

**Open**

## **Cabinet**

## **Agenda**

**6pm**  
**Tuesday, 13 February 2024**  
**Council Chamber**  
**Wyre Forest House**  
**Finepoint Way**  
**Kidderminster**



**Wyre Forest** District Council



## Cabinet

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

<b>Councillor M Hart</b>	<b>Leader of the Council &amp; Strategy</b>
<b>Councillor I Hardiman</b>	<b>Deputy Leader &amp; Housing, Health and Well-being</b>
<b>Councillor B Brookes</b>	<b>Operational Services</b>
<b>Councillor D Morehead</b>	<b>Economic Regeneration, Planning &amp; the Green Agenda</b>
<b>Councillor T Onslow</b>	<b>Culture, Leisure, Arts &amp; Community Safety</b>
<b>Councillor D Ross</b>	<b>Finance &amp; Capital Portfolio</b>

### **Scrutiny of Decisions of the Cabinet**

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

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

*The deadline for "calling in" Cabinet decisions is 5pm on Friday 23 February 2024.*

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

### **Urgent Key Decisions**

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

### **Disclosure of Interests**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **For further information**

If you have any queries about this Agenda or require any details of background papers, further documents or information you should contact Louisa Bright, Principal Committee and Member Services Officer, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, DY11 7WF. Telephone: 01562 732763 or email [louisa.bright@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:louisa.bright@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)

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

### **WEBCASTING NOTICE**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

\* Unless there are no reports in the open session.

Wyre Forest District Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 13 February 2024

Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster

Part 1

Open to the press and public

Agenda item	Subject	Page Number
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
2.	<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.	
3.	<b>Minutes</b>  To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on the 20 December 2023 and the Minutes of the additional meeting held on the 16 January 2024.	7
4.	<b>CALL INS</b> a verbal update will be given on any decisions which have been "called in" since the last meeting of the Cabinet.	
5.	<b>Items Requiring Urgent Attention</b>  To consider any item which, in the opinion of the Chairman requires consideration at the meeting as a matter of urgency.	
6.	<b>Public Participation</b>  In accordance with the Council's Scheme for Public Speaking at Meetings of Full Council/Cabinet, to allow members of the public to present petitions, ask questions, or make statements, details of which have been received by 12 noon on Monday 5 February 2024. (See front cover for contact details).	

7.		
7.1	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Councillor D Ross</b></p> <p><b>Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027 and Capital Strategy 2024-2034</b></p> <p>To consider a report from the Head of Resources and S151 Officer that updates Cabinet on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027 and makes recommendations to Council on the proposed budget decision. The report also seeks approval of the Capital Strategy for 2024-2034 including prudential indicators which set limits for non-financial investments and to fulfil the key requirements of the DLUHC Investment Guidance.</p> <p><i>The appendices to this report have been circulated electronically.</i></p>	17

8.		
8.1	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Councillor D Morehead</b></p> <p><b>Wyre Forest District Council Local Development Scheme</b></p> <p>To consider a report from the Head of Strategic Growth that presents the updated Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) Local Development Scheme (LDS).</p> <p><i>The appendix to this report has been circulated electronically.</i></p> <p>Also to consider recommendations from the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 11 January 2024.</p>	<p>31</p> <p>34</p>
8.2	<p><b>Review of Statement of Community Involvement</b></p> <p>To consider a report from the Head of Strategic Growth that presents the draft Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and to agree that it be consulted upon.</p> <p><i>The appendix to this report has been circulated electronically.</i></p> <p>Also to consider recommendations from the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 11 January 2024.</p>	<p>35</p> <p>38</p>

9.	<p><b>To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Solicitor to the Council before the commencement of the meeting, which the Chairman by reason of special circumstances considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.</b></p>	
10.	<p><b>Exclusion of the Press and Public</b></p> <p>To consider passing the following resolution:</p> <p>“That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of “exempt information” as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act”.</p>	

Part 2

Not open to the Press and Public

<b>11.</b>		
<b>11.</b>	<b>To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Solicitor to the Council before the commencement of the meeting, which the Chairman by reason of special circumstances considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.</b>	

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

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

**20 DECEMBER 2023 (6PM)**

---

**Present:**

Councillors: M J Hart (Chairman), I Hardiman (Vice-Chairman), B Brookes, D Morehead, T L Onslow and D Ross.

**Observers:**

Councillors: L Carroll and F M Oborski MBE.

**CAB.44 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**CAB.45 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.46 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CAB.47 Call Ins**

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

**CAB.48 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

**CAB.49 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**CAB.50 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-27**

A report was considered from the Head of Resources and S151 Officer that provided the Cabinet with financial information in order to make proposals for the Budget Strategy for the period 2024-27.

Prior to the meeting, members received supplementary papers that set out amendments to the table at 6.7 and appendix 1 of the report that reflected the funding allocations notified in the provisional statement received on 18 December 2023.

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

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that looking ahead, the main challenges faced by the Council was inflation, an increase in demand led services such as homelessness and further slippage in the Capital Programme which would involve additional cost pressures.

The Cabinet Member added that within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) the budget for 2024-2025 contained eight Cabinet spending proposals as set out at paragraph 6.4 of the report. He outlined each proposal in turn.

The Cabinet Member further advised that the draft budget would be published on the Council's website on 21 December, with council tax and business ratepayers invited to comment. He added that any changes made as a consideration of the responses received would be made to the final budget that will be presented to Council in February 2024.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

**Decision: The Cabinet NOTED:**

- 1.1 The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 – Part 1 of the report.**
- 1.2 The recommendations in the separate Capital Strategy 2024-2034 report that are intrinsically linked to the MTFS report.**

**The Cabinet ENDORSED and RECOMMEND to the Strategic Review Panel for scrutiny:**

- 1.3 The Council's updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy;**
  - 1.3.1 There are eight Cabinet spending proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council's Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2024-27 (paragraph 6.4) as follows;**
    - a) provision of community leadership funding of £1,000 for each councillor across the period of the MTFS, at a cost of £33k in each year.**
    - b) Delivering actions set out in the new corporate plan by increasing capacity in the Civil Enforcement team at a cost of £39k in the second year. This will provide funding for one additional environmental enforcement post in 2025-26.**
    - c) Delivering actions set out in the new corporate plan by increasing litter picking activity at a cost of £52k/£56k in 2024-25 and 2025-26.**
    - d) capital investment of £50k for accessible play equipment, which**



will have a revenue cost for the borrowing of £7.5k/year.

- e) a spend to save proposal to provide permanent capacity within the property team, at a cost of £116k/£120k/£123k to progress commercial rental income growth in line with the priority within the 2023-27 Corporate plan; cost of temporary agency resource is currently met from risk reserves; cost to be fully recouped from income growth from commercial rents.
- f) changes to the senior management structure to provide capacity for delivery of the priorities in the corporate plan, at a cost of up to £11k/£15k/£15k.
- g) introduction of free one hour parking at one car park in each of the three towns, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm. This builds on the arrangements put in place in Bewdley in November as a consequence of the long-term traffic works. This is anticipated to cost £51k/£54k/£57k.
- h) to introduce web casting of meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a cost of £1k in each year to allow maximum access for the public and in order to be fully open and transparent.

1.3.2 The level of net expenditure and resultant Council Tax for 2024-27 as per paragraphs 6.1 and 6.5 including the revenue implications of the Capital Strategy report also on the agenda;

1.3.3 The fees and charges in line with this strategy and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2024-27, as shown in Part 3 of Appendix 3 (paragraph 5.4 also refers) which incorporate decisions taken by Council on 13th December 2023 in respect of licensing fees and charges;

1.4 The Cabinet APPROVED:

1.4.1 The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 – Part 2.

1.4.2 That the budget contained in the papers is the subject of consultation with residents and business ratepayers for the 4 week period commencing 21st December 2023.

#### **CAB.51 Capital Strategy 2024-34 and Capital Programme Update**

A report was received from the Head of Resources and S151 Officer that sought Council approval of a Capital Strategy for 2024-34 and to consider the Capital Programme 2023-24. The report also set out the details to support the recommendations within the separate MTFS.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the report and gave a verbal update on the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) for 2024-25. The Cabinet Member thanked the Head of Resources and S151 Officer for providing the briefing note and an excellent,

detailed report.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

He explained that the Capital Strategy formed part of the framework for financial planning and was integral to both the MTFS and the Treasury Management Strategy (TMS). He added that it set out how capital investment plays its part in delivering the ambitions long term strategic objectives of the Council, how associated risks are managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

**Decision:**

**1.1 The CABINET ENDORSED and RECOMMEND to the Strategic Review Panel for scrutiny:**

**The Council's updated Capital Strategy:**

- a) Approve the Capital Strategy 2024-34 including the associated Quantitative Indicators in Appendix 2;**
- b) Approve variations to the Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendix 1, Appendices A and B;**
- c) Approve the limits for gross debt of non-treasury investments compared to net service expenditure and for Capital Portfolio Fund as a percentage of net service expenditure as set out in Appendix 2.**

**1.2 The Cabinet APPROVED:**

**That delegation is given to the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development & Regeneration in consultation with the Head of Resources and Solicitor to the Council and the Cabinet Member for Resources and Capital Portfolio Fund, to update the Capital Portfolio Strategy Policies in year if required.**

**CAB.52 Wyre Forest Health Action Plan Update**

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided an update on action to improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities in Wyre Forest. The report included the Wyre Forest Health Action Plan for 2024-25 for endorsement.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report. He gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

He explained that the Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board oversees local health commissioning and leads on the strategic planning and co-ordination of local health services. He added that the Health and Wellbeing Board was required to develop a strategy for improving the health and wellbeing of people who live and work in Worcestershire. He said the 'Being Well in Worcestershire' Strategy covered the period 2022-2032.

The Cabinet Member further explained that the 'Being Well Strategic Group' subgroup had delegated responsibility to develop detailed action plans to deliver the strategy. He added that within the Council, delivery of the work was primarily carried out by the Health and Sustainability team in Strategic Growth.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor F Oborski MBE presented the recommendations from its meeting on 7 December 2023. The Cabinet Member said that it was appropriate that an update on the effectiveness of the Action Plan was provided after 12 months.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7 December 2023, the Cabinet:**

**1.1 APPROVED the Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2024-25.**

**CAB.53 Cost of Living Action Plan Update**

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided an update on action to tackle the cost-of-living crisis. The report included the Wyre Forest Cost of Living action plan for 2024-25 for endorsement.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report. He gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

He explained that on 21 September 2022, Council decided to hold an Emergency Summit to explore how more local help could be provided for those struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. He added that the summit was held on 13 October 2022 and the Cost-of-Living Action Plan 2022-23 was developed and endorsed by Cabinet on 20 December 2022.

He further explained that since then, a further two Cost of Living summits had 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. He said the events provided the opportunity to share information on specific topics such as Warm Spaces, Household Support Fund and Sustainable Warmth. He added that the events were also an opportunity for all organisations attending to update on the issues affecting them and the services they provide. He said that the events also helped with identifying ways of working together to tackle cost of living issues.

The Cabinet Member said that a Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) group with officers from Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits and Strategic Growth also meet regularly to discuss council specific action on delivering this work.

The Leader seconded the proposals. He said that the authority, through the household support fund and other mechanisms such as the council tax reduction scheme, very much supported those households who were finding it difficult. He said that with inflation coming down there was light at the end of the tunnel, and he looked forward to the day when there was no longer a need to hold these summits.

Councillor Oborski MBE presented the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 December 2023, she said the Committee endorsed the recommendations. In relation to the household support fund, she congratulated the Council officers for the very prompt and efficient way they had dealt with the application process.

**Decision: Having had regard to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7 December 2023, the Cabinet:**

**1.1 NOTED the update on delivery of the Cost-of-Living Action Plan 2022-23.**

**1.2 APPROVED the Cost-of-Living Action Plan 2024-25.**

**CAB.54 Climate Change Action Plan Update and Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024 – 27**

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided an update on action to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions. The report included the new Wyre Forest Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan for 2024-27 and year one action plan for endorsement.

Councillor T Onslow left the meeting at 6.58pm and returned at 7.01pm.

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

Councillor D Ross left the meeting at 7.02pm.

The Cabinet Member explained that the new WFDC Climate Change Action Plan and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024-27 had been developed to pull together activities the Council and some of its partners were undertaking to tackle climate change, increase resilience and reduce carbon emissions. He added that it considered both existing actions and new projects to be delivered in 2024 onwards.

In conclusion the Cabinet Member said that the Council had declared a climate emergency and was keen to support residents and businesses to reduce

carbon emissions. He added that it was important that the authority considered how it could reduce its own carbon emissions through its operations.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

Councillor D Ross re-joined the meeting at 7.04pm.

Councillor Oborski MBE presented the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 December 2023.

**Decision: Having had regard to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7 December 2023, the Cabinet:**

- 1.1 CONSIDERED the update of the Climate Change Action Plan 2022-23.**
- 1.2 APPROVED the new Wyre Forest Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan and accompanying action plan for delivery of this.**
- 1.3 DELEGATED 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.**

**CAB.55 Termination of shared service arrangement: North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration**

A report was considered from the Chief Executive to agree the mutual termination, with effect from 30 June 2024, of the agreement that established North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWedR).

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

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that NWedR was a shared service serving Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest councils. It had successfully operated for over a decade and in recent years had attracted a very welcome total of £70m in Government grants for the three districts to support major regeneration programmes.

He added that all three councils placed high priority on economic regeneration. He said implementing the programmes and projects associated with the Government grants had inevitably involved considerable additional work and had affected NWedR's capacity in the last couple of years.

The Cabinet Member further explained that discussions had been ongoing between the leadership of the three councils about future options for over a year. He said the three Leaders had accepted advice from officers that mutually agreed termination should be achievable and should happen on 30

June 2024.

The Leader seconded the recommendations. He said that the three councils had a very proud record of working together and it had served the authority well. He added that the three Leaders felt that the best model was to have their own in-house team to create greater capacity in order to be able to deliver on the important projects.

**Decision: The Cabinet:**

- a) **AGREED that the Collaboration Agreement relating to the Provision of Economic Development and Regeneration Services should be terminated mutually under clause 15.1 with effect from 30 June 2024;**
- b) **DELEGATED to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda, Head of Resources and Solicitor to the Council authority to approve the exit agreement and to take any other steps that arise from the termination process.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.18pm.

The meeting is available for viewing on the Council's website  
<https://wyreforestdc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

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

**16 JANUARY 2024 (5PM)**

---

**Present:**

Councillors: M J Hart (Chairman), I Hardiman (Vice-Chairman), B Brookes, D Morehead, T L Onslow and D Ross.

**Observers:**

There were no members present as observers.

**CAB.56 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**CAB.57 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.58 Exclusion of Press and Public**

**Decision: "Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "exempt information" as defined in paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.**

**CAB.59 Acquisition of Property in Kidderminster**

A report was considered from Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) that sought decisions in respect of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) grant.

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

He gave a detailed summary of the background and key issues of the proposals. He explained that the project faced a challenging timescale because the LUF grant had to be spent by 31 March 2025. The project was expected to be fully met by the LUF grant allocated to it.

He thanked and congratulated the Officers for the work they had done with regards to the investment income generated from the grant, which had been paid in advance.

The Leader seconded the recommendations for approval.

It was agreed unanimously.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 11 January 2024, the Cabinet AGREED to:**

- 1.1 APPROVE the acquisition of the freehold of the property, as set out in the confidential report.**
- 1.2 DELEGATE to the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration, in agreement with both the Solicitor to the Council and the S151 Officer and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda, completion of purchase.**
- 1.3 APPROVE the appointment of a professional team through the SCAPE Consultancy Framework to deliver multi-disciplinary professional services to RIBA Stages 2-7, as set out in the confidential report.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 5.20pm.



**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**  
**13<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2024**

**Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027  
and Capital Strategy 2024-2034**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor D Ross
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Head of Resources
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Helen Ogram, Ext 2907 Helen.ogram@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
Appendix 1 Appendix 2  Appendix 3 Appendix 4  Appendix 5 Appendix 6	Base Budget Projections 2024-2027 Capital Programme and updated non-treasury prudential indicators Fees and Charges – Council Report of the Head of Resources/Chief Financial Officer in respect of Sections 25-28 Local Government Act 2003 Draft Alternative Budget Proposals Summary of budget consultation responses <i>The appendices to this report have been circulated electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request. (See front cover for details.)</i>

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027 and make recommendations to Council on the proposed budget decision. This report also seeks approval of the Capital Strategy for 2024-2034 including prudential indicators which set limits for non-financial investments and to fulfil the key requirements of the DLUHC Investment Guidance. As part of the overall approval sought the report of the Head of Resources in respect of statutory duties placed on Local Authority Chief Financial Officers in relation to budget setting and monitoring is considered.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The **CABINET** having re-considered the Financial Strategy 2024-2027, the results of the Budget consultation exercise, alternative budget proposals and recommendations of the Strategic Review Panel **RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL** that it:

**2.1 THREE YEAR BUDGET, CAPITAL STRATEGY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 2024-2027**

2.1.1 **APPROVES** the updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027.

2.1.2 **APPROVES** the Cabinet Proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council's Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2024-2027 as shown in the tables in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.3 and as set out below:

- a.) **provision of community leadership funding of £1,000 for each councillor across the period of the MTFS, at a cost of £33k in each year.**
- b.) **delivering actions set out in the new corporate plan by increasing capacity in the Civil Enforcement team at a cost of £39k in the second year.** This will provide funding for one additional enforcement post in 2025-26.
- c.) **delivering actions set out in the new corporate plan by increasing litter picking activity at a cost of £52k/£56k in 2024-25 and 2025-26.**
- d.) **capital investment of £50k for accessible play equipment, which will have a revenue cost for the borrowing of £7.5k/year.**
- e.) **a spend to save proposal to provide permanent capacity within the property team, at a cost of £116k/£120k/£123k** to progress commercial rental income growth in line with the priority within the 2023-27 Corporate plan; cost of temporary agency resource is currently met from risk reserves; cost to be fully recouped from income growth from commercial rents.
- f.) **changes to the senior management structure to provide capacity for delivery of the priorities in the corporate plan, at a cost of up to £11k/£15k/£15k.**
- g.) **introduction of free one hour parking at one car park in each of the three towns, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.** This builds on the arrangements put in place in Bewdley in November as a consequence of the long-term traffic works. **This is anticipated to cost £51k/£54k/£57k.**
- h.) **to introduce web casting of meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a cost of £1k in each year** to allow maximum access for the public and in order to be fully open and transparent.
- i.) **to explore and develop a commercial proposal to bring long term empty homes back into use** to increase housing supply and help meet housing demand; and support an allocation from the Innovation Fund of up to £10k to fund the feasibility study.
- j.) **to hold a public engagement event with businesses, residents and stakeholders at Wyre Forest House for a State of the Area debate.**

2.1.3 **APPROVES** the fees and charges in line with this Strategy, and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2024-2027, as shown in Appendix 3.

2.1.4 **APPROVES** the Council's updated Capital Strategy:

- a) **Approval** of the Capital Strategy 2024-2034 set out in Appendix 1 of the December Cabinet report and the updated, associated Quantitative Indicators set out in Appendix 2C of this report
- b) **Approval** of variations to the Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendices 2A and 2B, of this report (which updates Appendix 1 of the Capital Strategy report to December 2023 Cabinet)
- c) **Approval** of the limits for gross debt for non-treasury investments compared to net service expenditure and for commercial income as a percentage of net service expenditure as set out in Appendix 2C of this report.

2.1.5 **APPROVES** that any Final Accounts savings arising from 2023-2024, together with surplus Earmarked Reserves, be allocated by the Head of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio.

2.1.6 The General Fund Revenue Budget be **APPROVED** including all updates from the position in December 2023 as set out in this report.

## **2.2 COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES**

2.2.1 That Council Tax is increased by the higher limit specified by the Government of 3% and:

- a. **SETS** the Council Tax for Wyre Forest District Council on a Band D Property at £243.29 for 2024-2025 which represents an increase of 3% on Council Tax from 2023-2024.
- b. **ENDORSES** the provisional Council Tax on a Band D Property in 2025-2026 of £250.58 and £258.09 in 2026-2027, being increases of 3%.

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

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

2.3.1 Delegated authority is given to the Head of Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital portfolio, to make any appropriate adjustments to the General Fund Revenue Budget

recommended under paragraph 2.1.6 above, as a result of any further notifications from Central Government.

**2.4 The Cabinet is asked to **NOTE in line with the recommendations of the Strategic Review Panel:****

- 2.4.1 The Alternative budget proposals as detailed within Appendix 5 of this report, further noting that updated versions as appropriate will be provided for Full Council on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024.

**3. KEY ISSUES**

- 3.1 On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2023, Cabinet considered reports on proposals for the Budget Strategy for the period 2024-2027 including the intrinsically linked Capital Strategy 2024-2034. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on the 18<sup>th</sup> December. The Final Settlement was published on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024. This report provides an updated position and a proposed budget decision for Council to consider on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024.
- 3.2 The following assumptions included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy are now updated or confirmed:
- Provisional Finance Settlement, now updated with the Final Settlement
  - Council Tax Base
  - The position in relation to New Homes Bonus
  - Collection Fund position restated to reflect deficit on Council Tax in 2023-24
  - Cabinet Proposals
  - Capital Strategy and Capital Programme
  - Business Rates Pool levy gain and retained growth projections
  - The overall Reserves position and Funding Gap
- 3.3 There are two matters that have arisen since the December Cabinet that either have or may have an impact on the 2024-27 MTFS. The first concerns the shared Worcestershire Regulatory Service. Following an intervention from the Food Standards Agency about the level of activity on food safety inspections the cost of the council's share of the service has increased by £35k p.a. The second matter concerns cyber security risk, more specifically this council's planned response to the LGA case study on the Gloucester City Council cyber-attack. The planned response will be fully costed during the 2024-25 financial year and may result in additional expense over the term of the MTFS. Any costs resulting from the response plan that fall into 2024-25 will be met from the general risk reserve.
- 3.4 The latest forward projection of interest receipts from our treasury cashflow investments has been included. Interest earned is expected to be £350k higher in 2023-24 than the previous estimate. In addition a small number of low value, cost neutral, in service corrections have been made that have no impact on the figures reported.
- 3.5 The increase in the District Council's tax from 2011-12 to 2024-25 taking into account the latest proposal is only 23.11% compared to a CPI increase of 50.57%

between 2010 and 2024 demonstrating that households within Wyre Forest have enjoyed sub inflation increases across that period.

- 3.6 The Budget Consultation survey was launched on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and ran until Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The results of this consultation were considered by the Strategic Review Panel on the 25<sup>th</sup> January and informed the proposals in this report. A summary of the Public Budget Consultation responses is provided at Appendix 6. The report was considered by the Strategic Review Panel on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The Strategic Review Panel meetings also received Alternative Budget Proposals for consideration by Cabinet in formulation of their final proposals and these proposals are included in this report at Appendix 5. Further updated versions will be provided, if necessary, for Full Council on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024. Following careful consideration of these proposal two additional items are included as Cabinet proposals as set out below at paragraphs 3.12.9 and 3.12.10.
- 3.7 A revised **Capital Programme**, with updates to the version considered by December Cabinet to incorporate changes to the Capital Programme is in Appendix 2A for Council approval. The programme has been updated to include the Food Waste Disposal Scheme funded by DEFRA, removal of the Electric Vehicle Charging point proposal now being delivered under a contractual arrangement and for disabled play equipment put forward as a Cabinet proposal.
- 3.8 A revised set of Quantitative Indicators for the Assessment of Risk Exposure is included as Appendix 2C, containing the new indicator, Net income from commercial and service investments as a percentage of net revenue.
- 3.9 The approach to be taken to **fees and charges** within the financial strategy recommended by Cabinet this year continues to have regard to demand and other market conditions. As a result, some fees and charges may be frozen or increased by less than the average of 5%. Cabinet decided in December that in addition to the Cabinet proposal to introduce free one hour car parking at one car park in each of the three towns that car park fees and season ticket prices will generally be increased by 10p or 20p per ticket.
- 3.10 Fees and Charges requiring Council approval are detailed in Appendix 3.

### **Spending Proposals**

- 3.11 The Cabinet Proposals are revised following careful consideration of the budget consultation responses and Alternative Budget Proposals considered by the Strategic Review Panel on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and further dialogue with the opposition groups. The revised proposals demonstrate investment to deliver actions set out in the new corporate plan.
- 3.12 There are ten Cabinet Proposals this year as set out below:
- 3.12.1 provision of community leadership funding of £1,000 for each councillor across the period of the MTFS, at a cost of £33k in each year.
  - 3.12.2 delivering actions set out in the new corporate plan by increasing

capacity in the Civil Enforcement team at a cost of £39k in the second year. This will provide funding for one additional environmental enforcement post in 2025-26.

- 3.12.3 delivering actions set out in the new corporate plan by increasing litter picking activity at a cost of £52k/£56k in 2024-25 and 2025-26.
- 3.12.4 capital investment of £50k for accessible play equipment, which will have a revenue cost for the borrowing of £7.5k/year.
- 3.12.5 a spend to save proposal to provide permanent capacity within the property team, at a cost of £116k/£120k/£123k to progress commercial rental income growth in line with the priority within the 2023-27 Corporate plan; cost of temporary agency resource is currently met from risk reserves; cost to be fully recouped from income growth from commercial rents.
- 3.12.6 changes to the senior management structure to provide capacity for delivery of the priorities in the corporate plan, at an estimated cost of £11k/£15k/£15k. This is described in detail below at paragraph
- 3.12.7 introduction of free one hour parking at one car park in each of the three towns, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm. This builds on the arrangements put in place in Bewdley in November as a consequence of the long-term traffic works. This has an estimated cost of £51k/£54k/£57k.
- 3.12.8 introduction of web casting of meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a cost of £1k in each year to allow maximum access for the public and in order to be fully open and transparent.
- 3.12.9 to explore and develop a commercial proposal to bring long term empty homes back into use to increase housing supply and help meet housing demand; and support an allocation from the Innovation Fund of up to £10k to fund the feasibility study.
- 3.12.10 to hold a public engagement event with businesses, residents and stakeholders at Wyre Forest House for a State of the Area debate.

- 3.13 Business Rate projections based on participation in a Herefordshire and Worcestershire Pool for 2024-25 are shown in table 6.3 below. These have been revised taking into account completion of the NDR1 return and that the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Pool will continue in 2024-25. Accurate forecasting is extremely difficult, but it should be possible to manage any significant variations by drawing on the Business Rates Equalisation earmarked reserves if necessary. Estimates take into account the Council's share of forecast growth from major redevelopments, appeals, reliefs, economic regeneration work, forecast increases in the multiplier for inflation, revaluation and other Business Rates market intelligence. A collective Herefordshire and Worcestershire Business Rates Pool approach to provisions for appeals may result in outturn variances to these forecasts which will be reported as part of the Final Accounts process.

- 3.14 LG Futures were commissioned to undertake detailed financial modelling of the potential Pooling proposals for 2024-25. Extensive sensitivity and risk analysis has been undertaken as part of the work. This showed that it is unlikely that participation in the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Pool would not be beneficial.
- 3.15 Taking these items into account the projected Base Budget net expenditure for 2024-2025 is estimated to be £14.293m (see paragraph 6.3). This is £342k more than currently estimated to be raised from Council Tax, Business Rates Income retained, New Homes Bonus and all other grants based on a 2.997% pa Council Tax increase. This total is net of savings targets from Wyre Forest Forward and Localism work streams.

#### **4. LOCAL AUTHORITY REVENUE FINANCE SETTLEMENT FOR 2024-2025**

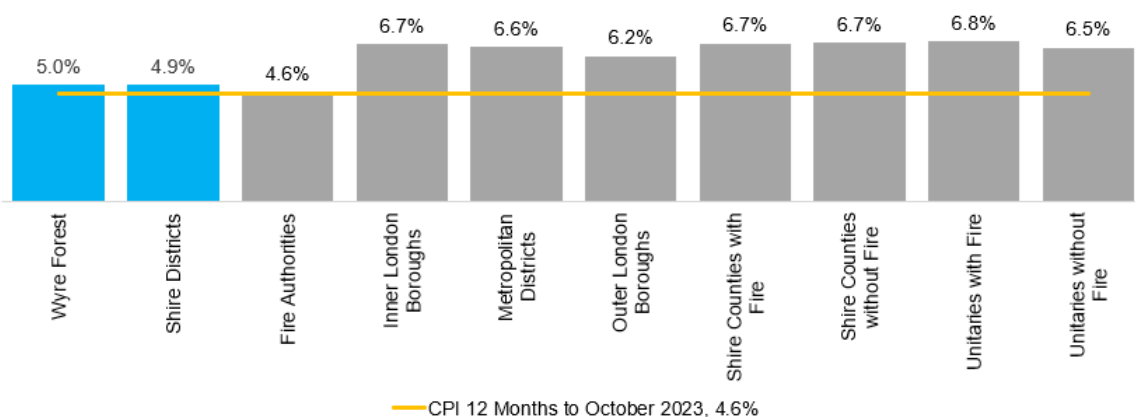
- 4.1 The Provisional Local Government Settlement was announced on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The Final Settlement was issued on 5<sup>th</sup> February. The Provisional Settlement contained no surprises, but the final settlement included an additional funding guarantee allocation as announced on 24<sup>th</sup> February. The total funding position was £126k higher than previous assumptions for 2024-25, but did not change the longer-term financial forecast.
- 4.2 The 2024-25 local government finance settlement is for one year only and is based on the Autumn Statement 2023. The final settlement confirms previous announcements; the main points are set out below followed by further analysis:
- **Council Tax** – the council tax referendum limit is set at 3%, with social care authorities allowed an additional 2% social care precept. The provisional settlement confirmed that districts will be allowed to apply the higher of the referendum limit or £5. This was confirmed at Final settlement. There will be no referendum limits set for town and parish councils.
  - **Business Rates Retention** – The small business rates multiplier has been frozen for 2024-25 at 49.9p and the standard business rates multiplier will increase to 54.6p. Councils will be compensated as if both business rates multipliers had increased by Consumer Price Index (CPI).
  - **Revenue Support Grant** – For authorities still receiving RSG, this has been increased by 6.7%, in line with the increase to the business rates multiplier.
  - **Services Grant** – This grant has been reduced from £483m to £77m, a reduction of £406m. The funding has been reduced after “factoring in the costs of using some of the remaining Services Grant to fund increases to other settlement grants and equalisation of the adult social care precept”. A small proportion held back as a contingency and resulted in an additional allocation at Final Settlement of £1,760. The methodology for the grant remains unchanged.
  - **New Homes Bonus** - The 2023-24 allocations have been announced at £291m. There have been no changes to the design of the scheme for 2024-25, with a single year's new allocation.

- **Funding Guarantee** – This grant is intended to provide a funding floor for all local authorities. The provisional settlement included a guarantee that no local authority would see an increase in Core Spending Power that is lower than 3% (before assumptions on council tax rate increases, but includes those on Council Tax base). The value of the grant increased from £133m to £197m for 2024-25. An announcement on 24<sup>th</sup> January increased this guarantee to 4%, the value of the increase, confirmed at Final Settlement is £124k.
- **Local Government Funding Reform** – Confirmation that funding reform will be deferred until after the General Election.

**a. Core Spending Power – Overall**

“Core Spending power” is a headline figure used by DLUHC to represent the key revenue resources available to local authorities, including an estimate of actual and potential council tax. The National Core Spending Power increased by 6.5% for 2024-25. The increase for individual authorities will be different to the national figures and the government figures also contain assumptions around council tax base change that may not be reflected in local projections. This Council's core spending power will increase by 5% in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24 This compares with the average for shire districts of 4.9%.

**Table 4.2.1 - Change in CSP by authority type (2023-24 to 2024-25) – WFDC 5% increase**



- b. **Council Tax** – For 2024-2025, there will continue to be differential limits that will trigger the need for a council tax referendum.

A referendum limit of up to 3% will represent the trigger for all authorities, except Shire Districts (higher of £5 or 3%) Parishes (no limit), Police and Crime Commissioners (£13), non-PCC elements of council tax for Mayoral Combined Authorities (no limit) and all fire and rescue authorities (£5). As previously announced, an adult social care precept of up to 2% will also be available in 2024-25.

- c. **Business Rates** - The application for a 50% Herefordshire and Worcestershire Business Rates Pool, including the Fire Authority has been confirmed.



- d. **New Homes Bonus** - the allocations have been announced for 2024-25. The Core Spending Power figures for 2024-25 include these allocations. There are no changes to New Homes Bonus this year, the overall allocation for each authority is based on a single allocation for 2024-25 with no legacy payments included in the allocation. The allocations are provisional and subject to final confirmation and checks.

4.3 Councils continue to face significant financial uncertainty and resultant risk. Clarity and certainty about how all local services will be funded over the next few years and beyond is needed. The 2024-25 settlement was the sixth one-year settlement. The one-off nature of grants, the uncertainty around New Homes Bonus and funding of waste reforms through the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme cause significant difficulties in forecasting. A multi-year settlement is needed for forward planning and long term stability.

4.4 The forecast position in relation to total Government grant taking into account the Final Finance Settlement for 2024-2025 is shown in the Tables at 6.3.

## **5. COUNCIL TAX BASE**

- 5.1 The Council Tax Base previously reported for 2024-25 has now been confirmed; this has increased from the 2023-24 level of 34,738 to 34,902 being an increase of 164 or 0.47%. This is due to growth in the housing stock and is net of reliefs, exemptions, discounts, disregards and Council Tax Reduction Scheme. It is forecast to rise over the term of the Strategy, informed by data from planning applications, resulting in increases of circa 1.4% or 500 additional properties each year in 2025-26 and 2026-27. The taxbase has been lower than anticipated during 2023-24, this has resulted in an in-year deficit. There are various reasons for this, whilst the gross property charge has increased, the increase arising from new build developments has been offset by a higher number of discounts than assumed. There has been a significant uplift in the number of council tax exemptions mainly due to deceased taxpayer exemptions and those awarded under the “severely mentally impaired category” following promotion by a TV celebrity and the VOA has cleared a back log of band reduction appeals.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Cabinet Proposals previously considered have been reviewed following consideration of the alternative budget proposals presented by the LibDem group. The final proposals are summarised below and included in the table in paragraph 6.3.

## Agenda Item No. 7.1

ACTIVITY AND DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSALS	KEY	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	After 2026-27
		£	£	£	£
<b><u>Enforcement</u></b> Additional funding in 2025-26 for 1 new Civil Enforcement Officer. Unspent allocations approved in the 2023-26 MTFS being rolled forward.	C R S		38,800 1.00		
<b><u>Street Scene</u></b> Appoint 2 new Street Scene officers utilising allocations approved in the 2023-26 MTFS for part time litter pickers (including match funding) to partially off-set the increased cost to provide year-round blitz/hot spot reactive repairs.	C R S	51,700 1.70	55,800 1.70		
<b><u>Community Leadership Fund</u></b> Provision of community leadership funding of £1,000 for each councillor in across the period of the MTFS	C R S	33,000	33,000	33,000	33,000
<b><u>Additional Staffing resource</u></b> Additional staffing resource to address capacity within the property team to deliver corporate priorities (off-set by income target)	C R S	116,000 2.00	119,500 2.00	123,100 2.00	126,800 2.00
<b><u>Additional Staffing resource</u></b> Additional staffing resource to align the management structure to deliver the corporate priorities	C R S	11,250	15,000	15,450	15,900
<b><u>Adaptive play equipment</u></b> Provision of disabled play equipment in Brinton Park and Stourport riverside.	C R S	50,000 7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500
<b><u>Free one hour parking</u></b> Introduction of free one hour parking at one car park in each of the three towns, Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm. This builds on the arrangement already put in place in Bewdley due to long term traffic	C R S	51,000	54,000	57,000	57,000
<b><u>Web Casting of meetings</u></b> To introduce web casting of meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to allow maximum access for the public and in order to be fully open and transparent	C R S	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
<b><u>Empty Home proposal Feasibility Study</u></b> To explore and develop a commercial proposal to bring long term empty homes back into use to increase housing supply and help meet housing demand (allocate £10k funding from Innovation Fund)	C R S	-	-	-	-
<b><u>Annual State of the Area debate</u></b> To hold a public engagement event with businesses, residents and stakeholders at Wyre Forest House	C R S	-	250	-	-
<b><u>Commercial Income growth</u></b> A strengthened focus on growing the Council's net commercial income	C R S	160,000 CR	240,000 CR	300,000 CR	330,000 CR
<b>TOTALS</b>	C R S	50,000 111,450 3.7	- 84,850 4.7	- 62,950 CR 2.0	- 88,800 CR 2.0
Also: 3% pa Council Tax increase					

### **KEY - Changes in Resources**

C - Capital

R - Revenue

S - Staffing - Stated in FTEs

- 6.2 The estimates and assumptions included in the December Cabinet report have been reviewed to reflect latest available information. Following completion of the NNDR1 return we can confirm our estimates of income from business rates and following the statutory calculation of the deficit on collection of Council Tax this funding source has been updated (£101k deficit).

**Table 6.2 - Updated Position due to amendments since December Cabinet**

Detail of Changes	Revised 2023-24 £	2024-25 £	2025-26 £	2026-27 £
Collection Fund Deficit		100,830		
Increased cost of Worcestershire Shared Regulatory Services		35,000	35,000	35,000
Increased Investment Income	(350,000)			
Increased funding from Government (Final settlement )		(125,880)		
	(350,000)	9,950	35,000	35,000
New/amendments to Draft Cabinet Proposals			250	
<b>Total Variance</b>	<b>(350,000)</b>	<b>9,950</b>	<b>35,250</b>	<b>35,000</b>

- 6.3 The following tables demonstrate the updated position for the Council when the revisions are incorporated into the Base Budget. The Council is forecast to hold a balance of £854k at the end of 2026-27 (see reserves table in 6.4) based on a Council Tax increase of 3% pa.

**Table 6.3 - Updated Position Assuming a Council Tax Increase of 3% pa**

	Revised 2023-24 £	2024-25 £	2025-26 £	2026-27 £
Net Expenditure on Services	13,313,420	14,181,740	15,247,040	15,788,150
Total Net Expenditure on Services	<b>13,313,420</b>	<b>14,181,740</b>	<b>15,247,040</b>	<b>15,788,150</b>
Include:				
Cabinet Proposals	0	111,450	84,850	(62,950)
Net Expenditure	13,313,420	14,293,190	15,331,890	15,725,200
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	215,060	(341,870)	(950,680)	(1,536,750)
<b>Net Budget Requirement</b>	<b>13,528,480</b>	<b>13,951,320</b>	<b>14,381,210</b>	<b>14,188,450</b>
Funded by:				
Revenue Support Grant	150,380	160,340	160,000	(356,000)
Business Rates	4,392,250	4,408,470	4,841,680	4,397,000
New Homes Bonus	240,030	285,060	0	0
Funding Guarantee	425,370	687,120	490,410	0
Collection Fund Deficit	0	(100,830)	0	0
Council Tax Income	8,205,460	8,491,310	8,871,030	9,265,950
Services Grant	114,990	19,850	18,090	0
Transitional Funding (assumption)	0	0	0	881,500
WFDC Council Tax: 3% increase per annum	<b>236.21</b>	<b>243.29</b>	<b>250.58</b>	<b>258.09</b>
Percentage increase in Council Tax	2.996%	2.997%	2.996%	2.997%

- 6.4 Reserves available as part of the three-year financial strategy are as shown in the following table. The reserves position at the end of 2026-27 compared to the December forecast is shown below.

**Table 6.4. - Reserves Statement Assuming a Council Tax Increase of 3% pa**

Reserves Statement	Revised 2023-24 £	2024-25 £	2025-26 £	2026-27 £
Reserves as at 1st April	3,468	3,683	3,341	2,391
December MTFS transfer to (from) Reserves	(135)	(332)	(915)	(1,502)
Service revenue account changes	0	(35)	(35)	(35)
Collection Fund deficit adjustment	0	(101)	0	0
Final settlement changes	0	126	0	0
Transfer to (from) Reserves	(135)	(342)	(950)	(1,537)
Updated Reserves as at 31st March	<b>3,333</b>	<b>3,342</b>	<b>2,391</b>	<b>854</b>

- 6.5 The table below shows a funding gap of £2.172m in 2026-27, an increase of £35,000 from the previously reported £2.137m in December 2023 as a result of the updates in this report, based on a 3% Council Tax increase.

**Table 6.5 – Funding Gap Assuming a Council Tax Increase of 3% pa**

Financial Gap	2023-24 £	2024-25 £	2025-26 £	2026-27 £
Wyre Forest Forward Savings not yet achieved	0	218,310	267,810	255,380
Generic Localism Savings	0	40,000	60,000	80,000
New Cabinet Proposal for Commercial Income				
- Property	0	110,000	140,000	150,000
- General (new initiatives and refocus on commercialism)	0	50,000	100,000	150,000
<b>SUB- Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>418,310</b>	<b>567,810</b>	<b>635,380</b>
Use of reserves from proposed 2024-27 Strategy	(215,060)	341,870	950,680	1,536,750
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(215,060)</b>	<b>760,180</b>	<b>1,518,490</b>	<b>2,172,130</b>

## 7. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 7.1 Equality, Climate Change and Health and Wellbeing Impact assessments will be undertaken as appropriate as part of reviews of service delivery arrangements and implementation of new models. There are no proposals in this report that require an assessment, because of their generic nature. However the proposed investment in accessible play equipment will enhance provision for disabled children in the district.

## 8. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 Achieving financial sustainability is the most significant challenge facing the Council. The Strategic Review Panel provided some options for the Cabinet to consider in making its recommendations on the medium-term financial strategy. The principal risks were outlined in Appendix 5 of the report to Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and are summarised and refreshed where appropriate in Appendix 4 of this report.

- 8.2 The increased Council Tax Base from 2024-25, the development and regeneration of Kidderminster and the wider district following the successful award of grant under both the Future High Streets fund and the Levelling Up Fund, Cabinet Proposals and continuing progress with the Wyre Forest Forward Transformation savings contribute as far as possible to the mitigation of the financial risk within this budget strategy.
- 8.3 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require Local Authorities to fully consider and manage Risk as part of the Budget process. Appendix 5 of the December 2023 report showed an analysis of the significant financial risks which are affecting the Council. This has been reviewed and remains current subject to the comments and updates provided in Appendix 4 of this report.
- 8.4 Local authorities are required to formalise their approach to risk management and evidence it more directly as part of the budgetary process. Further statutory safeguards designed to prevent an authority from over-committing itself financially are as follows:
- Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 which requires the authority to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and that the Chief Finance Officer has personal responsibility for such administration.
  - Section 32 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 which requires the authority to set a balanced budget.
  - The prudential framework, introduced as part of the Local Government Act 2003, covers the way an authority must manage its investments including affordability considerations. The assessment of affordability of financial plans requires a judgement about risk. Prudential Indicators are the monitoring tool to assess performance and risk.
  - The external auditor's duty to satisfy itself that the authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
  - CIPFA Guidance on Reserves and Balances highlights the need to consider risks facing the authority; the risks posed by the continuing economic uncertainty, supply chain issues exacerbated by global unrest and departure from the EU and continued uncertainty about funding reform place pressure on the Council to hold higher levels of reserves to ensure ongoing sustainability.
  - To reinforce these obligations section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the Chief Finance Officer to report to all councillors, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, if there is or is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget.
- 8.5 CIPFA issued a Financial Management Code (FM Code) in October 2019 which provides guidance for good and sustainable financial management in local authorities provides assurance that authorities are managing resources effectively.

- 8.6 The Treasury Management Code and Prudential Code provide guidance to support the management of risks associated with Treasury and Capital Financing strategies.
- 8.7 The on-going principle of the Prudential Code is that capital plans must be affordable and proportionate, and an authority must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return.
- 8.8 The financial projections suggest deficits in funding across all three years under consideration, leading to an overall projected net deficit over the three years of some £2.172m. In broad terms this can be explained by the combination of cost pressures not met by government grant, and historic reductions in Revenue Support Grant and New Homes Bonus receipts.

## **9. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

### **9.1 Local Government Act 2003**

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

## **10. CONSULTEES**

Corporate Leadership Team  
Cabinet

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 11.2 Cabinet Report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023–2026 20<sup>th</sup> December 2023.
- 11.3 Cabinet Report on updated Capital Strategy 2024-2034 20<sup>th</sup> December 2023.
- 11.4 Agenda and Minutes of the Strategic Review Panel.
- 11.5 Provisional and Final Local Government Finance Settlements 2024-2025.
- 11.6 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes December 2021
- 11.7 Strong Leader Cabinet Report – September 2023 – Business Rates Retention Business Rate Pool bid. Delegated Decision Notice 15<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**REVENUE BUDGET TOTAL REQUIREMENTS - DISTRICT COUNCIL PURPOSES - Before Cabinet Proposals and Council Fees & Charges**

SERVICE	2023/24		2024/25			2025/26			2026/27		
	Original Estimate £	Revised Estimate £	At Nov.23 Prices £	Inflation £	TOTAL £	At Nov.23 Prices £	Inflation £	TOTAL £	At Nov.23 Prices £	Inflation £	TOTAL £
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL	2,218,860	2,865,280	2,475,940	91,170	2,567,110	2,423,970	167,130	2,591,100	2,431,470	246,550	2,678,020
COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT	5,482,310	5,433,920	5,770,940	302,800	6,073,740	5,777,540	549,720	6,327,260	5,786,140	804,160	6,590,300
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION	248,950	563,470	446,820	42,080	488,900	316,140	77,410	393,550	302,920	115,100	418,020
RESOURCES	2,448,120	2,294,550	2,168,340	20,450	2,188,790	2,064,940	38,680	2,103,620	1,973,420	82,440	2,055,860
REVENUES, BENEFITS & CUSTOMER SERVICES	1,389,990	1,444,330	1,524,990	78,850	1,603,840	1,556,220	140,890	1,697,110	1,568,730	205,030	1,773,760
STRATEGIC GROWTH	2,063,770	2,287,220	2,064,780	100,540	2,165,320	1,983,630	169,740	2,153,370	1,827,580	245,460	2,073,040
	13,852,000	14,888,770	14,451,810	635,890	15,087,700	14,122,440	1,143,570	15,266,010	13,890,260	1,698,740	15,589,000
LESS: CAPITAL ACCOUNT	585,490	234,650	526,450	5,200	531,650	948,890	9,360	958,250	1,003,530	13,450	1,016,980
INTEREST RECEIVED	(750,000)	(1,810,000)	(1,425,000)	0	(1,425,000)	(952,000)	0	(952,000)	(780,000)	0	(780,000)
<b>TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE ON SERVICES</b>	<b>13,687,490</b>	<b>13,313,420</b>	<b>13,553,260</b>	<b>641,090</b>	<b>14,194,350</b>	<b>14,119,330</b>	<b>1,152,930</b>	<b>15,272,260</b>	<b>14,113,790</b>	<b>1,712,190</b>	<b>15,825,980</b>
LESS: CONTRIBUTION (FROM) TO RESERVES	(159,010)	215,060			(243,030)			(891,050)			(1,637,530)
<b>NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>13,528,480</b>	<b>13,528,480</b>			<b>13,951,320</b>			<b>14,381,210</b>			<b>14,188,450</b>
LESS: REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT	(150,380)	(150,380)			(160,340)			(160,000)			356,000
BUSINESS RATES INCOME	(3,442,050)	(3,442,050)			(3,655,460)			(4,841,680)			(4,397,000)
BUSINESS RATES GROWTH	(950,200)	(950,200)			(753,010)			0			0
FUNDING GUARANTEE	(425,370)	(425,370)			(687,120)			(490,410)			0
COLLECTION FUND (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT	0	0			100,830			0			0
NEW HOMES BONUS	(240,030)	(240,030)			(285,060)			0			0
TRANSITIONAL FUNDING (assumption)	0	0			0			0			(881,500)
ONE OFF SERVICES GRANT	(114,990)	(114,990)			(19,850)			(18,090)			0
<b>GENERAL EXPENSES -</b>											
COUNCIL TAX INCOME	<b>8,205,460</b>	<b>8,205,460</b>			<b>8,491,310</b>			<b>8,871,030</b>			<b>9,265,950</b>
<b>COUNCIL TAX LEVY</b>		<b>236.21</b>			<b>243.29</b>			<b>250.58</b>			<b>258.09</b>
<b>COUNCIL TAX BASE</b>		<b>34,738</b>			<b>34,902</b>			<b>35,402</b>			<b>35,902</b>

**Agenda Item No. 7.1**  
**APPENDIX 2A**

**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024 TO 2034**

Detail	2023-24		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	Prior to 01/04/2023	Total
	Original £	Revised £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	£	£
<b>COMMITTED EXPENDITURE</b>														
<b>1. CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL</b>														
Headquarters - Office Accommodation	413,610	-	413,610	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9,586,390	10,000,000
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>413,610</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>413,610</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9,586,390</b>	<b>10,000,000</b>
<b>2. COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES</b>														
Parking Facilities: Improvement to Car Parks	29,530	23,600	30,930	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	419,970	474,500
Stourport Riverside	-	52,200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	97,800	150,000
Community Safety CCTV Upgrade (Grant Funded)	-	-	4,460	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,400	24,860
Brinton Park HLF Scheme (subject to successful HLF bid)	1,931,190	39,000	2,138,200	240,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	182,800	2,600,000
Food Waste Collection (funded by Defra grant)	-	-	1,037,760	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,037,760
Adaptive Play Equipment	-	-	50,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50,000
Innovation Fund - Capital*	185,000	100,000	190,390	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54,610	345,000
* Subject to Business Cases & approval by the Cabinet/CLT														
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>2,145,720</b>	<b>214,800</b>	<b>3,451,740</b>	<b>240,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>775,580</b>	<b>4,682,120</b>
<b>3. STRATEGIC GROWTH</b>														
Housing Strategy:														
Better Care Fund (BCF) - Disabled Facilities Grants (subject to confirmation 24-25 onwards)	2,000,000	1,350,000	2,376,090	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	16,524,300	29,250,390
BCF - Dementia Dwellings Grants	-	20,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,000
BCF - Minor Adaptations Grants	-	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100,000
BCF - Discretionary Grants	-	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100,000
BCF - Discretionary Top Up Grants	-	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100,000
BCF- Hospital Discharge/Moving Home/Housing Advice Grants	-	80,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80,000
BCF- Energy Efficiency	-	400,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	400,000
BCF- Disabled Adapted Units	-	240,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	240,000
Housing Assistance - Private Sector Measures (including Decent Homes Grant)	290,230	150,000	211,210	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,995,910	2,357,120
Housing Fund	876,000	1,045,920	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,045,920
Castle Road Development	2,000,000	721,140	3,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	139,070	3,860,210
Raven Street Conversion	-	84,700	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	84,700
Flood Relief	28,410	28,410	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	170,590	199,000
Flood Recovery Support (BEIS Funded)	150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 3 (LADS3)	-	432,750	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27,250	460,000
Home Upgrade Grant Phase 1 (HUGS1)	-	22,800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22,800
Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUGS2)	-	462,000	693,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,155,000
Future Investment Evergreen Fund*	890,470	1,096,830	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47,100	1,143,930
Acquisition of Land at Horsefair, Kidderminster	49,590	49,590	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	410	50,000
Innovation Fund Capital	-	105,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	105,000
Capital Projects Fund*	3,500,000	1,000,000	7,267,750	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,267,750
* Subject to Business Cases & Due Diligence														
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>9,784,700</b>	<b>7,589,140</b>	<b>13,548,050</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>18,904,630</b>	<b>49,041,820</b>
<b>4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION</b>														
Levelling Up Fund**	5,517,050	4,358,510	12,750,920	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	790,570	17,900,000
Capital Portfolio Fund*	6,050,830	3,025,410	3,025,420	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16,754,620	22,805,450
Future High Streets Fund**	9,751,920	13,564,890	8,248,180	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,685,260	27,498,330
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	178,890	287,360	275,210	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50,030	612,600
* Subject to Business Cases & Due Diligence														
**Any Co-funding subject to full Business Case following the principles of the Capital Portfolio Fund														
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>21,498,690</b>	<b>21,236,170</b>	<b>24,299,730</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23,280,480</b>	<b>68,816,380</b>
<b>5. RESOURCES</b>														
ICT Strategy	250,000	502,480	912,000	257,000	97,000	84,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,150,640	6,003,120
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>250,000</b>	<b>502,480</b>	<b>912,000</b>	<b>257,000</b>	<b>97,000</b>	<b>84,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,150,640</b>	<b>6,003,120</b>
<b>6. VEHICLE, EQUIPMENT &amp; SYSTEMS RENEWAL SCHEDULE</b>														
Vehicles & Equipment & Systems Renewal Schedule	1,012,040	1,119,720	668,890	1,505,290	1,429,690	366,490	467,690	933,690	544,690	122,890	122,890	122,890	7,708,940	15,113,760
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>1,012,040</b>	<b>1,119,720</b>	<b>668,890</b>	<b>1,505,290</b>	<b>1,429,690</b>	<b>366,490</b>	<b>467,690</b>	<b>933,690</b>	<b>544,690</b>	<b>122,890</b>	<b>122,890</b>	<b>122,890</b>	<b>7,708,940</b>	<b>15,113,760</b>
<b>TOTAL COMMITTED EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>35,104,760</b>	<b>30,662,310</b>	<b>43,294,020</b>	<b>3,002,290</b>	<b>2,526,690</b>	<b>1,450,490</b>	<b>1,467,690</b>	<b>1,933,690</b>	<b>1,544,690</b>	<b>1,122,890</b>	<b>1,122,890</b>	<b>1,122,890</b>	<b>64,406,660</b>	<b>153,657,200</b>



**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024 TO 2034**

Detail	2023-24		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	Prior to 01/04/2023	Total
	Original £	Revised £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	£	£
<b>FINANCING</b>														
Capital Receipts: Funding Approved	1,985,680	2,190,390	626,680	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,817,070
Prudential Borrowing for Capital Projects Fund	3,500,000	1,000,000	7,267,750	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,267,750
Prudential Borrowing for Capital Portfolio Fund	6,050,830	3,025,410	3,025,420	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,050,830
Prudential Borrowing for Castle Road Development	2,000,000	-	2,838,360	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,838,360
Prudential Borrowing for Brinton Park HLF Scheme	176,380	-	-	176,380	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	176,380
Prudential Borrowing for ICT Strategy	250,000	502,480	912,000	257,000	97,000	84,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,852,480
Prudential Borrowing for Innovation Fund - Capital	185,000	205,000	190,390	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	395,390
Prudential Borrowing for Stourport Riverside	-	52,200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52,200
Prudential Borrowing for Future High Street Fund	1,808,000	-	1,808,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,808,000
Prudential Borrowing for Adaptive Play Equipment	-	-	50,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50,000
Better Care Fund Grant (from Worcestershire County Council - subject to confirmation 23-24 onwards)	2,000,000	2,186,630	2,376,090	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	-	13,562,720
Housing Fund Grant	536,080	706,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	706,000
HLF Partner External Funding	1,754,810	39,000	2,138,200	63,620	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,240,820
Future High Street Fund (DLUHC)	7,943,920	11,240,380	3,584,960	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,825,340
Future High Street Fund (GBSLEP)	-	-	1,500,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,500,000
Future High Street Fund (Brownfields Release)	-	725,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	725,000
Levelling Up Fund	5,517,050	4,358,510	12,750,920	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17,109,430
DEFRA Flood Grant Funding	28,410	28,410	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28,410
S.106 Funding (Parking - Contractual Agreement)	27,670	23,600	29,070	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52,670
S.106 Funding (Castle Road Development)	-	185,250	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	185,250
DEFRA Food Waste Collection Funding	-	-	1,037,760	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,037,760
Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 3 (LADS3) Grant Funding	-	432,750	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	432,750
Home Upgrade Grant Phase 1 (HUGS1) Grant Funding	-	22,800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22,800
Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUGS) Grant Funding	-	462,000	693,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,155,000
Flood Support Grant	150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
CCTV Grant (PCC)	-	-	4,460	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,460
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Grant	178,890	287,360	275,210	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	562,570
Vehicles, Equipment & Systems (Prudential Borrowing)	1,012,040	1,119,720	668,890	1,505,290	1,429,690	366,490	467,690	933,690	544,690	122,890	122,890	122,890	-	7,404,820
Direct Revenue Funding	-	1,869,420	1,516,860	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,386,280
	35,104,760	30,662,310	43,294,020	3,002,290	2,526,690	1,450,490	1,467,690	1,933,690	1,544,690	1,122,890	1,122,890	1,122,890		89,250,540

VEHICLE, EQUIPMENT AND SYSTEMS RENEWAL SCHEDULE 2024-2034

Detail			Classification	2023-24		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34
				Original Budget	Revised Budget	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
				£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>1. VEHICLES</b>															
MOT Bay & Garage Equipment - Replacement (slippage from p	N/A	R229	GARAGE EQUIPMENT		17,680										
Refurbishment Fund	N/A	R002	REFURBISHMENT FUND		30,000										
Bin Stock Renewals	BINS	Various	BIN STOCK RENEWALS	122,890	122,890	122,890	122,890	122,890	122,890	122,890	122,890	122,890	122,890	122,890	122,890
Tractor	AV070	R236	TRACTOR				48,000								
JCB Digger	AV183	R001	JCB DIGGER	72,000	72,000										
Midi Tractor	AV189	R236	MIDI TRACTOR			36,000									
Tractor ( wx13 auv )	AV225	R236	TRACTOR			72,000									
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV234	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg				132,000								
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV237	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg				132,000								
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV238	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg				132,000								
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV239	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg				132,000								
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV241	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg				132,000								
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV268	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg				132,000								
Kia Rio	AV272	R193	CAR	18,000	18,000							18,000			
Kubota F3440	AV273	R160	RIDE ON MOWER AND FLAIL		33,600						21,000				
Kubota F3440	AV274	R160	RIDE ON MOWER AND FLAIL		33,600						21,000				
Forest TR8 Chipper	AV277	R252	CHIPPER	36,000	36,000									40,000	
Indespension Trailer (for chipper)	AV278	R252	TRAILER	4,800	4,800									5,000	
Vauxhall Astra 2.0 cdti	AV279	R160	CAR	14,400	14,400									12,000	
Viajet Roadsweeper	AV280	R200	ROAD SWEEPER 15000kg	156,000	156,000										
Small Van	AV281	R236	3500KG VAN	36,000	36,000									27,600	
Small Van	AV282	R236	LIGHT VAN	36,000	36,000									27,600	
Small van	AV283	R516	LIGHT VAN		30,000									27,600	
Iveco Cargo for Bulky	AV284	R200	TIPPER 7500kg			66,000									
Ford Connect	AV285	R193	LIGHT VAN	31,200	31,200									24,000	
Iveco Daily	AV286	R002	TIPPER 3500kg			42,000									
John Deere 1445	AV287	R236	RIDE ON MOWER	33,600	33,600						35,000				
Isuzu	AV288	R163	BOXED VAN 7500kg				36,000								
Mechanical Sweeper (Small JOHNSON C200)	AV289	R200	PAVEMENT SWEEPER	102,000	102,000						84,000				
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV290	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg			132,000									
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV291	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg			132,000									
Iveco Daily for Bulky	AV292	R160	TIPPER 3500kg			42,000									
Isuzu	AV294	R252	BOXED VAN 7500kg					57,600							
TR6 Chipper	AV295	R252	CHIPPER	36,000	36,000										
Mower	AV296	R160	RIDE ON MOWER				38,400								
Ride on Mower	AV297	R160	RIDE ON MOWER					30,000							
Tipper Vehicle	AV298	R254	TIPPER 3500kg				42,000								
Iveco Daily	AV299	R160	TIPPER 3500kg				42,000								
Small Van	AV300	R229	SMALL VAN					36,000							
Iveco Daily	AV301	R160	TIPPER 3500kg				42,000								
Iveco Daily	AV302	R160	TIPPER 3500kg				42,000								
Iveco Daily	AV303	R160	TIPPER 3500kg				42,000								
Iveco Daily	AV304	R160	TIPPER 3500kg				42,000								
Iveco Daily	AV305	R160	TIPPER 3500kg				42,000								
Iveco Daily	AV306	R160	TIPPER 3500kg				42,000								
Iveco Cargo small Refuse Freighter	AV307	R002	MEDIUM REFUSE FREIGHTER 12000kg RCV			132,000									
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV308	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg					210,000							
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV309	R005	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg					210,000							
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV310	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg					204,600							
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	AV311	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg					204,600							
Iveco Daily	AV312	R200	TIPPER 3500kg					36,000							
Iveco Daily	AV313	R200	TIPPER 3500kg					36,000							
Iveco Daily	AV314	R200	TIPPER 3500kg					36,000							
Iveco Daily	AV315	R200	TIPPER 3500kg		30,000						36,000				
4x4 Offroad Vehicle	AV316	R163	4x4					36,000							
Isuzu	AV317	R252	BOXED VAN 7500kg						57,600						
Refuse Freighter	AV318	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg					210,000							
Mechanical Sweeper (Johnson CN201)	AV319	R200	PAVEMENT SWEEPER									120,000			
Iveco Daily	AV320	R200	TIPPER 3500kg						42,000						
Iveco Daily	AV321	R200	TIPPER 3500kg						42,000						
Ford Connect	AV322	R160	LIGHT VAN											40,000	
Ford Connect	AV323	R200	LIGHT VAN											40,000	
Ford Connect	AV324	R185	LIGHT VAN											40,000	
Iveco Daily Refuse Freigher	AV325	R002	SMALL REFUSE FREIGHTER 7500kg RCV					102,000							
Mechanical Sweeper (Johnson VT650)	AV326	R200	ROAD SWEEPER 15000kg							156,000					
Mechanical Sweeper	AV327	R200	PAVEMENT SWEEPER							80,400					
Mechanical Sweeper	AV328	R200	PAVEMENT SWEEPER							80,400					
Mercedes Refuse Freighter	AV329	R003	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg								204,600				
Mercedes Refuse Freighter	AV330	R005	REFUSE FREIGHTER 26000kg								204,600				
Mercedes Refuse Freighter	AV331	R002	REFUSE FREIGHTER 18000kg								204,600				
Fork Lift Truck	FORKLIFT	R229	FORK LIFT												
<b>2. OTHER</b>															
Financial Management System Replacement	FMS001			45,950	45,950										
Flail Equipment replacement	R476	R236	FLAIL			24,000									
Wessex Proline	R600	R236	Pull Along Mower Attachment	200,000	200,000					28,000					
Lighting system upgrade (Wyre Forest House)															
				1,012,040	1,119,720	668,890	1,505,290	1,429,690	366,490	467,690	933,690	544,690	122,890	122,890	122,890

# **QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS FOR ASSESSMENT OF RISK EXPOSURE 2023-27**

Capital Portfolio Fund as at February 2024		2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
<b>DEBT TO GROSS SERVICE EXPENDITURE RATIOS</b>					
Non treasury property investments debt to gross service expenditure (GSE) ratio	<i>Gross debt of non treasury property acquisitions as a percentage of gross service expenditure, where gross service expenditure is a proxy for the size and financial strength of a local authority.</i>	43.20%	49.94%	51.78%	50.13%
<b>DEBT TO NET SERVICE EXPENDITURE RATIOS</b>					
Non treasury property investments debt to net service expenditure (NSE) ratio	<i>Gross debt of non treasury property acquisitions as a percentage of net service expenditure, where net service expenditure is a proxy for the size and financial strength of a local authority.</i>	150.59%	163.52%	154.89%	145.63%
<b>LOAN TO VALUE RATIOS</b>					
Loan to PPE value ratio (property)	<i>The amount of non treasury property debt compared to the total asset value (Long term assets - PPE).</i>	35.60%	39.48%	38.68%	37.86%
Loan to value ratio (property only)	<i>The amount of property debt compared to the total property asset value (property portfolio only).</i>	103.81%	115.13%	112.77%	110.41%
<b>CFR RATIOS</b>					
CFR - Property	<i>Property CFR as a proportion of the gross CFR</i>	41.93%	35.86%	35.17%	34.77%
<b>FINANCING COSTS TO NET SERVICE EXPENDITURE RATIOS</b>					
Property investments financing costs to net service expenditure (NSE) ratio	<i>Non treasury property acquisitions financing costs as a percentage of net service expenditure, where net service expenditure is a proxy for the size and financial strength of a local authority.</i>	5.84%	5.73%	5.55%	5.34%
<b>INCOME/INVESTMENT COVER RATIOS</b>					
Property investment cover ratio	<i>The total net income from property acquisitions, compared to the interest expense.</i>	-42.92%	-19.38%	6.95%	8.79%
Property target income returns (excluding financing costs)	<i>Net revenue income (excluding financing costs) compared to equity. This is a measure of achievement of the portfolio of properties.</i>	3.01%	3.57%	4.20%	4.25%
Property target income returns (including financing costs)	<i>Net revenue income compared to equity. This is a measure of achievement of the portfolio of properties.</i>	-1.01%	-0.46%	0.16%	0.21%
Commercial income to NSE ratio	<i>Dependence on non-fees and charges income to deliver core services. Fees and charges should be netted off gross service expenditure to calculate NSE.</i>	4.00%	4.30%	4.90%	4.89%
Net income from commercial and service investments as a percentage of net revenue	<i>The net return from the property portfolio compared to the total net service expenditure.</i>	1.47%	0.65%	-0.23%	-0.27%
<b>TRENDS</b>					
Gross income	<i>The income received from the property portfolio at a gross level over time.</i>	(£1,731,360)	(£1,755,550)	(£1,863,650)	(£1,885,610)
Operating costs	<i>The trend in operating costs of the non-financial investment portfolio over time, as the portfolio expands.</i>	£1,083,830	£987,110	£960,060	£971,220
Financing costs	<i>The trend in financing costs of the non-financial property portfolio over time, as the portfolio expands.</i>	£865,570	£866,910	£868,290	£869,710
Net (income)/loss	<i>The income received from the property portfolio at a net level (less costs) over time.</i>	£218,040	£98,470	(£35,300)	(£44,680)

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL****FEES AND CHARGES 2024-2025****COUNCIL**

Cost Centre	ACTIVITY AND DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE OPTION	KEY	CHANGES IN RESOURCES		
			2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	<b><u>STRATEGIC GROWTH</u></b>				
<b>R605</b>	<b><u>Development Management - High Hedges</u></b> Increase charges by 5% in line with Council Policy.	C	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
		R	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
		S	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>R605</b>	<b><u>Development Management - Planning Advice</u></b> Increase charges by 5% in line with Council Policy.	C	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
		R	£30.00	£30.00	£30.00
		S	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>R605</b>	<b><u>Development Management - Pre-application Advice</u></b> Fees and charges reviewed and commercial judgement used.	C	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
		R	£1,290.00	£1,290.00	£1,290.00
		S	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>R605</b>	<b><u>Development Management - Sale of Documents</u></b> Increase charges by 5% in line with Council Policy.	C	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
		R	£210.00	£210.00	£210.00
		S	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>R625</b>	<b><u>Building Control - Decision Notices</u></b> To increase charges by 5% for copies of decision notices held by the Council prior to the formation of the North Worcestershire Building Control Shared Service.	C	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
		R	£10.00	£10.00	£10.00
		S	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>R310</b>	<b><u>RESOURCES</u></b>				
	<b><u>Council Tax and NNDR</u></b>	C	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
	Summons Costs      £50	R	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
	Liability Order Costs <u>£30</u> <u>£80</u>	S	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Bi-annual review of summons costs and liability orders to reflect inflation and additional Magistrates Court costs.				
	<b>TOTALS</b>	C	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>
		R	<b>£12,610.00</b>	<b>£12,610.00</b>	<b>£12,610.00</b>
		S	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>



Service	Planning	Service Manager	Planning Manager
Service Area	Strategic Growth	Cabinet Member	Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

**PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES**

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge	Proposed Charge	Proposed Charge
	TO 31-03-2024	FROM 01-04-2024	FROM 01-04-2024
High Hedge Applications	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Charges before VAT	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
High Hedge Applications			
Householder	£473.00	£497.00	No VAT currently charged
Other	£473.00	£497.00	No VAT currently charged
Concession (for those in receipt of housing or council tax benefits)	£210.00	£221.00	No VAT currently charged
NOTES:			

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



Service	Planning & Building Control	Service Manager	Planning Manager
Service Area	Strategic Growth	Cabinet Member	Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

**PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES**

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge TO 31-03-2024  Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2024  Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2024  Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
<b>Planning Advice</b>			
<b>Building Control Decision Notices (Pre 01-01-2012)</b>			
<b>Sale of Copy Documents</b>			
Reply to general individual queries, Planning or Building Control for up to 6 questions (after that the full Local Land Charge Search fee will be charged)	£32.00 per Question	£34.00 per Question	No VAT currently charged
If any query requires a site visit to be made (e.g. compliance with conditions)	£91.00	£96.00	No VAT currently charged
<b>Charges for Copy Documents</b>			
See Note 2 below			
Monthly Decision List - Emailed	Free	Free	Free
Weekly Planning Application List - Emailed	Free	Free	Free
Decision Notices	£26.00	£22.50	£27.00
Decision Notices Additional Copies	£1.80	£1.58	£1.90
A4 - For each copy	£1.80	£1.58	£1.90
A3 - For each copy	£1.80	£1.58	£1.90
A2 - For each copy	£4.60	£4.00	£4.80
A1 - For each copy	£6.30	£5.50	£6.60
A0 - For each copy	£7.80	£6.83	£8.20

**NOTES:**

Note 1 - Copies, where appropriate, are available free up to a cumulative single transaction value of £10 for individuals (the discretion of Head of Service to be applied in cases of multiple separate transactions) and charged at full cost to representatives of professional and/or commercial companies.  
 Note 2 - Copies of all planning application plans and decision notices made from 2006 onwards are available online at zero cost at <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings.aspx>  
 Customers may be able to order and pay for some services online – please refer to <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk>



Service	Planning	Service Manager	Planning Manager
Service Area	Strategic Growth	Cabinet Member	Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

**PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES**

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge	Proposed Charge	Proposed Charge
	TO 31-03-2024	FROM 01-04-2024	FROM 01-04-2024
Permitted Developments and Pre-application Advice	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Charges before VAT	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
<b>Permitted Development enquiries</b>			
<b>Proposed development type</b>			
Householder	£30.00	n/a	n/a
Other	£30.00	n/a	n/a
<b>Pre-Application advice</b>			
Householder	£42.00	£36.67	£44.00
<b>Biodiversity/Protected Species/BNG related advice</b>			
Small Scale Developments (including one site meeting)	n/a	£57.50	£69.00
Major Scale Developments (including one site meeting)	n/a	£115.00	£138.00
<b>Residential Development including Conversions (see note 1)</b>			
1 dwelling (Fee for the first three meetings)	£116.00	£101.67	£122.00
2-3 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£324.00	£283.33	£340.00
4-5 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£435.00	£380.83	£457.00
6-7 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£637.00	£557.50	£669.00
8-9 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£868.00	£759.17	£911.00
10-24 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£1,158.00	£1,013.33	£1,216.00
25-49 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£1,852.00	£1,620.83	£1,945.00
50 - 74 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£2,315.00	£2,025.83	£2,431.00
75 - 99 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£3,010.00	£2,634.17	£3,161.00
100 - 149 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£3,704.00	£3,240.83	£3,889.00
150 - 199 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£3,768.00	£3,296.67	£3,956.00
200 - 299 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£4,863.00	£4,255.00	£5,106.00
300 - 499 dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£5,557.00	£4,862.50	£5,835.00
500+ dwellings (Fee for the first three meetings)	£6,020.00	£5,267.50	£6,321.00
<b>Non Residential/Commercial Development (see note 1)</b>			
Gross floor area up to 75m2	Free	Free	Free
Gross floor area 76m2 - 249m2	£174.00	£152.50	£183.00
Gross floor area up to 250m2 - 499m2	£348.00	£304.17	£365.00
Gross floor area 500m2 - 999m2	£753.00	£659.17	£791.00
Gross floor area 1,000m2 - 2,499m2	£1,852.00	£1,620.83	£1,945.00
Gross floor area 2,500m2 - 4,999m2	£2,894.00	£2,532.50	£3,039.00
Gross floor area 2,500m2 - 9,999m2	£3,936.00	£3,444.17	£4,133.00
Gross floor area +10,000m2	£5,557.00	£4,862.50	£5,835.00



Service	Planning	Service Manager	Planning Manager
Service Area	Strategic Growth	Cabinet Member	Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

**PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES**

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge	Proposed Charge	Proposed Charge
	TO 31-03-2024	FROM 01-04-2024	FROM 01-04-2024
Permitted Developments and Pre-application Advice	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Charges before VAT	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
<b>Other Categories</b>			
Advertisements	£87.00	£75.83	£91.00
Change of Use	£174.00	£152.50	£183.00
Telecommunications	£260.00	£227.50	£273.00
Glasshouses/Poly Tunnels	£92.00	£80.83	£97.00
Others (see note 2)	£87.00	£75.83	£91.00
Installation of Solar Farm/Panels	n/a	£76.67	£92.00
<b>Historic Environmental and Tree related enquiries</b>			
Separate Listed Building and Conservation Area Advice			
(Up to 3 Separate Matters - see note 3)	£69.00	£60.00	£72.00
Cost per additional matter to be considered	£18.00	£15.83	£19.00
Separate Tree related Advice - number of trees not exceeding 10	£69.00	£60.00	£72.00
Separate Tree related Advice - number of trees over 10 but not exceeding 30 (see Note 4)	£139.00	£121.67	£146.00
<b>Exemptions</b>			
As set out in Guidance Note (e.g. Parish Councils, etc)			

**NOTES:**

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





Service	Revenues	Service Manager	Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager
Service Area	Resources	Cabinet Member	Finance and Capital Portfolio

**PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES**

INCOME DESCRIPTION	Current Charge TO 31-03-2024  Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2024  Charges before VAT	Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2024  Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
<b>Council Tax and NNDR</b>			
Council Tax and NNDR			
Summons costs	£50.00	£50.00	No VAT currently charged
Liability Orders	£30.00	£30.00	No VAT currently charged

**NOTES:**

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

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

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To consider the report of the Head of Resources in respect of statutory duties placed on Local Authority Chief Financial Officers in relation to budget setting and monitoring. The report provides councillors with assurance that the budgets have been compiled appropriately and that the levels of reserves held is adequate.

**2. RECOMMENDATION** (see 2.2.3 of main report)

**THAT COUNCIL NOTE:**

- 2.1 The Chief Financial Officer's opinion on the budget proposals, recommended by the Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024, as detailed in this report.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Sections 25 to 28 of the Local Government Act 2003 (The Act) place statutory duties on Local Authorities on how they set and monitor budgets. The Act requires local authorities to ensure that the budget estimates are robust, reserves are adequate and the Budget is monitored on a regular basis.
- 3.2 Section 25 requires the Chief Financial Officer to report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates it makes when calculating its budget requirement under Section 32 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and on the adequacy of its proposed financial reserves.
- 3.3 Section 26 requires authorities to adhere to their approved policies in relation to Reserves when setting budgets to ensure that the minimum Reserve levels are maintained.
- 3.4 Section 27 requires the Chief Financial Officer, at the time of the budget setting, to report if it appears that a reserve in relation to the previous financial year is likely to be inadequate. The reasons for the inadequacy and a recommended course of action must be considered by Council.
- 3.5 Section 28 places a statutory duty on the Council to review its budget and all calculations related to it from time to time. If the review shows a deterioration in the financial position, the Council must take such action as it considers necessary (if any) to address the situation.
- 3.6 Whilst Sections 25-27 relate specifically to budget and council tax setting for the following financial year, these Sections are being more widely interpreted by External Auditors to include the period of the Council's Financial Strategy; as a consequence it is necessary to report not only on next year's Budget but on the period covered by the Three Year Budget Strategy (2024-27).

#### **4. KEY ISSUES – CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER'S OPINION ON 2024-27 BUDGET & THREE YEAR BUDGET STRATEGY**

##### **4.1 Macroeconomic context within which the council operates**

Wyre Forest is a predominantly rural district centred around the 3 towns of Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley. Residents in the district earn marginally less than the West Midlands average, the unemployment rate is slightly below and the population is older than the UK average. There are significant pockets of wealth and deprivation across the district and most homes fall into bands A or B. The District performs the worst out of the 6 Worcestershire Districts for many health outcomes.

##### **4.2 Overview of financial management track record**

The Council has a good financial management track record with the 2022-23 revenue outturn being in line with the Revised 2022-23 budget in the 2023-26 MTFS. The capital programme contains two significant funds to support viable business cases for the first to support property acquisition or development and the second to support business cases that deliver efficiencies or otherwise are self-financing or generate a financial return over the medium term. There has been significant slippage on both of these programme due to the negative impact on business case viability of macro-economic conditions and base rate increases. A combined finance and performance report is considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

The Cabinet formally monitors budgets and performance in accordance with Section 28 of the 2003 Act, including 'Budget Risk Management' and takes appropriate action to ensure financial accountability. These quarterly reports are also considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In addition, Cabinet/CLT receive monthly budget monitoring updates. Reporting is regularly reviewed and refined including in relation to external income generation to provide relevant management information to improve the pace of decision making around demand-led income. The quarterly budget and performance reporting framework ensures that budget pressures are identified in a timely fashion to allow maximum time for action to be taken in year to address potential overspends.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 have been incorporated into the Council's Financial Regulations. These regulations require the Council's Statement of Accounts be produced and approved by the Chief Financial Officer on or before 31<sup>st</sup> May and that the accounts are audited and published by 30<sup>th</sup> September. The Council has a consistent record of meeting the reporting and auditing timeframe. One of only three Councils to receive an opinion on its Statements for 2022-23 by the deadline.

##### **4.3 Compliance with codes and standards**

The Council complies with all CIPFA codes and relevant accounting standards including CIPFA's Prudential Code, the Treasury Management Code and the Financial Management code. A formal review of the action plan developed under the Financial Management Code was considered in preparation of this report.

The assessment of affordability of financial plans requires a judgement about risk and for capital plans this is covered in the Prudential Framework and associated codes and guidance. A revision to the Prudential Code and the Treasury Management Code was issued in December 2021. These codes include a requirement for a detailed capital strategy that sets out the long term context in which

capital expenditure and investment decisions are made, giving due regard to both risk and reward and the achievement of priority outcomes. The code updates reporting requirements for long term financial and risk implications in relation to non-treasury investments and requires that investments are not primarily made to generate a financial return. The revised Treasury Management Code enhances and strengthens the skills and training requirements for staff and members involved with the Treasury function. The Capital Strategy proposed for this budget cycle provides high-level projections over a 10 year timeframe to provide information for transparency and decision making, particularly in relation to movements in the Balance Sheet, Capital Financing Requirements and Minimum Revenue Provision which all impact on the revenue budget and reserves requirement. Prudential Indicators are the monitoring tool to assess performance and risk for treasury management and non-treasury capital expenditure and are reported to members in accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Capital Strategy prepared under the CIPFA Treasury Management and Prudential Codes.

#### **4.4 Robustness of estimates**

##### **4.4.1 Key assumptions around growth, inflation and the impact of macro conditions**

The budget includes reasonable assumptions for growth, inflation and demand. The expected tax base growth arising from adoption of the local plan in 2022 reflects the mix of properties expected to be delivered and reductions arising from reliefs, exemptions, discounts, disregards and the Council Tax reduction scheme have been factored into calculations. The additional demand on operational services from tax base growth has been factored into forward plans including work on route optimisation. Modest assumptions have been made across the strategy period for pay inflation (4%, 3%, 3%) and a separate pay risk reserve (£300k) is held to mitigate against the impact of awards above assumption. The impact of national policy on the National Living Wage has been tested against our establishment and the expected impact is included within the budget being presented. A granular approach has been adopted for contract inflation and at subjective level for non-contractual expense items. Demand for homelessness support has been factored into estimates as has the impact of the new build development in Kidderminster set to deliver 20 units of temporary accommodation during the strategy period.

##### **4.4.2 Income assumptions**

Council tax and business rates income assumptions have been reviewed and are adjusted to take account of collection rate experience the prevailing economic conditions, appeals lodged and local knowledge.

Demand for some chargeable services has failed to return to pre covid levels, the net impact of the reduced demand is reflected in the expenditure and income projections included in the budget presented for consideration. There remains a risk that income targets are not achieved due to changes in behaviour or Government legislation. Achievement of income against targets is regularly reviewed. The Commercial Activity Board has been re established to review activity. The senior management team (Corporate Leadership Team) has been realigned to release capacity to progress the commercial agenda.

The Council's property estate has been reviewed to assess the likely outcome of rent reviews, breaks and renewals with a pragmatic approach taken on void

periods, rent incentives and rent increases. There remains a risk that income assumptions will not be achieved. To mitigate against the impact of this risk crystallising, 20% of the net income achieved from property holdings is held in a property risk earmarked reserve.

#### **4.4.3 Grant assumptions**

A prudent position has been adopted in respect of unguaranteed grants such as New Homes Bonus, Services Grant, the 4% Funding Guarantee, Revenue Support grant and retention of Business Rates Growth.

<b>Grant</b>	<b>Final Settlement 2024-25</b>	<b>Future Years assumptions</b>
New Homes Bonus	£285k	2024-25 is the final year of this grant. No future year allocations are included
Services grant	£20k	Grant will again feature in 2025-26 then disappear
4% Funding guarantee	£687k	Funding guarantee will feature in 2025-26 and then disappear
Revenue Support Grant	£160k	An updated needs analysis will reintroduce negative RSG in 2026-27, with impact smoothed via new transitional funding arrangements.
Business Rates Growth	£950k	The current assumption, informed by the latest monitoring, is that we will achieve growth above the baseline funding assessment for business rates in 2023-24. A Business rates reset is assumed in 2026-27 with all growth lost. Transitional Funding assumed to smooth impact of funding reform and business rates reset over a 2 year period.

#### **4.4.4 Savings requirement and feasibility of the plans to achieve the required savings**

The Strategy takes a measured approach to identifying achievable savings and modest income growth targets based on pipeline proposals. The Cabinet have been proactive in removing any targets that are considered aspirational. The timetable for delivering the transformation programme (Wyre Forest Forward and Localism) will need to be carefully managed to ensure that the Council can deliver against the medium-term financial strategy. The need to drive forward the strategy is recognised and capacity within the Senior Management Team (the Corporate Leadership Team) is being strengthened by a restructure and realignment of responsibilities. The measures identified enable a balanced budget over the 3 year medium term but are not sufficient to fully close the financial gap. If planned efficiencies do not accrue from service collaborations in North Worcestershire the Cabinet will need to support alternative proposals to make savings.

The Future High Street and Levelling Up Fund programmes will regenerate Kidderminster and surrounding areas and promote economic growth. This will help

move the Council towards a sustainable balanced budget in the future, that is less reliant on the use of reserves. The overall funding gap in year 3 of the strategy has increased from circa £1.8m in the 2023-26 Strategy to circa £2.1m in 2024-27 Strategy due to the impact of high inflation and wage growth and despite a significant increase in investment income. The funding gap continues to represent a key risk to ongoing financial sustainability.

The programme of change outlined in the 2021-24 MTFS continues to be progressed. Services currently provided solely for the district by WFDC staff are, or have been reviewed and options for service collaborations with another council or councils in Worcestershire or other organisations are being explored and progressed where financially advantageous. This includes exploring the possibility of joint venture vehicles with the private sector and the option of a joint waste collection and disposal authority. This process could involve the transfer of relevant assets to other organisations or their placing in joint venture vehicles. If all other options have been explored and exhausted and it remains necessary to secure further cost savings then outsourcing to the private sector as an option for some services will need to be considered.

Work is planned to continue to reduce costs through internal efficiency, growth in income by increasing our customer base and regenerating our towns to increase income from the Council's assets and taxbase.

**4.4.5 Financial risks relating to commercial ventures, partnerships and or investment.**

The Capital strategy retains the Capital Portfolio Fund for the acquisition or development of property assets to further Council priorities. It is expected that the fund will make a contribution to the Council's financial sustainability although it is likely that proposals that grow our tax base will be favoured in future. No assumption relating to a net revenue stream from service investments has been assumed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Business cases will need to evidence how proposals deliver against corporate objectives to evidence that capital expenditure is classified as service investment. It is recognised that any acquisitions proposed for outside the district but within the functional economic geography will need a particularly strong evidence based case to demonstrate how priorities are supported. Service investments are taken or held primarily for the purposes of delivering public services including housing, regeneration and local infrastructure. Financial return will be a secondary consideration except where it supports the financial viability of a proposal by covering financing costs. This will ensure that the council continues to have access to PWLB loans.

**4.4.6 Other financial risks facing the council and mitigations in place** are set out in section 8.

**4.4.7 Debt service cost and exposure to interest rate risks**

The Council's Capital Financing requirement (circa £60m) includes headroom for the Capital Portfolio Fund (£6m) and the Capital projects fund (£8m), both of which require business cases that demonstrate the annual cost of financing (borrowing costs) can be met from revenue savings or income before approval is given to proceed and do not increase exposure to interest rate risk. Actual external borrowing is currently £34m with circa £7m internal borrowing. A laddered approach to borrowing has been taken with annual maturities being approximately equivalent to the annual Minimum Revenue Provision charge. This approach reduces

exposure to interest rate risk on refinancing as well as reducing the risk of gross debt exceeding the Capital Financing requirement. CIPFA's new Liability Benchmark encourages Council's to internally borrow where cashflow balances are available to defer borrowing decisions and reduce the overall cost of borrowing. The Council has adopted a policy to internally borrow in line with CIPFA's new approach. The new data set included in CIPFA's 2023 Resilience Indicators shows that relative to the Council's near neighbours our debt and reserves position relative to income position is low risk.

#### **4.5 Adequacy of reserves**

4.5.1 A summary of usable reserves available to support the 2024-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy and to manage future risk is outlined below:

<b>Revenue Reserves</b>	<b>Balance £</b>
Earmarked Reserves (at 31st January 2024)	
Total Earmarked Reserves	12,726,588
Less: Existing commitments	6,151,453
Available Earmarked Reserves	6,575,135
Of which	
General Risk Reserve	1,461,000
Innovation Fund	472,000
External Funding	2,002,572
WFDC Budget	2,639,563
General unallocated reserves (at 1st April 2023)	3,468,050
Working balance	1,650,000
<b>Total Revenue Reserves</b>	<b>17,844,638</b>

#### **4.5.2 Reserves narrative summarising the purpose of earmarked reserves and the basis of calculation of general reserves**

The Council have adopted the general principles of the CIPFA Guidance on Local Authority Reserves and Balances, which outline a minimum Reserve (Working Balance) for this Council which has been adhered to in the Financial Strategy 2024-27.

This year's MTFS maintains the increased working balance of £1.65m following the increase at final accounts 2022-23. Overall levels of reserves held, increased in recent years to reflect ongoing risk but have reduced during 2023-24. The working balance will continue to be kept under review.

Earmarked Reserves are held to meet the cost of known liabilities and to manage future risk. The Council currently holds earmarked reserves of £12.7m (as at mid-January 2024). It should be noted that the Council has commitments against such earmarked reserves and the forecast balance after commitments is £6.6m. A General Risk Reserve is also held of circa £1.5m as at mid-January 2024. The level

of this reserve and the innovation fund will be reconsidered as part of the Final Accounts process. A Planned Property Maintenance reserve is held, taking 20% of the net proceeds from Capital Portfolio purchases to help mitigate future unknown risk.

The reserves position presented in the strategy assumes that the efficiency savings and income growth proposed in the Wyre Forest Forward program and localism strategy are achieved. The funding gap presents the financial position if these savings or growth plans do not proceed or fail to achieve targets set.

It is important that the level of reserves is carefully monitored and reviewed as economic conditions and rising inflation adds additional financial risk. Future funding levels continue to be uncertain as Local Government Finance Reforms and Business rates reset have again been delayed making any financial planning beyond the short term difficult. Consequently, reserves continue to be important to mitigating future risk. Further uncertainty arises from the reforms to waste collection under the Environment Act, the level of one off and ongoing new burdens funding and the timing of introduction of Enhanced Producer Responsibility scheme. Levels will be reviewed again when funding reforms are implemented and their impacts are known.

#### **4.5.3 A review of the authority's resilience using CIPFA's Resilience Index**

The CIPFA Financial Resilience Index 2023 and the indicators of poor financial resilience have been examined. The Financial Stress indicators suggest that the Council was in a stronger position at the start of 2023-24 than at the start of 2022-23. However, it should be noted that the indicators are backwards looking and do not take account of decisions in 2023-24. There are no areas of significant concern in relation to the financial stress indicators. In general, our indicators reduced over the 2022-23 indicating an improvement in the council's financial resilience. A second set of indicators examines the Council's reserves position. One indicator in this sub-set relating to the change in the unallocated reserves ratio is an exception to the trend and the indicator value indicates increased risk. The unallocated reserves indicator is calculated as the ratio of unallocated reserves to net revenue expenditure. This ratio is significantly distorted in 2021-22 by the payment of Covid related grants as this significantly increased net revenue expenditure, since the grant income that funded the payments was held in an earmarked reserve. There are no areas of significant concern.

- 4.5.4 **IFRS 9** - The ending of the IFRS 9 statutory override does not present a financial risk to the 2024-27 MTFS. The Council ceased investing in variable net asset value pooled investment assets during the 2022-23 financial year.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 These are contained within the main MTFS report.

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

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

## **7. IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT**



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

## 8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Strategic risk management is delivered, in accordance with the Risk Management Strategy, across the Council to identify and manage risks appropriately. Contained within the Financial Strategy 2024-27 and subsequent Cabinet reports are the significant risks and mitigating actions which have been identified, allied to the budget process.
- 8.2 Achieving ongoing financial sustainability is the most significant risk facing the Council. There are four significant financial risks affecting the Council over the next three years:
- Funding uncertainty as a result of delays to Local Government Finance Reforms changing key funding streams and allocation methodologies.  
*Mitigation - Prudent funding assumptions built into strategy and level of risk reserves maintained*
  - Rising prices has resulted in pay inflation in the public sector in each of the last 2 financial years. There is a possibility that increases will continue to be ahead of inflation due to the autumn statement announcements in relation to the National Living wage, an increase of 9.8% to £11.44 in April 2024. Although this remains below WFDC's lowest pay point on the main pay scales which is now £12.77, the gap with the bottom point on the NJC pay scale is much closer and this will have a knock-on impact on the NJC pay award agreed for 2024-25, as the Local Government Employers will need to keep local government pay ahead of the possible National Living Wage in April 2025. There is a risk that the pay settlement for 2024-25 will exceed the growth expectations included in the MTFS.  
*Mitigation – Specific £300k pay inflation risk reserve maintained*
  - Reliance on local income sources including from fees and charges, the Capital Portfolio Fund and other demand led income streams, there is a risk this may not be realised in line with projected expectations  
*Mitigation – Commercial activity Board re-established to review and monitor performance and to act as a catalyst for growth, and realignment of senior management resource built into the MTFS.*
  - Risk that further savings required from service collaborations if pipeline proposals don't materialise will prove challenging to deliver in the timeframe required.  
*Mitigation – Alternative delivery models are available that can be delivered within the timeframe. The innovation fund balance is available to support any upfront costs if an alternative approach is pursued.*
- 8.3 The Council proposes to keep the current £1,650,000 level of the working balance reserve under review. This fund is available to provide cover for urgent unforeseen expenditure e.g. in respect of a civil emergency. The Innovation Fund is held to fund one-off costs of implementation of Transformation to fund one-off severance costs following service reviews if they arise. The General Risk Reserve also mitigates more generic risks. Consideration of levels will be given as part of the Final Accounts process, in accordance with the delegations in the main budget report on this

agenda. In addition to these generic reserves, earmarked reserves are held to cover specific commitments and therefore limit financial risk. The Planned Property Maintenance reserve takes 20% of the net proceeds from Capital Portfolio purchases to mitigate future unknown risk; this is a fundamental element of the methodology used for the assessment of risk using the latest CIPFA guidance.

## **9. FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 9.1 The Council continues to be reliant on contributions from reserves to balance its budget over the term of the Financial Strategy. The Finance Settlement, did not provide the financial certainty needed to support staffing and investment decisions that would contribute to future financial sustainability.
- 9.2 To reduce the financial risks now faced, it is essential that net expenditure and funding be better aligned by the progression of efficiency plans for reductions in spending and increased income generation. This realignment work continues but it is important that focus is maintained in 2024-25.
- 9.3 The continued delays to Local Government Finance Reforms creates further uncertainty and resultant risk and it is recognised that planning is particularly difficult given these delays. The level of reserves will need to be kept under consideration as more information emerges.
- 9.5 The assessment of affordability of financial plans requires a judgement about risk. This has been updated in the latest Capital Strategy and continues to be kept under review taking into account the changes to CIPFA Codes and access to PWLB loans. This places relevant focus on reporting and planning for long term financial liabilities and risk implications in relation to non-treasury investments. The 10 year Capital Programme helps achieve this. The current approval for the Capital Portfolio Fund is considered to be proportionate to the size of this Council and the composition of the Balance Sheet as reported in the statutory accounts. The December 2021 revisions to the Prudential Code make it clear that CIPFA is taking a more risk averse outlook in respect of investment matters. Local authorities must not borrow to invest for the primary purpose of financial return. Business cases for any future acquisitions will need to provide evidence that investment outside the District boundary contributes to the achievement of corporate priorities. Current guidance on Prudential Property Investment is met by existing policies and procedures.
- 9.6 Development of commercialism and income generation continues to be a part of the solution to close the funding gap, the generic Capital budget allocation to the Innovation Fund will be slipped to support new financially viable initiatives. All business cases will continue to include an appropriate assessment of risks gauged against potential rewards; review of risk and performance will be conducted at least annually for each area of commercial activity. This regular review includes the option to cease more commercial activity if appropriate.
- 9.7 Financial Resilience remains a key risk for this and most other Councils. It is essential that the Council better aligns expenditure with income to alleviate the reliance on reserves.

## **10.CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION**

**10.1 In respect of the Budget Proposals recommended by the Cabinet, in my opinion, as s151 Officer**

- **the estimates made for the purposes of Section 32 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 calculations are robust.**
- **The Reserves outlined in the Three Year Budget and Policy Framework Report to the Cabinet on this agenda are adequate in relation to the 2024-27 Budget.**

## **11. CONSULTEES**

11.1 Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio

11.2 CLT

## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Local Government Act 2003 Sections 25-28

Local Government Finance Act 1992 Section 32

CIPFA revised Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code December 2021

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-27 Cabinet December 2023

CIPFA Financial Resilience Index 2023

CIPFA Financial Management Code – October 2019

CIPFA Code Guidance on prudential property investment

## CABINET PROPOSALS AS PER FEB CABINET MTFs REPORT

	Revised 2023-24 £	2024-25 £	2025-26 £	2026-27 £
Net Expenditure on Services	13,313,420	14,181,740	15,247,040	15,788,150
Cabinet Proposals	0	111,450	84,850	(62,950)
Net Expenditure	13,313,420	14,293,190	15,331,890	15,725,200
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	215,060	(367,750)	(950,680)	(1,536,750)
	<b>13,528,480</b>	<b>13,925,440</b>	<b>14,381,210</b>	<b>14,188,450</b>
<b>Net Budget Requirement</b>				
Funded by:				
Revenue Support Grant	150,380	160,340	160,000	(356,000)
Business Rates	4,392,250	4,408,470	4,841,680	4,397,000
Business Rates - National levy redistributed				
New Homes Bonus	240,030	285,060	0	0
Funding Guarantee	425,370	663,000	490,410	0
Collection Fund Deficit	0	(100,830)	0	0
Council Tax Income	8,205,460	8,491,310	8,871,030	9,265,950
Services Grant	114,990	18,090	18,090	0
Transitional Funding (assumption)	0	0	0	881,500
<b>COUNCIL TAX LEVY increase by 3% pa from 2023-24 onwards</b>	<b>236.21</b>	<b>243.29</b>	<b>250.58</b>	<b>258.09</b>
<b>COUNCIL TAX BASE</b>	<b>34,738</b>	<b>34,902</b>	<b>35,402</b>	<b>35,902</b>
<b>Reserves Statement</b>	<b>Revised 2023-24 £</b>	<b>2024-25 £</b>	<b>2025-26 £</b>	<b>2026-27 £</b>
Reserves as at 1st April	3,468,050	3,683,110	3,315,360	2,364,680
Increase to Working Balance				
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	215,060	(367,750)	(950,680)	(1,536,750)
Reserves as at 31st March	3,683,110	3,315,360	2,364,680	827,930
<b>LIB DEM PROPOSALS</b>	<b>Revised 2023-24 £</b>	<b>2024-25 £</b>	<b>2025-26 £</b>	<b>2026-27 £</b>
Net Expenditure on Services	13,313,420	14,181,740	15,247,040	15,788,150
Lib Dem Proposals	0	140,680	74,830	(72,720)
Net Expenditure	<b>13,313,420</b>	<b>14,322,420</b>	<b>15,321,870</b>	<b>15,715,430</b>
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	215,060	(396,980)	(940,660)	(1,526,980)
	<b>13,528,480</b>	<b>13,925,440</b>	<b>14,381,210</b>	<b>14,188,450</b>
<b>Net Budget Requirement</b>				
Funded by:				
Revenue Support Grant	150,380	160,340	160,000	(356,000)
Business Rates	4,392,250	4,408,470	4,841,680	4,397,000
New Homes Bonus	240,030	285,060	0	0
3% Funding Guarantee	425,370	663,000	490,410	0
Collection Fund Deficit	0	(100,830)	0	0
Council Tax Income	8,205,460	8,491,310	8,871,030	9,265,950
Services Grant	114,990	18,090	18,090	0
Transitional Funding (assumption)	0	0	0	881,500
<b>COUNCIL TAX LEVY increase by 2.996% pa from 2024-25 onwards</b>	<b>236.21</b>	<b>243.29</b>	<b>250.58</b>	<b>258.09</b>
<b>COUNCIL TAX BASE</b>	<b>34,738</b>	<b>34,902</b>	<b>35,402</b>	<b>35,902</b>
<b>Reserves Statement - LIB DEM PROPOSALS</b>	<b>Revised 2023-24 £</b>	<b>2024-25 £</b>	<b>2025-26 £</b>	<b>2026-27 £</b>
Reserves as at 1st April	3,468,050	3,683,110	3,286,130	2,345,470
Increase to Working Balance				
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	215,060	(396,980)	(940,660)	(1,526,980)
Reserves as at 31st March	3,683,110	3,286,130	2,345,470	818,490
Difference in reserves between proposals	0	29,230	19,210	9,440

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL****LIB DEM GROUP PROPOSALS 2024-25 ONWARDS**

ACTIVITY AND DESCRIPTION OF LIB DEM PROPOSALS	KEY	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	After 2026-27
		£	£	£	£
<b><u>Enforcement</u></b> Additional funding in 2025-26 for 1 new Civil Enforcement Officer. Unspent allocations approved in the 2023-26 MTFS being rolled forward.	C R S		38,800 1.00		
<b><u>Street Scene</u></b> Appoint 2 new Street Scene officers utilising allocations approved in the 2023-26 MTFS for part time litter pickers (including match funding) to partially off-set the increased cost to provide year-round blitz/hot spot reactive repairs.	C R S	51,700 1.70	55,800 1.70		
<b><u>Community Leadership Fund</u></b> Provision of community leadership funding of £1,000 for each councillor in across the period of the MTFS	C R S	33,000	33,000	33,000	33,000
<b><u>Additional Staffing resource</u></b> Additional staffing resource to address capacity within the property team to deliver corporate priorities (off-set by income target)	C R S	116,000 2.00	119,500 2.00	123,100 2.00	126,800 2.00
<b><u>Additional Staffing resource</u></b> Additional staffing resource to alignment the management structure to deliver the corporate priorities	C R S	11,250	15,000	15,450	15,900
<b><u>Adaptive play equipment</u></b> Provision of disabled play equipment in Brinton Park and Stourport riverside.	C R S	50,000 7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500
<b><u>Enhanced Free one hour parking to include Saturdays</u></b> Introduction of free one hour parking at one car park in each of the three towns, Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm. This builds on the arrangement already put in place in Bewdley due to long term traffic	C R S	79,480	82,480	85,480	85,480
<b><u>Web Casting of meetings</u></b> To introduce web casting of meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to allow maximum access for the public and in order to be fully open and transparent	C R S	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
<b><u>Second Home Premium</u></b> To introduce the second home premium from April 2025	C R S		39,000 CR	39,000 CR	39,000 CR
<b><u>Town Hall Meetings</u></b> To hold one public meeting in each Town every year	C R S	750	750	750	750
<b><u>Empty Home proposal Feasibility Study</u></b> To explore and develop a commercial proposal to bring long term empty homes back into use to increase housing supply and help meet housing demand (allocate funding from Innovation Fund)	C R S	-			
<b><u>Commercial Income growth</u></b> A strengthened focus on growing the Council's net commercial income	C R S	160,000 CR	240,000 CR	300,000 CR	330,000 CR
<b>TOTALS</b>	C R S	50,000 140,680 3.70	- 74,830 4.70	- 72,720 CR 2.00	- 98,570 CR 2.00
<b>Also:</b> <b>3% pa Council Tax increase</b>					

**KEY - Changes in Resources**

C - Capital

R - Revenue

S - Staffing - Stated in FTEs

<b>CABINET PROPOSALS</b>	R	111,450	84,850	62,950 CR	88,800 CR
Variance		29,230	10,020 CR	9,770 CR	9,770 CR
Total Variance (Overall saving over Cabinet proposals)				9,440	330 CR

## STRATEGIC REVIEW PANEL

25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2024

### BUDGET CONSULTATION RESULTS

#### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The reports presents the results of the budget consultation on the 2024-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy. The consultation results are available to inform the Final Cabinet Proposals.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The panel is asked to note the analysis set out in the report.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Budget Consultation survey was launched on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and ran for four weeks until Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The results of this consultation are set out below.

- 3.2 A total of 976 responses were received (2022 – 153; 2021 – 789; 2020 – 894). A summary of the responses is shown below. A full list of the questions is provided below. **For all questions, there were more people who strongly supported/supporting a proposal than those who strongly opposed/opposed it except:**

- **Community leadership fund. This was the least supported proposal with – among those who gave a view - 36% in support and 42% opposed;**
- **3% increase in council tax. Marginally more opposed the increase (44%) than supported it (43%).**

**Question 1-** Civil enforcement officers make sure drivers follow parking regulations on public streets and in car parks. We are proposing to fund an additional officer. To what extent do you support this proposal?

Strongly support – 24.28%

Support – 24.38%

Neither support nor oppose – 23.05%

Oppose – 14.92%

Strongly oppose – 13.37%

**49% support vs 28% oppose**

**Question 2 -** Clearing up dropped litter such as cigarette stubs, food wrappers and gum is a major financial burden to many local authorities including ours. We take action against those responsible so you can feel

proud and safe in the district. We have excellent support from volunteers who regularly litter pick, but we feel more still needs to be done to clean up the district. We are proposing to create a litter blitz squad, which would create two additional jobs. To what extent do you support this proposal?

Strongly support – 37.37%  
Support – 35.93%  
Neither support nor oppose – 13.04%  
Oppose – 8.11%  
Strongly oppose – 5.54%

**73% support vs 14% oppose**

**Question 3** - One of our priorities is securing financial sustainability for the services our communities value. As part of our corporate plan, we have stated that we are working to increase net income from our commercial activities. We are proposing a target of £160,000 in year one, £240,000 in year two and £300,000 in year three. To what extent do you support this proposal?

Strongly support – 22.42%  
Support – 32.54%  
Neither support nor oppose – 21.90%  
Oppose – 3.51%  
Strongly oppose – 19.63%

**55% support vs 23% oppose**

**Question 4** - We are considering introducing a free one-hour parking offer in one car park in each of the three towns, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm. The car parks would be Batemans Yard (Kidderminster), Gardners Meadow (Bewdley) and Vale Road (Stourport). This builds on the arrangements we introduced in Bewdley in November as a consequence of the long-term traffic works. This is anticipated to cost a total of £167,000 over the next three financial years. To what extent do you support this proposal?

Strongly support – 43.72%  
Support – 19.65%  
Neither support nor oppose – 14.81%  
Oppose – 11.32%  
Strongly oppose – 10.49%

**63% support vs 22% oppose**

**Question 5** - In Summer 2023 we installed a wheelchair friendly roundabout in the play area at Spennells Park, Kidderminster. We are looking to provide more accessible play equipment in Brinton Park and Stourport Riverside. The proposal would involve a capital investment of £50,000 for the play equipment. To what extent do you support this proposal?

Strongly support – 40.08%  
Support – 31.71%  
Neither support nor oppose – 17.77%  
Oppose – 5.99%  
Strongly oppose – 4.44%  
**72% support vs 10% oppose**

**Question 6** - The community leadership fund is for all councillors to have the opportunity to support worthwhile initiatives, projects, activities and organisations within their ward. Councillors are allocated £1,000 each per year. There are 33 councillors so this would cost £33,000 each year. To what extent do you support this proposal?

Strongly support – 10.75%  
Support – 25.23%  
Neither support nor oppose – 22.23%  
Oppose – 11.89%  
Strongly oppose – 29.89%

**36% support vs 42% oppose**

**Question 7** - We currently webcast our full Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee meetings. Webcasting allows maximum access for the public and helps the council to be fully open and transparent. It enables anyone to watch meetings live online and at any time as they are recorded too. We are proposing to introduce web casting of meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a cost of £1,000 in each of the next three financial years. To what extent do you support this proposal?

Strongly support – 16.75%  
Support – 36.09%  
Neither support nor oppose – 31.64%  
Oppose – 9.00%  
Strongly oppose – 6.51%

**53% support vs 16% oppose**

**Question 8** - The increases we have made to our part of the Council Tax bill have been below the rate of inflation across the last decade. We are planning to put Council Tax up by £7.08 in 2024 for Band D households, that is an increase of 3%. This works out to less than 14p a week. Most households in the district fall into Band B or C, so they would pay less. To what extent do you support the proposal to increase Council Tax by 3% in 2024?

Strongly support – 16.86%  
Support – 26.49%  
Neither support nor oppose – 12.98%  
Oppose – 9.95%  
Strongly oppose – 33.72%



**43% support vs 44% oppose**

**Question 9** – Do you have any other comments about the budget? We are particularly keen to hear your realistic and practical ideas for reducing costs or increasing income.

There were 327 responses to this question and parking, litter and town centres featured heavily. The themes of covered were varied and included:

- **Car parking** – Most comments welcomed the idea of the one hour free parking. However ideas suggested that this could be extended to more/all carparks within the district, and the 1 hour's free parking could be extended to weekends.
- **Litter** – Many respondents raised the problem of litter across the district. Suggestions included more enforcement officers needed for littering and dog fouling, increasing penalties to act as a deterrent and CCTV cameras in littering hotspots.
- **Empty shops** – Comments noted that a way to increase income was to decrease the number of empty shops within the town centres. Suggestions included giving small businesses incentives to rent the premises. Suggestions included reducing business rates.
- **More leisure activities** – outdoor equipment, youth clubs, craft markets, funding to save pool at St George's Park.
- **Non-district responsibilities** – some comments focused on services the Council are not responsible for such as highway maintenance and St George's park.
- **Council Tax** - Many comments focused on increases in council tax, and the impact on residents of the cost-of-living crisis. Many called for council tax to be frozen or even cut: this is reflected in the 34% of respondents who strongly opposed the 3% increase in question 8.
- **Councillors** – several comments calling for the number of councillors or their allowances to be reduced and objecting to the community leadership fund. The latter reflects the response to question 6.

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET REPORT**

**13 February 2024**

**Wyre Forest District Council Local Development Scheme**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Cllr Dan Morehead, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Kate Bailey, Head of Strategic Growth
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Heather Stone, Principal Planning Policy Officer
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1: WFDC Local Development Scheme

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To present the updated Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) Local Development Scheme (LDS)

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 The Cabinet is invited to AGREE:**

the adoption of the revised Local Development Scheme.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to produce a Local Development Scheme (LDS) under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). The LDS must specify the documents which make up the Local Development Documents (LDDs) for the area. For Wyre Forest the Development Plan Documents are the Local Plan and any Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). This LDS sets out the timetable for the production of the LDDs which will be produced by WFDC over a three year period (2023-2026).

**4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The LDS sets out the timetable for the production of a number of Supplementary Planning Documents as listed in Appendix b of the Adopted Local Plan. Some of these are completely new SPDs such as the Health and Wellbeing SPD (recently adopted) and a Green Infrastructure SPD (now renamed as Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure SPD), others such as the Planning Obligations SPD, Affordable Housing SPD and the Design Guidance SPD are being completely reviewed and updated to reflect changes in both national and local policy.

- 4.2 In addition to the production of these SPDs, a number of Conservation Area Character Appraisals are also being reviewed and updated starting with those for Stourport No.1 and Stourport No.2. All of these documents will be available for public consultation prior to their adoption.
- 4.3 The Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill received Royal Assent on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The Act aims to streamline the local-plan making process. A new set of national development management policies will also be introduced to cover common planning consideration such as Green Belt and flood risk. Most of the sections in the Act which relate to plan making and development management will require secondary legislation. The next Local Plan for Wyre Forest will be very different with its content limited to allocating land for development, infrastructure requirements and principles of good design.
- 4.4 The council is required by statute to review the Local Plan every five years. It may be necessary to review strategic policies earlier but only where there are significant changes in the circumstances such as where housing numbers are insufficient or relevant changes to national policy that have a significant impact on the district. Work is not expected to start on any 'new-look' Local Plan until 2026/27 subject to any changes in the NPPF. By that date, all of the legislative changes arising from the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act should have been enacted with both the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Planning Policy Guidance fully updated.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Costs incurred will be in officer time in progressing the documents set out in this Local Development Scheme to adoption and will be met from existing budgets.

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

- 6.1 Adoption of the Local Development Scheme would meet the statutory requirement under s15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011).
- 6.2 It is necessary to introduce or update the policy documents to reflect current national and local policy.

## **7. IMPACT AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 Not applicable to the LDS. Assessments in respect of each document to be adopted will be considered individually.
- 7.2 Health and Wellbeing impact – Not applicable.
- 7.3 Climate Change impact – Not applicable.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 An updated LDS is a legal requirement.

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 A revised LDS is required to provide certainty about the production of policy documents as set out in the adopted Local Plan and is required by statute. A replacement is needed to the current LDS to reflect changes to local and national policy.
- 9.2 This LDS reflects the key pieces of work for the planning policy officers in the next three years including the Housing, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure supplementary planning documents and the Conservation Area Character Appraisals.

**10. CONSULTEES**

- 10.1 CLT  
10.2 Planning Manager  
10.3 Principal Solicitor

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Not applicable

# **Wyre Forest District Local Development Scheme 2024-2026**

## **Contents**

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The Development Plan for Wyre Forest.....</b>	<b>2</b>
	Wyre Forest District Local Plan.....	2
	Neighbourhood Plans.....	3
<b>3</b>	<b>Supporting Planning Policy Documents.....</b>	<b>3</b>
	Supplementary Planning Documents.....	4
	Conservation Area Character Appraisals.....	4
	Brownfield Land Register.....	5
	Self-Build and Custom-Build Register.....	5
	Authority Monitoring Report.....	5
<b>4</b>	<b>Monitoring And Review Of LDS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Planning Policy Document Structure.....</b>	<b>6</b>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Wyre Forest District Council is required by Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS is a project plan which sets out the Local Planning Authority's timetable over a three year period for preparing documents which form part of its Development Plan as well as other supplementary planning documents.
- 1.2 The LDS informs communities and other interested parties of the process and progress in preparing planning policy documents. Further information on community engagement in the planning process is set out in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which is available on the website [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk).
- 1.3 This LDS covers the period 2023-26. It will be kept under review to reflect any changes to planning legislation or policy-related matters.

## 2 THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR WYRE FOREST

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) and National Planning Practice Guidance sets out the government's planning policies and advice for England. They provide a framework within which Development Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents are prepared.
- 2.2 The Development Plan Documents for Wyre Forest are shown in the table below:

Document Title	Date Adopted
Wyre Forest District Local Plan (2016-2036)	April 2022
Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy Local Plan (2012-2027)	November 2012
Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan (2018-2036)	July 2022
Chaddesley Corbett Neighbourhood Plan (2022-2036)	April 2023
Churchill & Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan (2016-2026)	July 2017

- 2.3 A further 3 Neighbourhood Plan Areas have been formally designated, these are shown in the table below:

Parish – area covered	Date Designated
Bewdley – whole parish	June 2015
Upper Arley – whole parish	July 2015
Cookley & Caunsall (Eastern part of Wolverley & Cookley Parish)	September 2018

### WYRE FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

- 2.4 The Wyre Forest District Local Plan was adopted in April 2022 and covers the period 2016-2036. This covers the whole district and replaces the Core Strategy (2010), the Site Allocations & Policies Local Plan (2013) and the Kidderminster Action Plan

(2013). It addresses the district's needs and opportunities for housing, employment, community facilities, the built and natural environment and infrastructure. The accompanying Policies Map shows the location of the various designations and site allocations. Under current Government policy, the Local Plan needs to be reviewed at least every 5 years. As of April 2023, Wyre Forest District Council was able to demonstrate over 10 years housing land supply and therefore unless the planning legislation is amended to require an earlier review, no work on a review of the Local Plan is timetabled during this LDS.

- 2.5 The Government have recently consulted on changes to the NPPF which will affect the requirements for future Local Plans. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill received Royal Assent on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act aims to streamline the local plan-making process. A new set of national development management policies will also be introduced to cover common planning consideration such as Design, Green Belt and Flood Risk. Most of the sections in the Act which relate to plan making and development management will require secondary legislation.
- 2.6 The Minerals and Waste Documents are the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council and work is being progressed on a Minerals Site Allocations DPD. Further information can be found on the County Council's website: [www.worcestershire.gov.uk](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk)
- 2.7 With the adoption of the Local Plan (2016-2036), the focus of the Planning Policy section is now moving to the implementation of the Local Plan. Several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are being prepared to assist with the interpretation of policies contained within the Local Plan.

#### NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

- 2.8 Neighbourhood Plans provides communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their local area and to shape its development and growth. The Local Planning Authority provides advice to communities that are preparing Neighbourhood Plans to ensure they are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2.9 Bewdley have set up a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (established in 2015) and they have carried out public consultation and produced a draft Neighbourhood Plan (2020). This is now being revisited in the light of the adoption of the Wyre Forest Local Plan. A decision will be taken in 2024 as to whether to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan for the town of Bewdley.

### **3 SUPPORTING PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENTS**

#### SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 Supplementary Planning Documents add further detail to Local Plan policies and provide guidance on particular sites or issues. The Local Planning Authority will consult on draft Supplementary Planning Documents for 6 weeks and then will consider representations received and finalise the SPD before it is adopted by Cabinet.



- 3.2 Once adopted, an SPD can be a material consideration in decision-making and should be taken into account in deciding planning applications or appeals. There are several SPDs currently being prepared or have been recently adopted, these are:

**3.3 Health and Wellbeing SPD – Adopted July 2023**

This SPD provides more detailed advice on the health and wellbeing related policies in the Local Plan. It was prepared in partnership with Worcestershire County Council's Strategic Planning Team and the Public Health Team. It sets out how developers will be expected to demonstrate that their proposals reflect health and wellbeing principles through the use of Health Impact Assessments.

**3.5 Housing SPD**

This SPD was consulted on for 6 weeks during November/December 2023. Adoption is expected early in 2024. This document will support the implementation of policies in the Adopted Local Plan relating to housing, provide guidance to help with the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans, inform pre-application advice on housing development and be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It has been prepared in partnership with Development Management and Housing colleagues.

**3.6 Design, Amenity and Shopfronts SPD**

The Design Guidance SPD (June 2015) is being fully updated to reflect changes to both National and Local Planning policy. This document will also include a section on shop front design, which will replace the 2004 SPG on Shop Front Design Guidance within the Historic Environment.

**3.7 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure SPD**

This is a new SPD which will provide guidance on the implementation of the Environment Act 2021 and further detail on Policies SP.23 and SP.28 of the Adopted Local Plan.

**3.8 Planning Obligations SPD**

The Planning Obligations SPD 2016 will be updated to reflect changes in national and local planning policy.

- 3.9 The following table sets out the timetable to produce Supplementary Planning Documents over the next 3 years.

<b>Document title</b>	<b>Committee cycle</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Adoption of SPD</b>
Housing SPD	October 2023	Nov/Dec 2023	February 2024
Design, Amenity and Shopfronts SPD	early 2024	Spring 2024	Summer 2024
Biodiversity & Green Infrastructure SPD	Spring 2024	Early summer 2024	Adoption late summer 2024
Planning Obligations SPD	Summer 2024	Late summer 2024	Autumn 2024

### CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISALS

- 3.10 Conservation Area Character Appraisals – Appraisals for Stourport No.1 and Stourport No.2 are currently being redrafted to bring them up to date to reflect changes on the ground and with planning policy. They are due to be consulted on in early 2024. Following this, Character Appraisals for Gilgal and Bewdley will then be revised and updated.

<b>Document Title</b>	<b>Committee Cycle</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Adoption</b>
Stourport No.1 CACA	Early 2024	Early 2024	Late Spring 2024
Stourport No.2	Early 2024	Early 2024	Late Spring 2024
Gilgal	Autumn 2024	Autumn 2024	Winter 2024
Bewdley	Autumn 2025	Autumn 2025	Winter 2025
Churchill	Autumn 2026	Autumn 2026	Winter 2026

### BROWNFIELD LAND REGISTER

- 3.11 The LPA is required to prepare, maintain and publish a register of previously developed (brownfield) land which is suitable for residential development. The register is made up of sites which have been assessed as having potential for residential redevelopment. The Brownfield Land Register is published on the Council's website and reviewed at least annually to include new sites and make amendments to the details on existing sites, for example where redevelopment has started. There is no requirement to consult on sites proposed for inclusion on the register.

### SELF-BUILD AND CUSTOM-BUILD REGISTER

- 3.12 The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 places a duty on the local authorities to keep and regard to a register of people who are interested in self-build or custom-build projects in their area. Self-build or custom-build housing is built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual. Such housing can be either market or affordable housing.
- 3.13 An online registration form is available on the website. Information from the register helps to gauge the level of demand for such plots in Wyre Forest District. The LPA will use this information to try to match applicants with suitable plots but there is no guarantee.

### AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT

- 3.14 The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) is published on an annual basis. The AMR includes the following:

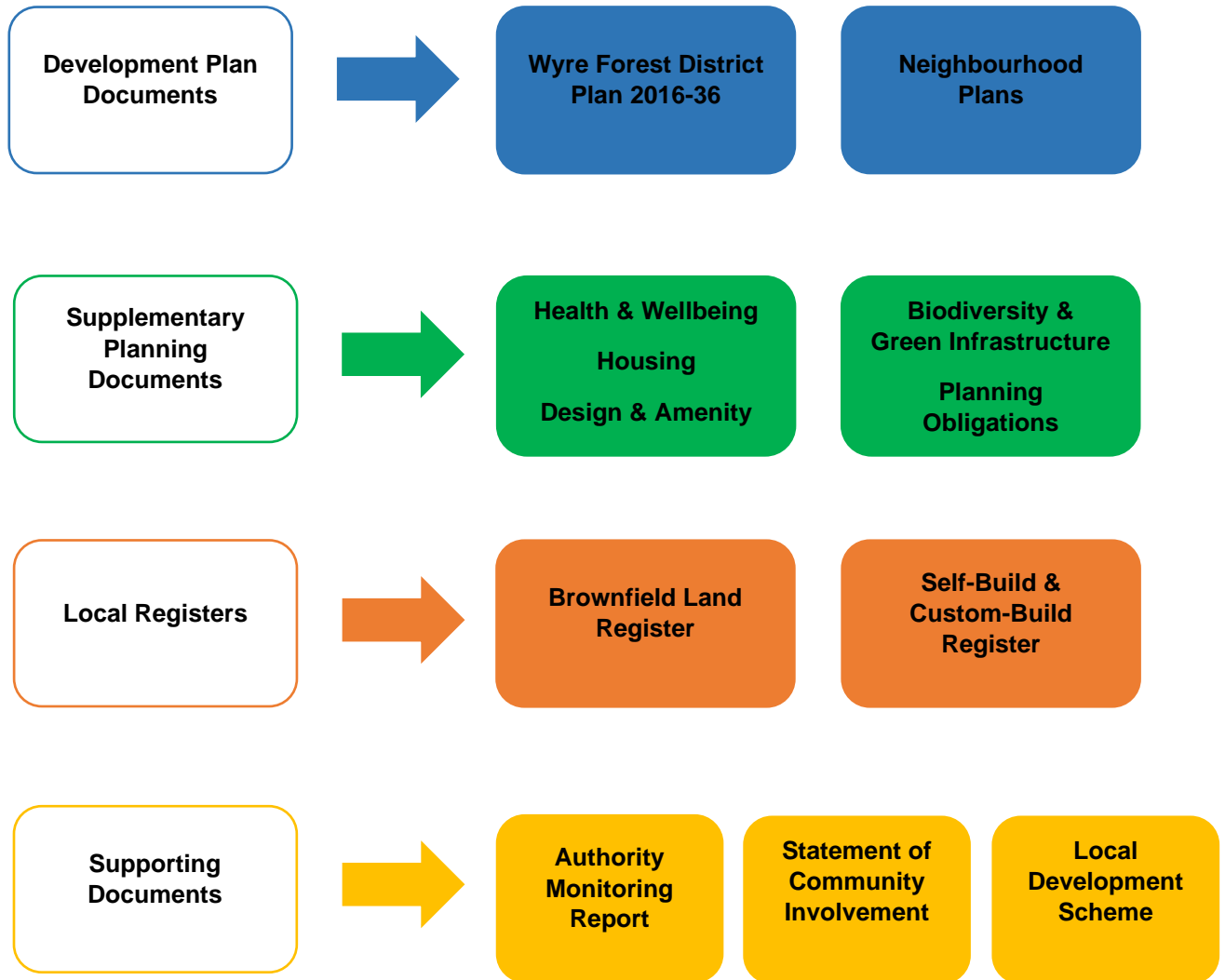
- Progress towards the preparation of documents outlined in the LDS
- Progress towards the delivery of net additional market and affordable dwellings
- Progress towards the delivery of employment land
- Details of any policy documents that have been adopted or approved
- Details of any Local Plan policies not being implemented and reasons why
- Details of any Neighbourhood Plans that have been 'made'

The AMR can help inform whether there is a need to undertake a partial or full update of the Local Plan. The latest published AMR is available on the website.

## 4 MONITORING AND REVIEW OF LDS

4.1 The Local Planning Authority will keep the LDS under review.

## 5 PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENT STRUCTURE



**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Cabinet  
Tuesday 13 February 2024**

**Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Thursday 11 January 2024**

**Wyre Forest District Council Local Development Scheme**

The Committee received a draft of a Cabinet Report from the Principal Planning Policy Officer that presented the updated Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) Local Development Scheme (LDS).

The Committee scrutinised the report and were given the opportunity to ask questions, to which the Head of Strategic Growth and the Principal Planning Policy Officer were able to provide verbal responses.

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

**AGREE:** the adoption of the revised Local Development Scheme.

**Background papers:**

See the report on page 9 of the pdf at this link:

[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc59150\\_20240111\\_o\\_and\\_s\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc59150_20240111_o_and_s_agenda.pdf)

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL****CABINET**  
**13 February 2024****Review of Statement of Community Involvement**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Cllr Dan Morehead, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Green Agenda
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Kate Bailey, Head of Strategic Growth
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Heather Stone, Principal Planning Policy Officer
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix one: WFDC Statement of Community Involvement

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To present the draft Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and to agree that it be consulted upon.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 Cabinet is invited to **agree** that a six week public consultation on the revised draft Statement of Community Involvement be undertaken.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Wyre Forest District Council's first Statement of Community Involvement was produced in May 2006 and updated in February 2013 as there had been a number of changes to planning policy and legislation. These were introduced through the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012. The SCI was partially updated in 2020 in response to updated government regulations (April 2020) as a result of the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), Local Authorities are required to review their SCI every 5 years.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The planning system affects everybody who lives, works or visits the district. It balances competing land uses and sets out the vision for how communities will be enhanced. Local communities, businesses and other organisations can contribute to this process through engagement in the planning process and thereby help to shape their environment.
- 4.2 The draft SCI updates the adopted SCI from February 2013 (amended 2020) and takes into account - although there is no legal requirement to do so - the Government's Consultation Principles: Guidance 2018 which provides guidance for

Government departments on how consultations should in general be conducted. WFDC should involve people in a meaningful way by using clear, purposeful and informative consultations. The review has provided an opportunity for a complete refresh of the SCI, having regard to availability of staff and financial resources and all relevant factors including the growing shift to public engagement being focussed on social media.

- 4.3 The changes include a section on consultation (and re-consultation) on planning applications as well as a section on speaking at committee. This has been included to provide clear guidance to officers, applicants and the public about how WFDC will approach consultation during the development management process. The SCI also confirms that the Council will move to consultation being in digital format as past paper-based methods have proved ineffective and can no longer be justified on cost grounds given the Council's financial position. The approach is fully consistent with the corporate priority of securing financial sustainability and also reducing impact on the environment (for example from the printing and distribution process).
- 4.4 Whilst there are no regulations setting out how to prepare an SCI and no longer a legal requirement to consult on a draft, it is considered best practice to undertake consultation to give stakeholders and residents the opportunity to seek changes to the document.
- 4.5 It is proposed that a six-week consultation will be held between 19<sup>th</sup> February and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024. The following measures will be taken to publicise the consultation:
- Displaying information on the District Council's website
  - Press release and social media activity
  - Providing electronic or hard copies of the consultation document in the WFDC offices and Libraries throughout the District.
- 4.6 A final version of the revised SCI will be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee after the consultation period ends and it is anticipated that the revised SCI will be brought back to Cabinet with a view to adoption in summer 2024.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The costs of adopting the SCI relate to staff time. These will be met by existing budgets. The revised approach set out in the SCI will reduce future costs of consultation processes and is essential in view of the significant financial gap set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

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

- 6.1 Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires all planning authorities to produce an SCI, setting out how they would consult communities on the various stages of preparation of planning policy and the determination of planning applications. Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 requires a planning authority to review its SCI every five years. Beyond the requirements of section 18 of the 2004 Act, there is no statutory guidance about the content of an SCI to which the Council must have regard. Considerable flexibility therefore exists in respect of the

commitments about involvement that are made in an SCI, as long as the legal requirements are met.

**7. IMPACT AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 7.1 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and it has been found that there are no negative impacts from the SCI.
- 7.2 The SCI in itself is not expected to have any adverse impacts on climate change or health and well-being with the move to greater online digitisation of the consultation process having a positive environmental impact and the wide range of consultation methods utilised will support accessibility. Local Plan policy documents and planning applications would need to be assessed separately for any such impacts.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 Local Authorities have a legal requirement to prepare and publish an SCI and review it every five years. The report is the first step in discharging the Council's statutory duties.
- 8.2 The document provides guidance to applicants, stakeholders and the community about the planning consultation process and will help to reduce demand on officer time. The proposed SCI meets all legal requirements and has been prepared taking account of extant Council policies and other relevant factors, including availability of resources.

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The draft SCI is required to update the document that was last amended in 2020.
- 9.2 Although not formally required it is considered good practice to go out to consultation and therefore the report proposes a six week consultation period between 19<sup>th</sup> February and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024.

**10. CONSULTEES**

- 10.1 CLT
- 10.2 Planning Manager, WFDC
- 10.3 Principal Solicitor WFDC

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Not applicable



# Wyre Forest District Council Statement of Community Involvement

*HOW WE WILL INVOLVE YOU IN PLANNING MATTERS*

**January 2024**



## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
	What is the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)	2
<b>2</b>	<b>Consultation Principles</b>	<b>2</b>
	How does the Planning System Work?	3
	Monitoring and Review	3
<b>3</b>	<b>Consultation Principles</b>	<b>3</b>
	Statutory Consultees	5
	The Role of Elected Councillors	6
	The Wyre Forest District Local Plan	6
	Supplementary Planning Documents	7
	Neighbourhood Plans	8
<b>4</b>	<b>Consultation on Planning Applications</b>	<b>9</b>
	Pre-Application Discussions and Early Community Involvement	9
	Community Involvement in Planning Application Decisions	10
	Consultation with adjoining properties	11
	Re-consultation	11
	Public Speaking at Planning Committee	12
	Member Involvement	13
	Appeals	13
<b>5</b>	<b>Appendix One: Local Plan Consultation requirements</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Appendix Two: Supplementary Planning Documents</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Appendix Three: Neighbourhood Planning</b>	<b>19</b>

# 1 Introduction

## What is the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

- 1.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been written to inform residents and businesses how they can engage in the plan-making process of developing and deciding planning policy and the planning process in terms of the management of new development in the District.
- 1.2 The planning system affects everybody who lives, works in or visits the district. It balances competing land uses and sets out the vision for how communities will be enhanced. Local people and businesses can contribute to this process through engaging in the planning process and thus help to shape their local area.
- 1.3 It is a statutory requirement that the local planning authority keeps local communities and key stakeholders informed about plan making, planning applications and other planning matters including how the Council will support groups undertaking neighbourhood planning.

# 2 Consultation Principles

- 2.1 The key aims of the SCI are:
  - To offer the widest range of opportunities to stakeholders and the community to participate in the plan making process within the resources available.
  - To comply with, and where appropriate, exceed the minimum legal requirements for stakeholder and community consultation in the planning process.
- 2.2 Therefore, the following principles will apply to all planning consultations:
  - Information will be presented in a clear and concise format using plain English and avoiding the use of technical jargon where possible.
  - Consultations will have a purpose and will be informative. Those being consulted will be given enough information to ensure that they understand issues and can give informed responses within reason.
  - The opinions of stakeholders, community groups and individuals will be valued. Where possible, changes will be made to reflect comments received, and where this is not possible, the reasons will be clearly explained where appropriate.
  - Consultation techniques which are appropriate to the subject matter and the particular consultees involved will be used.
  - The value of diversity will be recognised with equal and fair treatment of all of those involved in the consultation process.
- 2.3 The statement sets out:
  - How people will have the chance to contribute their ideas, and the process for considering and responding to these views.
  - How people will get the chance to participate in developing proposals and options.
  - How people can submit representations on formal planning proposals.
  - How the District Council will seek to provide feedback to keep the community informed on progress and outcomes.

### How does the Planning System Work?

- 2.4 There are two main parts to the planning system, Planning Policy and Development Management:
- a) Planning Policy is concerned with producing the local planning documents and policies that will guide development in the district. These documents must conform to relevant Government policies and guidance and there are specific regulatory procedures which have to be followed during their preparation. The Local Plan includes strategic and site-specific policies relating to issues such as housing, employment and other land allocations and outlines where new development is expected to take place.
  - b) Development Management is responsible for processing and determining planning applications, together with works to trees, advertisements and listed buildings. The team also provides pre-application advice. The Planning Enforcement team investigates planning breaches and takes appropriate action when required.

### Why are we refreshing the Statement of Community Involvement?

- 2.5 The preparation of a SCI is a legal requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (section 18) as amended by the Planning Act 2008, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017. This legislation requires the Council to prepare a statement for how it will involve those with an interest in development in the area.
- 2.6 The Council recognises that there have been significant changes in the ways that the local community interacts with the District Council. Access to the internet has increased. This SCI will use online engagement as the primary method, including websites, online questionnaires, social media and email alerts. The Council's website will be regularly updated with information about the Local Plan when a review is being undertaken or other planning documents are being produced. All planning consultations will be advertised on its website with documents available to view on dedicated pages. Where appropriate, social media will be used to promote consultations with information posted on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and other social media platforms.

### Monitoring and Review

- 2.7 The SCI will be kept under review and community engagement in planning will be monitored through the production of the District Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). A review of the SCI would only be considered necessary following significant changes in the legislation governing the production of planning policy, the determining of planning applications or community involvement in planning, or where the AMR identifies consistently low or declining levels of public participation in planning.
- 2.8 Should a review of the SCI become necessary, the District Council will consult on a draft and take those comments into consideration when finalising the SCI. The SCI will need to be adopted at a meeting of Council in accordance with the District Council's constitution.

## 3 Consultation Principles

- 3.1 The key aims of the SCI are:
- To offer the widest range of opportunities to stakeholders and the community to participate in the plan making process within the resources available.

- To comply with, and where appropriate, exceed the minimum legal requirements for stakeholder and community consultation in the planning process.

3.2 Therefore, the following principles will apply to all planning consultations:

- Information will be presented in a clear and concise format using plain English and avoiding the use of technical jargon where possible.
- Consultations will have a purpose and will be informative. Those being consulted will be given enough information to ensure that they understand issues and can give informed responses where possible.
- The opinions of stakeholders, community groups and individuals will be valued. Where possible, changes will be made to reflect comments received, and where this is not possible, the reasons will be clearly explained.
- Consultation techniques which are appropriate to the subject matter and those involved will be used.
- The value of diversity will be recognised with equal and fair treatment of all of those involved in the consultation process.
- The District Council will make every reasonable effort to ensure it engages with those groups not traditionally involved with the planning process including through representative groups or bodies.
- The public will always be involved at an early stage in the Local Plan process.
- Consultation responses will be analysed, and the outcomes reported in a clear, understandable way within a reasonable timeframe.
- Individual responses will not be sent to members of the public who submit responses to consultations.
- It may not always be possible or appropriate to decide the matter in accordance with comments received. Sometimes there may be other material considerations to adhere to such as national or local policies and legislation.
- Responses that use racist, sexist, homophobic or other offensive language or terminology will not be accepted.

**Communication Methods that will be used by WFDC during consultation**

3.3 Different ways of communication will suit different people and circumstances. With the use of good communication, everyone can find the information they need and will know how to get involved if they choose to. The Council is committed to moving towards more online forms of engagement whilst ensuring that everyone, including the digitally excluded, have an opportunity to get involved where appropriate.

3.4 The following table lists some pro-active approaches, as well as the more generic methods such as social media and press, utilising links with groups and organisations used by the council.

Method	Explanation
Consultation documents, paper copies	Planning documents will be available to view at WFDC offices and at public locations such as Kidderminster Library.
Website	Information about draft development plans and policies, planning applications and public consultations will be on the planning pages of the WFDC website.
Social Media	WFDC will use online platforms such as Facebook, X and LinkedIn (or their successors) to advertise consultations and

	seek feedback via online survey tools where possible
Workshops/focus groups	These will be used to consult specific groups of people, for example, statutory consultees or community groups.
Drop in events/exhibitions	These can be staffed or unstaffed drop-in events/exhibitions where people can examine documents/materials and provide comments on the information.
Emails, newsletters and letters	Consultees can be notified via relevant newsletters, such as the residents' newsletters and planning newsletter.
Meetings	These can be organised meetings or consultations via an agenda item on existing network groups. For example, a meeting specifically consulting on an SPD, or an item about the SPD consultation on a parish council agenda.
Press releases	WFDC will produce and share to local media to raise interest and participation in any consultations.
Questionnaire/Surveys	These can be conducted electronically online and /or in person. In exceptional circumstances e.g. where someone has a specific disability or is excluded from these methods, then it may be possible to use a paper form. A mix of approaches will be used to attract responses to consultation where necessary.
Online meetings via MS Teams/Zoom	Online meeting tools such as MS teams and Zoom can be used to meet with groups and people who may find it difficult to participate in other consultations events/methods.

### Statutory Consultees

- 3.5 Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011 introduced the Duty to Co-operate. This is a legal requirement for local planning authorities, National Park authorities, county councils and a number of other public organisations such as infrastructure providers, to work together and consider joint approaches to plan-making. Wyre Forest District Council will continue to work closely with neighbouring authorities and key stakeholders to deliver positive planning within the area and fulfil the requirements of the Duty to Co-operate.
- 3.6 There are certain organisations and bodies that the Council must ask for their opinion when preparing plan documents and / or deciding on applications. These are:
- Central, Regional and Local Government organisations
  - Bodies such as utility companies
  - Community, voluntary, resident and interested groups
  - Individuals who have requested to be kept informed on planning policy matters
  - Parish/Town Councils
  - Local businesses, developers and agents
  - Neighbouring authorities and relevant internal council departments

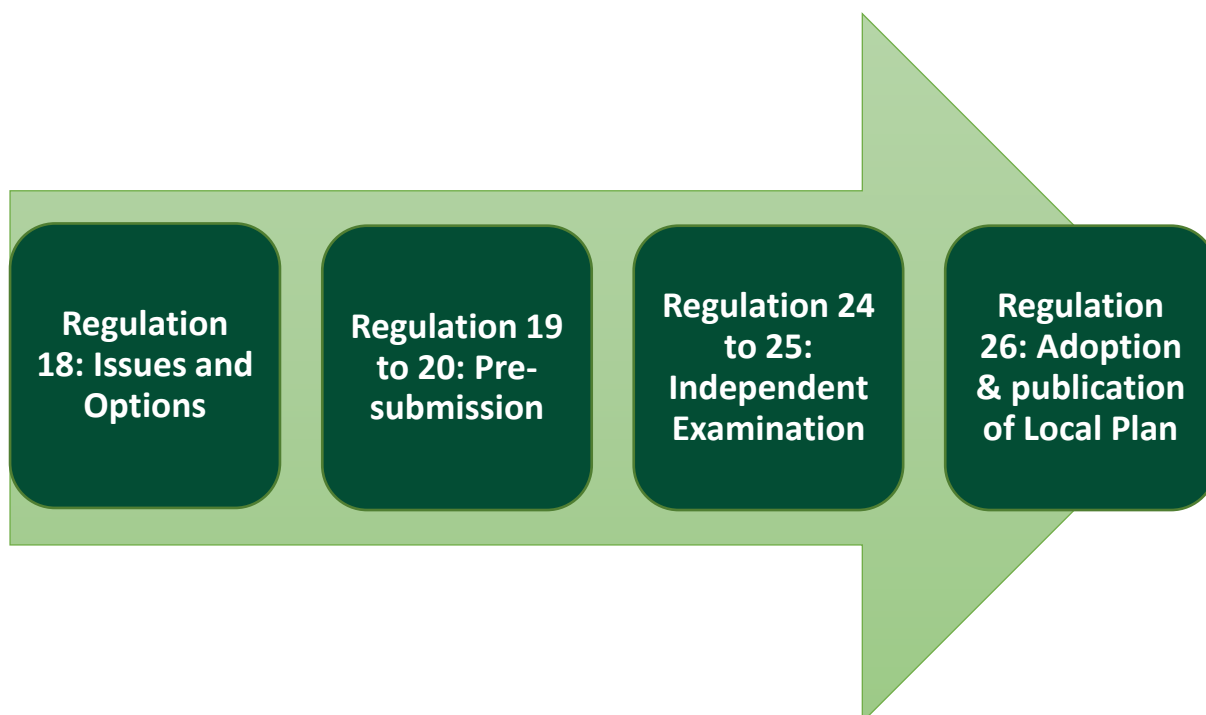
- 3.7 The groups and organisations will change over time and the planning consultation contact list will be checked regularly to keep an up-to-date list of groups, organisations and individuals to contact.

### The Role of Elected Councillors

- 3.8 Elected Councillors play a key role in the planning process. Their role in planning policy includes approving development plans for consultation and their subsequent submission for Examination in Public. There are a number of committees with different powers to scrutinise plans and make decisions. In some circumstances, special panels may also be established.
- 3.9 Any document which forms part of the Local Plan must be approved by Council before it is submitted for Examination in Public or adopted.
- 3.10 Elected Members also play a key role in the development management process. The District Council's Planning Committee determine many planning applications, with some smaller applications being determined by officers under delegated powers in accordance with the Adopted Scheme of Delegation.

### The Wyre Forest District Local Plan

- 3.11 The Wyre Forest District Council Local Plan is the principal statutory development plan and forms the basis for planning decision making for the district.
- 3.12 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 is the main piece of legislation that provides the minimum standards for local authorities when consulting on the local plan and supplementary planning documents.
- 3.13 The flow chart below states the process that WFDC will go through when consulting on the Local Plan.

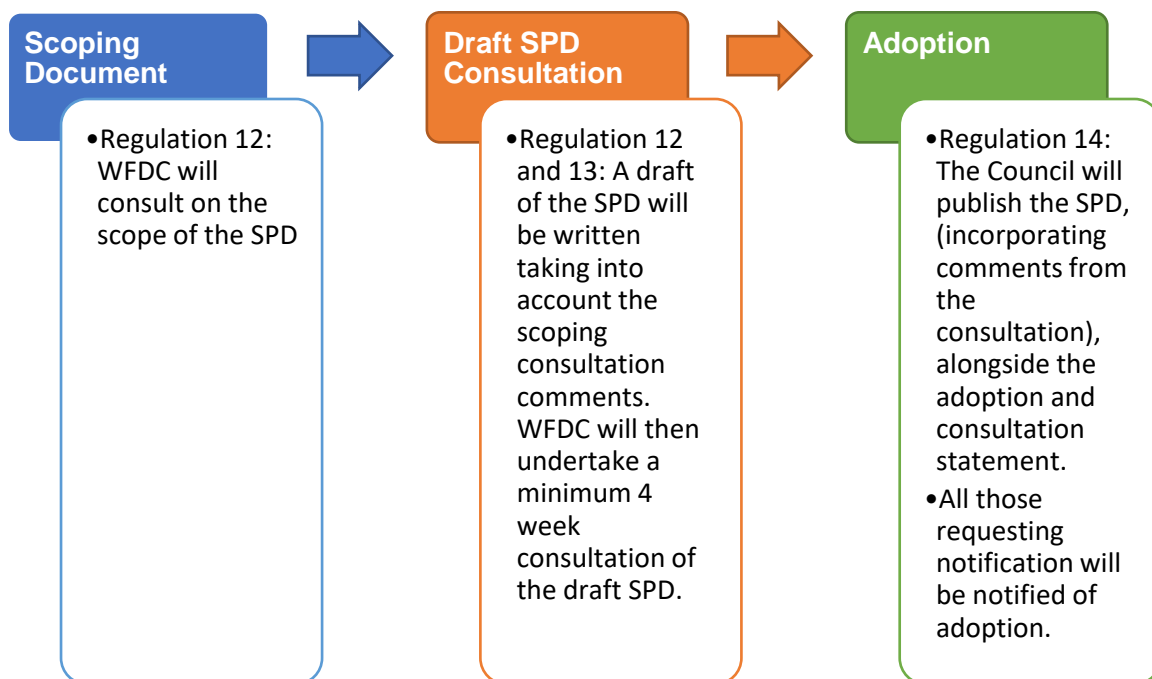


- 3.14 A detailed breakdown of the consultation process is in Appendix 1 of this document but in brief, the following consultation opportunities are detailed below.

- 3.15 Regulation 18:** First consultation, or series of consultations (Minimum 6 weeks each) – develop/ add to the evidence base and may include the preparation of several options. Consultees will be invited to give their feedback and the preferred options identified. It may be that developers or individuals give new options not previously known about. In this case, another consultation on these options will take place.
- 3.16 Regulation 19 to 20:** Draft document consultation (Minimum 6 weeks) – Consultees will be asked to give their feedback. Subject to there not being significant changes following the previous stage, the final document goes to the Secretary of State.
- 3.17 Regulation 24 to 25:** The final document (known as the submission plan) is examined by an Independent Planning Inspector. There may be modifications suggested by the Inspector at this stage. These will be published and subject to public consultation. The Inspector will issue a report including any changes that must be made to the document.
- 3.18 Regulation 26:** Adoption and publication of the final document.

### Supplementary Planning Documents

- 3.19** Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) can provide additional policy guidance on specific issues such as design, or specific sites allocated for development within the local plan. They do not have statutory status and cannot set new policy. Therefore, SPDs have fewer stages in their preparation than the local plan and they are not subject to an Examination in Public. This means they can be prepared more quickly. Despite this, community consultation is an important part of the process of preparing SPDs.
- 3.20** As with the Local Plan, the main legislation governing the consulting on SPD's are the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The diagram below sets out the key stages:

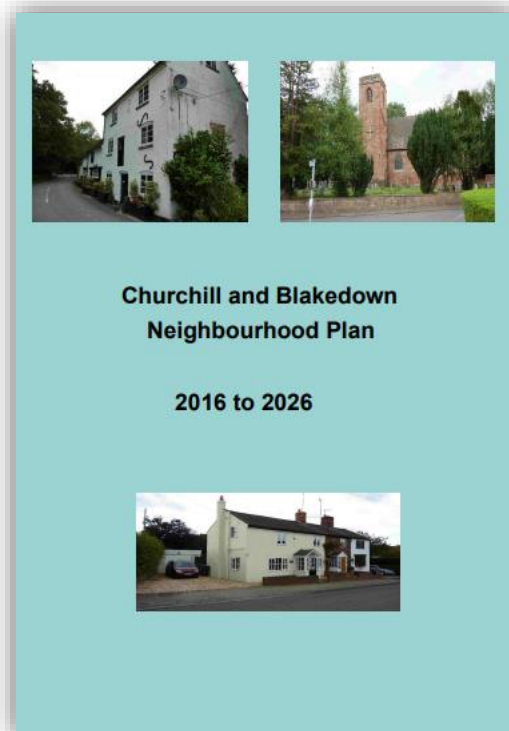
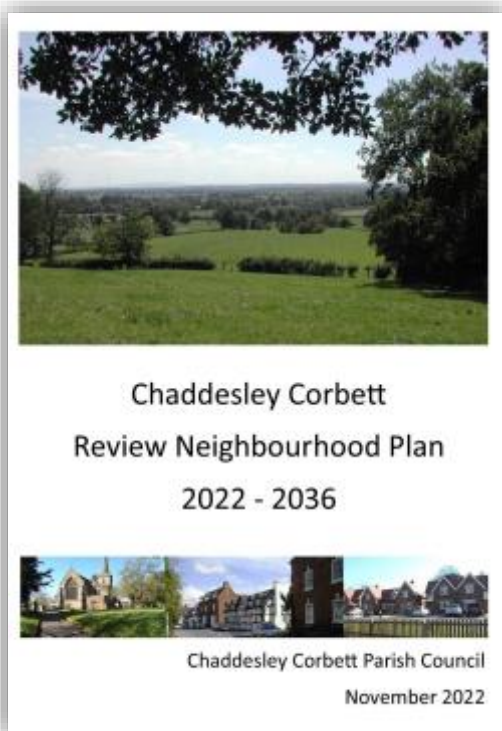




- 3.21 Further details of the consultation process for the SPD consultation process can be found in Appendix 2.

### Neighbourhood Plans

- 3.22 The role of Neighbourhood Plans in Planning was introduced by the Localism Act (2011) and has since been strengthened by the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012), the Housing and Planning Act (2016) and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.
- 3.23 Neighbourhood Plans, once adopted, are statutory plans that carry equal weight to any Local Plan. It is a way for local communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work by having more of a say in where new homes, businesses, shops and community facilities should be located in their local area, along with being able to allocate sites for development. However, these plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the WFDC Local Plan and have regard to national policy.
- 3.24 Unlike the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans are produced by local communities themselves with the support of WFDC. The Council will guide the communities through the process ensuring that all legislative requirements are met.
- 3.25 Details of the different consultation stages are in Appendix 3.
- 3.26 Current ‘made’ Neighbourhood Plans





## 4 Consultation on Planning Applications

- 4.1 The District Council sits within a two-tier administrative system with Worcestershire County Council overseeing a much larger area. The County Council is responsible for determining applications in relation to the working of minerals (together with the processing of minerals and other related activities), infrastructure projects and the deposit of waste materials (including treatment, storage, processing and other related activities). However, Wyre Forest District Council is responsible for all other development control functions within the District.
- 4.2 The District Council deals with a number of different types of planning applications, the three main types which are covered by the SCI being:
- **Outline** - to establish the principle of development. Outline applications can only be made for the erection of buildings and are usually used for larger sites and developments.
  - **Full** - all details need to be submitted when the application is made.
  - **Reserved Matters** - following an outline planning approval, reserved matters applications finalise the details of the development and relate to matters including design, access and layout.
- 4.3 WFDC has a scheme of delegation, which states which applications are determined by the Planning Manager and which will be determined by Planning Committee. The scheme of delegation is on the WFDC website at: [Constitution section 4 \(wyreforestdc.gov.uk\)](http://wyreforestdc.gov.uk)

### Pre-Application Discussions and Early Community Involvement

- 4.4 The District Council encourages developers to enter into early dialogue with the WFDC planning team and external statutory consultees. These include:
- Worcestershire Regulatory Services
  - Worcestershire County Council
  - North Worcestershire Water Management
  - Environment Agency
  - West Mercia Police
  - Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
  - Canal and River Trust
  - Historic England
- 4.5 Pre-application discussions are confidential between the District Council and the applicant. Pre-application discussions have the following benefits:
- They help to achieve better quality applications with more chance of a successful outcome;
  - They help to identify at an early stage whether specialist input is required;
  - They ensure all the necessary drawings and information are provided to enable the application to be registered as valid; and
  - They highlight any key considerations at the beginning of the process, including whether there are any major issues with the proposal or what contributions may be required to make the proposal acceptable in policy terms.

- Where it is indicated that a proposal is completely unacceptable, this could save considerable costs in pursuing a formal application.
- 4.6 At the pre-application stage, planning officers can advise applicants as to whether or not their proposal may be sensitive and therefore require a more detailed level of community involvement.
- 4.7 Applicants will always be encouraged to consider the benefits of involving the community in developing their proposals whether it is legally required or not. The following methodologies could be adopted to involve the community:
- Public exhibitions or meetings
  - Publish Development Briefs
  - Use of websites and online tools such as Teams/Zoom meetings
  - Questionnaires and surveys
  - Site notices
- 4.8 Applicants for large developments should discuss community involvement with officers and agree the approach to public consultation. However, in order for the District Council to maintain its impartiality when determining planning applications, it will be the responsibility of the applicant to take the lead role in community engagement and to cover any costs resulting from the process. The District Council will expect applicants to provide evidence of pre-application consultation in accordance with the requirements of The Localism Act 2011. Such evidence should be set out within a consultation statement outlining what consultation has been carried out and how the results of the exercise have been incorporated into the submitted proposals. Inadequate pre-application consultation may lead to delays in processing applications as new issues emerge late in the process.

### Community Involvement in Planning Application Decisions

- 4.9 Statutory consultation requirements for planning applications are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- 4.10 The District Council has a number of procedures currently in place to involve the community in planning application decisions and these are (depending on the application type):
- Publishing the application details on the Council's Planning Portal and how to comment
  - Letter to the owner/occupiers of properties adjoining the application site advising of application and the period in which to submit comments, and/or
  - Publishing a notice in the local press (Kidderminster Shuttle) for certain types of development
  - Weekly list of planning applications (circulated to specific consultees and available on the Council's website)
  - Consultation with statutory and non-statutory bodies (e.g. parish councils)
  - Following existing protocols with particular organisations (e.g. Environment Agency, Highways Authority)
- 4.11 The Planning Service is committed to both informing and engaging with the wider community and individuals in relation to planning proposals. However, there needs to

be a balance between making decisions in a timely and efficient way and providing the community with a reasonable opportunity to comment. Consultation involves not only the public but also statutory and non-statutory consultees. The scope of consultees will vary depending on the nature of the proposal, application type and location so not all bodies are consulted on every application. Statutory consultees are defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015.

- 4.12 Consultees to applications will have a minimum of 21 days to respond to a consultation letter and all responses should be submitted online via the Council's website. If a consultee requires an extension of time to respond then they should write or email the case officer to ask for an agreement to extend the consultee expiry date, otherwise the local planning authority has the right to determine the application after the expiry of the consultation period.
- 4.13 Comments can be submitted on any planning application within 21 days of it being registered or the date as specified in the consultation letter. Comments can be submitted online, by e-mail or in writing to the Development Management Team. You must supply your name and address for your comments to be considered.
- 4.14 Any public comments which contain defamatory remarks will be removed from public view on the Council's website, but will be made available upon written, email or FOI/SAR request.
- 4.15 No copycats or persistent repetitive comments will be accepted either by phone, writing or email prior to the application being determined and post planning committee/decision. If this occurs then the Council will consider taking appropriate action in accordance with the Council's vexatious complaints policy ([Unreasonably persistent or vexatious complaints policy | Wyre Forest District Council \(wyreforestdc.gov.uk\)](#)).

### Consultation with adjoining properties

- 4.16 When an application is received, we aim to ensure the application is validated and all consultations are sent out within the first 10 days from when the date of when the application is received. This will include writing to the adjoining properties to the proposal or displaying a site notice at or near to the application site.
- 4.17 If required by The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015, a notice about the application will be published in the Kidderminster Shuttle.

### Re-consultation

- 4.18 All comments received in response to consultations carried out on applications will be carefully considered and taken into account in the assessment of applications. Officers will consider the need for potential amendments to schemes where they have been suggested. If significant material changes are made to applications, re-consultation on the application will be carried out to all original consultees. Contributors who were not originally consulted on the application will not be re-consulted. If no significant material changes are made, then no re-consultation will be undertaken.

### Public Speaking at Planning Committee

- 4.19 Through the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, Local Planning Authorities have a duty to publicise certain applications. Local Planning Authorities have a duty to consider any representation made as part of the process of determining applications. Although Article 6 of the Human Rights Act secures individuals the right to a fair and public hearing, there is no statutory requirement to allow third parties, other consultees, or applicants to address Members of the Planning Committee as part of the process of determining planning applications. Wyre Forest District Council, however, recognises that it is as a mark of good practice to allow such public speaking at committee.
- 4.20 The procedure for public speaking at WFDC is set out in detail the development practice note [Public Speaking at Planning Committee](#). However, in summary:

The Right to Speak at Planning Committee	
Open to	Not Open to
Third party objectors to the development	Applicants or their representatives unless as a 'right of reply'
Third party supporters of the development proposed	Statutory consultees (although these may from time to time be invited to address committee by the chairman)
In the absence of any speakers in support of the development, and only where there is a speaker opposing the development, the applicant or his chosen representative	

- 4.21 Due to the time constraints of committee meetings and to ensure that the balance is not unfairly tilted, the first person to register to speak against an application will have a slot. If another objector requests to speak, it will be refused and recommended that they liaise with the registered speaker.
- 4.22 Any person wishing to speak on an application must:
- notify the case officer dealing with the application in writing of your desire to speak, within 21 days of the date of the adjoining properties notification letter or press/site notice; and
  - register your wish to speak with Committee Services by telephoning 01562 732763 within the same 21 day time limit; and
  - submit your formal written objections in full to the case officer within the same 21-day time limit. Any additional or amended objections can be submitted beyond the initial 21-day period.
- 4.23 If you have registered to speak, you will be advised in writing by Committee Services whether you have the right to speak prior to the relevant committee meeting. If you wish to telephone to check, please do not do so until a week before the committee meeting.

### Member Involvement

- 4.24 Local Councillors will be encouraged to participate in the planning process at pre-application stage by attending public meetings and exhibitions in line with the Member's Code of Good Practice. However, Councillors should keep an open mind and not give an opinion at this stage as pre-determination of a planning application may prejudice their position in any future decision making on that matter at Planning Committee.

### Appeals

- 4.25 When a planning application is refused, or not determined by the authority within the statutory period, the applicant may appeal to the Secretary of State via the Planning Inspectorate. There are broadly three different appeal types: written representations, hearings and public enquiries. The local planning authority will carry out the following public notifications:
- Those people who were consulted on the original application and those who commented on the application will be re-notified.
  - If the appeal is to be heard by informal hearing or public inquiry, those people who were consulted on the original application will be re-notified, with information about the date, time and venue of the hearing. If it is a significant hearing/inquiry, a site notice detailing the date, time and location of the hearing/inquiry will be posted on or near the site.
  - If the appeal is for a householder (fast track) application, those people who were consulted on the original will be notified.
- 4.26 In all instances any comments received on the original application will be forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate. Additional written representations can be made in all instances except where the appeal route is the householder fast-track option, which does not allow for additional representations to be made. Third parties can speak at appeal hearings and enquiries; however, this is at the discretion of the Inspector in the case of hearings and is subject to the rules for Public Enquiries for such appeals.

## 5 Appendix One: Local Plan Consultation requirements

<b>Regulation 18 sets out the requirements for early engagement</b>		
<b>What is required</b>	<b>Process and Requirements</b>	<b>How this will be achieved</b>
Notify both the specific and general consultation bodies of the subject of the local plan which they propose to prepare.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect evidence and establish wider policy framework.</li> <li>• Consider issues and alternatives.</li> <li>• Establish scope of the SA/SEA.</li> <li>• Carry out the 'duty to co-operate' requirement.</li> </ul>	<p>In order to meet the requirements of Regulation 18 the District Council will notify all of those people registered on the database, which it feels are appropriate, that the document will be prepared. This will be done in writing via email or letter.</p> <p>Statutory consultees will be consulted on the SA/SEA.</p>
Invite those people notified to make representations to the local authority about what a local plan should contain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and publish 'Preferred Options' Draft Document.</li> <li>• Carry out initial Equality Impact Assessment.</li> <li>• Prepare interim SA/SEA.</li> <li>• Consult for a minimum statutory period of six weeks.</li> <li>• Prepare Consultation Statement.</li> </ul>	<p>In order to publicise the proposals to residents and businesses in the area we will utilise the following methods (as appropriate) to advertise the consultation and make consultation documents available for inspection including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- on the website, council buildings and other locations as considered appropriate.</li> <li>- hold public exhibitions, events and workshops or more focused meetings where appropriate (please see below).</li> <li>- use social media and/or local media to raise awareness</li> <li>-</li> </ul> <p>An interactive version of the consultation document will be made available to enable electronic representations to be made.</p> <p>In addition to meeting the requirements of Regulation 18, the District Council will also at this stage make available all of the relevant consultation material on its website and in the appropriate deposit locations within the</p>

		<p>District. Documents will also be available to loan.</p> <p>In order to increase levels of engagement, it may be considered appropriate to hold exhibitions within accessible locations to publicise proposals to a wider audience. Exhibitions may be held in the three main towns of Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley. Exhibitions will only be held in the rural areas where there are specific proposals relating to that area and it is deemed appropriate to do so. When organising the exhibition schedule and venues, consideration will be given to selecting venues and tailoring opening hours to attract the widest audience. Where appropriate this could include exhibitions taking place during the evening and/or a Saturday.</p> <p>Online tools such as Microsoft teams and zoom will also be considered to provide opportunities for people who wish to meet with officers but cannot attend exhibitions.</p>
Take into account any representations received when preparing the draft local plan.		<p>All representations received at this stage will be acknowledged within five working days of their receipt and will be entered into a database and summarised. The representations and District Council responses will be published on the District Council's website and will be used to inform the preparation of the draft local plan. Tables setting out the summary of representations and the District Council's responses to these will also be made available in the deposit locations.</p>





## 6 Appendix Two: Supplementary Planning Documents

### Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

**Regulation 12 and 13: The local authority must prepare a statement setting out who was consulted, the main issues raised and how these issues have been addressed in the SPD.**

<b>What is required</b>	<b>Process and Requirements</b>	<b>How this will be achieved</b>
State in the consultation statement how the main issues in the SPD were established.	A draft SPD will be consulted on for a minimum of 4 weeks.	<p>Email/letters to be sent out to statutory consultees, parish and town councils and neighbouring authorities asking for comments on the draft SPD.</p> <p>A press release will be issued and posted on the website and on social media channels inviting comments from the public.</p> <p>Copies of the draft SPD will be available electronically on the WFDC website. Hard copies will be available at the council offices and libraries at Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport. Responses can be made electronically via an online form, via email or in writing. Comments can also be made by speaking to the lead officer for the SPD, details of which will be provided in the draft SPD.</p>
State the main issues raised and how these have been addressed in the SPD	Issues raised and how these have been addressed in the SPD will be included in the committee report	All representations received will be acknowledged within five working days of their receipt and will be entered into a database and summarised. The representations and District Council responses will be published as part of the consultation statement which will be presented to Full Council alongside the

		SPD and adoption statement.
--	--	-----------------------------

<b>Regulation 14: Adoption</b>		
<b>What is required</b>	<b>Process and Requirements</b>	<b>How this will be achieved</b>
The SPD and adoption statement should be made available as soon as possible after adoption.	Upon Council resolving to adopt an SPD, an adoption statement will be prepared and publicised alongside the adopted SPD.	<p>Consultees who have asked to be kept informed will be notified by post or email (as per their request) by WFDC.</p> <p>The adoption statement and SPD will be made available on the WFDC website.</p>

## 7 Appendix Three: Neighbourhood Planning

<b>Regulation 6 and 7 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012): Designating a Neighbourhood Area</b>		
<b>What is required</b>	<b>Process and Requirements</b>	<b>How this will be achieved</b>
The district council must publicise and consult on an area application for a period of 6 weeks	The District Council must publicise it on their website and in any other manner considered appropriate to bring it to the attention of people living, working or carrying out business in the area. The authority must publish a copy of the area application, details of how to make representations and the date by which representations should be made. A period of at least six weeks must be allowed for representations to be made	Neighbourhood area applications will be published on the District Council's website as a minimum but may also be advertised on the qualifying body's website where possible. Additionally, where possible, notices will be placed within the area, for example, on Parish notice boards.
The district council must publicise the decision on the area designation.	<p>If a neighbourhood area application is approved, the District Council must publicise the name of the area, a map of the area and the name of the body who applied for the area to be designated on their website and in any other manner considered appropriate to bring it to the attention of people living, working or carrying out business in the area.</p> <p>If the application for the neighbourhood area is refused, the District Council must publish the 'decision statement' which must set out the reasons for refusing the application, together with details of where the decision statement can be inspected, on their website and in any other manner considered appropriate to bring it to the attention of people living, working or</p>	Full details will be placed on the District Council's website, including a table of representations and details of how these were considered. Where an application is refused, the 'decision statement' will be placed at Wyre Forest House in Kidderminster, as well as in any appropriate public buildings within the area covered by the application.

	carrying out business in the area.	
--	------------------------------------	--

**Regulation 9 and 10 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012): Designating a Neighbourhood Forum**

<b>What is required</b>	<b>Process and Requirements</b>	<b>How this will be achieved</b>
Regulation 9: Publicise an application for a neighbourhood forum	<p>As soon as possible after receiving a neighbourhood forum application, the District Council must publicise the following on their website and in any other manner considered appropriate to bring it to the attention of people living, working or carrying out business in the area:</p> <p>A copy of the application.</p> <p>A statement that if the designation is made no other organisation or body may be designated for that neighbourhood area until that designation expires or is withdrawn.</p> <p>Details of how to make representations and the date by which they must be received, being no less than six weeks from when the application was first publicised.</p>	The District Council must consult on the application for a minimum of six weeks. The Council will publish the application on its website as a minimum. In addition, a press release will be issued which may lead to media coverage.
Regulation 10: Publicise designating a neighbourhood forum	<p>As soon as possible after designating a neighbourhood forum the District Council must publicise the following on their web-site and in any other manner appropriate to bring it to the attention of people living, working or carrying out business in the area considered. The name of the neighbourhood forum.</p> <p>A copy of the written constitution of the neighbourhood forum.</p>	Neighbourhood forum applications will be published on the District Council's website as a minimum but may also be advertised on the qualifying body's website where possible. Additionally, where possible, notices will be placed within the area, for example, on Parish notice boards.

	<p>The name of the neighbourhood area to which the designation relates.</p> <p>Contact details for at least one member of the neighbourhood forum.</p>	
Regulation 10: If a neighbourhood forum application is refused.	<p>Where an application for a neighbourhood forum is refused the District Council must publicise the following:</p> <p>A copy of the 'refusal statement' setting out the decision and the reasons for making that decision.</p> <p>Details of when and where the refusal statement can be inspected.</p>	<p>Full details will be placed on the District Council's website, including a table of representations and details of how these were considered. Where an application is refused, the 'decision statement' will be placed at Wyre Forest House in Kidderminster, as well as in any appropriate public buildings within the area covered by the application.</p>

**Regulation 14: Pre-submission Consultation and Publicity of the Neighbourhood Plan**

What is required	Process and Requirements	How this will be achieved
Regulation 14 sets out the requirements for the consultation which the qualifying body (the designated neighbourhood area/forum) must undertake on a neighbourhood development plan before it is submitted to the District Council.	<p>The regulation requires that the qualifying body publicise, in a manner that is likely to bring the attention of people who live, work or carry out business in the area.</p> <p>Details of the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan.</p> <p>Details of where and when the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan may be inspected. Details of how to make representations and the date by which they must be made which must be at least six weeks from when the proposals were first publicised.</p> <p>That the qualifying body consult any of the</p>	<p>The qualifying body must decide how they are to consult but some suggestions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaflet drop to all households within the neighbourhood area (if requested and funded by the PC or NP team)</li> <li>• Posters within the neighbourhood area.</li> <li>• Exhibitions.</li> <li>• Public meetings.</li> <li>• Workshop events.</li> <li>• Information on the qualifying body's website.</li> </ul> <p>The Council can assist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on District Council's website.</li> </ul>

	<p>consultation bodies listed in the regulations whose interests may be affected by the neighbourhood development plan.</p> <p>That the qualifying body send the local planning authority a copy of the neighbourhood development plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press release via the District Council.</li> </ul>
--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Regulation 16: Plan Proposals**

<b>What is required</b>	<b>Process and Requirements</b>	<b>How this will be achieved</b>
Regulation 16 requires that the District Council must publicise the Neighbourhood Submission Development Plan on their website and in a manner that is likely to bring the attention of people who live, work, or carry out business in the area	<p>The following details must be published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan proposals</li> <li>• Where and when the plan can be inspected.</li> <li>• Details of how to make representations.</li> <li>• A statement that any person making representations may request to be notified of the District Council's decision to whether or not to adopt the neighbourhood development plan.</li> <li>• The date by which representations must be received being no less than 6 weeks from the date the proposal is first publicised.</li> <li>• Notify any consultation body referred to in the consultation statement submitted, alongside the neighbourhood development plan that the plan has been submitted.</li> </ul>	<p>The following consultation techniques will be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation and publication of a statement setting out when and where documents can be inspected, details of how to make representations and when they must be made by, and that any persons making representations may request to be notified of the local authority's decision on a plan proposal.</li> <li>• Written notification to all of those bodies who were consulted by the qualifying body during the plan's preparation.</li> <li>• Publication of the neighbourhood development plan on District Council's website.</li> <li>• Publication of the neighbourhood development plan on qualifying bodies website where appropriate.</li> <li>• Displaying of posters within the neighbourhood area.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making copies of the documents available to view at Wyre Forest House in Kidderminster and at any locations within the neighbourhood area where documents were made available under Regulation 14.</li> <li>• Preparing a press release.</li> </ul>
--	--	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<b>Regulation 18: Inspectors Report</b>		
<b>What is required</b>	<b>Process and Requirements</b>	<b>How this will be achieved</b>
Once the inspector's report has been received by the District Council and a decision has been made regarding how to proceed, Regulation 18 requires that the District Council publish on their website and in a manner that is likely to bring the attention of people who live, work or carry out business in the area.	<p>WFDC must issue:</p> <p>The 'decision statement' which sets out their decision and the reasons for it.</p> <p>Details of where the decision statement can be inspected.</p> <p>The inspector's report.</p>	Once the inspector's report is received, the District Council will decide how to proceed with the neighbourhood development plan and publish their decision in a 'decision statement' which will be made available on the District Council's website and in those places where the plan was made available during the Regulation 16 consultation period. A copy of the 'decision statement' will be sent to the qualifying body and to any person who requested to be notified. The District Council will also ask the qualifying body to publish the 'decision statement' on their website, where possible, and will use posters in the neighbourhood area to advertise the fact the 'decision statement' is available.

<b>Regulation 20: Neighbourhood Development Plan</b>		
<b>What is required</b>	<b>Process and Requirements</b>	<b>How this will be achieved</b>
Notification that a Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted	Once the District Council has adopted a neighbourhood development plan Regulation 20 requires that they:	Once the neighbourhood development plan is adopted, WFDC will publish their decision in a 'decision statement' which will be

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish on their website and a manner that is likely to bring the attention of people who live, work or carry out business in the area:</li> <li>• The neighbourhood development plan</li> <li>• Details of where and when the neighbourhood development plan can be inspected.</li> <li>• Notify any person who has asked to be notified of the making of the neighbourhood development plan and where and when it can be inspected.</li> </ul>	<p>made available on the District Council's website and in those places where the plan was made available during the Regulation 16 consultation period. A copy of the 'decision statement' will be sent to the qualifying body and to any person who requested to be notified. The District Council will also ask the qualifying body to publish the 'decision statement' and the neighbourhood development plan on their website, where possible, and will use posters in the neighbourhood area to advertise the fact the 'decision statement' is available and the neighbourhood plan adopted.</p>
--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Cabinet  
Tuesday 13 February 2024**

**Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Thursday 11 January 2024**

**Review of Statement of Community Involvement**

The Committee considered a draft of a Cabinet report from the Head of Strategic Growth to review the Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and whether to proceed with a consultation.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer presented the report and members were given the opportunity to ask questions on the report, and the proposed consultation, going through it page by page.

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

**AGREE** that a six-week public consultation on the revised draft Statement of Community Involvement be undertaken.

**Background papers:**

See the report on page 20 of the pdf at this link:

[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc59150\\_20240111\\_o\\_and\\_s\\_agenda.p  
df](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc59150_20240111_o_and_s_agenda.pdf)