan; their subject matter and area and the timetable for their preparation and revision.
- 1.4 Under changes brought about through the Localism Bill aimed at simplifying the planning system in 2011, Councils are no longer required to submit the Local Development Scheme to the Secretary of State, but they must publish up-to-date information on their progress in preparing Local Plans against the project plan.

### **Key changes introduced to the Project Plan in this review**

- 1.5 The District Council's first LDS or Project Plan was formally submitted to the Secretary of State in February 2005 and came into effect on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2005. Since then the Project Plan has progressively been refined through a process of monitoring and review. The last review was undertaken during early 2012 and it is considered that an update to provide a review of timescales following the adoption of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan is required.

- 1.6 The key changes introduced as part of this review are the reprogramming of the timetable following the adoption of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan. This will now focus on the refresh of the evidence base to inform a review of the Core Strategy, the progression of a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule for the District, subject to viability evidence, Neighbourhood Development Plans and a number of Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 1.7 It is also a useful opportunity to provide a timetable for review of the Adopted Core Strategy which will commence in early 2015.

## **2. CURRENT DISTRICT LOCAL PLANNING POLICY**

- 2.1 At present the main Planning Policies for the District are contained in the following documents:

- ❖ Wyre Forest Adopted Core Strategy (December 2010)
- ❖ Wyre Forest Adopted Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan (July 2013)
- ❖ Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (July 2013)
- ❖ Worcestershire Adopted Waste Core Strategy (2012)
- ❖ Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan Saved Policies

### **West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS)**

- 2.2 The WMRSS was formally revoked on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013. It therefore no longer forms part of the District's Statutory Development Plan.

### **Worcestershire County Structure Plan and Minerals Local Plan Saved Policies**

- 2.3 The Worcestershire Structure Plan was revoked on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013. It therefore no longer forms part of the District's Statutory Development Plan.

**Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy (Adopted November 2012)**

- 2.4 Worcestershire County Council has recently adopted the Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire. This document forms part of the Development Plan for the District and therefore all proposals will need to have regard to its contents.

**Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004)**

- 2.5 Saved Policies within the Wyre Forest District Local Plan have now been replaced by the Adopted Core Strategy (2010), Adopted Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan (2013) and Adopted Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (2013).

**Wyre Forest Adopted Core Strategy (December 2010)**

- 2.6 The Core Strategy was formally adopted by the Council in December 2010 following an Independent Examination by a Planning Inspector. This is the key strategic level document for the District and sets out the broad strategy and vision for development within the District up until 2026. It provides the overall context for the more detailed site specific policies and the focus for decision-making on planning applications. Although the Core Strategy does not address specific sites, it does set the overall Development Strategy for the District and the broad areas where new housing and employment development will be located.

**Wyre Forest Adopted Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan (July 2013)**

- 2.7 The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan was formally adopted by the Council in July 2013 following Independent Examination. This contains the detailed site allocations and their associated policies in order to meet the overarching Development Strategy. It also contains a number of generic Development Management policies.

**Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (July 2013)**

- 2.8 The Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan was formally adopted by the Council in July 2013 following Independent Examination. This contains detailed policies

for sites within the central area of Kidderminster and has a strong focus on regeneration.

**Supplementary Planning Documents/Supplementary Guidance**

2.9 The District Council has found it helpful to prepare additional guidance to further clarify some of the Local Plan policies. These documents have been formally adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and as such can be afforded material consideration.

2.10 Worcestershire County Council has also produced Supplementary Guidance in relation to Education Contributions and Landscape Character Assessment. This has been adopted by the District Councils and is therefore a material consideration against which planning applications should be assessed.

2.11 The table below relates to existing Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents for the Wyre Forest District. They are capable of being a material consideration in determining planning applications.

Table 1: Existing Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

<b>Document Title</b>	<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>	<b>Relevant DPD</b>
Wyre Forest Cycling Strategy	Adopted SPG (2002)	Proposed cycle route network & promotion of cycling	- Core Strategy - Site Allocations - KCAAP
Design Quality Guidance	Adopted SPG (2004)	Suite of Design Guidance including residential & town centres design guides	- KCAAP
Shop Front Design Guide within Historic Areas	Adopted SPG (2004)	Design Guidance for new, replacements or alterations to existing shop fronts in historic settings.	- Site Allocations
Severn Road Development Brief	Adopted SPG (2001)	Redevelopment Proposals for three sites on the eastside of Stourport on Severn town centre.	- Site Allocations
Lichfield Basin Design Guidance	Adopted SPG (2001)	Detailed design guide for one of the sites included in the Severn Road Development Brief.	- Site Allocations

<b>Document Title</b>	<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>	<b>Relevant DPD</b>
Bridge Street Basins Link Development Brief	Adopted SPD (2005)	Redevelopment proposals for a site on the east side of Stourport-on-Severn town centre linking Bridge Street and the Canal Basins.	- Site Allocations
Planning Obligations	Adopted SPD (2007)	Sets out the District Council's requirements for developer contributions.	- Core Strategy - Site Allocations - KCAAP
Churchfields Masterplan	Adopted SPD (2011)	Development brief for Churchfields area of Kidderminster as a key regeneration opportunity.	- Core Strategy - KCAAP
Landscape Character Assessment	Adopted SG (Dec 2011)	Detailed guidance on landscape character assessment for Worcestershire produced by WCC.	- Core Strategy - Site Allocations

### **3. REVIEW OF THE ADOPTED CORE STRATEGY AND PREPARATION OF A DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN**

3.1 The remainder of this Project Plan will consider the preparation of new Local Plans which will form the Development Plan and these are set out in more detail in Appendix A (Programme Management Timetable) and Appendix B ( Profiles & milestones). The proposed Documents that follow are sub-divided into five main categories, namely:

- ❖ Statement of Community Involvement
- ❖ Local Plans;
- ❖ Supplementary Planning Documents.
- ❖ Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule
- ❖ Neighbourhood Development Plans

**Progressing the Local Development Framework.**

3.2 Since the last review of the Local Development Scheme, the Council has taken some significant steps to progress the District's Local Development Framework.

Major milestones include:

- Adoption of the Wyre Forest Core Strategy in December 2010.
- Adoption of the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park Local Development Order in July 2012
- Adoption of the Wyre Forest Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan in July 2013
- Adoption of the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan in July 2013

3.3 During 2013-16 we anticipate that our resources will be concentrated on:

- Progressing the Affordable Housing SPD in 2013/14
- Reviewing the Planning Obligations SPD in 2013/14
- Progressing work on evidence base studies during 2014 to inform the Core Strategy Review. This will include work on assessing housing needs; a potential Green Belt Review; Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment and Employment Land Review. Much of our evidence base collation will need to be completed in house due to a reduction in resources available for the appointment of consultants.
- Facilitating progress on Neighbourhood Development Plans for Chaddesley Corbett and Churchill and Blakedown.
- Commencing a Review of the Adopted Core Strategy in early 2015. This will also incorporate potential site allocations for Gypsy and Traveller sites.

**4. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)**

4.1 The District Council's first Statement of Community Involvement was formally adopted by the Council in April 2006. In February 2013 the District Council adopted a Revised Statement of Community Involvement in order to reflect changes to the regulations governing the preparation of Local Plans, the introduction of neighbourhood planning and changes to consultation on planning

applications. The Revised Statement of Community Involvement provides a set of clear guidelines and minimum standards that the community and interest groups can expect when Local Development Documents are being prepared. It provides guidance on how bodies carrying out neighbourhood planning should undertake consultation and sets out the methods of consultation the District Council will use when undertaking its statutory duties in relation to neighbourhood planning. The document also clarifies the community participation and public consultation arrangements for the determination of Planning Applications.

## **5. LOCAL PLANS**

### **2013 to 2016**

- 5.1 It is envisaged that the following Local Plans will be progressed during this time period:

#### **District wide Local Plan**

- 5.2 During 2015 we will commence a review of the Adopted Core Strategy. We will take this opportunity to include the Site Allocations and Area Action Plan into one District wide Local Plan for the District, rather than continuing with three separate plans.
- 5.3 Following the publication of National Policy Guidance on site provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in March 2012, the District Council has jointly commissioned with other Worcestershire District authorities, a comprehensive needs assessment (Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment). The outcome of this study will inform the production of site specific policies for pitch provision within the District wide local plan.

## **6. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS (SPDs)**

- 6.1 In addition to reviewing existing SPG/SG/SPDs, the Planning Policy Section will also need to consider producing a number of SPDs to support policy set out in the Adopted Local Plans. These SPDs will provide further detail and clarification



on planning policy and development management that pose significant issues and challenges to the Wyre Forest District.

6.2 It is anticipated that we will need to bring forward the following SPDs during 2013/14:

- Review of the Developer Contributions/Section 106 in parallel with progression of a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (2013/14)
- Affordable Housing Requirements and Standards (2013/14)
- Revision of the Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Guidance (2014)

6.3 The need for further SPDs will be monitored and kept under review during the 2013-16 time period and up to date information will be included in the Project Plan as and when necessary. Some of the Supplementary Planning Guidance relates to sites which are currently being developed out and will therefore be subject to review in the next LDS as developments are completed and they are no longer required.

## **7. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)**

7.1 The District Council is currently considering the potential to bring forward a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule for the area in consultation with the other Worcestershire Authorities. The levy would allow the authority to raise funds from new developments and rates should be set in consultation with local communities and developers and will provide certainty up front about how much money developers will be expected to contribute.

7.2 Charging Authorities must produce a charging schedule setting out the levy's rate in their area, which must strike an appropriate balance between the desirability of funding infrastructure and the potential effects of the levy upon the economic viability of development across their area.

7.3 To progress a tariff we will require evidence about the effect of the levy on economic viability to demonstrate that any proposed rate strikes an appropriate balance. The level of CIL charge must only be set on the basis of viability. We are currently producing further viability evidence as the Council is concerned about the potential impact of CIL on our brownfield regeneration strategy. A recent decision has been taken to postpone progression on CIL until later in 2014.

## **8. NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

8.1 Neighbourhood Planning is central to the Government's Localism Agenda. The right to produce Neighbourhood Development Plans is introduced through the Localism Bill.

8.2 As the Local Planning Authority we must provide advice and assistance to Parish & Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums in unparished areas, should they wish to bring forward a Neighbourhood Development Plan/Order for their area. We will take an active role in advising and supporting community groups, sharing evidence and information. This is likely to be a considerable draw on the resources of the Planning Policy Section going forward and will need to be kept under review with regard to allocating additional staff resources to this function.

8.3 Under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations it is the District Council's role to:

- 1) Consider applications for neighbourhood areas
- 2) Organise an independent examination for a Neighbourhood Development Plan/Order
- 3) Organise a Local Referendum
- 4) Make the Neighbourhood Development Plan as part of our Local Development Framework if a majority "yes" vote is secured at the referendum.

8.4 The District Council has two designated Neighbourhood Areas within the District:

- Chaddesley Corbett Parish

- Churchill and Blakedown Parish

8.5 Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council began work on their Neighbourhood Development Plan in 2012. They were successful in obtaining a grant under the 'frontrunners' scheme to help support the preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and the Neighbourhood Area was approved in September 2012. To date, the steering group have undertaken a neighbourhood survey and have sought feedback from the community on the vision and objectives of the plan. Informal consultation and drafting of the plan will take place during summer/autumn 2013 with a formal 6 week pre-submission consultation due to be held in November/December 2013.

8.6 Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council are in the early stages of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan. The Neighbourhood Area was approved in April 2013. The Steering Group has yet to set out a formal timetable for the production of the plan.

## APPENDIX A - Programme for the preparation and review of Development Plan

Local Plans	2014												2015												2016			
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	
Adopted Core Strategy Review - District Wide Local Plan	1															2		3			4						5	6
	2016 continued																											
	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D																			
Adopted Core Strategy Review - District Wide Local Plan			7						8																			

- 1 Evidence Base preparation and assessment of needs
- 2 Council approval for issues and options consultation
- 3 Issues and Options Consultation
- 4 Consideration of consultation responses and development of Preferred Options
- 5 Council approval for Preferred Options Consultation
- 6 Preferred Options Consultation
- 7 Consideration of Consultation responses and development of Publication Plan
- 8 Council approval for publication consultation

## APPENDIX A - Programme for the preparation and review of Development Plan

Supplementary Planning Documents	2013							2014							2015																
	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Affordable Housing SPD					1		2						3																		
Review Planning Obligations SPD													1		2					3		4									
Design Guidance SPD								1		2				3		4															

- 1 Early Engagement Consultation
- 2 Preparation of Draft SPD
- 3 Regulation 12(b) Consultation
- 4 Preparation and Adoption of SPD

## APPENDIX B – Local Plan Profiles

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### 1. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

#### Overview:

- ❖ Role & Coverage: Sets out how the District Council will involve stakeholders and the local community in the preparation of all Local Development Documents and the consideration of planning applications.
- ❖ Coverage: District-wide
- ❖ Status: Non Development Plan LDD
- ❖ Conformity: Regulations and requirements set out by Government and the District Council's Consultation Strategy 2004  
  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended

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#### Key Milestones:

REVIEWED: FEBRUARY 2013

MONITOR THROUGH ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT AND REVIEW IF SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATIVE CHANGES OCCUR.

## APPENDIX B – Local Plan Profiles

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### 2. CORE STRATEGY

#### Overview:

- ❖ Role & Coverage: Strategic document setting out the vision and spatial planning framework for the District up to 2026. Includes generic strategy and core policies on subjects including housing; climate change and the environment; economy, town centres, local distinctiveness and transport infrastructure.
- ❖ Coverage: District-wide
- ❖ Status: Local Plan
- ❖ Conformity: Regulations and requirements set out by Government National Planning Policy

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#### Key Milestones:

ADOPTED: DECEMBER 2010

MONITOR AND REVIEW THROUGH ANNUAL MONITORING PROCESS.

REVIEW TO COMMENCE IN 2015 FOLLOWING EVIDENCE BASE COLLATION AND RENEWAL IN 2014.

## APPENDIX B – Local Plan Profiles

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### 3. SITE ALLOCATIONS AND POLICIES LOCAL PLAN

#### Overview:

- ❖ **Role & Coverage:** Identifies the specific sites that will provide for the District's development needs in the period up to 2026, in conformity with the Adopted Core Strategy. It will also designate specific areas for protection/safeguarding during the plan period and include some generic development control policies.
- ❖ **Coverage:** District-wide
- ❖ **Status:** Local Plan
- ❖ **Conformity:** Regulations and requirements set out by Government  
National Planning Policy  
Core Strategy

#### Key Milestones:

ADOPTED: JULY 2013

MONITOR AND REVIEW THROUGH ANNUAL MONITORING PROCESS.  
INCORPORATE INTO DISTRICT WIDE LOCAL PLAN IN PARALLEL WITH CORE STRATEGY REVIEW.



## APPENDIX B – Local Plan Profiles

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### 4. KIDDERMINSTER CENTRAL AREA ACTION PLAN

#### Overview:

Role & Coverage: To provide a detailed planning policy framework, which sets out the strategy and policies for the development of the town's central area, and helps to achieve this regeneration. The KCAAP will help to stimulate regeneration and investment in the town by providing certainty and confidence for potential investors, as well as providing the basis for co-ordinating the actions of a range of public and private sector partners.

- ❖ Coverage: Central Kidderminster including the Town Centre, Horsefair, Comberton Hill, Mill Street and Park Lane.
- ❖ Status: Local Plan
- ❖ Conformity: Regulations and requirements set out by Government  
National Planning Policy  
Core Strategy

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#### Key Milestones:

ADOPTED: JULY 2013

MONITOR AND REVIEW THROUGH ANNUAL MONITORING PROCESS.  
INCORPORATE INTO DISTRICT WIDE LOCAL PLAN IN PARALLEL WITH CORE STRATEGY REVIEW.

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Cabinet  
22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013**

**Wyre Forest District Development Plan: Revised Local Development Scheme  
(Project Plan 2013-16)**

The Committee considered the proposals for the revision of the Local Development Scheme (Project Plan), which will guide the future production of the District's Local Plans.

**Recommend to Cabinet:**

**The proposed Revised Local Development Scheme 2013-16, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be endorsed.**

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Cabinet  
22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013**

**Community Infrastructure Levy**

The Committee received an update on the work undertaken on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and considered the recommendations from the Local Development Review Panel which was discussed at length by the Panel in September 2013.

**Recommend to Cabinet:**

**The progression of a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule is postponed and the position is reviewed again later in 2014.**

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Cabinet  
22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013**

**Wyre Forest Health Action Plan Update**

The Committee received an update on the work to improve health and wellbeing in Wyre Forest and considered the new Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2013/14.

**Recommend to Cabinet:**

**The Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2013/14, as attached at Appendix 2 to the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be approved.**