

Open

# Overview & Scrutiny Committee

## Agenda

6pm  
Thursday, 7 December 2023  
Council Chamber  
Wyre Forest House  
Finepoint Way  
Kidderminster



## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

### Members of Committee:

**Chairman: Councillor N Martin**  
**Vice-Chairman: Councillor F M Oborski MBE**

**Councillor V Caulfield**

**Councillor N J Desmond**

**Councillor N Gale**

**Councillor D Little**

**Councillor D Russell**

**Councillor G Connolly**

**Councillor H E Dyke**

**Councillor P Harrison**

**Councillor C Rogers**

**Councillor L Whitehouse**

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

### Information for Members of the Public:

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

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

### Disclosure of Interests

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

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

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

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

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

Where a Member or co-opted Member has an NRI which directly relates to their financial interest or wellbeing, or that of a relative or close associate, they must disclose the interest at the meeting, may not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not stay in the meeting unless granted a dispensation.

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

### Co-opted Members

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

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

The following will apply:

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

### **For Further information:**

**If you have any queries about this Agenda or require any details of background papers, further documents or information, you should contact Karen Morton, Assistant Committee Services Officer, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, DY11 7WF. Telephone: 01562 732726 or email [committee.services@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@wyreforestdc.gov.uk).**

Wyre Forest District Council

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 7 December 2023

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>
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
2.	<b>Appointment of Substitute Members</b> To receive the name of any Councillor who is to act as a substitute, together with the name of the Councillor for whom he/she is acting.	
3.	<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 interest (DPI), an other registrable interest (ORI) or a non-registrable interest (NRI) in relation to any matter on the agenda.  Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's Constitution for full details.	
4.	<b>Minutes</b> To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on the 6 November 2023.	6
5.	<b>Wyre Forest Health Action Plan Update</b> To consider a draft of a Cabinet report from the Head of Strategic Growth, which updates Members on action to improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities in Wyre Forest and which also includes the Wyre Forest Health Action Plan for 2024-25 for endorsement.	8
6.	<b>Climate Change Action Plan Update and Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024 - 27</b> To consider a report from the Head of Strategic Growth, which provides Members with an update on action to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions. It includes the new Wyre Forest Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan for 2024 - 27 and year one action plan for endorsement.	17
7.	<b>Cost of Living Action Plan</b> To consider a draft of a Cabinet report from the Head of Strategic Growth giving an update on action to tackle the cost-of-living crisis and which includes the Wyre Forest Cost of Living action plan for 2024/25 for endorsement.	61

8.	<p><b>Work Programme</b></p> <p>To review the work programme for the current municipal year with regard to the Corporate Plan Priority, Annual Priorities and the Forward Plan.</p>	76
9.	<p><b>Press Involvement</b></p> <p>To consider any future items for scrutiny that might require publicity.</p>	
10.	<p><b>To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Solicitor of the Council before the commencement of the meeting, which the Chairman by reason of special circumstances considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.</b></p>	
11.	<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

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

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

**MONDAY, 6 NOVEMBER 2023 (6PM)**

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**Present:**

Councillors: F M Oborski MBE (Vice-Chairman), G Connolly, N J Desmond, P Dyke, N Gale, P Harrison, D Little, C Rogers, D Russell and L Whitehouse.

**Observers**

Councillors: M J Hart and D Ross.

Observed remotely: Councillor J F Byng.

**OS.35 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: N Martin (Chairman), V Caulfield and H E Dyke.

**OS.36 Appointment of Substitutes**

Councillor P Dyke was a substitute for Councillor N Martin.

**OS.37 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**OS.38 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**OS.39 Budget and Performance Monitoring Second Quarter 2023-2024**

The Committee considered a draft of a Cabinet Report from the Head of Resources and s151 Officer on the Council's financial and other performance at the end of Quarter 2 ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The report also presented the current projected outturn position for the 2023-24 financial year.

The Committee fully scrutinised the report and the Head of Resources and s151 Officer, the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development & Regeneration, the Head of Community & Environment Services and the Head of Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services were able to provide members with verbal responses to their questions and comments.

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

**1.1 The projected budget variations and comments within the report and appendices 1 to 5.**

**1.2 The performance against measures and actions as set out in the report and appendix 6.**

**OS.40 Work Programme**

The published Work Programme 2023-24 for the rest of the municipal year was reviewed by the committee, and the items for the November meeting and the rest of the year were noted.

**OS.41 Press Involvement**

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

The meeting ended at 6.44pm.

# Overview & Scrutiny Committee



## Report of: Jennifer Moreton

### Date

07/12/2023

### Open

## Agenda Item 5 – Wyre Forest Health Action Plan

### Summary

Attached is a draft of a Cabinet report on this subject, which Cabinet is expected to consider on 20 December 2023.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the report and provide recommendations to Cabinet.

### Officer contact details

Name: Jennifer Moreton

Title: Principal Health and Sustainability Officer

Contact number: 2569



**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**  
**20 December 2023**

**Wyre Forest Health Action Plan Update**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor Ian Hardiman Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Kate Bailey Head of Strategic Growth
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Jenny Moreton Principal Health and Sustainability Officer
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1: Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2024-25

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides Members with an update on action to improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities in Wyre Forest. It includes the Wyre Forest Health Action Plan for 2024-25 for endorsement.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**The Cabinet is invited to:**

**2.1 Approve the Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2024-25.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board oversees local health commissioning and leads on the strategic planning and co-ordination of local health services. The Health and Wellbeing Board is required to develop a strategy for improving the health and wellbeing of people who live and work in Worcestershire. The 'Being Well in Worcestershire' Strategy covers the period 2022-2032. This outlines commitments to improving mental health and wellbeing, supporting people to live well in good health for as long as possible, particularly those who have poorer health outcomes. The Board champions collective action to ensure children have the best start in life, young people will have hope and aspiration for the future, and residents live longer, more independent lives in good health, with fewer people going on to need care and support, which is vital to supporting good mental health and wellbeing. The 'Being Well Strategic Group' subgroup has been delegated the responsibility to develop detailed action plans to deliver the strategy.

- 3.2 District Collaboratives have been set up in Worcestershire to bring together organisations to work together collaboratively to deliver the Being Well in Worcestershire Strategy, to tackle health and wellbeing issues and address need in the local area. The Wyre Forest Collaborative was established in September 2021 and aims to take a joined-up approach in identifying need, addressing the wider determinants of health and reducing health inequalities through targeted and proactive care and support. As well as Wyre Forest District Council, the Collaborative partners include organisations such as Worcestershire Public Health, the two Primary Care Networks (Wyre Forest Health Partnership and the Wyre Forest Network of Independent Practices), West Mercia Police, Onside Advocacy, Age UK and more.
- 3.3 Within the District Council, delivery of this work is primarily carried out by the Health and Sustainability team in Strategic Growth. The Wyre Forest Collaborative Project Officer, funded by Worcestershire Public Health, joined the team in 2023.
- 3.4 The plan will commence on 1 January 2024 until 31 December 2025.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The Wyre Forest Collaborative has looked at population health data with help from Public Health. A huge amount of data and information is available at district, ward and local super-output area level on the [Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Insights Website](#). In Wyre Forest there are various conditions with noticeably higher prevalence in patients compared to the national average, such as depression, hypertension, obesity, diabetes and asthma. These, along with common themes and pressures amongst the collaborative partner organisations, have informed the Collaborative’s priorities which are outlined in the table below. The Wyre Forest District Council Health Action plan shows how the council will help to deliver on these topics in 2024.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Topics to include:</b>
<b>Population Health Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Obesity (including diabetes and pre-diabetes).</li> <li>• Frailty.</li> </ul>
<b>Vulnerable Adults</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Light approach to tackling vulnerabilities.</li> <li>• Drug related deaths.</li> <li>• Homeless health.</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Connectedness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset Based Community Development.</li> <li>• Taking services out to communities.</li> <li>• Sharing resources and information.</li> </ul>
<b>Best Start in Life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy pregnancy.</li> <li>• Children’s mental health.</li> </ul>
<b>Health Inequalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Disabilities.</li> <li>• Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community.</li> </ul>
<b>Health Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing review and risk assessment.</li> </ul>

4.2 Examples of activity carried out to deliver this work in 2023 included:

**4.2.1 Homelessness Health Project**

The homelessness health project between Wyre Forest Health Partnership (WFHP) and Wyre Forest District Council has helped improve access to health and housing services for homeless residents. The project aimed to improve access to healthcare for patients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Housing team have flagged up homeless service users with unmet health needs to GP practices and supported homeless clients in accessing health services. The WFHP has improved access through measures such as giving patients an option to register their address as their GP practice to receive letters relating to their health and social care and ensuring continuity of care with one named GP, with double appointments for complex needs. Working together on this issue means the GP practices are now aware of the Commitment to Refer (CTR) their service users who are at risk of homelessness to WFDC for support, and clinicians are now active on the WFDC Homelessness Forum.

**4.2.2 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)**

The ABCD project has been funded initially through Contain Outbreak Management Funding and then by Public Health. In Wyre Forest, the ABCD project has focussed on four areas: Horsefair/Broadwaters and the Foley Park and Hoobrook ward in Kidderminster, the Walshes estate in Stourport and the Wyre Forest Rural ward, which includes Cookley, Wolverley and the nearby rural areas. These areas were selected based upon data on multiple deprivation/ unemployment/ health inequalities- with pre-existing issues exacerbated by the covid pandemic. WFDC's Community Builders are working in these areas using an ABCD approach- working with the people there to find out what is already in place and helping to make connections to support them in building the community up and working with 'what's strong, not what's wrong.' With support from the Community Builders, these communities have been empowered to carry out a wide range of activities such as putting on new fitness activities, community gardening projects, running Warm Spaces and setting up new social groups for different age groups to help tackle loneliness and isolation. The Community Builders have also worked with other service providers for them to run activities in these areas, for example youth activities in local parks over the school holidays.

**4.2.3 Children and Young People's Mental Health Showcase events**

Children and Young People's Mental Health Showcase events have been carried out in several high schools in Bewdley, Stourport and Kidderminster. A range of organisations providing services to support young people's mental health and wellbeing attend the events. These include local youth services, charities such as Reach Out, Barnardos and Homestart, health support services, police and more. A typical Showcase event involves these organisations setting up stands in the main school hall and classes of children attending throughout the day. The children can talk to the service providers or take information away with them for future use.

**4.2.4 Ageing Well project**

WFDC is an active participant on the Ageing Well subgroup of the Wyre Forest Collaborative. The group focusses on several aspects to ageing well: feeling well, active communities, enough money, safe at home (falls, hoarding, crime prevention)

and quality health & care. In 2023, WFDC led the organisation of the Showcase of Services events for the 50+ age group which took place in October in Kidderminster and Stourport. The ever-popular Older People's Activities booklet has also been updated and widely distributed this year.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 No additional financial implications- actions are funded from existing resources.

**6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The development and delivery of the action plan support the Council in relevant plans endorsed by the council, including the Wyre Forest Local Plan and the Worcestershire Housing Strategy.

6.2 The Council meets the wider public health policy and legislative objectives through undertaking activities that align with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy "Being Well in Worcestershire" 2022 – 2032.

**7. IMPACT AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

**7.1 Equality Impact Assessment**

An equality impact screening assessment has been undertaken and no negative impacts identified. The plan includes actions aiming to help overcome barriers to people accessing support e.g., due to digital exclusion. The plan also includes schemes to support people most impacted by deprivation and health inequalities.

**7.2 Climate Change Impact**

Not applicable.

**7.3 Health and Wellbeing Impact**

This action plan supports the health and wellbeing of the community through a number of projects aimed at improving health, in partnership with the Wyre Forest Collaborative members.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

8.1 Failure to implement measures to tackle health inequalities could have many negative implications for the council and Wyre Forest residents. This includes increased future cost/ demand on services, as well as reputational risk of failing to tackle the issue.

**9. CONCLUSION**

9.1 The Wyre Forest Health Action Plan (Appendix 1) outlines actions to be taken by WFDC to help improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities in Wyre Forest.

9.2 This work is underpinned by the role of the Wyre Forest Collaborative and meets objectives in the Being Well in Worcestershire Strategy.

**10. CONSULTEES**

10.1 CLT

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 [Worcestershire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032](#)

Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2024 - 25

The current priority themes for the Wyre Forest Collaborative are:

Theme	Topics to include:
Population Health Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Obesity (including diabetes and pre-diabetes).</li> <li>• Frailty.</li> </ul>
Vulnerable Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Light approach to tackling vulnerabilities.</li> <li>• Drug related deaths.</li> <li>• Homeless health.</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse.</li> </ul>
Community Connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset Based Community Development.</li> <li>• Taking services out to communities.</li> <li>• Sharing resources and information.</li> </ul>
Best Start in Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy pregnancy.</li> <li>• Children’s mental health.</li> </ul>
Health Inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Disabilities.</li> <li>• Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community.</li> </ul>
Health Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing review and risk assessment.</li> </ul>

Wyre Forest District Council will support these themes through the following actions, carried out in partnership with Wyre Forest Collaborative partners:

Action	Measures	Notes/Information	Collaborative themes supported
Promote uptake of the Healthy Start voucher scheme.	Percentage of eligible Wyre Forest residents taking up the scheme.	Healthy Start is a Government Scheme that provides weekly vouchers to eligible pregnant women and parents of children under four. These vouchers can be spent on milk, fruit and vegetables and also includes coupons for free vitamins. See <a href="https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/">https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/</a>	Best Start in Life Population Health
Promote Children’s Mental Health Week	Activities/ communications during the Week.	<a href="http://childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk">Children's Mental Health Week (childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk)</a> takes place 5-11 February 2024	Best Start in Life Population Health

Co-ordinate Mental Health and Wellbeing Showcase events in local High Schools	Number of events held/ number of attendees. Feedback results.	Showcase events are held in local high schools, bringing together organisations providing mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people.	Best Start in Life Population Health
Promotion of local voluntary opportunities and the mental health benefits of volunteering.	Activities/ communications during Volunteering Week.	Volunteers Week takes place annually on 1-7 June. <a href="https://volunteersweek.org/">https://volunteersweek.org/</a>	Population Health
Co-ordination of the Wyre Forest Suicide Prevention Group	Quarterly meetings held. Activities (e.g. events, training) delivered.	The Wyre Forest Suicide Prevention group supports local delivery of the Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Plan <a href="#">Suicide prevention and support   Worcestershire County Council</a>	Population Health Best Start in Life Health Inequalities
Promotion of mental health and wellbeing campaigns and local support available	Activities / communication of campaign messages and support.	Key campaigns include: World Suicide Prevention Day World Mental Health Day <a href="#">Mental Health Awareness Week   Mental Health Foundation</a> These will be promoted to WFDC staff through the Health and Wellbeing group and more widely through our external communication channels and networks.	Population Health Best Start in Life
Support for/ promotion of the Family Coach Pilot Project.	Numbers of families supported and outcomes achieved as per pilot project monitoring.	Partnership pilot project between Onside, NHS and WFDC. Provide support for families who have one or more children who are under/overweight, families who are not able to access existing weight management services in their area, and families who may experience other inequalities. <a href="#">Children &amp; Families - Family Coach :: Onside Advocacy, Worcestershire (onside-advocacy.org.uk)</a>	Population Health Health Inequalities
Support for/ promotion of postural stability pilot classes	Attendance at pilot classes and feedback received	Pilot project with classes held at to community venues.	Population health Health Inequalities

## Agenda Item No. 5 Appendix 1

Support for/promotion of activities for children and young people	Attendance at/feedback from youth services commissioned by WFDC and at Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) activities.	Funding provided by Worcestershire County Council for commissioning of youth services and for HAF activities for children over the main school holidays: <a href="http://haf-it.co.uk">HAF Worcestershire (haf-it.co.uk)</a>	Population Health Health Inequalities Best Start in Life
Winter Warmth promotions	Numbers of residents supported via the helpline/ at energy advice surgeries. Attendance at fuel poverty training.	In partnership with Act on Energy, promotion of energy advice and support <a href="http://wyreforestdc.gov.uk">Energy efficiency   Wyre Forest District Council (wyreforestdc.gov.uk)</a>	Population health Health Inequalities
Warmth on Prescription project	Numbers of people supported, and health outcomes achieved	Funded through the Household Support Fund. Collaborative partners identify and support vulnerable residents with health conditions exacerbated by the cold.	Population health Health Inequalities
Delivery of the Asset Based Community Development Project	Impact report to show outcomes achieved.	WFDC funded through Public Health to deliver asset based community development activity in 4 areas of the district.	Community Connectedness Population health Health Inequalities
Celebrating Community Stories Project	Five creative case studies produced	Public Health funded project to celebrate community stories and demonstrate the health and wellbeing outcomes achieved.	Community Connectedness
Homeless Health Charter implementation	Update meetings held with Wyre Forest Health partnership	Ongoing project to improve access to health and housing services to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	Population health Health inequalities
Showcase of Services for 50+ events	Number of events/ attendees Feedback received	Aim is to hold an event in each of the 3 main towns.	Population health
Support for active travel through the Wyre Forest Cycle Forum	Quarterly meetings held	<a href="http://wyreforestdc.gov.uk">Cycling in Wyre Forest   Wyre Forest District Council (wyreforestdc.gov.uk)</a>	Population health
Information and resources	Monthly health and wellbeing newsletter produced	Sign up link at <a href="http://wyreforestdc.gov.uk">Wyre Forest news   Wyre Forest District Council (wyreforestdc.gov.uk)</a>	Community Connectedness
Promotion of Dementia Wellbeing support	Numbers attending training	<a href="http://www.ageuk.org.uk">Age UK Herefordshire &amp; Worcestershire   Dementia Wellbeing Service</a>	Population health



# Overview & Scrutiny Committee



## Report of: Jennifer Moreton

### Date

07/12/2023

### Open

## Agenda Item 6 - Climate Change Action Plan Update and Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024-27

### Summary

Attached is a draft of a Cabinet report on this subject, which Cabinet is expected to consider on 20 December 2023.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the report and provide recommendations to Cabinet.

### Officer contact details

Name: Jennifer Moreton

Title: Principal Health and Sustainability Officer

Contact number: 2569

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**  
**20 December 2023**

**Climate Change Action Plan Update and Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024 - 27**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Kate Bailey
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Jenny Moreton
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix One – Climate Change Action Plan 2022-23 Appendix Two – Climate Change Action Plan 2024 Appendix Three – Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024-27

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides Members with an update on action to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions. It includes the new Wyre Forest Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan for 2024 - 27 and year one action plan for endorsement.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet is invited to:

- 2.1 Consider the update of the Climate Change Action Plan 2022-23**
- 2.2 Approve the new Wyre Forest Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan and accompanying action plan for delivery of this**
- 2.3 To delegate to the Head of Strategic Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda to make minor amendments and updates to the Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024 - 2027.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1** The Health and Sustainability Team in Strategic Growth lead the co-ordination and delivery of work to tackle climate change in Wyre Forest, working with internal and external colleagues and stakeholders on this vital issue.
- 3.2** A new Wyre Forest Climate Change Action and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024-27 has been developed to pull together activities the council and some of its partners are undertaking to tackle climate change, increase resilience and reduce carbon emissions. It considers both existing actions and new projects to be delivered in 2024 onwards.

3.3 The Wyre Forest Climate Change action plan outlines the work that will be undertaken during 2024 and onwards to deliver this. It focuses on key areas where Wyre Forest District Council and partners can have the most impact in the district, within current resources. There are four key themes:

1. Warmer, healthier homes.
2. Building a low carbon economy.
3. Transport and infrastructure.
4. Healthy and resilient communities.
5. Cross cutting objectives
6. Reducing carbon emissions in council operations

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

4.1 The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) releases an assessment report on the latest climate change science every five years. The latest report considered evidence from many independent scientific analyses and has been endorsed by all UN member States. Scientists are now all but certain that climate change is mostly caused by human action, and that it is already leading to changes in regional weather patterns, with extreme events such as flooding and heat waves on the increase. The IPCC has also concluded that we have until 2030 to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people. The Paris Agreement came into force in 2016 and aims to limit the rise in global temperatures to well below 2°C, to pursue efforts to hold it to 1.5°C and to reach net zero emissions in the second half of the century. In November 2021, Glasgow hosted the COP (Conference of the Parties) 26 for world leaders. The arising Glasgow Climate Pact aims to keep alive the hope of limiting the rise in global temperature to 1.5C. Combined with increased ambition and action from countries, 1.5C remains in sight, but it will only be achieved if every country delivers on what they have pledged.

4.2 The UK is already experiencing widespread change in the climate. According to the recent Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk report by the UK Climate Change Committee, average land temperature has risen by around 1.2°C from pre-industrial levels, UK sea levels have risen by 16cm since 1900 and episodes of extreme heat are becoming more frequent. The highest ever recorded temperatures in the UK exceeded 40C for the first time in July. In May 2019, UK Parliament approved a motion to declare an environment and climate emergency. The UK Climate Change Act 2008 was subsequently amended to set a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. The previous target was to reduce carbon emissions by 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050. Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) is one of more than 300 Local Authorities which have also declared a Climate Emergency to date.

4.3 Each year, central government releases per capita CO2 emissions figures for all local authorities. Between 2005 and 2021 (the latest data available) per capita emissions in Wyre Forest fell by around 40%; more data and information on how this compares to other areas is included in the new plan. Councils have a pivotal role in tackling

climate change and, through local governance, can ensure climate change policies and programmes protect and help the most vulnerable, including those suffering from fuel poverty. Local authorities are uniquely placed to assess the needs of their areas and local residents and to act as catalysts for change. The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) recognises local authorities' ability to use their position to improve the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation in their areas. HECA requires local authorities to produce a series of reports, setting out the energy conservation measures that considered practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area. Fuel poverty is an issue for the district; latest government statistics show that in 2021 16.5% of Wyre Forest households (7,663 households) were classed as being fuel poor. Living in cold, damp homes can exacerbate health conditions, particularly cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses. Worcestershire has slightly higher than average excess winter deaths, the majority of which tend to be caused by diseases of the cardiovascular system (such as stroke and heart attack) and respiratory illness (e.g. influenza).

- 4.4 A progress report on delivery of the Climate Change action plan for 2022-23 is included at Appendix 1.
- 4.5 The climate action charity Climate Emergency UK assesses the climate credentials of all local authorities in the UK and publish their findings in a set of scores known as climate scorecards. In these scorecards, every local authority is assessed using a methodology that is tailored to the responsibilities of that council and is given an overall score for each methodology section. In 2021, the first assessment year, the assessment looked at the plans local authorities had in place to tackle climate change and Wyre Forest District Council was awarded a score of 18%. In 2023, the assessment was based on action in the following categories: Buildings and Heating; Transport; Planning and Land Use; Governance and Finance; Biodiversity; Collaboration and Engagement; and Waste Reduction and Food. Wyre Forest District Council received an overall score 28%. This was slightly below the national average district council score of 29%, and slightly above the average for Worcestershire districts of (27.5%).
- 4.6 A new Wyre Forest Climate Change and Carbon Reduction has been developed to provide further information about the current situation and future plans to address this issue which will be in place for three years with an action plan that is annually reviewed and updated. The associated Climate Change Action Plan (Year One) outlines work that will be delivered in this period and is in Appendix Two.
- 4.7 The Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan will be a live document and regularly reviewed to ensure the information remains up to date. Any projects requiring funding from the Council will be subject to business cases through the Commercial Board or appropriate route.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The resources implications of adopting the climate change plan are shown within the action plan. These are either:

- 5.1.1 Minimal and mainly relate to staff time. These will be met by existing budgets.
- 5.1.2 Already agreed through the capital programme or funded using external grant funding.
- 5.1.3 Subject to an individual business case being developed by the relevant service area and taken through the appropriate decision-making process, including the medium term financial strategy and capital programme as appropriate.

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

- 6.1 The UK Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 sets a target for the UK to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.
- 6.2 'A clean, safe and green place to live, work and visit' is a priority in WFDC's Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027. Relevant key strategic actions are to:
  - Produce and implement a carbon reduction plan for the district and for the council
  - Help people make their homes more energy efficient and
  - Install electric charging points in car parks in all three towns.
- 6.3 The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) recognises local authorities' ability to use their position to improve the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation in their areas. HECA requires local authorities to produce a series of reports, setting out the energy conservation measures that considered practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area.

## **7. IMPACTS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

### **7.1 Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equality Impact Assessment Screening has been undertaken in relation to the Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan no impact identified.

### **7.2 Climate Change Impact**

This plan and actions seek to tackle climate change and reduce the council's own carbon emissions through a number of actions including raising awareness and undertaking projects that reduce emissions including to council buildings and fleet.

### **7.3 Health and Wellbeing Impact**

This plan has an indirect impact on health and wellbeing by seeking to reduce carbon emissions that contribute to global warming that in turn can lead to extreme weather conditions including extreme heat and cold, which particularly affect those with underlying health conditions.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 Failure to implement measures to tackle climate change could have many negative implications for the council and Wyre Forest residents, as well as failure to meet the

requirements of the relevant legislation / policies and reputational risk of failing to tackle the issue.

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The Council has declared a climate emergency and is keen to support residents and business to reduce carbon emissions. It is important that it considers how it can reduce it's own carbon emissions through it's operations.
- 9.2 The Action Plan 2022-23 (Appendix 1) sets out progress against the current action plan and Appendix two includes the proposed actions to tackle climate change in 2024. The Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024-2027 is in Appendix Three.

**10. CONSULTEES**

- 10.1 Corporate Leadership Team

**11. BACKGROUND PAPER**

N/A

Appendix 1: WFDC A Climate Change-Action Plan 2022-23

Warmer, Healthier Homes	Update
Ongoing promotion and delivery of schemes to install domestic energy efficiency and renewable energy measures.	Various schemes are in place locally and nationally; these are outlined on the website: <a href="#">WFDC Energy Efficiency page</a> The schemes are promoted in various ways. WFDC has a Service Level Agreement with independent charity Act on Energy, who act as a one-stop shop for residents to obtain impartial advice and information about the support available to them, which is dependent upon their circumstances.
Develop, co-ordinate and deliver energy efficiency schemes, utilising external funding where possible e.g. Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Sustainable Warmth funding for measures including low carbon heating, insulation, domestic renewable energy.	A Sustainable Warmth Project Officer was recruited into the Private Sector Housing Team this year, utilising Sustainable Warmth funding. The main Sustainable Warmth scheme delivered during this period was the Local Authority Delivery Scheme 3 (LAD3). This was deemed a huge success, helping families on a low income with this funding. All homes supported were owner occupiers with a combined household income of less than 31K. The scheme Installed 71 measures across 45 properties to a value of £420,000. Measures included loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, double glazing and solar PV.
Participate in collective scheme for domestic solar panel installation	Wyre Forest participated in the county wide Solar Together scheme, carried out and resourced through the Warmer Worcestershire Network. Solar Together Worcestershire is a group buying scheme for solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and battery storage. Householders who registered their interest before the February 2023 deadline were sent an offer price for the PV installation, which they could accept or decline. The installation programme for those who accepted is currently ongoing.
Deliver a Winter Warmth awareness campaign in Wyre Forest	Promotion of the various energy schemes carried out through newsletters, social media, partnership work.
Deliver a programme of energy advice/information/training sessions- online, by phone or face-to-face.	Act on Energy helpline 0800 988 2881 had over 1300 calls from Wyre Forest residents in 2022/23. Act on Energy also carried out training for frontline staff on fuel poverty- face to face at Wyre Forest House (25 attendees) and through online sessions.
Deliver project to improve energy efficiency and thermal comfort within the private rented sector.	Ongoing implementation of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards carried out by the Private Sector Housing team throughout the year. This included landlord enforcement, promotion of available support, communications & training.
Household support fund support for energy bills/ fuel debt/heating repairs.	Household Support Fund (HSF) distributed through county and district schemes. A county wide scheme is run through Act on Energy, this provides funding for vulnerable & low income households to help with energy costs/ debts and heating repairs. In the 12 months to 31 March 2023, £132k of HSF was provided to 291 Wyre

	Forest households through Act on Energy. District funding has included support through WFDC which has included provision of energy support. <a href="#">WORCESTERSHIRE HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND - Act On Energy</a>
Affordable Warmth and Health- increase collaborative working on improving affordable warmth for those most vulnerable due to health conditions.	In winter 2022/23, a Warmth on Prescription scheme was piloted in Wyre Forest using Household Support Funding. Working through the Wyre Forest Collaborative, 22 people with health conditions exacerbated by cold and damp but struggling to pay heating bills were identified and provided with additional support for fuel costs, aiming to help reduce their need to call upon the NHS over this period.
Completion and publication of mandatory Home Energy Conservation Act report	Delayed by government- awaiting updated guidance.
<b>Building a low carbon economy</b>	<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Publicise available resource efficiency / low carbon support to local businesses and encourage uptake.	Ongoing promotion of the low carbon support in place by the NWEDR and H&S teams. These included the Worcestershire Business Energy Efficiency Programme, Public Sector Energy Efficiency Programme, Low Carbon Opportunities Programme and Carbon Ready Worcestershire. Details of current schemes on Achieving Net Zero are at <a href="#">Business support and grants   Worcestershire County Council</a>
Participate in county wide work on the low carbon economy sector	Community Renewal Funding projects in Worcestershire/ Wyre Forest developed including the Cleantech Bootcamp and Zero Carbon Ready Worcestershire
Investigate opportunities for renewable energy generation/ storage on council owned land.	The council is developing plans for a solar farm on council owned land. Currently, there is no grid capacity in the proposed area. Therefore, the council is pursuing a connection by private wire. It is anticipated that if this is successful a business case will be brought forward in 2024.  The council is also exploring opportunities to generate electricity from solar panels on council owned buildings (including Green Street Depot/Hub) and car park canopies subject to a business case and grid capacity. This feasibility work is due to conclude in 2024
<b>Transport and Infrastructure</b>	<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Ongoing support to the Wyre Forest Cycle Forum to strive for cycling infrastructure improvements and promote cycling opportunities.	The Forum are currently supporting the development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for the Wyre Forest Towns, which is led by Worcestershire County Council and Sustrans. This will help Worcestershire make the case for future investment in active travel through funding bids and by informing discussions with developers. <a href="http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/cycling">www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/cycling</a>



## Agenda Item No. 6 Appendix 1

Work with Cycle Forum to promote and develop short local cycle routes.	The members of the Wyre Forest Cycle Forum have produced a range of leaflets (funded by Wyre Forest District Council utilising previously agreed health funding) featuring short leisure cycle rides available in the local area. There are four routs available, as leaflets and online at <a href="#">Wyre Forest Cycling Forum - Home</a>
Implement planning policy as part of the Local Plan work- low carbon and renewable energy; sustainable transport , electric vehicle infrastructure.	The National Planning Policy Framework sets the foundation for considerations around climate change and sustainability. The new Local Plan builds on these principles providing policies that require or encourage developments to think responsibly about their impact and avoid or mitigate to achieve sustainable development across the District. Sustainability or climate change are found in a number of policies and visible outcomes can be achieved through their implementation in planning decisions. More detail on these policies are included in the new Wyre Forest Climate Plan.
Installation of electric vehicle charge points in WFDC owned car parks.	The council is currently in the process of procuring Electric Vehicle charging points for car parks in the district via the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Solutions (VCIS). The tender for this went out in October 2023 and is currently receiving bids. A chosen supplier is expected to be named in the new year.
Investigate opportunities for EV Taxi charging/ changing licensing policy to move away from fossil fuel vehicles.	Consultation carried out in 2023 on changing the licensing policy to move away from fossil fuel vehicles.
Reduce carbon emissions from vehicle fleet and staff travel.	The first electric fleet vehicle is now in operation and the Cycle to Work salary sacrifice scheme for staff was set up in 2023.
<b>Healthy and resilient communities</b>	<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Assist voluntary groups in promoting environmental initiatives e.g. Wyre Forest Repair Café, SustFest.	Ongoing assistance with promotion of initiatives such as <a href="#">Repair Cafes</a> and <a href="#">SustFest Wyre Forest</a>
Support and work with the Wyre Forest Green Alliance, including identification of new/ shared projects on climate change.	Wyre Forest District Council is an active member of the WFGA, a union of approximately 50 different member organisations, all of which are sustainability-oriented and are situated in the district. WFGA run a number of sustainability themed events throughout the year, most notably during “SustFest”, a two-week annual festival with a huge range of sustainability-themed activities and events occurring in springtime every year, which in 2023 included a launch event at Stourport Riverside Park.
Wyre Forest Wild project- develop activity on/ links between work on climate change and biodiversity/ tree planting	Wyre Forest District Council owns over 1000 acres of land, much of which is constituted by the 15 nature reserves and 8 parks under the council’s ownership. Wyre Forest Wild seeks to position the council as biocustodians of this land for generations by securing a green future for it. This shall be achieved through the establishment of three key revenue streams: Increasing visitor numbers and ecotourism (e.g. by improving active travel corridors between the reserves), the sale of biodiversity units to developers to help them achieve minimum 10% mandatory BNG (which comes into force in January 2024 for large developments), and the sale

	of carbon credits to companies hoping to offset some or all of their emissions. It is important to note that any carbon credits/biodiversity units that all sold shall be removed from the council's sequestration inventory so as to avoid the risk of 'double counting' sequestration capacity.
<b>Cross-cutting actions</b>	<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Deliver Carbon Literacy training (in house)	Carried forward to 2023/24
Ongoing communications and engagement through the Greener Wyre Forest campaign	Ongoing promotion through <a href="http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/greenerwyreforest">www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/greenerwyreforest</a>

Appendix two: WFDC Climate Change Action Plan 2024

Warmer, Healthier Homes	Who?	Expected Outcomes/ Timescale	Resources	Measures	Notes/ Further Info
Ongoing promotion and delivery of schemes to install domestic energy efficiency and renewable energy measures.	Health & Sustainability Private Sector Housing Act on Energy	Ongoing promotion and delivery throughout the year. 150 measures to be installed through the various schemes.	Act on Energy SLA in place. Internal funding used for fuel poverty assistance where external funding not available.		<a href="#">WFDC Energy Efficiency page</a>
Develop, co-ordinate and deliver energy efficiency schemes, utilising external funding where possible e.g. Energy Company Obligation (ECO) , Private Sector Housing and Sustainable Warmth funding for measures including low carbon heating, insulation, domestic renewable energy.	Health & Sustainability Private Sector Housing team Act on Energy Warmer Worcestershire Network for joint activity on energy efficiency/fuel poverty schemes.	Ongoing throughout the year.	HUGS2 funding (1.1m) Renewable Energy grants (£400k) Landlord grants (up to £100k)		<a href="#">WFDC Energy Efficiency page</a>  The <a href="#">Worcs. Statement of Intent</a> enables us to channel in ECO funds according to locally set criteria.
Deliver a Winter Warmth awareness campaign in Wyre Forest	Health & Sustainability	Autumn/ Winter 2023/24	Promoted using existing resources.		Promotion of the various energy schemes through newsletters, social media, partnership work.
Deliver a programme of energy advice/information/training sessions- online, by phone or face-to-face.	Act on Energy Health & Sustainability	1000 enquiries to be processed.	Act on Energy SLA in place		Act on Energy helpline 0800 988 2881

**Agenda Item No. 6 Appendix 2**

Household support fund support for energy bills/ fuel debt/heating repairs.	Act on Energy Health and Sustainability	Ongoing throughout the year.	Household Support Funding allocation.		<a href="#">WORCESTERSHIRE HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND - Act On Energy</a>
Affordable Warmth and Health-increase collaborative working on improving affordable warmth for those most vulnerable due to health conditions.	Health and Sustainability. Wyre Forest Collaborative	Ongoing throughout the year.	Within existing resources.		
Completion and publication of mandatory Home Energy Conservation Act report	Health and Sustainability Act on Energy	31 March 2023			
<b>Building a low carbon economy</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>		<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Publicise available resource efficiency / low carbon support to local businesses and encourage uptake.	Lead by Worcestershire County Council	Ongoing promotion throughout the year.	Externally funded		<a href="#">Support for Businesses   Worcestershire County Council</a>
Participate in county wide work on the low carbon economy sector	Health & Sustainability NWEDR	Ongoing	Staff time		
<b>Transport and Infrastructure</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>		<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Ongoing support to the Wyre Forest Cycle Forum to strive for cycling infrastructure improvements and promote cycling opportunities.	Health & Sustainability Wyre Forest Cycle Forum	Ongoing throughout the year	Staff time		
Implement planning policy as part of the Local Plan work- low carbon and renewable energy;	Health & Sustainability Planning Policy	Ongoing	Staff time		

sustainable transport , electric vehicle infrastructure.					
Installation of electric vehicle charge points in WFDC owned car parks.	Health and Sustainability. Community & Environment Services. Procurement.	2024	Funding agreed.		
Investigate opportunities for EV Taxi charging/ changing licensing policy to move away from fossil fuel vehicles.	WRS Health & Sustainability	Ongoing	External funding would be sought.		
<b>Healthy and resilient communities</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>		<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Assist voluntary groups in promoting environmental initiatives e.g. Wyre Forest Repair Café, SustFest.	Health & Sustainability	Ongoing	Existing resources.		
Support and work with the Wyre Forest Green Alliance, including identification of new/ shared projects on climate change.	Health & Sustainability WFGA	Ongoing	Staff time		
Wyre Forest Wild project- develop activity on/ links between work on climate change and biodiversity/ tree planting	Community & Environment	Ongoing	Staff time		
<b>Cross-cutting actions</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>		<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Deliver Carbon Literacy training (in house)	Health & Sustainability	Winter 2023/24	Existing resources/staff time		

**Agenda Item No. 6 Appendix 2**

Ongoing communications and engagement through the Greener Wyre Forest campaign	Health & Sustainability Communications.	Ongoing	Staff time.		<a href="http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/greenerwyreforest">www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/greenerwyreforest</a>
Actions through the Local Plan policies to increase renewable energy and chargepoints in new builds, improve access to open spaces / blue and green infrastructure, encourage water efficiency and reduce the risk of flooding	Planning team	Ongoing	Staff time		
<b>Carbon reduction actions</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>		<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Investigate opportunities for renewable energy generation/ storage on council owned land.	WFDC	Winter 2023/24	Funding in place for feasibility work		
Reduce carbon emissions from vehicle fleet and staff travel.	Head of Operational service. HR	Ongoing	Business case		
To support sustainable procurement through incorporating corporate social responsibility	Head of Resources and s151 Officer	Ongoing	Staff time		
Swimming Pool Support Fund – apply for funding to undertake capital works to reduce costs	Head of Operational Services	2024	Staff time		

# Wyre Forest District Council Climate Action and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024 - 2027



# Wyre Forest District Council Climate Action and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024 - 2027

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## Introduction

Climate change is fast becoming the defining challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and constitutes the largest existential threat to humankind (and indeed of most life on earth) in the current age. In response to this, Wyre Forest District Council has worked on tackling climate change and reducing carbon emissions through its own activities for number of years. The council, along with many other local authorities, declared a Climate Emergency on 22 May 2019. This Climate Change Action and Carbon Reduction Plan pulls together activities across the council and some of its partners to tackle climate change, increase resilience and reduce carbon emissions. It considers both existing actions and new projects that could be delivered over the next few years until 2027.

## Climate change

Climate change is primarily caused by the anthropogenic release of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into the atmosphere, which traps the heat of the sun (insolation) into the atmosphere via a process called the enhanced greenhouse effect. Records show that earth's temperatures have risen since the Industrial Revolution in Britain. The UK is already affected by rising temperatures. The most recent decade (2008-2017) has been on average 0.8 °C warmer than the 1961-1990 average.

The environmental and economic costs of climate change are increasing. Along with warming at the earth's surface, many other changes in the climate are occurring such as warming oceans, melting polar ice and glaciers, rising sea levels, and more extreme weather events.

Across the world we are already seeing devastating consequences from more frequent and intense droughts, storms, heat waves, rising sea levels, and melting glaciers upon people's lives and livelihoods as well as whole communities and ecosystems. As climate change worsens, dangerous weather events are becoming more frequent or severe.

## Greenhouse gases

Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in Britain (c.1750), the anthropogenic (human-induced) release of greenhouse gases has caused the level of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere to rise by approximately 50%. Global average atmospheric carbon dioxide levels have risen from 315.98 ppm (parts per million) in 1959 to 418.56ppm for the year 2022. The primary causes of this rise in CO<sub>2</sub> levels are the direct combustion of fossil fuels (for the likes of transport and manufacturing), land use change (especially deforestation), agriculture, and overconsumption.

Carbon dioxide is not the only greenhouse gas (GHG), nor is it the only contributor to the enhanced greenhouse effect. Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) is approximately 56 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> in terms of its global warming potential after 20 years in the atmosphere, but typically stays in the atmosphere for a much shorter period than CO<sub>2</sub> (12 years compared with 300 – 1,000 years). A major cause of methane emissions is industrialised animal agriculture, especially that involving ruminant livestock such as cattle and sheep. Other greenhouse gases contributing to the enhanced greenhouse effect include nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) and the fluorinated gases.

This climate strategy shall be primarily (but by no means exclusively) concerned with the reduction of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for which the council responsible, as well increasing the council's potential for the removal of carbon from the atmosphere (sequestration) through strategies such as ecosystem regeneration.

Where possible, emissions figures are expressed in metric tonnes (1,000kg) of carbon dioxide equivalent (TCO<sub>2</sub>e) throughout this report, as this is the internationally standardised way of measuring and comparing emissions. However, this is not always possible and/or convenient, therefore emissions figures will also be expressed in kilotons of carbon dioxide equivalent (ktCO<sub>2</sub>e) occasionally, with a kiloton being equal to 1,000 metric tonnes.

## **Carbon Neutrality vs Net Zero**

Although often used interchangeably, carbon neutrality and net zero do not have the same meaning. Both terms refer to balancing out of any existing emissions through sequestration (removing carbon from the atmosphere via the photosynthesis of plants) and offsetting projects. However, with carbon neutrality, the emphasis is placed on offsetting emissions using strategies such as tree planting or the installation of a solar farm. With regards to net zero, the emphasis is placed on reducing emissions as much as possible, and only using sequestration as a last resort in order to offset any remaining emissions.

## International, Regional and Local Context

### United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals for the entire world. They were written to cover the period 2015 - 2030. This climate action and carbon reduction plan is directly related to goals 7, 11, 12, and 13, and indirectly related to goals 6, 8, 9, 14, and 15. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are:

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions.
17. Partnerships for the goal



For more information on each of the SDGs, visit the United Nations' website <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

## The international context: The Paris Agreement

Prior to the 2015 Paris Climate Accords, 186 out of 195 countries submitted Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). These were a set of pledges that stated how each individual country would reduce its carbon emissions. In December 2015, the UK and 195 other countries agreed to aim to limit anthropogenic mean global temperature rise to 1.5C above preindustrial levels. This is known as the Paris Agreement as it occurred as part of Conference of the Parties 21 (COP21) in Paris. To achieve this, global emissions must be cut in half in the period 2015 – 2030. Upon approval of the Paris agreement, the INDCs dropped the ‘intended’ part to become Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). These NDCs have been updated every five years, with the most recent round of updates occurring in 2022.

The Paris Agreement is significant not least because of its inclusion of representatives of non-state entities, with everything from businesses to regional governments included. As of October 2023, only three countries (Iran, Libya, and Yemen) have not yet ratified the agreement. However, according to climate watchdog Climate Action Tracker, not a single G20 country is on track to meet its commitments established at COP21.

## The national context: UK commitment

The UK is responsible for just over 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, but accounts for just 0.84% of global population. Therefore, the UK is overrepresented with regards to its share of global greenhouse gas contributions. Furthermore, if we look at cumulative carbon emissions in the period 1750 (the approximate beginning of the Industrial Revolution) to 2021, the UK ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in the world with 78,500,000,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (78.5 billion metric tonnes of carbon dioxide) behind only the USA, China, Russia, and Germany. It also ranks well ahead of India (whose cumulative figure is 57.1 billion tCO<sub>2</sub>e), despite India having a much higher population both historically and in the present day (1.4 billion people compared to the UK’s 67 million). Therefore, as the UK has historically contributed so much to the global greenhouse gas budget, it follows that the UK should bear some responsibility in reducing its emissions. The UK has set its own target of becoming net zero by 2050. This was made legally binding by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019. This act stipulates the need for an emissions reduction of 100% relative to 1990 levels. If the UK fails to achieve net zero by 2050, it shall remain a carbon positive country, as its total greenhouse gas emissions will outstrip the amount of carbon the country is sequestering. Therefore, this excess of emissions will have to be offset by other countries– a situation that should be avoided at all costs.

## How Wyre Forest district compares regionally and nationally

Figure 1 demonstrates how the per capita emissions of the Wyre Forest district compare regionally and nationally. As shown in the graph, the per capita emissions of Wyre Forest district were 7.1 tCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2005, which was 2.2 tCO<sub>2</sub>e lower than the Worcestershire average of 9.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, and 2.9tCO<sub>2</sub>e lower than the England average of 10 tCO<sub>2</sub>e per capita for the year 2005. In the period 2005-2021, per capita emissions fell to 4.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e per capita for Wyre Forest district, which is still 1.7 tCO<sub>2</sub>e below the Worcestershire average (for 2021) of 6tCO<sub>2</sub>e per capita, and 1.2tCO<sub>2</sub>e below the England average of 5.5 tCO<sub>2</sub>e per capita.

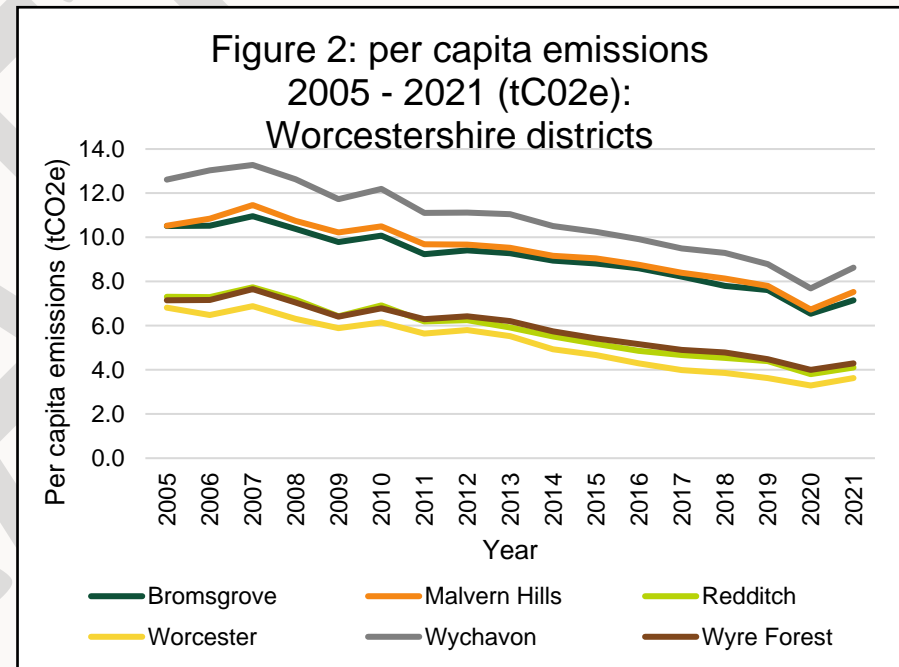
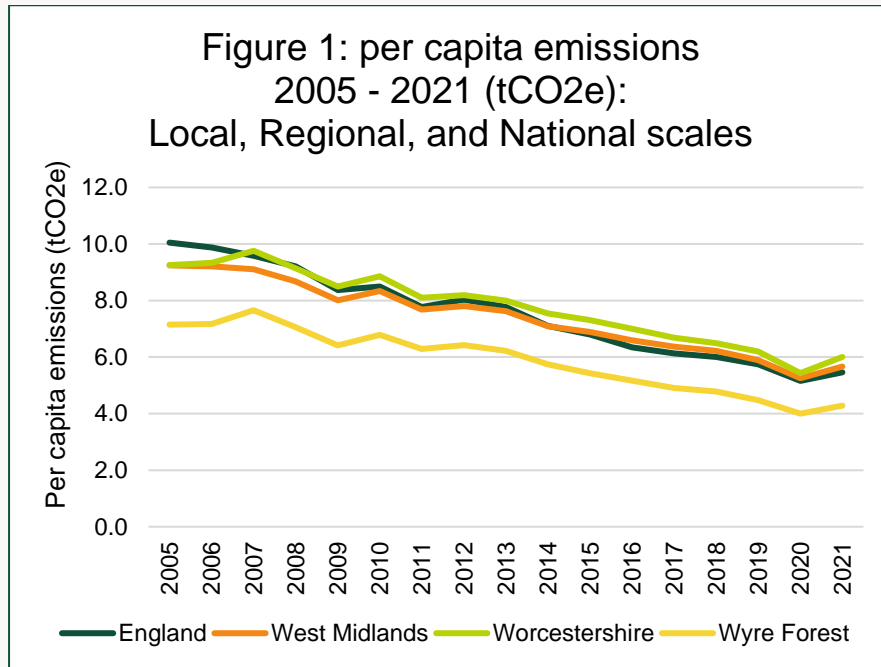


Figure 1 Local, Regional and National scales of per capita emissions 2005 - 2021

Figure 2 Worcestershire districts per capita emissions 2005 - 2021

Figure 2 illustrates per capita emissions for all six districts of the county of Worcestershire in tCO<sub>2</sub>e. As shown in the graph, the per capita emissions of the Wyre Forest district have consistently been around 3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e lower than the per capita emissions for Wychavon, Malvern Hills and Bromsgrove in the period 2005-2021. In the same time frame, Wyre Forest has performed only slightly worse than Worcester and Redditch in terms of per capita emissions, with the per capita figure for Wyre Forest always remaining less than 1 tCO<sub>2</sub>e higher than the corresponding

figures from Redditch and Worcester City. The graph also demonstrates that the general trend in per capita emissions is that of a fall, with a slight rise since 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a trend that is reflected both regionally and nationally.

Source: GOV.UK 2021

## 2023 Climate scorecard scores

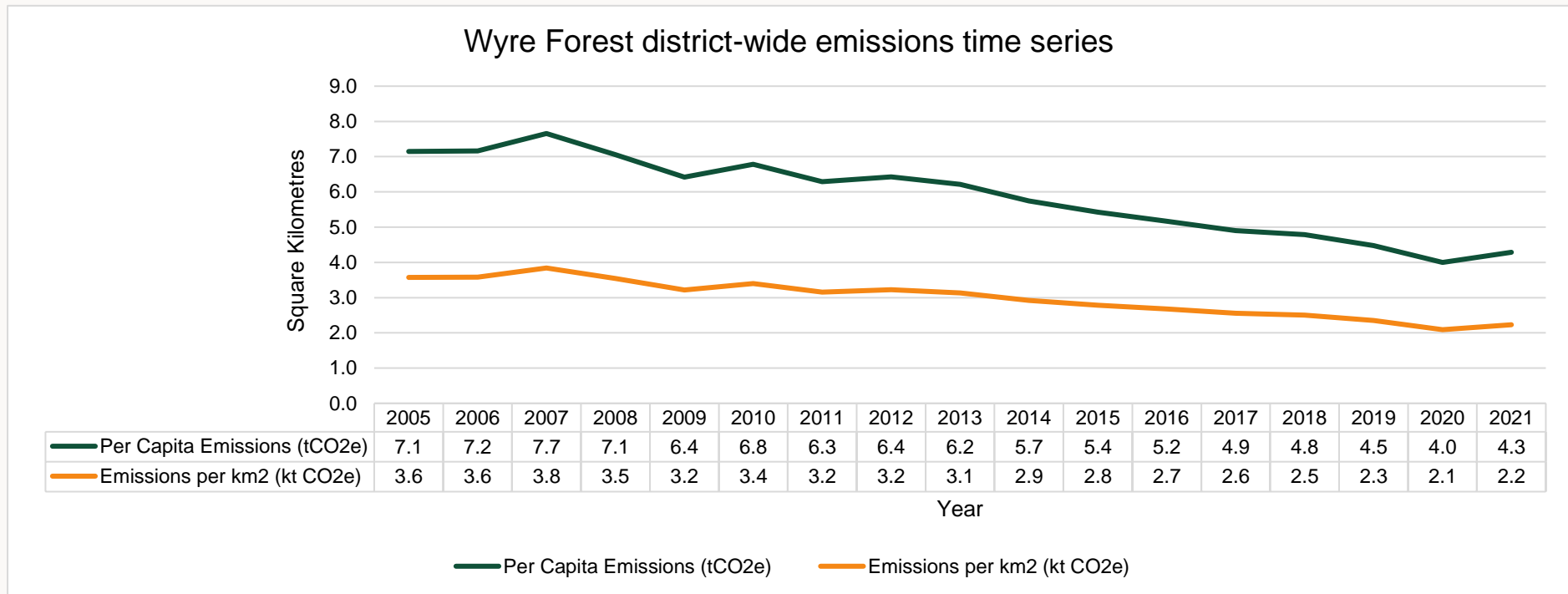
Every year the climate action charity Climate Emergency UK assess the climate credentials of all local authorities in the UK and publish their findings in a set of scores known as climate scorecards. In these scorecards, every local authority is assessed using a methodology that is tailored to the responsibilities of that council and is given an overall score for each methodology section. The methodology sections on which councils are assessed are as follows: Buildings and Heating; Transport; Planning and Land Use; Governance and Finance; Biodiversity; Collaboration and Engagement; and Waste Reduction and Food. You can find out more information on the Council Climate Action Scorecard website <https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/sections/>.

The most recent round of scorecards was released on 18 October 2023. Wyre Forest District Council received an overall score 28%. This was slightly below the national average district council score of 29%, and slightly above the average for Worcestershire districts of (27.5%). Please note that different sections receive different weightings within the methodology. Therefore, averaging out a council’s scores for the different sections will not equate to the overall score for that council. You can see how we compare to the other districts in Worcestershire by visiting the Council Climate Action Scorecard website <https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/scoring/district/>

	<b>Total average score</b>	<b>Buildings and Heating</b>	<b>Transport</b>	<b>Planning and Land Use</b>	<b>Governance and Finance</b>	<b>Biodiversity</b>	<b>Collaboration and Engagement</b>	<b>Waste Reduction and Food</b>
<b>Our score</b>	28%	58%	-4%	10%	18%	10%	45%	15%
<b>National district average score</b>	29%	42%	9%	23%	24%	22%	42%	23%

Figure 3 Council Climate Action Scorecard results for Wyre Forest District Council, 18 October 2023.

## The local context: Wyre Forest district



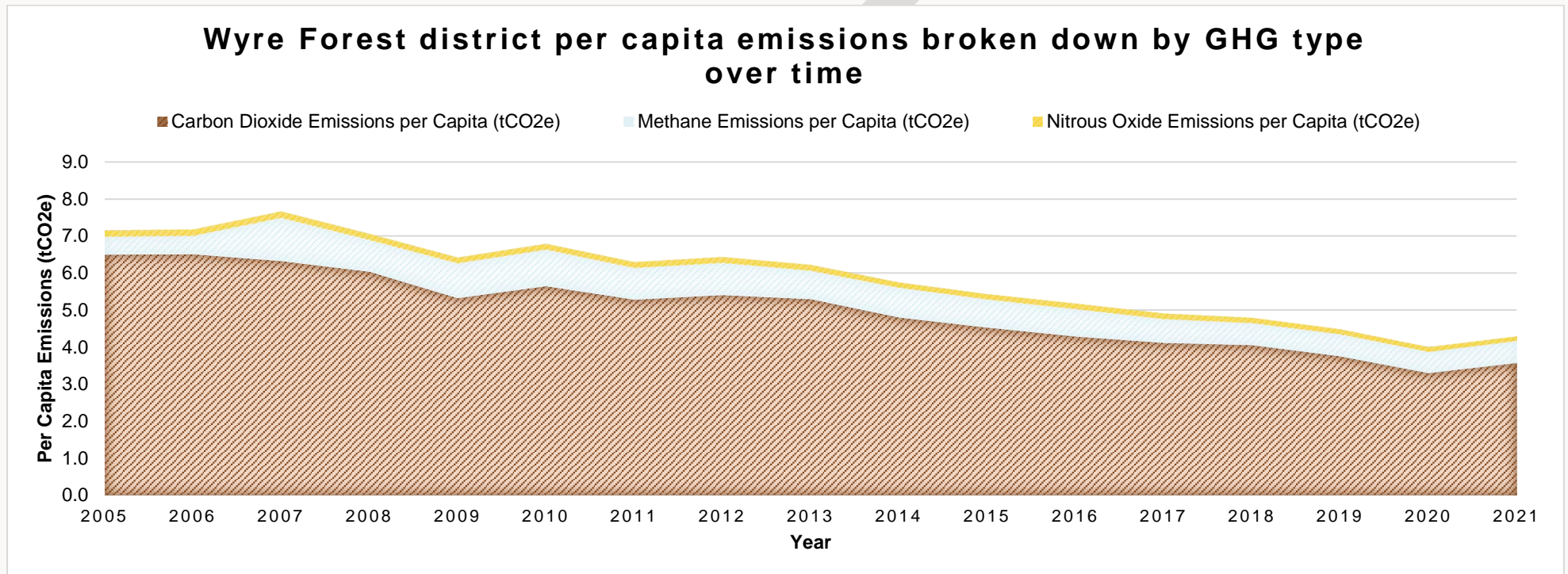
Data Source: GOV.UK, 2021

The above line graph depicts the per capita and per square kilometre emissions for the entire Wyre Forest district in the period 2005 – 2021. To ensure that both variables can be plotted on the same chart, per capita emissions are depicted in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per head of population (tCO<sub>2</sub>e per capita), whilst per square kilometre emissions are depicted in kilotons of carbon dioxide equivalent per square kilometre of the district’s area (kt CO<sub>2</sub>e km<sup>2</sup>). As shown in the graph, there is a relatively consistent fall in the emissions figures for both variables. Per capita emissions fell from just over 7 tCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2005 to just over 4 tCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2021. In the same period, per square kilometre emissions for the district fell from a shade under 4 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e km<sup>2</sup> in 2005 to just over 2 ktCO<sub>2</sub>e km<sup>2</sup> in 2021.

Combatting climate change is about more than just reducing carbon dioxide emissions. As stated earlier, methane is far more potent than carbon dioxide in terms of its ability to enhance the greenhouse effect and trigger global heating. Therefore, the stacked line graph below breaks down the Wyre Forest District’s per capita emissions by Greenhouse Gas (GHG) type. Most of the reduction in the district’s per capita



GHG emissions is accounted for by the fall in per capita carbon dioxide emissions, with per capita methane emissions and per capita nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) emissions remaining relatively stable in the period 2005 - 2021, especially N<sub>2</sub>O emissions. The most recent per capita emissions figure for the Wyre Forest district (for the year 2021) was 4.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e per resident. Extrapolated out (multiplied by the population of the district), this equates to a gross emissions figure of 436,500 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.



Source: GOV.UK, 2021



# The hyper-local context: mapping the emissions of Wyre Forest District Council

## Conversion factors

A conversion factor is a figure that is multiplied by another variable (such as fuel consumption) to give an estimated carbon dioxide equivalent figure. Where possible, the Greenhouse Gas Accounting tool produced by Local Partnerships and the Local Government Association (LGA) has been used for emissions conversion factors as this is the standard conversion tool for UK local authorities. Where a variable is not covered by the Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool, the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) 2023 Emissions Factors have been used instead.

## Scope 1 and 2 emissions

Scope 1 emissions are those that arise from the direct combustion of fossil fuels, and thus encompasses the burning of natural gas across all council buildings fitted with gas boilers, and the combustion of fossil fuels in council fleet vehicles with internal combustion engines. Scope 2 emissions are those that arise indirectly from the production of electricity that is purchased from the grid by a Local Authority. Scope 3 emissions are those that arise indirectly from procurement and the supply chain of goods and services purchased by the council.

## Energy tariffs

The council is on a 100% green energy tariff, supplied by npower. There is a contract in place for this financial year 2023-24 for Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO) at a premium of 1.25p/kWh across all council-occupied premises (admin buildings, museum, car parks, public conveniences etc.). This is 100% renewable energy. The council's Gas is supplied by Corona Energy. The council purchased its estimated gas usage for the 13-month period (01/03/2023 – 31/03/2024) at a premium of 2.6p/kWh. Please note that renewable energy is not necessarily emissions free, as biofuels qualify as renewable and carbon neutral (since they can be regrown relatively quickly), but also have emissions since they must be combusted in order to heat a building or generate electricity.

## Emissions from council-occupied buildings

The following table is for all council-owned properties that are currently occupied (whole or in part) by Wyre Forest District Council. Each council-owned building has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) or a Display Energy Certificate (DEC), depending on building type. These are calculated using the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP). All properties get a rating ranging from A (0-25) to G (over 150). The higher the score, the less energy efficient and the more environmentally damaging the property is. Note that EPCs are valid for 10 years after the date of issue, whilst DEC's are only valid for a year from the date of issue, and thus should be renewed annually.

Building Name	Address	DEC Rating	Annual Carbon Emissions (tCO2e per year)
<b>Bewdley Guildhall and Museum</b>	13 Load Street, Bewdley DY12 2AE	C - 65	66.34
<b>Wyre Forest House</b>	Finepoint Way, Kidderminster DY11 7WF	E - 119	396.73
<b>Green Street Depot and Hub</b>	Green Street, Kidderminster DY10 1HA	D - 96	92.08
<b>2 - 3 New Street</b>	Stourport, DY13 8UN	F - 133	5.9

Total annual CO2 emissions from council-occupied buildings: 561.05 tCO2e

### Fleet emissions

The total fuel consumption for the entire council fleet was **260,495.21 litres** of 100% mineral diesel for 2022 (the most recent year for which a full dataset was available), a fall of over 10,000 litres relative to 2021 figures.

The fuel consumption figure was multiplied by the conversion factor for 100% mineral diesel. This resulted in the total fleet emissions for the calendar year 2022 being **703.02 tCO2e**.

### Scope 3 emissions

Scope 3 emissions are those that arise indirectly from supply chains, procurement, staff travel, and investments/securities. According to the Local Government Association, scope 3 emissions typically account for around 70-80% of the total emissions of a given Local Authority. Therefore, it is vitally important that they are recorded as accurately as possible. By working out which areas of our supply chains and procurement networks are the greatest emitters, it is possible to identify the emissions hotspots of the council. Knowing this then allows a council to prioritise which aspects of its operations should be decarbonised first.

Emissions from leased out buildings are included in appendix one. The total annual emissions from leased out buildings is 1787.37 TCO2e.

## Business travel: grey fleet mileage claims

According to 2021 Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census data, 59.9% of people in our district travel to work by car or van. This is far above the England average of 44.5%.

A total of 15,250 miles were claimed for the financial year 2022-23. The council does not require staff to record vehicle type or fuel type on a mileage claim so the conversion factor for “average medium car (unknown fuel)” was used, as this is the default conversion factor to use when the two aforementioned variables are not known. This resulted in a grey fleet mileage claims emissions figure of **4.19 tCO<sub>2</sub>e**

## Business travel: rail

Whilst rail travel is recorded via rail expense claims, the origin and destination stations are not a requirement. Therefore, we have estimated the carbon emissions associated with rail travel claims using a spend-based factor. Please note that, for the purposes of display, the following calculations have been rounded to two decimal places.

The distance from Kidderminster to Birmingham New Street by rail is 19 miles (30.58km). When multiplied by the conversion factor for UK National Rail (0.04), this gives a figure of 1.08 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e.

The average cost of a rail ticket from Kidderminster to Birmingham New Street (without a Railcard) using The TrainLine app is £8.20.

Therefore, using these figures, we can calculate an approximate spend-based factor by dividing the emissions figure by the ticket cost, to give a conversion factor of 0.00013224022 tCO<sub>2</sub>e for every pound spent on UK National Rail

The total amount of money claimed via rail expenses for all employees of Wyre Forest District Council for the financial year 2022-23 was £2,638.76. Using the spend-based factor, this equates to **0.35 tCO<sub>2</sub>e** total annual emissions for rail travel.

Rather than using a spend-based factor in the future, the council explore the option of asking staff to record the carbon emissions of their journey (in TCO<sub>2</sub>e) as recorded by train ticket apps such as TrainLine or TrainPal.

## Business travel: air

No business travel by air has occurred in the previous or current financial year, and there are no plans for it to occur at any point in the future.

## Pension funds

Wyre Forest District Council contributes to the Worcestershire Pension Fund, itself a part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Central Pool. The LGPS is one of the largest pension schemes in the UK with over 6 million members. In the period March 2020 – May 2022, Worcestershire Pension Fund reduced the carbon footprint of its total equities by 13.63%. However, financed emissions have increased by 5.51% from the baseline in this period. This trend was also reflected in the total value of fossil fuel investments in this period, which rose from £122 million to £149 million in the period 2022-23. Wyre Forest District Council has limited ability to influence investment choices by the pension fund, the most recent consultation exercise was undertaken in August 2023 inviting staff to complete an online survey relating to the investment choices. For a more in-depth explanation of Worcestershire Pension Fund's investments, please see Appendix Two.

## Hotel usage

The council regularly pays for Wyre Forest residents to go into hotels or bed and breakfasts as a form of emergency temporary accommodation. **The total spent on this for financial year 2022-23 was £174,083. Using the average price of a single room in Kidderminster, this equates to 4,353 nights.** Using DEFRA's GHG conversion factor for UK hotels (10.4 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e per night), this totals 45.26 tCO<sub>2</sub>e hotel/guest house emissions.

## Sequestration

Wyre Forest District Council commissioned a consultancy firm to conduct an evaluation of the sequestration capacity of all council owned land. The firm divided council owned land into six zones. Three of the six zones have been evaluated so far. The results are as follows:

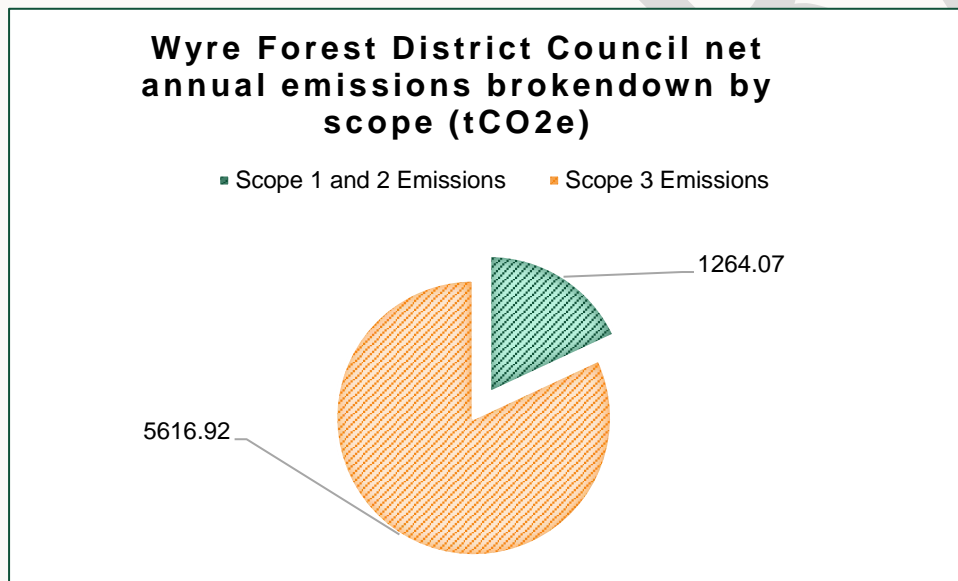
- Zones 1-3 account for 46.7% of the council's total green space.
- Carbon storage in soil and vegetation across the 3 zones is 30,986 tonnes, equating to 147.1 tonnes per hectare. This is slightly lower when compared to the initial district wide analysis which predicted 165.87 tonnes of carbon storage per hectare. It is estimated that the total rate of carbon storage for all of the council's green space will be around 66,351 tonnes.
- Carbon storage in vegetation only is 17,416 tonnes across the 3 zones, equating to 82.69 tonnes per hectare. A slightly lower figure when compared to the initial district wide analysis of 94.25 tonnes per hectare. It is estimated that the total rate of carbon storage for all council green space will be around 37,293 tonnes.
- Carbon capture across the 3 zones is 531 tonnes, equating to 2.52 per hectare. Rates for carbon capture are largely similar when compared to the initial district wide analysis which estimated 2.36 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> captured per hectare per year.

- Across the 3 zones, 35.5% of the habitats are classified as poor, if these were enhanced to a moderate condition there is an uplift of 167.5 biodiversity units (61.2%). This equates to an average of 2.24 units per hectare, a higher rate compared to initial district wide analysis which estimated 1.67 biodiversity units per hectare.
- Across the 3 zones, 47.9% of the habitats are classified as moderate, if these were enhanced to a good condition there is an uplift of 222.7 biodiversity units (16.7%). This equates to an average of 2.21 units per hectare, a higher rate compared to initial district wide analysis which estimated 1.63 biodiversity units per hectare. Across the 3 zones, 16.6% of the habitats are classified as good, generating 569.5 biodiversity units.

Our study projects the total rate of annual sequestration for all our green space to be approximately 1,137 TCO2e per annum.

### Net annual emissions of Wyre Forest District Council

- Total Scope 1 and 2 Emissions: 1264.07 tCO2e
- Total Scope 3 Emissions: 5616.92 tCO2e
- Total Projected Annual Sequestration: 1137 tCO2e
- Net Annual Emissions: 5743.99 tCO2



## **Energy efficiency schemes**

### **Refurbishment of Green Street Depot and the Hub**

The Council repurposed a former pumping station and sewerage treatment works to act as the base for frontline council operations. The entire buildings were retrofitted to improve their energy efficiency schemes. This was achieved courtesy of a number of strategies, namely: the upgrading of all lighting to Light Emitting Diodes (LED) with motion sensors; the replacement of inefficient heating systems; and the upgrading of insulation.

### **Improvement of Wyre Forest House**

The Council installed a ground source heat pump to assist with the heating of its headquarters at Wyre Forest House on Finepoint Way, Kidderminster.

### **Act on Energy**

Act on Energy is a charity that provides impartial energy advice to residents and small businesses across Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Coventry, Solihull, and Birmingham. Wyre Forest District Council works on various initiatives with Act on Energy to tackle fuel poverty and promote energy efficiency. Examples of initiatives include the Home Upgrade Grant Scheme (HUGS) and the Worcestershire Household Support Fund. The council also works with Act on Energy to raise awareness about energy efficiency support, including grants and fuel bill advice through their free helpline and energy advice surgeries at community events. Act on Energy also carry out training on energy issues for front line workers and volunteers, on behalf of the council.

### **Home Upgrade Grant Scheme phase 2**

The Home Upgrade Grant Scheme (HUGS) Phase 2 is a grant scheme specifically designed for off-grid gas homes. This encompasses homes that use Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), coal, and other solid fuels (such as wood) for the purpose of heating their home. Eligible properties include those with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of D, E, F, or G, and a pre-tax combined income of less than £31,000 per annum. The government has outlined postcodes in which all properties are automatically eligible for HUGS phase 2. The Council has been awarded £1.155 million from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's (DESNZ) for the Home Upgrade Grant Scheme to deliver works to 65 homes. In addition, we have a renewable energy grant which can provide additional measures to support HUGS2, such as providing battery storage for electricity generated through solar panels.

## Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) scheme came into force for England and Wales in April 2018. It stipulates that all private rented and non-domestic properties must be upgraded such that they achieve an EPC of at least Band E. Therefore, properties with an EPC Band of F or G must be upgraded. Where possible, the government wants to upgrade as many of these properties as possible to EPC Band C. Wyre Forest District Council works with landlords to provide MEES advice. For the financial year 2022-23, the council issued a total of 48 Notices: 18 of which were Penalty Notices (in relation to 15 properties), and 30 of which were Compliance Notices. The council expects to issue over 50 notices by financial year 2024-25, and in subsequent financial years also.

## Renewable Energy Grants

The Council provides grants to landlords to improve energy efficiency and thermal comfort in the private rented sector and renewable energy grants to support homeowners switch to renewable energy generation primarily in off grid properties.

## Raising awareness of climate change

The Council plays an important role in raising awareness of climate change and promoting activities everyone can get involved in including through the Greener Wyre Forest brand. This includes promoting awareness of Act on Energy, available energy efficiency schemes and seasonal specific campaigns like staying warm in winter. Work is undertaken with businesses through advice given by the North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration team who also promote energy efficiency measures and grants.

## Carbon Literacy training

Carbon Literacy training provides an awareness of the carbon dioxide costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community, and organisational basis. Wyre Forest District Council will be carrying out Carbon Literacy training for our staff and councillors to increase knowledge and understanding and to engage all in taking account of climate change impacts within job roles.

## Access to green space

Policy DM.8 of the Wyre Forest District Council's Local Plan (2016 - 2036) states that for major developments the provision of on-site open space should have regard to the following accessibility standards:



Playing pitches should be situated “within 1.2km of dwellings or within a 20-minute drive in the rural areas of the district”. The situation of green space near to where people live can reduce car usage and increases the possibility of people using that green space for recreation, exercise/sport, and mindfulness.

## **Roadside verges**

The council has a Service-Level Agreement (SLA) with Worcestershire County Council to maintain the highway verges in the district. In support of the Worcestershire Pollinator Strategy 2020-2025, the Council are now mowing their sites less and creating a new wildflower meadow on a former golf course site.

## **Trees**

Part 10.32 of the District Council’s Local Plan views ancient woodland and veteran trees as an irreplaceable and intrinsic feature of Wyre Forest’s ecological network. The National Planning Policy Framework advises that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists (paragraph 180c). In addition, landscape schemes must demonstrate that they will provide adequate room for the growth of existing trees, hedgerows, and plants.

Policy SP.28 of the Local Plan states that the existing Green Infrastructure network will be safeguarded from inappropriate development, and that all greenfield sites exceeding 1 hectare (gross) must consist of at least 40% Green Infrastructure. This figure is 20% for greenfield sites smaller than 1 hectare but larger than 0.2 hectares.

## **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)**

In the Council’s adopted Local Plan (2016 - 2036), Policy SP.23 (Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity) sets out the expectation for proposed developments to deliver measurable net gains in biodiversity through the promotion and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of legally protected and priority species populations. This is in accordance with the most recent National Planning Policy Framework which sets out that, where possible, BNG should be maximised for all new developments. It does not set out a numerical BNG threshold that must be met. However, this is subject to change. A minimum of 10% BNG will become a legal requirement for all new major developments as of January 2024 (April 2024 for small developments which fall within a set threshold).



## Shared transport schemes: Dial-A-Ride

Wyre Forest Dial-A-Ride is an initiative that focuses on providing shared transport for residents with reduced mobility across the district. The Council provides a portacabin for the use of Dial-A-Ride at its Green Street Depot. The Council also supports Dial-A-Ride via regular grants.

## Active travel: Cycle Forum

The Wyre Forest Cycle Forum aims to promote cycling within the area. The Forum acts as a facilitator and consultee for all matters relating to cycling. Members work to raise awareness about cycling and to ensure that new infrastructure for cyclists is convenient and safe to use. Members of the Forum include local cyclists, cycling organisations and the local authorities; new members are always welcome. Recent activities have included development of cycling route maps, promotion of cycling at events and running an Adult Cycle Training Scheme. The Forum is currently supporting the development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Wyre Forest towns.

## New developments

Table 2.0.1 of Wyre Forest District Council's current Local Plan (<https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/localplan>) establishes planning for the impact(s) of climate change as a key issue facing Wyre Forest district in the context of the consideration of new developments.

## Flood risk and mitigation

Much of the Wyre Forest district is classed as being vulnerable to flooding (much of which is enhanced and intensified by climate change), in particular the town of Bewdley (which lies on the River Severn), but also the towns of Stourport-on-Severn (which lies at the confluence of the Rivers Severn and Stour) and Kidderminster (which lies on the River Stour). Policy SP.31 of the Local Plan states that planning permission for development will only be granted where:

1. "The development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce overall flood risk in the area and beyond. This will entail evidence showing consideration of wider benefits and opportunities, including from cumulative impact assessment, to help ensure development will be safe and reduce flood risk in the catchment where possible."
2. "The natural watercourse and flood plain profiles are not adversely affected. Where practicable, any culverted (piped) watercourses will be opened up to improve drainage and flood flows. Proposals involving the creation of new culverts will not be permitted unless essential to the provision of access."

In addition, “A minimum 8m access strip is provided adjacent to watercourses for maintenance purposes. It should be appropriately landscaped for biodiversity benefits. The width of the strip may be reduced for smaller ordinary watercourses, where agreed by the Local Planning Authority.”

## **Water efficiency**

Policy SP.29 (Water Conservation and Efficiency) of Wyre Forest District Council’s Local Plan (2016-2036) states that: “the Council will require developments to demonstrate: The incorporation of design features that will reduce water consumption. Proposals for residential development will be expected to demonstrate that a water efficiency standard of 110 litres per person per day can be achieved. New developments will also be expected to demonstrate design features that will support recycling / re-use of water through measures such as rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling, especially where a large demand for water is predicted such as industrial processes or irrigation.”

## **On-site Renewable Energy Generation (including micro-generation)**

Policy SP.37 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy) of the council’s Local Plan (2016-2036) states that “All new developments, and where possible redevelopment of existing buildings, should consider location, design, siting, and orientation to maximise the use of natural heat and light and the potential for renewable energy micro-generation. Where possible, in appropriate locations, solar panels should be fitted. All new residential, employment or commercial developments should include electric vehicle charging points.”

## **Sustainable development case studies**

### **Lea Castle Village**

The proposed Lea Castle Village development, situated to the northeast of Kidderminster, is a good example of sustainable planning in action. It is a planned development of 1400 new dwellings. In addition to easing housing and accommodation pressures in the district, the development aims to work in relative harmony with nature, by retaining existing woodland and hedgerows. This will be accompanied by the planting of native trees and shrubs to ensure the provision of a substantial green buffer and green infrastructure in and around the proposed site. An area of acid grassland shall be created. Acid grassland is an increasingly rare and ecologically important habitat that was once abundant in the area of the Wyre Forest district. Much of the Wyre Forest district falls within National Character Area (NCA) 66 – Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau. In the profile of this NCA, the area now comprising the Wyre Forest district is described as being once abundant in heathland and acid grassland, therefore this is a key native habitat for this area that should be regenerated where possible. This will also have ramifications for the district’s net zero ambitions as acid grassland is particularly effective at sequestering carbon and can be an important carbon sink. Furthermore,

allotments and a community orchard, both of which improve local sourcing of food and reduce food miles, shall be provided. With regards to active travel and sustainable transportation, pedestrian and cycle links shall be created connecting the development to the neighbouring village of Cookley as well as Broadwaters, an area at the north-eastern edge of Kidderminster.

For these plans, the Wyre Forest District Council staff working on this project with Homes England were accredited with a Building with Nature Design Award on 11 June 2021.

### **Comberton Road Development (Woven Oaks)**

This is a proposed development of around 1400 new dwellings that has just completed its consultation phase. The plans also involve the construction of a community hub, primary school, retail outlets, sports pitches, and potentially a GP surgery. The site will be connected with existing developments via the establishment of pedestrian and cycle paths. Local bus routes shall be diverted through the proposed development to ensure public transport provision for those without a private automobile. Furthermore, allotments or a community orchard shall be added, whilst the natural features of the site (and its hedgerows) shall be retained where possible to retain in accordance with Kidderminster East Green Infrastructure Concept Statement. Finally, a linear wetland nature reserve shall be created along the tributary (of the Hoo Brook) that runs along the Western edge of the site. In addition, reducing flood risk and improving the buffer zone between the development and the water courses, this proposed wetland shall provide another area for recreational use, and potentially also for natural play via the provision of trim trails on site.

For these plans, the proposed development was accredited with a Building With Nature Design Award on 22 July 2022.

### **Sustainable procurement**

Wyre Forest District Council's most recent Procurement Strategy <https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/procurement-strategy> has a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) section that cites "prioritising lower cost over greener alternatives" as a potential risk to the sustainability of a contract. The procurement strategy also goes on to cite the inclusion of environmental considerations to reduce the carbon footprint as a key action to take in procurement exercises. The environmental and social value element of a tender evaluation will typically constitute upwards of 10% of the total score but is becoming more prominent as time goes by. This is aided by the division of larger tenders into separate lots.

## **Midlands Net Zero Hub (regional collaboration)**

Both Wyre Forest District Council and the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership are partner to the Midlands Net Zero Hub. This is an organisation run by Nottingham City Council and funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero that seeks to encourage decarbonisation projects across the East Midlands and West Midlands regions. The council regularly meets with a representative from the Midlands Net Zero Hub to discuss the progress of the council's decarbonisation, and to discuss the potential for new renewable energy projects in the region.

## **Waste reduction and the circular economy**

Whilst Wyre Forest's recycling rate rose marginally from 33.6 to 33.7% from 2021 to 2022, the figure has since fallen back to 33.07%. Annual household waste for the district was 545kg per household in 2022.

### **Food waste collection**

The council is currently collaborating with the other Worcestershire districts to establish a kerbside food waste collection service in 2025.

### **Single use plastics elimination**

Both Kidderminster and Bewdley have been officially awarded the status of Plastic Free Communities in progress. Single use plastics are carbon intensive in terms of their manufacture and are also notoriously hard to dispose of once finished with. They can take anything from 20 to 500 years to break down. Furthermore, plastic never truly biodegrades – it only photodegrades, meaning it remains in the ecosystem in the form of microplastics. This becomes increasingly problematic for organisms higher up on the food chain (including humans). This is due to a process called biomagnification whereby increasingly larger quantities of microplastics are concentrated in the organisms at each successively higher level of the food chain. Therefore, Wyre Forest District Council unanimously agreed to the passing of a motion banning the use of single use plastics across all council occupied properties at the Full Council meeting held July 2019.

### **Refill**

The Refill scheme, an initiative that aims to reduce plastic waste by increasing the availability of water stations where people can refill reusable bottles. Wyre Forest District Council has worked closely with Refill to help establish water stations at a large number of commercial and non-commercial locations across the district.

## What we are doing

The following section details actions the council is currently taking to help reduce the carbon footprint of the Wyre Forest district and mitigate against climate change. Where investment is required, these projects will be subject to a business case.

### Renewable energy and energy efficiency

#### Swimming Pool Support Fund

Wyre Forest District Council has submitted a formal bid of £60,000 under Phase 2 of the Swimming Pool Support Fund for the 25m pool at Wyre Forest Leisure Centre in Kidderminster. Under this, the council has applied for two capital items:

- The first item the council has applied for is a pool water waste recovery system to reduce the amount of energy required to heat replacement cold water following backwashing.
- The second item the council has applied for is a cover for the main pool (25m x 13m) to reduce heat loss and evaporation of water overnight. The cover will also allow pool water heating to be reduced overnight and speed pumps to be reduced to the optimum levels.

#### District Heat Networks

Part 16.28 of the Local Plan (2016-2036) stipulates that “The Worcestershire LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) obtained HNDU (Heat Network Delivery Unit) funding and commissioned a heat demand mapping and energy master-planning study.

In addition, the Local Plan also goes on to state that “New large scale development should install a decentralised energy and heating network if it is feasible and viable to do so as part of the development. If a district heat network already exists new development should connect to this network unless satisfactory evidence is provided to demonstrate that this is not viable or feasible.”

#### Electric vehicles (EVs)

According to Zap Map, there are just 37 public EV charging points across the district on privately owned land, such as retail businesses, which equates to one publicly available charger for every 2,757 residents. This is why policy SP.37 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy) of the Local Plan states that: “All new residential, employment or commercial developments should include electric vehicle charging points.” To evidence this, the council is currently in the process of procuring electric vehicle charging points for up to 22 car parks in the district via the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Solutions (VCIS). The tender for this went out in October 2023 and is currently

receiving bids. A chosen supplier is expected to be named in the new year. As for on-street vehicle charging, this is beyond the scope of Wyre Forest District Council as in a two-tier authority structure highways are managed by the upper-tier authority, in this case Worcestershire County Council.

### **Taxi and private hire fleet**

The Council's Licensing and Environmental Committee is in the process of reviewing a consultation that would prevent additional fossil fuel powered vehicles from joining the taxi and private hire fleet of Wyre Forest district.

### **Retrofitting of existing fleet using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil**

Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is a form of low-carbon biofuel that is derived solely from vegetable oils. It can be produced from common crops such as rapeseed and soybean, and thus qualifies as a both a renewable and carbon neutral fuel source. The hydrotreatment aspect ensures higher levels of purity. Although by no means emission free, HVO has the potential to drastically reduce the carbon emissions associated with Wyre Forest District Council's fleet. HVO is not emissions free, but it is carbon neutral. The council is currently looking into retrofitting its existing fleet for the consumption of HVO as its primary fuel type, with a view to becoming 100% HVO. It is important to stress that HVO is very much a steppingstone interim measure that will be in effect whilst Wyre Forest District council is in the process of electrifying its fleet (the council has already purchased an Electric Vehicle).

### **Photovoltaic (PV) solar panels**

The council is exploring opportunities to generate electricity from solar panels on council owned buildings (including the depot and the hub located at Green Street, and car park canopies) subject to a business case and grid capacity. This feasibility work is due to conclude in 2024.

### **Solar farms**

The Council is developing plans for a solar farm on council owned land. Currently, there is no grid capacity in the proposed area. Therefore, the council is pursuing a connection by private wire. It is anticipated that if this is successful a business case will be brought forward in 2024.

## **Water source heat pumps**

The council is currently collaborating with Transition Bewdley in the development of a Community Energy Fund (CEF) bid for a water source heat pump on the River Severn at Bewdley. The council will also seek to provide practical support (such as the provision of office/meeting space) for the bid.

## **Wyre Forest Wild**

Wyre Forest District Council owns over 1000 acres of land, much of which is constituted by the 15 nature reserves and 8 parks under the council's ownership. Wyre Forest Wild seeks to position the council as bio-custodians of this land for generations by securing a green future for it. This shall be achieved through the establishment of three key revenue streams: Increasing visitor numbers and ecotourism (for example, by improving active travel corridors between the reserves), the sale of biodiversity units to developers to help them achieve minimum 10% mandatory BNG (which comes into force in January 2024 for large developments), and the sale of carbon credits/ biodiversity units to companies hoping to offset some or all of their emissions. It is important to note that any carbon credits/biodiversity units that all sold shall be removed from the council's sequestration inventory to avoid the risk of 'double counting' sequestration capacity.

## **Wyre Forest Green Alliance**

Wyre Forest District Council is an active member of the Wyre Forest Green Alliance (WFGA), a union of approximately 50 different member organisations, all of which are sustainability-oriented and are situated in the district. A full list of the member organisations can be found on the Alliance's website, available at <http://www.wfgall.org.uk/members.html>. WFGA run a number of sustainability themed events throughout the year, most notably during "SustFest", a two-week annual festival with a huge range of sustainability-themed activities and events occurring in springtime every year. Furthermore, the WFGA also run an annual "Greener Christmas Fair" every November. This is a great opportunity to showcase innovative and sustainable ways of negotiating the festive season – a time of year typically associated with high levels of non-recyclable waste and the consumption of large amounts of carbon-intensive animal products.

## **The Transition Town Movement repair cafés**

The council assists in the publicisation of Transition Bewdley and Repair Café events. The transition town movement is an international movement that manifests itself on a truly local scale. A core aim of the movement is to encourage circular economy principles within a particular town or urban agglomeration. This is achieved in a number of different ways, one of which is by improving the provision of locally sourced food (such as through allotments, community orchards and even guerrilla planting). Another method through which the drive to circularity is achieved



is through waste reduction schemes that encourage the repair and reuse, and upcycling of objects that would otherwise be discarded and likely sent to landfill. An example of this in action is through repair cafés. These are regular meetings whereby any member of the public can bring in broken objects and get them repaired for free, thereby increasing the lifespan of the object and reducing the frequency with which new replacements are bought (thus reducing the embedded whole life cycle carbon emissions associated with the manufacture, transportation and eventual disposal of a given product). There are two monthly repair cafés operating in the Wyre Forest district: one in Bewdley and one in Kidderminster. They are run by Transition Bewdley and Transition Kidderminster respectively. For more information, please refer to the waste reduction section of the council website, available at: <https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/community-and-environment/sustainability/climate-change/waste-reduction/>

DRAFT



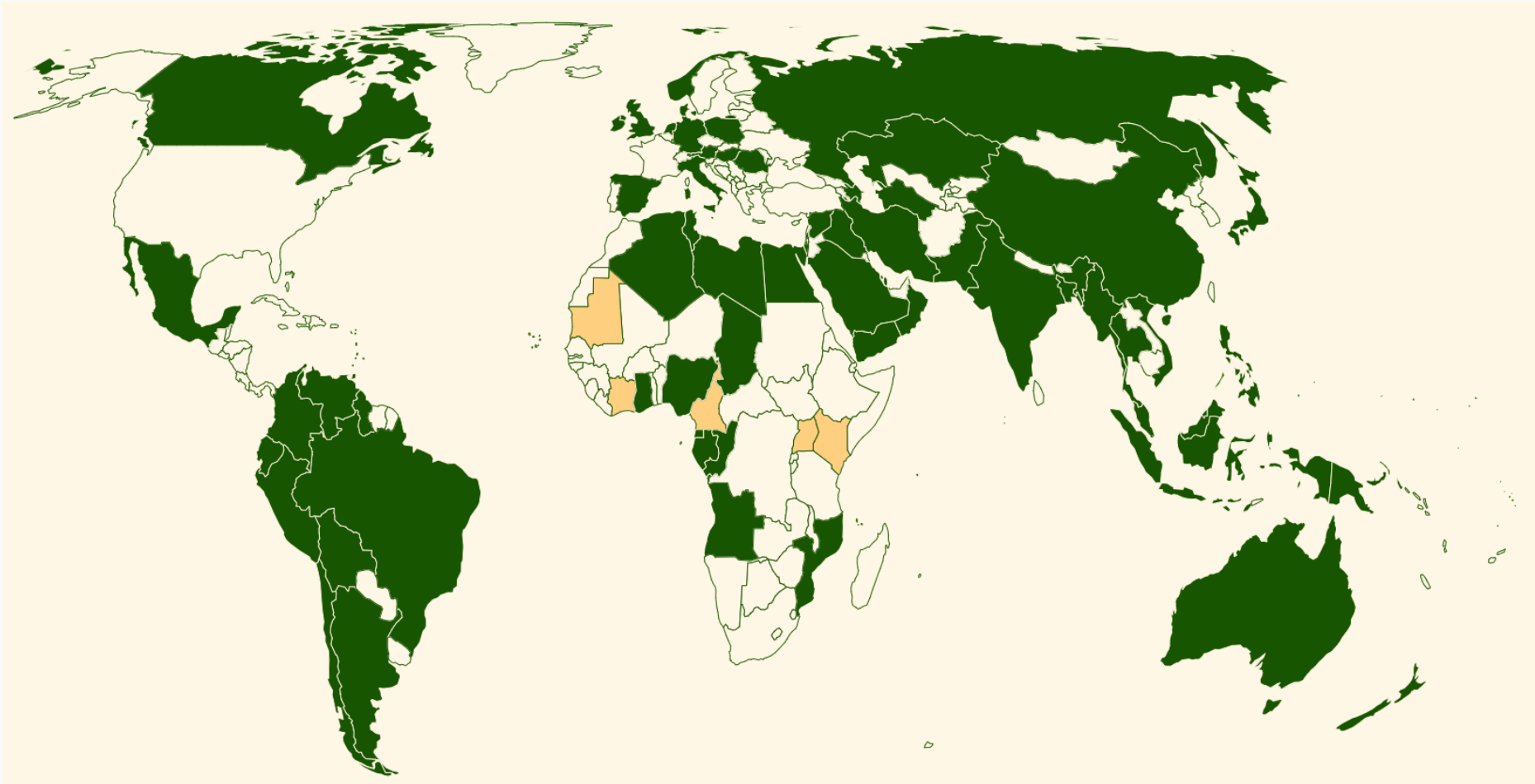
## Appendix One: emissions arising from leased out buildings

Building name and address	Unit number (if applicable)	EPC Rating	Annual Carbon Emissions (tCO <sub>2</sub> e per year)
Wyre Forest Leisure Centre Silverwoods Way, Kidderminster DY11 7DT	Not applicable	B - 44	425
Wyre Forest Crematorium Minster Road, Stourport DY13 8DE	Not applicable	G - 187	68
Hoobrook Enterprise Centre Worcester Road, Kidderminster DY10 1HB	Units 1 to 7, 10 and 11	D - 96	1.43
	Unit 8-9	E - 101	2.57
	Unit 12	C - 66	4.82
	Unit 13-14	C - 73	13.74
	Unit 15	E - 125	5.65
	Unit 17	E - 114	6.97
	Unit 18	E - 116	2.51
	Unit 20	E - 102	4.51
	Unit 21	E - 105	13.36
	Unit 22	E - 116	3.29
	Unit 23	E - 125	8.82
	Unit 24	E - 106	6.92
	Unit 25	E - 107	10.04
	Unit 26	D - 78	8.25
Comberton Place Kidderminster DY10 1QR	Unit 1	E - 114	14.98
	Units 2-10	D - 97	29.05
	Unit 11	E - 103	4.07

Building name and address	Unit number (if applicable)	EPC Rating	Annual Carbon Emissions (tCO2e per year)
	Unit 12	D - 94	7.49
	Unit 13	E - 113	16.07
	Unit 14	E - 110	16.32
Forest House Edwin Avenue, Kidderminster, DY11 7SZ	Not applicable	D - 77	64.48
Goldthorn Road Kidderminster, DY11 7JD	Unit 1C	D - 81	580.18
79-84 Worcester Street Kidderminster, DY10 1EH	Unit 1	69 - C	No data
	Unit 2	60 - C	10.66
	Unit 5	88 - D	41.34
Stratford Court Cranmore Boulevard, Solihull B904QT	Unit 1	79 - D	No data
	Unit 1B	45 - B	10.94
	Unit 2	50 - B	57.02
1 The Courtyard Buntsford Drive, Bromsgrove B60 3DJ	Not applicable	49 - B	30.94
Unity Park Road Number One, Silverwoods Way, Kidderminster DY10 1HY	Units 1 to 9	72 - C	2.17
Forest Industrial Park Crosbie Grove, Kidderminster DY11 7FX	Unit 1	49 - B	8.44
	Unit 2	51 - C	5.64
	Unit 3	47 - B	10.79
	Unit 4	50 - B	6.43
	Unit 5	51 - C	6.36
	Unit 6	50 - B	6.48

Total annual emissions from leased out buildings: 1533.09 tCO2e

## Appendix Two: Local Government Pension Scheme Investments



Worcestershire Pension Fund is worth more than £3.5 billion, at least £146.9 million of which is invested directly into fossil fuel companies. The vast majority of this amount is invested in oil, with the rest invested in coal. This investment constitutes 5.4% of the entire Worcestershire Pension Fund. This is the third highest proportion of total funds invested in fossil fuels of all 97 LGPS pension funds in the UK, behind only Great Manchester and East Riding pension funds. The total financed emissions of the Worcestershire Pension Fund, as reported by the fund themselves, was 169,673 tCO<sub>2</sub>e for the year 2022. However, Wyre Forest District Council is not the sole contributor to this fund. In total, there are 190 contributors, including Herefordshire Council, Worcestershire County Council and the five other district councils of Worcestershire. The

contributions of Wyre Forest District Council constituted 2.38% of all contributions received in the three financial years April 2020 – March 2023. Therefore, proportionally speaking, Wyre Forest District Council can be said to account for 4,038.22 tCO<sub>2</sub>e of the fund's total emissions.

At least £110 million worth of the Worcestershire Pension Fund's investments in fossil fuels are managed by Legal and General, with a further £32.2 million managed by LGPS Central, and another £4.7 million managed by Nomura Asset Management. This £146.9 million of fossil fuel investments also includes investments in unconventional fossil fuel sources including fracking, extra heavy oil, coalbed methane, ultra-deep water, Arctic oil, and tar sands.

The above map shows the countries in which Worcestershire Pension Fund is funding fossil fuel related projects. Countries highlighted in green are the ones in which Worcestershire Pension Fund is funding current fossil fuel extraction projects. For a list of these countries, please refer to Countries highlighted in yellow are where Worcestershire Pension Fund is funding projects looking into possible fossil fuel expansion/extraction. As shown by the map, it is clear the investment activities of the Worcestershire Pension Fund are truly global.

This data was collected by UK Divest through the sending of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to all UK LGPS pools and schemes.

List of countries in which Worcestershire Pension Fund is funding current fossil fuel extraction projects (highlighted in green): Canada, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Guyana, Mozambique, Angola, Gabon, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Ghana, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Ireland, the UK, Netherlands, Norway, Italy, Germany, Denmark, Poland, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Russia, Kazakhstan, China, India, Pakistan, Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Israel, Iraq, Iran, Turkmenistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Australia, New Zealand, Qatar, Philippines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Papua New Guinea.

List of countries where Worcestershire Pension Fund is funding projects looking into possible fossil fuel expansion/extraction (highlighted in yellow): Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Uganda, and Kenya.

Source: UK Divest, 2023

# Overview & Scrutiny Committee



## Report of: Jennifer Moreton

### Date

07/12/2023

### Open

## Agenda Item 7 – Cost of Living Action Plan

### Summary

Attached is a draft of a Cabinet report on this subject, which Cabinet is expected to consider on 20 December 2023.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the report and provide recommendations to Cabinet.

### Officer contact details

Name: Jennifer Moreton

Title: Principal Health and Sustainability Officer

Contact number: 2569

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL****CABINET**  
**20 December 2023****Cost of Living Action Plan Update**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Cllr Ian Hardiman Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Kate Bailey Head of Strategic Growth
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Jenny Moreton Principal Health and Sustainability Officer
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1: Cost of Living Action Plan Delivery 2022-23 Appendix 2: Cost of Living Action Plan 2024-25

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides Members with an update on action to tackle the cost-of-living crisis. It includes the Wyre Forest Cost of Living action plan for 2024/25 for endorsement.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**The Cabinet is invited to:**

- 2.1 Note the update on delivery of the Cost-of-Living Action Plan 2022-23
- 2.2 Approve the Cost-of-Living Action Plan 2024-25

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On 21st September 2022, the Council decided an Emergency Summit should be held to explore how more local help can be provided for those struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. The summit was held on 13th October 2022 and the Cost-of-Living Action Plan 2022-23 was then developed and endorsed by Cabinet on 20 December 2022. Since then, a further two Cost of Living summits have been held at Wyre Forest House and attended by a wide range of organisations from across the district, such as local authorities, Community Housing, Police, Food Banks, Citizens Advice, Age UK, church and community groups, Barnardo's, health and social care organisations. These events provide the opportunity to share information on specific topics (e.g. Warm Spaces, Household Support Fund, Sustainable Warmth) as well as the chance for all organisations attending to update on the issues affecting them and the services they provide. They also help with identifying ways of working

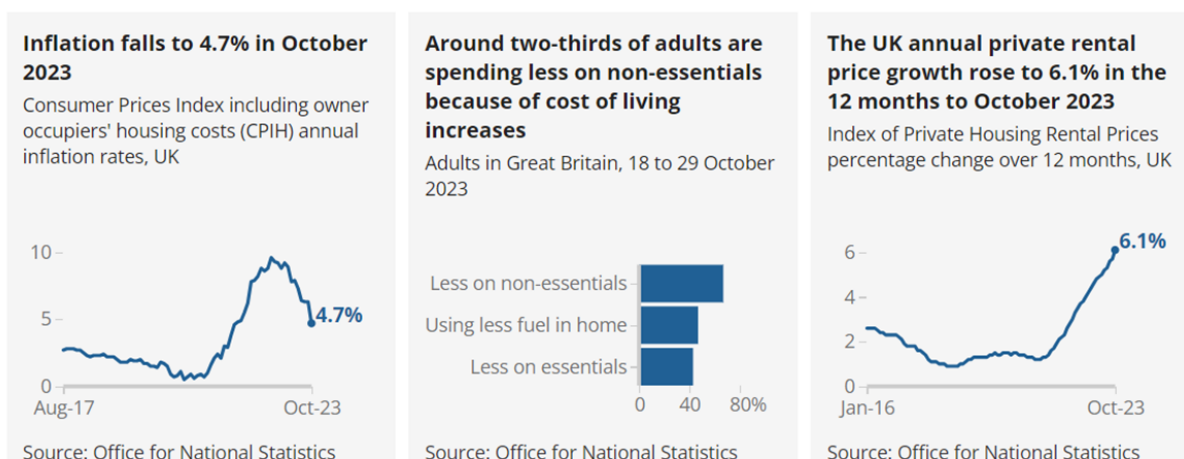
together to tackle cost of living issues. A WFDC group with officers from Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services and Strategic Growth also meets regularly to discuss council specific action on delivering this work lead by the Principal Health and Sustainability Officer.

3.2 The new action plan will commence from 1 January 2024 until 31 December 2025.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

4.1 Data Insights from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (see [Cost of living latest insights - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/cost-of-living/latest-insights) ) show that the cost of living has been rising. Food and energy costs have risen markedly over the last year, particularly gas prices, partly in response to the conflict in Ukraine, with global recovery from the pandemic putting further pressure on prices. Whilst the prices of consumer goods and services increased by 9.6% in the year to October 2022 – the fastest rate in four decades, the annual inflation rate has now slowed. In the year to October 2023 the annual inflation rate was 4.7%, down from 6.3% in September. Overview graphs from the latest ONS Insights are shown below.

**Table one: ONS Insights data**

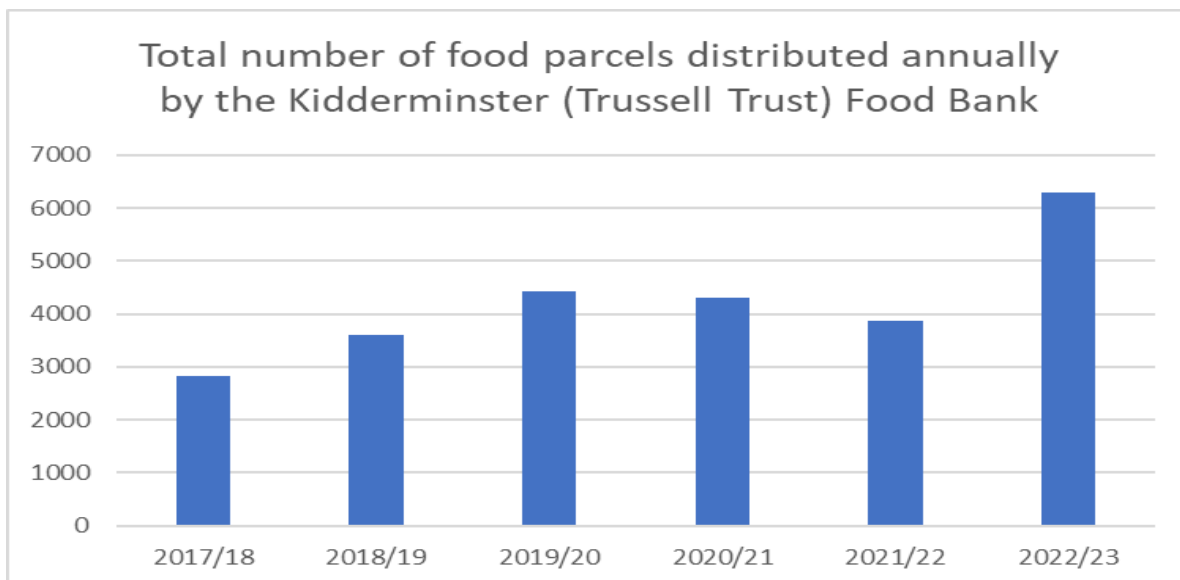


4.2 Nationally and locally, Citizens Advice are one of the organisations people struggling with cost of living issues may turn to. Citizens Advice data insights (see [CA cost-of-living data dashboard | Flourish](#) ) show that increasing numbers of people who are employed (whether self-employed, part time or full time) are in a negative budget. Nationally, since 2019/20 they have seen a 12% increase in people working full time and in a negative budget seeking help. A further worrying trend locally is an increase in the proportion helped who have a long-term health or disability issue- up from 40% of clients in 2020-21 to 54% in 2024/25.

4.3 Food banks locally and nationally have seen increased demand. The Trussell Trust report that their UK network (which includes the Kidderminster Foodbank) distributed 1.5 million food parcels to people facing hardship between 1 April and 30 September 2023 – an increase of 16% compared to the same period in 2022.

4.4 There are two main food banks serving the Wyre Forest district. The graph below shows the total number of food parcels distributed by the Trussell Trust's Kidderminster food bank over recent years.

**Table two: Food bank parcels 2017 – 2023**



4.4 Wyre Forest Food Bank, based at Franche Community Church have reported that pre-pandemic, they were typically providing 100-125 food boxes per month, whereas by summer 2023 they were typically providing around 300 food boxes per month. They have also reported that costs are impacting them in various ways- they need to purchase more items because of the increase in referrals, they are seeing a general decline in food items being donated to them, and the cost of what they are purchasing to fill the boxes has increased.

4.5 The number of children in Wyre Forest, from Reception to Year 11, claiming Free School Meals, has increased in recent years. Please see table below;

**Table three: Free school meal claimants 2020-2022**

School Census Date	Number of FSM Claimants in Wyre Forest
October 2020	2646
October 2021	2955
October 2022	3170

4.6 The Cost-of-Living action plan seeks to help address these issues locally through:

**4.6.1 Raising Awareness**

One issue in the Cost-of-Living crisis is that many people are unaware of the help that exists. A key part of the Council's ongoing work is to raise awareness about the support available both from the district council and our partner organisations in the public, voluntary and community sectors. Over the last year resources (such as leaflets) have been developed to support this and officers have carried out much



outreach work to engage with people in a wide range of community venues and this work will continue over the next year.

**4.6.2 Partnership working through the Cost-of-Living Summits**

The Cost-of-Living Summits have shown how keen organisations are to work together to signpost and spread awareness of organisations and their services that could be useful. The summits have helped identify ways of working together as well as promoting the different sources of support available.

**4.6.3 Energy and Food**

One of the major causes of the Cost-of-Living crisis is the increase of energy prices. Worcestershire has higher proportion of households living in fuel poverty than the national average, with particularly high proportions in Wyre Forest, Malvern Hill and Worcester. Recent increases in energy prices are very likely to exacerbate this for the most vulnerable families. The UK government’s definition for fuel poverty in England uses the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) indicator. Under this indicator, a household is fuel poor if: *It is living in a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating of band D or below, and when they spend the required amount to heat their home, they are left with a residual income below the official poverty line.*

Data using this definition is provided by government at Local Authority level, albeit with a two year time lag. The table below shows the latest data for Wyre Forest:

**Table four: Households in fuel poverty 2019 – 2021**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Wyre Forest households in fuel poverty (%)</b>
2019	15.5%
2020	15.7%
2021	16.5%

District Council teams will continue to work with organisations such as Act on Energy and local food banks to help people with energy costs and food provision.

**4.6.4 Warm Spaces**

Warm Spaces were set up in winter 2022 -23 to provide spaces in the community where people could keep warm but also meet other people, take part in activities and access information and advice. The table below shows which Warm Spaces were provided with funding from WFDC to help with the costs of providing these in 2022-23:

**Table five: Warm spaces grants 2022-23**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Warm Space Grant</b>
Community Housing (3 community venues)	Kidderminster and Cookley	£1,000
Simply Limitless	Kidderminster	£1,000
St Peters Community Church Hall	Kidderminster	£1,000
Wolverley Memorial Hall	Wolverley	£1,000
St Georges Church	Kidderminster	£1,000

St Michael's and All Angels Church	Stourport-on-Severn	£750
St Chads Church	Kidderminster	£1,000
The Walshes Community Centre and Community Café	Stourport on Severn	£1,000
St Peters Church Cookley	Cookley	£1,000
Kidderminster Baptist Church	Kidderminster	£50
Bewdley Baptist Church	Bewdley	£740
H.E.L.P	Kidderminster	£1,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£10,540</b>

Many attendees reported that the warm spaces had helped them with their mental wellbeing over the colder months. The Warm Welcome Spaces scheme is being re-run in 2023-4 and small grants are again being provided to support the voluntary and community organisations with the costs of running these.

#### **4.6.5 Financial Assistance**

The Council currently provides a range of financial assistance to households including Discretionary Housing Payments, Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Housing Benefit, Welfare Assistance to help with food, utilities and furniture and help with rent bonds/deposits. Through the Private Sector Housing team, Health and Sustainability Team and Act on Energy there are also grants and loans available to improve the energy efficiency / thermal comfort within people's homes. Further help has also been made available to households through the distribution of the Household Support Fund.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The costs of delivering the plan mostly relate to staff time and external grant funding that is available to the council through external grants such as the Household Support Fund (£387k) and the Home Upgrade Grant (£1.115m), as well as the health-related ear marked reserves (approximately 10k). There is also funding for Discretionary Housing Payments of £110k for 2023/24.

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

- 6.1 The development and delivery of the action plan support the Council in its Corporate Plan priorities "Economic Growth and Regeneration" and "A clean, safe and green place to live, work and visit".
- 6.2 The council can support residents through welfare schemes and in other ways under a variety of powers including under general powers in section one of the Localism Act 2011, section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

### **7. IMPACT AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 7.1 **Equality Impact Assessment**

An equality impact screening assessment has been undertaken and no negative impacts identified. The plan includes actions aiming to help overcome barriers to people accessing support e.g., due to a language barrier, transport poverty or digital exclusion. The plan also includes schemes to support people most impacted by deprivation and health inequalities, such as support schemes for food and energy/keeping warm.

**7.2 Climate Change Impact**

This action plan has a positive impact on climate change through actions within the action plan that support carbon reduction including grants to make properties more energy efficient and reducing food waste and other sustainability initiatives through the Green Alliance.

**7.3 Health and Wellbeing Impact**

This action plan has a positive impact on health and wellbeing through working with individuals to maximise income and reduce debt which has a positive impact on mental health and stress levels. Access to free warm spaces benefits all but particularly those suffering from loneliness and isolation or respiratory conditions. Access to free or affordable healthy food also improves health and wellbeing within the community.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

8.1 Helping households to access financial assistance and maximise their income will support the council's wider ambitions around economic growth and helping the health and wellbeing of the residents of Wyre Forest.

**9. CONCLUSION**

9.1 High inflation has affected all households in the District to varying degrees and the Council has responded by developing and delivering a Cost of Living action plan to support the those in the greatest need within the community, based on a series of summits attended by a wide range of partner organisations.

**10. CONSULTEES**

10.1 CLT

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 Not applicable.

WFDC Cost of Living - 2022-23 Action Plan

Raising Awareness	Who?	Expected Outcomes/ Timescale	Update on delivery
<p>Utilising services to raise awareness on the Cost of Living including using the WFDC website to post inviting and useful information. Website to have messages about financial support and employment support provided by WFDC.</p>	<p>Media team &amp; H&amp;S Wyre Forest.</p>	<p>Amend website by December 2022</p>	<p>Cost of Living pages have been set up on the website at <a href="http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/costofliving">www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/costofliving</a> and information shared through various WFDC communication channels (Wyred In, social media etc).</p>
<p>Introducing financial literacy through sessions and help with Financial Inclusion team Wyre Forest.</p>	<p>Financial Inclusion team</p>	<p>By the end of financial year</p>	<p>Financial literacy/debt prevention is integral to the Financial Inclusion Team’s pro-active community work. The team have attended many community events and venues over the year, including the Showcase of Services for the 50+ events, Early Years events in primary schools, cost of living events at libraries, Warm Spaces in community venues such as churches and community centres, outreach activities in local parks. A promotional banner was produced for the team to use and supplies of the Cost-of-Living support leaflet provided.</p>
<p>Creating a leaflet for Cost-of-Living Crisis. including all services provided by WFDC and signposting other organisations.</p>	<p>Strategic Growth team</p>	<p>By December 2022</p>	<p>An A5 leaflet was produced and has been widely distributed at community events and via partner organisations. The leaflet summarises information and signposting about the support available through WFDC and partner organisations.</p>
<p>Making WFDC a presence at schools and colleges. Making contacts at schools to promote services WFDC provides and signposting to organisations. Using schools’ newsletters to connect with parents.</p>	<p>Community Builders. H&amp;S Team Financial Inclusion Officers</p>	<p>By March 2023</p>	<p>WFDC Community Builders have established good contacts with schools in their areas and have been able to promote support available. The Financial Inclusion Team have carried out after-school engagement sessions with parents/carers on-site, at schools including. Birchen Coppice Academy, St Oswald’s Primary, Bewdley primary.</p>

## Agenda Item No. 7 Appendix 1

<p>Liaising with Worcestershire Child First to work together on getting into schools. Meeting with Ready Steady Worcestershire to work on providing funding for children over school holidays.</p>			<p>Ongoing promotion to schools via Worcestershire Children First about support available through: <a href="#">Ready Steady Worcestershire - Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme   Worcestershire County Council</a></p> <p><b>Add in HAF numbers for summer from Sarah</b></p>
<p>Reaching out to communities where there are barriers. Finding out more information to help access these communities e.g., Bangladeshi community where there is a language barrier. Connecting with community leaders to engage with and build a strong connection with to promote WFDC services that could help.</p>	<p>Councillors, community leaders &amp; H&amp;S team</p>	<p>By March 2023</p>	<p>The Community Builders work with a range of community leaders and organisations and are able to promote support available e.g., by alerting organisations to funding opportunities or arranging for organisations to carry out outreach activities.</p>
<p>Make the Council more accessible for people to approach re cost-of-living issues through Cost of Living Roadshows and outreach into communities including in the town centre and at different events, markets etc.</p>	<p>H&amp;S Team Financial Inclusion team</p>	<p>Attend a minimum of two events / venues per year.</p>	<p>The Financial Inclusion team have attended a wide range of events and activities throughout the year, along with other agencies, e.g., Act on Energy, Citizens Advice, Age UK.</p>
<p>Provide different ways for people to access services including options for those who are digitally deprived. Explore options around having specific telephone number for people to call.</p>	<p>H&amp;S team CS team</p>	<p>By March 2023</p>	<p>Cost of Living flier widely distributed and includes specific telephone numbers for multiple organisations that can help people in current climate. Services have been promoted through various networks to help reach a wider range of people e.g., the Wyre Forest Collaborative, to make local GPs and others in the health sector aware of the support available and referral processes.</p>
<p>Hosting further Cost of Living forums for organisations to come together and network to encourage partnership working and as a useful way of keeping current on new themes and problems and how to tackle them with organisations.</p>	<p>H&amp;S Team</p>	<p>Host a minimum of one event a year.</p>	<p>Cost of Living forum meetings are being held twice a year, in 2023 these were held in March and October at Wyre Forest House. The agenda includes presentation on specific topics (e.g., Warm Spaces, Household Support Fund, Sustainable Warmth) as well as the chance for all organisations attending to update on the issues affecting them and the services they provide. These have been attended by a wide range of organisations including WFDC, Community Housing, Police,</p>

## Agenda Item No. 7 Appendix 1

			Food Banks, Citizens Advice, Age UK, church and community groups, Barnardo's, health and social care organisations. These provide the opportunity for information sharing and identifying ways of working together to tackle cost of living issues. A WFDC officer group also meets regularly to discuss council specific action on delivering this work.
<b>Energy saving</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Utilising the Household Support Fund. Helping people buy energy efficient kitchen appliances. Offering grants to organisations to help distribute this help to those in need.	Financial Inclusion team Housing Advice & Strategy and Enabling Teams Voluntary and Community Services	By March 2023	Household Support Fund (HSF) distributed through county and district schemes. A county wide scheme is run through Act on Energy, this provides funding for vulnerable & low-income households to help with energy costs/ debts and heating repairs. In the 12 months to 31 March 2023, £132k of HSF was provided to 291 Wyre Forest households through Act on Energy. District funding has included support through WFDC which has included provision of energy efficient kitchen appliances in some instances. In winter 2022/23, a Warmth on Prescription scheme was piloted in Wyre Forest using Household Support Funding. Working through the Wyre Forest Collaborative, people with health conditions exacerbated by cold and damp but struggling to pay heating bills were identified and provided with additional support for fuel costs, aiming to help reduce their need to call upon the NHS over this period.
Working on reducing carbon footprint and food wastage.	WFDC Wyre Forest Green Alliance.	By December 2023	Working with Wyre Forest Green Alliance (WFGA) to promote education on how to reduce carbon footprint and increasing energy saving in households. Activities have included promotion of the monthly repair cafes in Bewdley and Kidderminster, online talks on saving energy in the home and food growing at home, Greener Living fairs organised by the WFGA and participation in the annual SustFest Wyre Forest fortnight of events and activities throughout the district.
Signposting to Act on Energy and supporting their work on reducing energy inefficiency and fuel poverty	Act on Energy H&S	Ongoing.	Ongoing cost of living communications includes promotion of energy efficiency and fuel bill support through Act on Energy. In 2022/23, Act on Energy received 1300 calls to their helpline from Wyre Forest residents, more than double typical years. Their outreach advisors

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			also carried out 23 home visits in Wyre Forest to provide more in-depth support to these residents. Support is provided through information and advice, referrals for grants for energy efficiency schemes and through the HSF.
Working together with organisations to push the agenda of sustainability e.g. Repair Cafes	H&S	Ongoing	Promotion of the WFGA activities as mentioned above through various communications channels.
<b>Warm spaces</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Setting up Warm Spaces in the local area accessible to all individuals.	Strategic Growth team.	By December 2022.	20 Warm Spaces were set up in Wyre Forest District in winter 2022/23. 13 of these were supported with a small grant towards the running costs. Info about all local Warm Spaces was promoted online. <a href="http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/warmspace">www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/warmspace</a> and via fliers etc. As well as providing a space where people could keep warm, many who attended benefited from the social/wellbeing support.
Promoting the Warm Spaces grant provided by WFDC. This helps organisations with costs of Warm Spaces up to £1000.	Strategic Growth team.	In progress.	Warm spaces promoted through website, Facebook page and Cost of Living flier. Funding disseminated to various voluntary and community sector organisations.
Promoting these Warm Spaces using IT services on WFDC website and social media to help people identify and use them. Promoting Warm Spaces on the Warm Spaces HUB network which is Nationwide.	Strategic Growth and Media team.	In progress	As above
<b>Training</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Notes/ Further Info</b>
Training front facing officers across the council to give advice re cost of living and where to go for help	H&S	By March 2023	Act on Energy training held at Wyre Forest House on 22 Nov 2022, aimed at front line staff and volunteers, approx. 25 attended. Act on Energy also held online fuel poverty training and 'lunch and learn' short online sessions about specific schemes, which were promoted through various networks.

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			The Financial Inclusion team also attended relevant team meetings to update on support available and how to access it, e.g., housing advice team, adult social care team.
Financial assistance	Who?	Timescale	Notes/ Further Info
Ensure take up of benefits and other forms or income and assistance (e.g. Council Tax Reduction Scheme) are maximised	Financial Inclusion Officers	Ongoing	This is ongoing through the work of the Financial Inclusion Team.
Refresh the procedure for supporting tenants with rent arrears to provide financial support (via the prevention panel)	Housing Advice Team	March 2023	The Housing Advice Team have revised the procedure and offer financial assistance to tenants with rent and former tenancy arrears.
Work with CHG to identify shared ownership cases in arrears and provide package of assistance	HAT / Strategy and Enabling team	March 2023	The Housing Advice Team and Strategy and Enabling teams offer support and financial assistance to homeowners on mortgage arrears.
Grants /loans for energy efficiency improvements (insulation, heating improvements, solar panels); subject to eligibility criteria.	Private Sector Housing Team/ Act on Energy	Ongoing	Grants and loans awarded through Private Sector Housing, including the Sustainable Warmth scheme, Disabled Facilities Grants and Home Assistance Loans.

### Anonymised case study

The Financial Inclusion Team attended an Adult Social Care team meeting to update them on support available. Adult Social Care then referred one of their clients for support. The client was an owner occupier due to be evicted due to mortgage rent arrears. The client had suffered a double bereavement over the pandemic and had had no income for 18 months. The officers supported the client to get breathing space on the mortgage situation, debt support, a food bank referral, a bank account, a significant backdated benefits payment and to get on the housing register for rehoming.



Appendix 2: WFDC Cost of Living – 2024 - 25 Action Plan

Awareness and Training	Who?	Expected Outcomes/ Timescale	Resources required	Notes/ Further Info
Ongoing awareness raising about Cost of Living support available through various communication channels, including using the WFDC website, social media channels, newsletters, fliers etc.	Media team Health & Sustainability Partner organisations	Ongoing throughout 2024/25.	Officer time	Partner organisations encouraged to share this information through their own communications channels.
Outreach work to promote the support available by attendance at events and venues throughout the district (e.g. at community buildings, schools, libraries).	Financial Inclusion Team Health and Sustainability Partner organisations	Ongoing throughout 2024/25.	Officer time	Health and Sustainability to also arrange for partner organisations (e.g. Act on Energy, Citizens Advice) to also attend events as relevant.
Awareness raising for WFDC staff about cost of living support available as part of the employee health and wellbeing programme e.g. through the Financial Awareness Week.	Human Resources Health and Wellbeing staff group.	Ongoing throughout 2024/25. Financial Awareness Week is in Dec 2023.	Officer time.	
Training and updates for frontline staff on support available and how to make referrals.	Financial Inclusion team Act on Energy	By the end of financial year	Officer time As part of existing SLA with Act on Energy.	
Hosting Cost of Living forum summits for organisations to come together and network to encourage partnership working and as a useful way of keeping current on new themes and problems and how to tackle them with organisations.	Internal Cost of Living action group.	March and October 2024	Officer time Small refreshment budget	

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Energy and food.	Who?	Timescale	Resources	Notes/ Further Info
Utilising the Household Support Fund-distribution of district allocation to help households with costs of energy, water, food and other essentials.	Health & Sustainability Financial Inclusion team Housing Advice Team Partner organisations from the Health, Voluntary and Community sectors.	By March 2024	Household Support Fund	
Local promotion of support available via county wide schemes e.g. through Household Support Fund and Holiday Activities and Food fund.	Health & Sustainability Media	Ongoing	Officer time	
Working on reducing carbon footprint and food wastage and promotion of community sustainability initiatives e.g. Repair Cafes.	WFDC Wyre Forest Green Alliance.	By December 2024	Officer time	Working with Wyre Forest Green Alliance to promote education on how to reduce carbon footprint and increasing energy saving in households.
Signposting to Act on Energy and supporting their work on reducing energy inefficiency and fuel poverty	Act on Energy H&S	Ongoing.	Officer time Existing SLA with Act on Energy	
Grants /loans for energy efficiency improvements (insulation, heating improvements, solar panels); subject to eligibility criteria.	Private Sector Housing Team/ Act on Energy	Ongoing	Better Care Fund Home Upgrade Grant ECO funding	
Support community partner organisations in increasing local food support, by helping them set up a community fridge.	Health and Sustainability	By December 2024	Grant funding from Public Health	

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Warm Welcome Spaces	Who?	Timescale	Resources	Notes/ Further Info
Setting up Warm Spaces in the local area accessible to all individuals and promoting these through WFDC communication channels.	Health and Sustainability Media	By January 2024	Grant funding to support provision via health funding.	
Promoting the Warm Spaces grant provided by WFDC. This helps organisations with costs of Warm Spaces up to £1000.	Health and Sustainability	In progress.	Grant funding to support provision via health funding..	
Co-ordination of provision of cost of living / health and wellbeing support from WFDC and partner organisations at the Warm Welcome Spaces	Health and Sustainability	By March 2024	Officer time	
Financial assistance	Who?	Timescale	Resources	Notes/ Further Info
Ensure take up of benefits and other forms of income and assistance (e.g. Council Tax Reduction Scheme) are maximised	Financial Inclusion Officers	Ongoing	Officer time	
Promote support for homeowners facing mortgage arrears.	Strategy and enabling team	Ongoing	Officer time Homeless Prevention grant	<a href="https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/mortgageadvice">https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/mortgageadvice</a>
Financial assistance for rent bonds, rent in advance, rent and former tenancy arrears where this is a barrier to accessing housing	Housing Advice Team	Ongoing	Officer time Homeless Prevention Grant	

**Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
Work Programme 2023-2024**

**June 2023**

Budget and Performance Monitoring Q4 update  
Review of inclusive play equipment in the parks owned by WFDC

**July 2023**

Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2023 – 2040  
Wyre Forest District Council Health and Wellbeing Supplementary Planning Document  
Review of Public Space Protection Orders – consultation  
Nominations for Treasury Management Review Panel (Chair to be appointed)

**September 2023**

Budget and Performance Monitoring Q1 update  
Environmental Enforcement Policy  
Localism Strategy

**October 2023**

Wyre Forest Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

**November 2023**

Budget and Performance Monitoring Q2 update

**December 2023**

Climate Change Strategy  
Health Action Plan  
Cost of Living Action Plan

**January 2024**

Local Development Scheme (LDS)  
Wyre Forest Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

**February 2024**

Budget and Performance Monitoring Q3 update

**March 2024**

Annual review of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership 2023/24  
Empty Property Strategy  
Housing Assistance Policy