

**Open**

# **Council**

# **Agenda**

**6PM**  
**Wednesday, 21 February 2024**  
**Council Chamber**  
**Wyre Forest House**  
**Finepoint Way**  
**Kidderminster**



## Council

### **Public Information**

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4. If you have any special requirements regarding access to the venue and its facilities including audio and visual needs please let us know in advance so that we can make arrangements for you.
5. This Agenda can be made available in larger print on request; if you require a copy please contact:

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**COUNCIL MEETING**

**13 February 2024**

**TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL AND HONORARY ALDERMEN**

**PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Dear Member

**YOU ARE INVITED** to attend a meeting of the Wyre Forest District Council to be held **at 6.00p.m. on Wednesday 21 February 2024**, in the Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster.

The Agenda for the meeting is enclosed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "I R Miller".

Ian Miller  
Chief Executive

## **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.

## **(A) TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COUNCIL**

### The Council

1. Is the ultimate decision making Body.
2. Determines the Budget (but reserves powers to itself in relation to requirements).
3. Is responsible for appointing (and dismissing) the Leader of the Council.
4. Appoints at its Annual Meeting, the Regulatory Committees, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other Committees/Forums necessary to conduct the Council's business.
5. Decides on matters where the Cabinet is not minded to determine a matter in accordance with Council policy.

## **(B) MATTERS RESERVED TO THE COUNCIL**

1. Those reserved by Law e.g. levying a rate, borrowing money, promotion of or opposition to a Bill in Parliament.
2. Matters reserved to the Council by financial regulations.
3. The adoption and amendment of Standing Orders, including the powers and duties of Committees and other forums.
4. Power to make, amend, revoke or enact or enforce any byelaws.
5. The determination of the objectives of the Council.
6. Matters of new policy or variation of existing policy as contained within the budget and policy framework.
7. Local Development Framework adoption.

8. Any function where a decision would be contrary to a plan, policy, budget or strategy previously adopted by the Council, which would be contrary to the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations or Executive arrangements.
9. The Scheme of Delegations to Officers.

### **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

Council

Wednesday, 21 February 2024

Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster

Part 1

Open to the press and public

<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page Number</b>
1.	<b>Prayers</b>  To be read by Rev Sallie Butcher – Priest-in-Charge, Wyre Forest West – Baynton, Clows Top, Far Forest, Heightington, Mamble, Rock	
2.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
3.	<b>Declarations of Interests by Members</b>  In accordance with the Code of Conduct, to invite Members to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI), an other registrable interest (ORI) or a non-registrable interest (NRI) in relation to any matter on the agenda.  Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's Constitution for full details.	
4.	<b>Minutes</b>  To approve as a correct record and sign the Minutes of the last meeting held on 13 December 2023.	10
5.	<b>Public Participation</b>  In accordance with the Council's Scheme for Public Speaking at Meetings of Full Council, 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 12 February 2024.  <b>No requests for public participation were received by the deadline.</b>  <i>If you wish to speak on an urgent matter that has arisen since the deadline and you could not reasonably have known about it at the time, you should register your interest in speaking no later than 9am on the day of the meeting of Council. In the case of a request to speak on an urgent matter, the Solicitor to the Council will rule on whether or not the matter is urgent and that ruling will be final.</i>	
6.	<b>Chairman's Communications</b>  To note the engagements of the Chairman of the Council since the Council's last meeting.	17

7.	<p><b>Leader of the Council Announcements</b></p> <p>To receive announcements from the Leader of the Council.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Political Balance</b></p> <p>To consider a report from the Solicitor to the Council to approve the revised table of political balance.</p>	18
9.	<p><b>Electoral arrangements and local government boundaries in Wyre Forest</b></p> <p>To receive a report from the Chief Executive to agree the Council's response to the draft recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission's review of electoral arrangements for Worcestershire County Council; and to agree to conduct a community governance review (CGR) for the parish of Wolverley and Cookley and the principle of other community governance reviews as set out in the report.</p>	21
10.	<p><b>Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027 and Capital Strategy 2024-2034</b></p> <p>To receive a report from the Head of Resources that invites Council to approve the Council's budget for 2024-2027 having considered the proposed budget decision recommended to Council by Cabinet.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><i>The appendices to this report have been circulated electronically.</i></p>	31
11.	<p><b>Council Tax Setting 2024-25</b></p> <p>To consider and approve the formal resolution for setting the Council Tax for 2024-25. This includes the <b>2.997%</b> increase in the District Council's element of Council Tax, to be recommended by Cabinet on 13 February 2024, and the precepts and council tax increases in the elements of Council Tax set by the following bodies:</p> <p>Worcestershire County Council –increase <b>+4.99%</b> (including <b>2%</b> adult social care) (TBC)  The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia <b>(+4.91%)</b>  Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority <b>(+2.99%)</b></p>	45

<p>12.</p> <p>(a)</p>	<p><b>Policy and Budget Framework</b></p> <p>Matters which require a Decision by Council.</p> <p><b>Recommendations from the Treasury Management Review Panel – 29 January 2024</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25</li> </ul> <p>Please note that the reports and associated documents, referred to above, have been circulated electronically to Members. Public inspection copies are available on request. Please refer to the front cover for contact details.</p>	<p>56</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p><b>Questions</b></p> <p>To receive questions submitted by Members of the Council and the replies of the Leader of the Council, or relevant Cabinet Member, in accordance with Standing Order 1.9, details of which have been received by 12 noon on Monday 12 February 2024.</p> <p><b>Two questions have been received by the deadline.</b></p> <p><i>In the case of an urgent matter that has arisen since the deadline above, and could not have been reasonably known at that time, it must be delivered in writing to the Solicitor to the Council no later than 9am on the day of Council.</i></p>	<p>60</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p><b>Motions Submitted under Standing Orders</b></p> <p>To consider Motions in the order in which notice has been received.</p> <p><b>No motions were received by the deadline.</b></p>	
<p>15.</p>	<p><b>Emergency Motions submitted under Standing Orders</b></p> <p>To consider Emergency Motions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 4.1 (i).</p>	
<p>16.</p>	<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>	
<p>17.</p>	<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 the paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act”.</p>	



**Part 2**

**Not open to the Press and Public**

<b>18.</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>	
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**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

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

**13 DECEMBER 2023 (6PM)**

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**Present:**

Councillors: C Rogers (Chairman), J F Byng (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, E Bourne, B Brookes, L Carroll, V Caulfield, G Connolly, N J Desmond, R Drew, H E Dyke, P Dyke, K Gale, N Gale, J Griffiths, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M J Hart, K Henderson, D Little, N Martin, M McDonnell, S Miah, D Morehead, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, D Ross, D Russell, A Sutton, L Whitehouse and P W M Young.

**C.105 Prayers**

Prayers were said by Deacon Becky Lovatt, Minister at the Wesley Methodist Chapel, Stourport.

**C.106 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: M Rayner and N Wilson.

**C.107 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**C.108 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**C.109 Public Participation**

In accordance with the Council's scheme for public participation at meetings of Full Council, the following members of the public addressed the meeting at this point: Councillor Liam Carroll.

The petition referred to below was circulated at the meeting.

*Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome all fellow councillors, council officers and members of public watching here in the chamber and those at home. I am here today to present a petition that has been signed by 33 residents in my ward as can be seen in the agenda. The petition reads, We, the undersigned, are concerned residents who urge Wyre Forest District Council to act now to create an additional polling station in OFC-2 to ensure that voting is accessible to all.*

*This is an issue that was raised with me prior to having the privilege to being elected to serve the excellent residents of Offmore and Comberton and I have been waiting for an opportunity to raise the concerns outlined in the petition. This exact issue was raised with me four times on polling day alone. The OFC-2 polling district used to have a polling station and is missed by many. Residents in the OFC-2 polling district have to walk up to over half an hour to the nearest polling station which is currently St. Chad's Church. The Chief Executive and I walked from Leswell Lane to St. Chad's Church in the pouring rain last Thursday. It took us approximately 26 minutes to walk the distance. Whilst it would be unfair to compare our fitness levels to the likes of Sir Mo Farah, I would like to think we both walked that route at a good pace. The same distance could take someone with mobility issues or those walking with Children at least 35 minutes. That is over 1hr 10 minutes round trip to exercise their right to vote which I believe to be unacceptable, a sentiment echoed, I'm certain, by many within and beyond this chamber.*

*The lack of adequate public transport in our area, coupled with limited access to vehicles for many residents, leaves walking as the sole option. While Postal Votes remain an alternative, the traditional voting method is often preferred for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, residents should have the liberty to choose how they exercise their voting rights.*

*I intend to delve deeper into this matter in Agenda Item 8. My aim today was to clearly present the concerns of our residents, and I hope I have achieved that. Thank you.*

**C.110 Chairman's Communications**

The Council received a list of functions attended by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman since the Council's last meeting.

The Chairman extended a huge thank you to everyone who had made a contribution to the Chairman's Foodbank Christmas Appeal.

**C.111 Leader of the Council Announcements**

The Leader of the Council referred members to his tabled report. A copy of the announcements is available for viewing on the Council's website.  
[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc59087\\_20231213\\_council\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc59087_20231213_council_agenda.pdf)

**C.112 Review of Polling districts and polling places**

Council received a report from the Chief Executive, which invited members to consider and make decisions on the recommended changes / options for change to polling districts and polling places.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio, presented the report and outlined the key issues, highlighting the response to the consultation as set out in Section 6 of the report and recommendations at Section 2 incorporating the proposal that the polling place for MI-SN1 should be

designated as Stourport Community Centre, Lower Lickhill Road; the polling place for AKR-SC should be designated as Severn’s Club, Lickhill Road; and that the polling place for BHS-5 should be designated as Baxter College, Habberley Road DY13 8SB.

The Leader of the Council said that he supported the recommendations and seconded the proposals as set out by Councillor Ross reserving the right to speak. Councillor Liam Carroll then proposed an amendment to the recommendations for the polling place for polling district OFC-2 to be designated as St Ambrose Catholic Primary School based on the distance that some residents have to travel in order to vote and the lack of public transport to reach St Chad’s Church. Councillor Leigh Whitehouse seconded this proposal.

An amendment to the amendment was proposed by Councillor Fran Oborski to use the Fred Bennett Centre instead of St Ambrose Catholic Primary School as the polling place for polling district OFC-2, it being more suitable in her opinion.

Councillor Liam Carroll accepted Councillor Oborski’s suggested amendment and a robust debate ensued. As the proposer of the original amendment, he and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio were given the opportunity to sum up on the revised amendment and a vote was called. The majority of members voted against the amendment.

Further debate then took place around the remaining recommendations and clarification was made on the name of the polling place for polling district OFC-2, which should be Offmore Church Hall. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio summed up on the substantive set of proposals and thanked members for taking part and voicing their opinions. The vote for the recommendations was carried, with the majority of members voting in favour.

**Decision: Council: CONSIDERED the responses to the review of polling districts and places:**

**1.2 DECIDED that the following changes should be implemented with effect from 1 March 2024:**

Issue	Change
<p><b>Creation of new polling district within existing polling district WFR-CO to serve Lea Castle</b></p>	<p><b>A new polling district should be created within WFR-CO, to Be designated WFR-CO2. The boundaries should be based on Option A.</b></p> <p><b>The polling place for the new polling district should be designated as Cookley Sports and Social Club.</b></p>
<p><b>Polling place for OFC-3 and OFC-4</b></p>	<p><b>Offmore Church Hall should be designated as the polling place for OFC-3 and OFC-4.</b></p>

<p><b>Polling place for MI-SN1 and AKR-SC</b></p>	<p>The polling place for MI-SN1 should be designated as Stourport Community Centre, Lower Lickhill Road, and the polling place for AKR-SC should be designated as Severn’s Club, Lickhill Road DY13 8SB.</p>
<p><b>Polling place for BHS-5</b></p>	<p>The polling place for BHS-5 should be designated as Baxter College, Habberley Road.</p>
<p><b>Other polling districts and polling places</b></p>	<p>No change.</p>

**C.113 Policy And Budget Framework – Matters which require a decision by Council**

**a. Recommendations from the Treasury Management Review Panel – 13 November 2023**

- **Annual Report on Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2022-23**

The Chairman proposed the recommendations and formally moved them for approval. They were seconded by the Leader of the Council and were agreed unanimously.

**Decision: Council:**

**APPROVED the actual 2022-23 prudential and treasury indicators in the report;**

**APPROVED the actual 2022-23 non-treasury prudential indicators for Capital Portfolio Fund properties;**

**NOTED the annual treasury management report for 2022-23, including information on the non-treasury prudential indicators for Capital Portfolio Fund properties.**

**b. Recommendations from the Treasury Management Review Panel – 13 November 2023**

- **Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2023-24**

The Chairman proposed the recommendation, formally moved it for approval and it was seconded by the Leader of the Council. The recommendation was agreed by all members of the Council.

**Decision: Council APPROVED the Mid-year Review and all updated Prudential Indicators, Ratios and the Liability Benchmark.**

**c. Recommendations from the Licensing and Environmental Committee – 4 December 2023**

- **Review of Fees and Charges for the Council’s Licensing and Regulatory Services Function 2024/25**

The Chairman of the Licensing and Environmental Committee proposed the recommendation and it was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Arts & Community Safety. A brief discussion took place to check understanding and, upon a vote, the proposal was unanimously agreed.

**Decision: Council AGREED that the proposals for fees and charges within the Council’s Licensing, Food, Health, Safety and Pollution Control functions for 2024/25, as detailed in the report, be included in the Council’s 2024/25 budget strategy.**

**C.114**

**Questions**

Three questions had been submitted by members of the Council in accordance with standing orders.

The Chairman announced that, in the absence of Councillor Mary Rayner, question number two had been withdrawn.

**1. Question from Councillor F Oborski MBE to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, and Well-being.**

Earlier this year we were told that the Council had received funding to purchase 7 properties. 6 were to be used for Ukrainian refugees and 1 for Afghans. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what progress has been made on this matter?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, and Well-being.**

The Council completed the delivery of the 7 properties in advance of the end date in November thanks to the hard work of the Strategic Growth and Legal teams.

2 properties were purchased by the Council, one of these will be for an Afghan family, yet to be identified and supported by the County Council service, and the second will be for Ukrainians or temporary accommodation supported in house. The first property should be ready for letting in January, the other property requires more substantial work, so the team are presently developing a specification for the works.

The other 5 properties are owned and managed by Community Housing Group and will be for Ukrainians and/or temporary accommodation. All are still undergoing works, but 2 should be ready quite shortly.

All councillors with properties in their wards have been advised, but not given the addresses to preserve anonymity.

**Supplementary Question**

Whilst I understand the need for anonymity, it would actually be very helpful

if you were to give councillors the addresses in confidence. I've had to deal with an unfortunate situation, where a large 5 bedroom council house in Offmore / Comberton is one of the ones that has been purchased, and unfortunately the workmen doing the works on behalf of the Council, gave all sorts of quite outlandish information to the neighbouring residents, who have been up in arms about it, and I've had to go and speak to 5 people so far and calm them down. Now, I understand the need for anonymity, but there is already a property on Offmore that's being used to support an Afghan family. As ward members we were told where it was, and we've been able to support that family and help them with getting their kids into school. I do think that we should be trusted, please, with confidential information so that we can know what to do when residents start haranguing us, and also so as local councillors we can actually support these probably quite vulnerable residents when they move into our wards. Please can you look into it?

**Supplementary Answer**

The answer I've had from the appropriate officers is that we don't share details of where anybody is rehoused, or information. Some of our Ukrainian families have been subjected to racism so we don't want their addresses in the public domain.

**2. Question from Councillor Mary Rayner – Withdrawn**

**3. Question from Councillor S Miah to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, and Well-being.**

Could the cabinet member please set out the main reasons for homelessness in Wyre Forest and what the council is doing about it?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, and Well-being.**

The four top reasons for homelessness are:-

Parents, friends, and relatives asking a person to leave.

Domestic abuse.

End of an assured short hold tenancy.

Non-violent relationship breakdown.

The council has a higher number of people approaching us at the prevention stage, than relief stage, compared with the national average, which is positive. We, the District Council, offer a range of services directly and indirectly through support for Homeless Households, including trying to keep them in their homes through offering support and financial assistance, through to helping them to find alternative accommodation via the housing register, or accessing the private rented sector. We provide income maximisation and debt advice, pre-tenancy training, life skills training, and counselling, alongside access to housing, including through rent bonds and rent in advance. We host three regular prevention panels with partners, and this is around rough sleeping, domestic abuse, and homeless prevention, with social and private sector landlords to increase the early intervention and prevention work that we do.

**Supplementary Question**

Do you agree with the former Home Secretary, Suella Braverman's

comments that our streets are taken over by people living on the streets as a lifestyle choice, and if you do not agree, will you write to the current Home Secretary about the good work being done by this Council and volunteer groups. And most importantly, will you look into the scheme operated at Hereford, where they are using pods as temporary housing?

**Supplementary Answer**

I think this is one where I can't personally answer the question directly, but I suggest perhaps you do the same that you are suggesting to me, in other words write to the Home Secretary.

**C.115 Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders**

No motions were received by the deadline.

**C.116 Emergency Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders**

There were no emergency motions.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.00pm.



**Chairman's List of Functions – 2024**

**December 2023 to January 2024**

Tuesday 12 December	Community Christmas Carol Service, St John's Church, Bromsgrove
Sunday 17 December	Community Christmas Carol Service, St Mary's Church Kidderminster
Wednesday 20 December	Worcester News Annual Carol Service, Worcester Cathedral
*Thursday 18 January	Mayor of Droitwich, Sleeping Beauty Pantomime

\* Denotes attendance by Vice Chairman

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

21 FEBRUARY 2024

Political Balance

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	The Leader of the Council
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Solicitor to the Council
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Caroline Newlands, Ext. 2715 caroline.newlands@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1: revised table of political balance

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To approve the revised table of political balance.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1 The Council is asked to approve the revised table of political balance in Appendix 1.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Council is responsible for establishing the political structures which are not the responsibility of the Leader and Cabinet.

3.2 Following the resignation of an elected member from the Labour Party and subsequent changes to the structure of political groups, there have been changes in political balance, and it is necessary for the Council to approve a revised table of political balance.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

4.1 In line with the legislation, only political groups are entitled to an allocation of seats on committees. The revised table of political balance is set out in Appendix 1 for Council's approval.

4.2 Council approved the political balance at its meeting on 17 May 2023. Since that date there has been a change in the political balance as a result of the resignation of an elected member from the Labour Group, and their decision to join the Independent and Green group. Council is required to re-calculate political balance although, in practice, the change does not affect allocation of seats on existing committees. Councillors have formed themselves into political groups of the following numbers.

Conservative	20
Independent & Green	8
Labour	3
Liberal Democrats	2

4.3 Legislation requires that the aggregate allocation of committee seats must be in accordance with the principles of political balance and proportionality. Subject to this, individual committee membership should reflect the political balance of the Council as far as practicable. Council can depart from these principles provided no member votes against doing so.

4.4 The Solicitor to the Council will liaise with groups as necessary to adjust any appointments to committees in light of the change in political balance.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

**6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Overall, membership of committees will continue to comply with political balance in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

**7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken as the report relates to appointments to be made by full Council.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

8.1 Appropriate arrangements will be made to provide training and support for the members appointed to the roles to ensure that they can perform effectively.

**9. CONCLUSION**

9.1 Council is invited to approve the revised table of political balance.

**10. CONSULTEES**

10.1 Corporate Leadership Team.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 Local Government Act 2000, Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

		Conservative		Labour		Independent/ Green		Lib Dem		Total
No. of Cllrs.			20		3		8		2	33
Percentage			60.61%		9.09%		24.24%		6.06%	100.00%
<b>Executive Cttees</b>										
	Membership									
Appts & Appeals	5	3	3.03	1	0.45	1	1.21	0	0.30	5
Audit cttee	8	5	4.85	1	0.73	2	1.94	0	0.48	8
Ethics & standards *	7	4	4.24	1	0.64	2	1.70	0	0.42	7
<b>Scrutiny</b>										
Scrutiny Committee	12	7	7.27	1	1.09	3	2.91	1	0.73	12
<b>Regulatory</b>										
Planning	12	7	7.27	1	1.09	3	2.91	1	0.73	12
Lic & Env	12	7	7.27	1	1.09	3	2.91	1	0.73	12
Total	56	33	33.94	6	5.09	14	13.58	3	3.39	56
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>58.93%</b>		<b>10.71%</b>		<b>25.00%</b>		<b>5.36%</b>		<b>100.00%</b>
Difference between % No. of Cllrs. And % Number of Seats		-1.68%		1.62%		0.76%		-0.70%		

\* the table shows only district councillor members

1. Each member is required to notify the Proper Officer which political group, if any, he or she wishes to be identified with. A group comprises of two or more members.
2. Each Group Secretary is required to notify the Proper Officer which members of his or her groups he/she wishes to sit on each relevant committee or sub-committee.
3. The allocation of seats required the rounding up or down of calculated figures to give whole numbers.
4. Single party representatives and independent members (who do not form part of a political group) are not legally entitled to seats on committees to which the rules of proportionality apply.

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**21<sup>st</sup> FEBRUARY 2024**

**Electoral arrangements and local government boundaries in Wyre Forest**

<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor Marcus Hart
<b>DIRECTOR:</b>	Ian Miller, Chief Executive
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Caroline Newlands Solicitor to the Council <a href="mailto:Caroline.newlands@wyreforestdc.gov.uk">Caroline.newlands@wyreforestdc.gov.uk</a>
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1 – draft response to LGBCE’s review of Worcestershire County Council

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report deals with two separate but interlinked issues:
- It seeks agreement of the Council’s response to the draft recommendations of the review of electoral arrangements for Worcestershire County Council by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE); and
  - it further seeks agreement to conduct a community governance review (CGR) for the parish of Wolverley and Cookley with terms of reference for the review and for a local advisory poll in May 2025 to be decided at the next meeting of Council. Community governance reviews are also envisaged in other areas and will be the subject of separate reports.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**The Council is asked to AGREE:**

- 2.1 The response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s review in Appendix 1;**
- 2.2 The principle of conducting a community governance review of the parish of Wolverley and Cookley, commencing on 1 August 2024 with a local advisory poll to be held on 1 May 2025;**
- 2.3 To receive a report in May 2024 to determine the terms of reference for the review and the details of the local advisory poll including the question to be asked in the poll;**
- 2.4 The principle of conducting community governance reviews of Kidderminster Foreign and Kidderminster to examine among other things the electoral arrangements for the parish and town councils, with timetables and terms of reference for these reviews to be agreed at the meeting in July 2024.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On 9 January, the LGBCE published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements for Worcestershire County Council. Consultation closes on 18 March

2024. The Commission is due to publish its final recommendations on 2 July 2024 which, so far as the County Council is concerned, would be implemented for the elections in May 2025 if the relevant order is approved by Parliament.

- 3.2 The draft recommendations propose retaining 10 county councillors to represent Wyre Forest out of 57 for the county as a whole, which is also unchanged. The full details can be seen in the LG BCE’s report at the link in the background papers section of this report. The most significant changes are:
- dividing the Stourport-on-Severn electoral division into two divisions, each to elect one councillor;
  - redrawing the boundaries of the five electoral divisions located wholly in Kidderminster and renaming some of them;
  - moving the Lea Castle area into the Chaddesley division which would, as now, include the Spennells area of Kidderminster.
- 3.3 The proposals would produce the following pattern of representation, with variance from electoral equality on the basis of the estimated electorate in 2029. The Commission considers divisions that are within 10% variance to represent “good electoral equality”. It will be seen that only one proposed division in Wyre Forest lies outside that range.

Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Bewdley	1	-8%
Chaddesley	1	4%
Cookley, Wolverley & Wribbenhall	1	-6%
St Barnabas	1	-10%
St Chads	1	-8%
St Georges	1	-3%
St Johns	1	1%
St Peters	1	-8%
Stourport Areley Kings & Riverside	1	-7%
Stourport Mitton	1	11%

- 3.4 The Commission also includes proposals in paragraphs 98 to 108 of its report that would affect the electoral arrangements for Kidderminster Foreign Parish Council, Kidderminster Town Council, Stourport on Severn Town Council and Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council. Paragraph 1(2) of Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 requires the Commission’s recommendations to provide that “every ward of a parish having a parish council (whether separate or common) must lie wholly within a single electoral area of the county council, and every parish which is not divided into parish wards must lie wholly within a single electoral area of the county council”.
- 3.5 This statutory requirement obliges the Commission to propose changes to the warding and electoral arrangements in the four town and parish councils. The changes include introduction of a separate ward for Lea Castle while merging the

existing wards for Wolverley and Cookley villages; splitting Kidderminster Foreign into two wards; and making numerous changes to wards in Kidderminster and Stourport, including replacing the 6 wards in Kidderminster that are co-terminous with the District Council's wards with 10 wards.

- 3.6 The changes in respect of parish and town councils would not take effect until the next ordinary elections of parish councils in May 2027 (May 2028 in the case of Kidderminster Town Council). As noted in paragraph 99 of the LGBCE's report, the District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements – indeed the powers can also be used to create new parish councils and adjust parish council boundaries. While there is the opportunity in the present consultation for town and parish councils, local electors and others to put forward their views, any responses cannot override the statutory requirements of the 2009 Act set out in paragraph 3.4 above. There is thus the opportunity for alternative arrangements to be put in place by the District Council by the time of the elections in 2027/2028 if it is felt that the LGBCE's proposals do not reflect local requirements. Community governance reviews would allow much fuller local consultation than can be undertaken by the LGBCE, including the option of local advisory polls, and would have the advantage of decisions about areas in Wyre Forest being taken by the elected body for the district rather than a remote national body.

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

- 4.1 It has long been the case, in Kidderminster and elsewhere, that county electoral divisions do not always align with district or parish/town wards. That is a consequence of the need for a broad measure of electoral equality between county divisions, which is not always possible to achieve if using existing wards as building blocks. The new pattern of county divisions may require some adjustment to how polling districts are divided on the electoral register but that is not expected to lead to any changes to polling places, following the review that Council approved in December.
- 4.2 That point aside, none of the proposals in respect of county electoral divisions causes concern. The draft response therefore raises no objection to the boundaries or names of the proposed divisions.
- 4.3 While it is recognised that the Commission is obliged to include its proposals in respect of town and parish councils, that does not mean that its proposals are correct or what the town or parish councils or local electors would wish to see. It is preferable that the District Council should review the electoral arrangements for the four parishes, after the LGBCE's final proposals have been confirmed. This would allow a greater degree of local consultation than is possible with the LGBCE process and mean that decisions about Wyre Forest are taken by a democratically elected body in Wyre Forest.
- 4.4 Indeed Kidderminster Town Council has already registered its unhappiness with the LGBCE proposals and makes a strong plea to retain the current alignment of district and town council wards in Kidderminster:

“these draft recommendations were considered at a meeting of Kidderminster Town Council, held on Wednesday 24th January 2024. Members were disappointed that the Commission had not consulted the Town council before publishing these proposals.

...

“Kidderminster Town Council regards the recommendations as unnecessary, confusing and complicated. The proposals are likely to cause confusion for the electorate and to result in lower turnout for Town Council elections.

“No review of Kidderminster Town Council Wards should be carried out until the next Wyre Forest District Council Ward Boundary Review at which time the Kidderminster Wards of both Councils should be reviewed at the same time and kept as coterminous boundaries. The electoral wards for elections to Kidderminster Town Council are currently aligned with those for the Wyre Forest District Council elections. The Town Council strongly recommends that these arrangements should remain in place.”

- 4.5 Kidderminster Foreign Parish Council considers its response to the Boundary Commission’s draft recommendations on 19 February. At its meeting on 6 February Stourport-on-Severn Town Council supported the proposals for electoral divisions in the town and did not resolve to object to the changes to the town council wards.
- 4.6 The statutory straitjacket within which the LG BCE operates has produced results that may not enjoy local support in each case and certainly do not look at options that would be available to the District Council in a community governance review. The need for a community governance review in respect of Lea Castle was identified in the report about the polling districts and polling places review that was considered by Council in December: “At some point in the future, a community governance review will be needed to consider options for representation at parish council level, whether by adjusting election arrangements for Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council or other options such as creating a separate parish and parish council for Lea Castle.”
- 4.7 The Council’s position on conducting a community governance review is supported by the following resolution from Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council: “In respect of the proposals for Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council, the Parish Council unanimously resolved to oppose the current proposal and request that the LGBC make no changes at the current time as Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council formally request that Wyre Forest District Council undertake a Community Governance Review in respect of the current Parish Council, given the housing growth at Lea Castle.”
- 4.8 Changes in elector numbers are also relevant to areas adjacent to Kidderminster that have been built on or are allocated for housing in the local plan as a review process would allow the views of residents in those areas to be tested in terms of future governance arrangements. In the case of Kidderminster Foreign, while the LG BCE has no choice about its recommendation, there is nothing to prevent a community governance review by the District Council concluding that there could be



two sub-polling districts for the parish for the purposes of county council elections while retaining a single poll to elect members of the parish council.

- 4.9 The Commission's proposals for Wolverley and Cookley are the most troubling. There are separate wards for Wolverley village and Cookley village at present, yet without any rationale the Commission proposes to merge them into a single ward and to create a separate ward (as it has to do) for Lea Castle. The response in Appendix 1 makes the point that there is no need to merge the two village wards and that this would disrupt the long-standing arrangements under which each has had separate representation on Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council; and suggests that the appropriate representation would be 5 for each village. The estimated electorate of the new Lea Castle ward used by the Boundary Commission suggests it will have about 1,700 electors by 2029. If the 1,400 dwellings envisaged by the local plan were all to be built and occupied, the number of electors in Lea Castle ward could approach 3,000 or more and would certainly exceed the 2,000 electors in each of the current Cookley and Wolverley wards. The response therefore objects to the proposal to merge Cookley and Wolverley villages into a single ward and to the proposal that Lea Castle ward would have 4 councillors: it submits an alternative proposal for parity of representation between the three wards, with at least five councillors for each of the wards.

#### **Community governance reviews including Wolverley and Cookley**

- 4.10 It is envisaged that community governance reviews should be undertaken for all four town and parish councils that are affected by the LGBCE proposals once the final county council electoral arrangements have been confirmed. There is ample time to complete the processes in good time before the May 2027 elections or May 2028 in the case of Kidderminster. Where a community governance review is initiated by the District Council under section 82 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, there is no time limit applying to such a review, but it would be considered good practice to complete the review within 12 months.
- 4.11 The most complex options to be addressed relate to Wolverley and Cookley. It is timely now to set out plans for a community governance review, given that many of the approved 600 dwellings at Lea Castle are completed and occupied and others are expected to be complete by the end of 2024. Under section 93(8) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, a community governance review must be concluded within 12 months if it is the result of an application for a community governance review. That is now relevant as a request has been formally submitted by Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council. While it is proposed to seek Council's approval of the terms of reference for the review at its meeting in May, these will need to incorporate reference to the LGBCE's final recommendations on 2 July. Therefore it is envisaged that the review would commence on 1 August and be completed no later than July 2025. In addition to seeking Council's agreement to the principle of conducting a community governance review of Wolverley and Cookley, commencing on 1 August 2024, it is envisaged that the review would include a local advisory poll to be held at the same time as the county council elections on 1 May 2025. Under electoral law, it is not possible to combine a local advisory poll with an election. A poll and election could be held at the same time although, in effect, there would have to be separate polling arrangements in each

location. The polling places used for Wolverley and Cookley are sufficiently large to accommodate the additional desks, staffing etc. that would be required. A report will be brought to the May 2024 meeting of Council to determine the terms of reference for the review and the details of the local advisory poll including the question to be asked in the poll, which needs to be simple and understandable and provide only two possible outcomes so that the “winner” will be clear. Consideration will be given to whether this could involve different questions for each of the three principal communities in the present parish.

### **Other community governance reviews and the District Council’s electoral arrangements**

4.12 Only the District Council has powers to change parish council boundaries by means of a community governance review. Thus the CGRs in respect of Kidderminster and immediately surrounding areas would need to be undertaken before any review was planned for the electoral arrangements for the District Council. Among other things, the CGRs could examine whether the boundaries of Kidderminster should be expanded to encompass immediately adjacent areas of development. If that were to be the outcome, then the district wards for Kidderminster should be constructed within those wider boundaries. A formal proposal will be brought forward for consideration at the next meeting of Council, which will examine whether it is timely for the District Council to request the LGBCE to undertake a review of electoral arrangements for the District given the changes in electorate that are expected in the next five years. If a review were to be requested, it would be with a view to new warding arrangements for the District Council taking effect at the next ordinary elections in May 2027. The LGBCE’s criteria for conducting a review are set out in its technical guidance as follows:

- 2.5 When the electoral variances in representation across a local authority become notable, an electoral review is required. Our criteria for initiating a review in those circumstances are as follows:
- more than 30% of a council's wards/divisions having an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority; and/or
  - one or more wards/divisions with an electoral imbalance of more than 30%; and
  - the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.

The Lea Castle development alone is expected to lead to an imbalance of more than 30% for the Wyre Forest Rural ward.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Conducting the community governance reviews will involve a financial cost to the Council including officer resources to undertake the review and to support any LGBCE review of the District Council’s electoral arrangements. The most expensive element envisaged at present is a local advisory poll in Wolverley and Cookley, which will involve costs of running a poll at the same time as the county council elections. This is estimated to cost up to £10k which will be met from

reserves. Other elements of the work involve staff time that can be absorbed within existing budgets. Subsequent reports will identify more precise estimates of any additional financial implications.

**6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The report refers throughout to relevant legislation, including that affecting the LGBCE's review of electoral arrangements for the county council.
- 6.2 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 sets out the powers associated with community governance reviews and provides the power for the Council to take decisions regarding matters arising from the review. The Council is required by Section 100(4) to have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State relating to community governance reviews.
- 6.3 In addition to the 2007 Act, legislation relating to parishes will have to be considered during the review as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government Act 1992.

**7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An initial assessment has been undertaken and no adverse implications for the protected characteristics has been identified.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 No risk is anticipated in submitting a response to the LGBCE's draft proposals.
- 8.2 Risks in respect of a community governance review will be mitigated by ensuring that the review accords with the legislation and statutory guidance. This will include ensuring that the review is carried out within appropriate timescales and that the terms of reference are comprehensive and appropriate. A robust process will also be necessary in order to ensure that the LGBCE grants consent to any changes to "protected electoral arrangements" under section 86 of the 2007 Act. Such consent is required if a CGR commences within 5 years of the order that gives effect to the LGBCE's recommendations and makes changes to the electoral arrangements of an existing parish council. Consent of the LGBCE would not be required if a CGR creates a new parish council.
- 8.3 The District Council's electoral arrangements were last reviewed before 2015. A further review would be able to take account of expected population growth addresses the risk that some wards will move a long way from electoral equality.

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The Council is invited to approve the response to the LGBCE's draft proposals and to agree the principle of undertaking community governance reviews for the four parishes identified, including a review of Wolverley and Cookley that will commence on 1 August 2024 – the detailed terms of reference that that review and detailed arrangements for the proposed local advisory poll will be subject to Council's approval at its May meeting.

**10. CONSULTEES**

10.1 Corporate Leadership Team.

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

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

11.2 DCLG and LGBCE – Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (March 2010)

[Guidance on community governance reviews \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

11.3 LGBCE's draft recommendations for Worcestershire, January 2024  
[worcestershire\\_full\\_report\\_1\\_v2.pdf \(lgbce.org.uk\)](https://www.lgbce.org.uk)

11.4 LGBCE technical guidance on electoral reviews (June 2023)

[https://www.lgbce.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/technical-guidance-june\\_2023.pdf](https://www.lgbce.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/technical-guidance-june_2023.pdf)

## APPENDIX 1

### **RESPONSE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND'S DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS – NEW ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

#### **Response from Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC)**

WFDC welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Boundary Commission's proposals.

#### **Proposed electoral divisions for Worcestershire County Council**

WFDC supports the retention of 10 county councillors for Wyre Forest and has no objection to the proposed boundaries or proposed names of the electoral divisions. It notes that all but one of the proposed divisions lie within 10% variance which the Commission considers to represent "good electoral equality".

#### **Proposed alterations to electoral arrangements of town and parish councils**

WFDC notes that the Commission's proposals to alter electoral arrangements for Kidderminster Foreign Parish Council, Kidderminster Town Council, Stourport on Severn Town Council and Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council arise directly from the statutory requirement in paragraph 1(2) of Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009: "every ward of a parish having a parish council (whether separate or common) must lie wholly within a single electoral area of the county council, and every parish which is not divided into parish wards must lie wholly within a single electoral area of the county council".

The changes in respect of parish and town councils would not take effect until the next ordinary elections of parish councils in May 2027 (May 2028 in the case of Kidderminster Town Council). As noted in paragraph 99 of the Commission's report, the District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements – indeed the powers can also be used to create new parish councils and adjust parish council boundaries. WFDC intends to undertake community governance reviews for each of the four parishes in good time before the next elections in 2027/2028.

Community governance reviews would allow much fuller local consultation than can be undertaken by the Commission, including the option of local advisory polls, and would have the advantage of decisions about areas in Wyre Forest being taken by the elected body for the district rather than a national body. The statutory straitjacket within which the Commission operates has produced results that may not enjoy local support, and the Commission is not able to look at options that would be available to the District Council in a community governance review (such as whether to create a separate parish council for Lea Castle).

WFDC cannot object to the proposals in respect of Kidderminster Foreign, Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn because it cannot submit workable, alternative proposals that meet the legal requirements within which the Commission has to operate. WFDC feels that community governance reviews would not be likely to produce the same outcomes as the

Boundary Commission's proposals. In particular it is concerned about the loss of alignment of the town and district wards in Kidderminster.

In respect of Wolverley and Cookley, WFDC **objects** to the proposal that the area of Wolverley and Cookley (other than Lea Castle) would be covered by one parish ward. No rationale is presented for such a change. There have been separate wards for Wolverley village and Cookley village for many years - each ward also includes more sparsely populated areas surrounding the main villages. There is no need to merge the two "village" wards (other than to create a separate ward for Lea Castle) as this would disrupt the long-standing arrangements under which each has had separate representation on Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council.

WFDC recognises that the Boundary Commission does "not normally" change the number of councillors for a parish council when making its recommendations. However we believe that there is a strong case for doing so in respect of Wolverley and Cookley. The 2029 estimates of electors which the Boundary Commission has used show that the Cookley ward would grow by almost 1700 electors, which will relate mainly or wholly to the development at Lea Castle. In total, 1,400 dwellings are expected at Lea Castle in accordance with the adopted local plan, of which 600 already have permission with an application for the remaining 800 expected to be considered this year. Once all 1,400 dwellings are built, there is every expectation that the number of electors in Lea Castle will comfortably exceed the 2,000 or so in each of the present Wolverley and Cookley wards. On that basis, WFDC **objects** to the representation of 4 councillors for the new Lea Castle ward and submits an alternative proposal that the appropriate representation should involve parity of representation for the three wards, comprising at least 5 councillors for each of Wolverley ward, Cookley ward and Lea Castle ward.

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**  
**21<sup>ST</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 Council on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027 and consider Cabinet’s 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.

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 and formed the basis of the Cabinet decisions. The Final Settlement was published on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and following checks and due diligence review amendments to funding were included in the report considered by Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024. This report provides the updated position and a proposed budget decision for Council to consider.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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 reported as part of the February 2024 MTFS report to Cabinet and have informed the proposals in this report. The Strategic Review Panel meetings also received Alternative Budget Proposals for consideration by Cabinet in formulation of their final proposals and the proposals from the Lib Dem group are included in this report at Appendix 5.
- 3.4 A revised **Capital Programme**, including the associated Quantitative Indicators, as set out in Appendix 2 of the February 2022 Cabinet report is in Appendix 2 for Council approval.
- 3.5 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 will generally be increased by 10p or 20p per ticket.
- 3.6 Fees and Charges requiring Council approval are detailed in Appendix 3.

**Spending Proposals**

- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 There are ten Cabinet Proposals this year as set out below:
- 3.8.1 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.

- 3.8.2 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.
  - 3.8.3 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.
  - 3.8.4 capital investment of £50k for accessible play equipment, which will have a revenue cost for the borrowing of £7.5k/year.
  - 3.8.5 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.
  - 3.8.6 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.
  - 3.8.7 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.
  - 3.8.8 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.
  - 3.8.9 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.
  - 3.8.10 to hold a public engagement event with businesses, residents and stakeholders at Wyre Forest House for a State of the Area debate.
- 3.9 The financial impact of the Cabinet Proposals is shown in table 6.1 below.
- 3.10 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 confirmation 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.

- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 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**

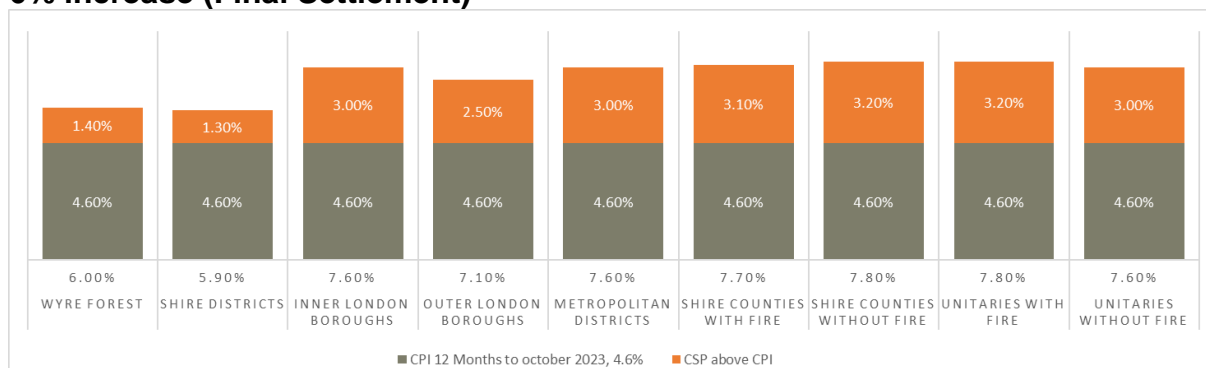
- 4.1 The Provisional Local Government Settlement was announced on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The Final Settlement was issued on 5<sup>th</sup> February. The Provisional Settlement contained no surprises, but the final settlement included an additional funding guarantee allocation as announced on 24<sup>th</sup> January. 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 for WFDC, confirmed at Final Settlement is £124k. Total grant for 2024-25 is £687k.
- **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 7.5% for 2024-25 (an additional 1% above the amount published at provisional settlement). 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 6% in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24 This compares with the average for shire districts of 5.9%.

**Table 4.2.1 - Change in CSP by authority type (2023-24 to 2024-25) – WFDC 6% increase (Final Settlement)**



- 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 now confirmed.

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.

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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
<b>Also:</b> 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 tables. 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**

<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	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**

<b>Financial Gap</b>	<b>2023-24 £</b>	<b>2024-25 £</b>	<b>2025-26 £</b>	<b>2026-27 £</b>
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.

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- 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

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	2,304,870	91,170	2,396,040	2,161,830	167,130	2,328,960	2,098,260	246,550	2,344,810
COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT	5,482,310	5,433,920	5,906,640	302,800	6,209,440	5,959,140	549,720	6,508,860	5,876,140	804,160	6,680,300
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION	248,950	563,470	574,070	42,080	616,150	450,890	77,410	528,300	441,470	115,100	556,570
RESOURCES	2,448,120	2,294,550	2,169,340	20,450	2,189,790	2,065,940	38,680	2,104,620	1,974,420	82,440	2,056,860
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	2,063,240	100,540	2,163,780	1,980,550	169,740	2,150,290	1,822,960	245,460	2,068,420
<b>LESS: CAPITAL ACCOUNT</b>	13,852,000	14,888,770	14,543,150	635,890	15,179,040	14,174,570	1,143,570	15,318,140	13,781,980	1,698,740	15,480,720
585,490	234,650	533,950	5,200	539,150	956,390	9,360	965,750	1,011,030	13,450	1,024,480	
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>13,652,100</b>	<b>641,090</b>	<b>14,293,190</b>	<b>14,178,960</b>	<b>1,152,930</b>	<b>15,331,890</b>	<b>14,013,010</b>	<b>1,712,190</b>	<b>15,725,200</b>
<b>LESS: CONTRIBUTION (FROM) TO RESERVES</b>	(159,010)	215,060			(341,870)			(950,680)			(1,536,750)
<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>
<b>LESS: REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT</b>	(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)
SERVICES GRANT	(114,990)	(114,990)			(19,850)			(18,090)			0
<b>GENERAL EXPENSES - COUNCIL TAX INCOME</b>	<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>

**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024 TO 2034**

Detail	2023-24		2024-25 Estimate £	2025-26 Estimate £	2026-27 Estimate £	2027-28 Estimate £	2028-29 Estimate £	2029-30 Estimate £	2030-31 Estimate £	2031-32 Estimate £	2032-33 Estimate £	2033-34 Estimate £	Prior to 01/04/2023 £	Total £
	Original £	Revised £												
<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 Estimate £	2025-26 Estimate £	2026-27 Estimate £	2027-28 Estimate £	2028-29 Estimate £	2029-30 Estimate £	2030-31 Estimate £	2031-32 Estimate £	2032-33 Estimate £	2033-34 Estimate £	Prior to 01/04/2023 £	Total £
	Original £	Revised £												
<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 Refurbishment Fund	N/A	R229	GARAGE EQUIPMENT		17,680										
Bin Stock Renewals	N/A	R002	REFURBISHMENT FUND		30,000										
Tractor	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
JCB Digger	AV070	R236	TRACTOR				48,000								
Midi Tractor	AV183	R001	JCB DIGGER	72,000	72,000										
Tractor ( wx13 auv )	AV189	R236	MIDI TRACTOR			36,000									
Dennis Eagle Refuse Freighter	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	33,600					21,000					
Kubota F3440	AV274	R160	RIDE ON MOWER AND FLAIL	33,600	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							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							28,000					
Lighting system upgrade (Wyre Forest House)				200,000	200,000										
				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>				
R605	<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
R605	<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
R605	<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
R605	<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
R625	<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
R310	<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>



<b>Service</b>	<b>Planning</b>	<b>Service Manager</b>	<b>Planning Manager</b>
<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Strategic Growth</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	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>High Hedge Applications</b>			
<b>High Hedge Applications</b>			
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>



<b>Service</b>	<b>Planning &amp; Building Control</b>	<b>Service Manager</b>	<b>Planning Manager</b>
<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Strategic Growth</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments</b>

**PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES**

<b>INCOME DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>Current Charge TO 31-03-2024</b>	<b>Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2024</b>	<b>Proposed Charge FROM 01-04-2024</b>
	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Charges before VAT	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>



<b>Service</b>	<b>Planning</b>	<b>Service Manager</b>	<b>Planning Manager</b>
<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Strategic Growth</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments</b>

**PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES**

<b>INCOME DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>Current Charge</b>	<b>Proposed Charge</b>	<b>Proposed Charge</b>
	<b>TO 31-03-2024</b>	<b>FROM 01-04-2024</b>	<b>FROM 01-04-2024</b>
	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Charges before VAT	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
<b>Permitted Developments and Pre-application Advice</b>			
<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



<b>Service</b>	<b>Planning</b>	<b>Service Manager</b>	<b>Planning Manager</b>
<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Strategic Growth</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

**PROPOSAL OF SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES**

<b>INCOME DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>Current Charge</b>	<b>Proposed Charge</b>	<b>Proposed Charge</b>
	<b>TO 31-03-2024</b>	<b>FROM 01-04-2024</b>	<b>FROM 01-04-2024</b>
	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)	Charges before VAT	Charges inclusive of VAT (if applicable)
<b>Permitted Developments and Pre-application Advice</b>			
<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>
<b>Earmarked Reserves (at 31st January 2024)</b>	
Total Earmarked Reserves	12,726,588
Less: Existing commitments	6,151,453
Available Earmarked Reserves	6,575,135
<b>Of which</b>	
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 MTF'S 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	(341,870)	(950,680)	(1,536,750)
	<b>13,528,480</b>	<b>13,951,320</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	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
<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	(341,870)	(950,680)	(1,536,750)
Reserves as at 31st March	3,683,110	3,341,240	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	13,313,420	14,322,420	15,321,870	15,715,430
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	215,060	(371,100)	(940,660)	(1,526,980)
	<b>13,528,480</b>	<b>13,951,320</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	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
<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	3,312,010	2,371,350
Increase to Working Balance				
Contribution (from)/to Reserves	215,060	(371,100)	(940,660)	(1,526,980)
Reserves as at 31st March	3,683,110	3,312,010	2,371,350	844,370
Difference in reserves between proposals	0	29,230	(6,670)	(16,440)

**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>Enforcement</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>Street Scene</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>Community Leadership Fund</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>Additional Staffing resource</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>Additional Staffing resource</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>Adaptive play equipment</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>Enhanced Free one hour parking to include Saturdays</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>Web Casting of meetings</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>Second Home Premium</b> To introduce the second home premium from April 2025	C R S		39,000 CR	39,000 CR	39,000 CR
<b>Town Hall Meetings</b> To hold one public meeting in each Town every year	C R S	750	750	750	750
<b>Empty Home proposal Feasibility Study</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>Commercial Income growth</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	<b>50,000</b> <b>140,680</b> <b>3.70</b>	<b>-</b> <b>74,830</b> <b>4.70</b>	<b>-</b> <b>72,720 CR</b> <b>2.00</b>	<b>-</b> <b>98,570 CR</b> <b>2.00</b>
<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	<b>111,450</b>	<b>84,850</b>	<b>62,950 CR</b>	<b>88,800 CR</b>
Variance		<b>29,230</b>	<b>10,020 CR</b>	<b>9,770 CR</b>	<b>9,770 CR</b>
Total Variance (Overall saving over Cabinet proposals)					<b>330 CR</b>

## 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/supported 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

## Agenda Item No. 10 Appendix 6

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****COUNCIL 21<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2024****COUNCIL TAX 2024-25**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor David Ross
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Head of Resources and S151 Officer
<b>CONTACT OFFICERS:</b>	Helen Ogram – Ext. 2907 <a href="mailto:Helen.ogram@wyreforestdc.gov.uk">Helen.ogram@wyreforestdc.gov.uk</a> Kathryn Pearsall – Ext. 2165 <a href="mailto:Kathryn.pearsall@wyreforestdc.gov.uk">Kathryn.pearsall@wyreforestdc.gov.uk</a> Lisa Hutchinson - Ext. 2120 <a href="mailto:lisa.hutchinson@wyreforestdc.gov.uk">lisa.hutchinson@wyreforestdc.gov.uk</a>
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1 - Council Tax Resolution 2024-25 Appendix 2 - Council Tax Schedule 2024-25 Appendix 3 - Parish and Town Council Precepts 2024-25 Appendix 4 – District Council Tax, including Parish/Town Council Precepts, 2024-25 Appendix 5 – Total Council Tax, including Major Precepting Authorities and Parish/Town Council Precepts, 2024-25

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable the Council to calculate and set the Council Tax for 2024-25.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**Council is asked to approve:**

- 2.1 **The formal Council Tax Resolution 2024-25 at Appendix 1, taking into account information contained in Appendices 2 to 5.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by The Localism Act 2011, requires the billing authority to calculate a Council Tax requirement for the year.

The Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, includes specific guidance in relation to Council Tax referendums. The House of Commons approved the regime of referenda for “excessive” Council Tax increases for 2023-24 on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024. This confirmed the Government’s proposal for district councils of 3% or £5, whichever is the greater. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS 2024-27), considered earlier at item 10 on this Council agenda recommends a council tax (Band D equivalent) of £243.29 is set, an increase of 2.997%; this is below the maximum level permitted and a referendum in respect of this Council’s element of council tax is not required.



3.2 Different criteria are specified for the County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner and the Fire Authority. However, the Council has not been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2024-25 is excessive and therefore the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum.

**4. WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL'S COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT**

4.1 Cabinet, on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024, approved and recommended to Council the 2024-25 revenue budget requirement.

4.2 Cabinet recommended that Wyre Forest District Council's element of the Council Tax 2024-25 be agreed at £243.29 for Band D properties. This represents an increase of 2.997% on the current rate for 2023-24.

4.3 In approving the District Council's element of the Council Tax, account has to be taken of:

- Government Support Grants
- Other non ring-fenced Government Grants
- Business Rates
- Any surplus or deficit arising from the Collection Fund

The District Council's Council Tax requirement also has to reflect Parish and Town Council spending. The following table sets out the position:

<b>Council Tax Requirement 2024-25</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Wyre Forest District Council Budget Requirement 2024-25	14,293	
Less: Contribution from Balances	(342)	
	13,951	
Parish & Town Councils' Requirement (Appendix 3)	2,012	
		15,963
Less:		
Revenue Support Grant	(160)	
Business Rates	(4,409)	
New Homes Bonus	(285)	
4% Funding Guarantee Grant	(687)	
Services Grant	(20)	
		(5,561)
Collection Fund Deficit		101
<b>Council Tax Requirement 2024-25</b>		<b>10,503</b>

4.4 Wyre Forest District Council's Council Tax at Band D for 2024-25 is £243.29, determined as follows:

Council Tax Requirement (as detailed in paragraph 4.3 above)	£10,503,155
Divided by Council Tax Base	34,902
Council Tax at Band D (including Parishes/Town Councils)	£300.93
Deduct Parish/Town Council Element	(£57.64)
<b>Council Tax at Band D for Wyre Forest District Council</b>	<b>£243.29</b>

**5. PRECEPT LEVELS**

5.1 The Precept levels of other precepting bodies have been received, and are detailed below:

**5.1.1 Parish and Town Councils**

The Parish and Town Council Precepts for 2024-25 are detailed in Appendix 3 and total £2,011,845.39. This results in an average Band D Council Tax figure of £57.64 for 2024-25. This represents an average increase of 13.82% in the parish and town council element of council tax, ranging from 0% to +42.2%.

**5.1.2 Worcestershire County Council**

Worcestershire County Council has stated its precept for 2024-25 to be £53,711,386, with a Collection Fund deficit adjustment for this year of £515,238. The increase in the Band D Council Tax is 4.99% of which 2% relates to the Precept ring-fenced support for Adult Social Care, resulting in a total Band D Council Tax of £1,538.92. Further details can be found in Appendix 1.

**5.1.3 The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia**

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia has stated its precept for 2024-25 to be £9,685,305, with a Collection Fund deficit adjustment for this year of £92,975. The increase in the Band D Council Tax is 4.91%, resulting in a Band D Council Tax of £277.50. Further details can be found in Appendix 1.

**5.1.4 Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority**

Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority has stated its precept for 2024-25 to be £3,393,172.40, with a Collection Fund deficit adjustment for this year of £33,184. The increase in the Band D Council Tax is 2.99%, resulting in a Band D Council Tax of £97.22. Further details can be found in Appendix 1.

5.1.5 The resulting average Council Tax at Band D is summarised as follows:

	£
Worcestershire County Council	1,312.20
Worcestershire County Council - Adult Social Care	226.72
The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	277.50
Wyre Forest District Council	243.29
Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority	97.22
Average Town/Parish Council	<u>57.64</u>
Total Average Band D Council Tax 2024-25	<u>2,214.57</u>

**6. SPECIAL EXPENSES**

6.1 Special Expenses are defined as those expenses incurred by the Council in performing, in part of the District, a function performed elsewhere by a Parish or Town Council. The Local Government Act 1992 allows the Council to treat any special expenses as general expenses, i.e. as part of its own budget requirement for Council Tax purposes, provided the Council resolved accordingly.

- 6.2 It is reasonable for the Council to continue to treat special expenses as general expenses, and for clarity it is considered sensible to reaffirm this position on an annual basis. For clarification this Council does not currently have any Special Expenses.

**7. COUNCIL TAX LEVELS**

- 7.1 The formal resolution for setting the Council Tax is set out in Appendix 1.
- 7.2 The Council Tax Schedule 2024-25 is set out in Appendix 2.
- 7.3 The Parish & Town Council precepts 2024-25 are set out in Appendix 3.
- 7.4 The District Council Tax, including Parish/Town Council precepts, 2024-25 is set out in Appendix 4.
- 7.5 The Total Council Tax, including Major Precepting Authorities and Parish/Town Council precepts, 2024-25 is set out in Appendix 5.

**8. KEY ISSUES**

- 8.1 That the formal Council Tax resolution presented in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Localism Act, be approved.

**9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Financial Implications of this Council Tax report are included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and Three Year Budget and Policy Framework, as updated by the Proposed Decision, also on this Council agenda.

**10. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The Council must set its Council Tax for 2024-25 in accordance with all statutory requirements.
- 10.2 The Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by The Localism Act 2011, requires the billing authority to calculate a Council Tax requirement for the year.

**11. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 11.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, require Local Authorities to fully consider and manage Risk as part of the Budget process. This was fully set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report to December 2023 Cabinet.

**12. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 12.1 This is a financial report and there is no requirement to consider an Equality Impact Assessment.

**13. CONCLUSION**

See Recommendations.

14. **CONSULTEES**

Cabinet  
CLT

15. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 15.1 Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by Localism Act 2011 and Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.
- 15.2 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 15.3 The Referendums Relating to Council Tax Increases (Principles) (England) Report 2024-25

**COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2024-25**

**The Council is recommended to resolve as follows:**

1. It be noted that the Council has calculated the Council Tax Base 2024-25:-
  - (a) for the whole Council area as **34,902** [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (“the Act”)]; and
  - (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish/Town Council precept relates as in column 5 of the attached Appendix 3.
2. To calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2024-25 (excluding Parish/Town Council precepts) is **£8,491,310**.
3. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2024-25 in accordance with Sections 30 to 36 of the Act:
  - (a) **£53,736,755.39** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish/Town Councils.
  - (b) **£43,233,600.00** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
  - (c) **£10,503,155.39** being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. [Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act]
  - (d) **£300.93** being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish/Town Council precepts).
  - (e) **£2,011,845.39** being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish/Town Council precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the attached Appendix 3).
  - (f) **£243.29** being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish/Town Council precept relates.

4. To note that for the year 2024-25 Worcestershire County Council, The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia and Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as shown below.

<b>WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL</b>							
Valuation Bands							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£1,025.95	£1,196.94	£1,367.93	£1,538.92	£1,880.90	£2,222.88	£2,564.87	£3,077.84

<b>THE OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR WEST MERCIA</b>							
Valuation Bands							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£185.00	£215.83	£246.67	£277.50	£339.17	£400.83	£462.50	£555.00

<b>HEREFORD AND WORCESTER FIRE AUTHORITY</b>							
Valuation Bands							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£64.81	£75.62	£86.42	£97.22	£118.82	£140.43	£162.03	£194.44

5. That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in Appendix 5 as the amounts of Council Tax for 2024-25 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.
6. To determine that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2024-25 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.
7. To note that, as the billing authority, the Council has not been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2024-25 is excessive and that the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

## COUNCIL TAX SCHEDULE 2024-25

<b><u>District Council and Major Precepting Authorities</u></b>	<b>Band A</b> £	<b>Band B</b> £	<b>Band C</b> £	<b>Band D</b> £	<b>Band E</b> £	<b>Band F</b> £	<b>Band G</b> £	<b>Band H</b> £
Wyre Forest District Council	162.19	189.23	216.25	243.29	297.35	351.42	405.48	486.58
Worcestershire County Council	874.80	1,020.61	1,166.40	1,312.20	1,603.79	1,895.39	2,187.00	2,624.40
Worcestershire County Council - Adult Social Care Precept	151.15	176.33	201.53	226.72	277.11	327.49	377.87	453.44
The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	185.00	215.83	246.67	277.50	339.17	400.83	462.50	555.00
Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority	64.81	75.62	86.42	97.22	118.82	140.43	162.03	194.44

<b><u>Parish &amp; Town Councils</u></b>	<b>Band A</b> £	<b>Band B</b> £	<b>Band C</b> £	<b>Band D</b> £	<b>Band E</b> £	<b>Band F</b> £	<b>Band G</b> £	<b>Band H</b> £
Kidderminster Town Council	38.50	44.92	51.33	57.75	70.58	83.42	96.25	115.50
Upper Arley Parish Council	33.28	38.83	44.37	49.92	61.01	72.11	83.20	99.84
Bewdley Town Council	52.35	61.07	69.80	78.52	95.97	113.42	130.87	157.04
Broome Parish Council	20.72	24.17	27.63	31.08	37.99	44.89	51.80	62.16
Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council	31.99	37.33	42.66	47.99	58.65	69.32	79.98	95.98
Churchill & Blakedown Parish Council	40.05	46.73	53.40	60.08	73.43	86.78	100.13	120.16
Kidderminster Foreign Parish Council	8.07	9.42	10.76	12.11	14.80	17.49	20.18	24.22
Ribbesford Parish	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rock Parish Council	31.09	36.28	41.46	46.64	57.00	67.37	77.73	93.28
Rushock Parish Council	31.57	36.84	42.10	47.36	57.88	68.41	78.93	94.72
Stone Parish Council	38.93	45.42	51.91	58.40	71.38	84.36	97.33	116.80
Stourport on Severn Town Council	37.73	44.02	50.31	56.60	69.18	81.76	94.33	113.20
Wolverley & Cookley Parish Council	32.69	38.14	43.59	49.04	59.94	70.84	81.73	98.08

**PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL PRECEPTS 2024-25**

<b><u>Parish &amp; Town Councils</u></b>	<b>2023-24</b>			<b>2024-25</b>			<b>Council Tax Increase/ (Decrease) (£)</b>	<b>Council Tax Increase/ (Decrease) (%)</b>
	<b>Tax Base</b>	<b>Precept £</b>	<b>Council Tax Band D (£)</b>	<b>Tax Base</b>	<b>Precept £</b>	<b>Council Tax Band D (£)</b>		
Kidderminster Town Council	17,679	879,566.00	49.75	17,744	1,024,716.00	57.75	8.00	16.1
Upper Arley Parish Council	359	16,155.00	45.00	356	17,770.50	49.92	4.92	10.9
Bewdley Town Council	3,666	276,622.00	75.46	3,705	290,922.00	78.52	3.06	4.1
Broome Parish Council	207	6,300.00	30.43	223	6,930.00	31.08	0.65	2.1
Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council	765	34,693.00	45.35	759	36,427.65	47.99	2.64	5.8
Churchill & Blakedown Parish Council	805	34,019.30	42.26	802	48,184.30	60.08	17.82	42.2
Kidderminster Foreign Parish Council	432	4,745.00	10.98	431	5,219.50	12.11	1.13	10.3
Ribbesford Parish	107	0.00	0.00	101	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.0
Rock Parish Council	1,296	57,650.00	44.48	1,323	61,700.00	46.64	2.16	4.9
Rushock Parish Council	80	3,608.00	45.10	80	3,788.40	47.36	2.26	5.0
Stone Parish Council	298	17,170.00	57.62	294	17,170.00	58.40	0.78	1.4
Stourport on Severn Town Council	7,056	335,866.00	47.60	7,083	400,898.00	56.60	9.00	18.9
Wolverley & Cookley Parish Council	1,988	92,839.60	46.70	2,001	98,119.04	49.04	2.34	5.0
<b>TOTAL/AVERAGE</b>	<b>34,738</b>	<b>1,759,233.90</b>	<b>50.64</b>	<b>34,902</b>	<b>2,011,845.39</b>	<b>57.64</b>		



**DISTRICT COUNCIL TAX (INCLUDING PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL PRECEPTS) 2024-25**

<b>Part of the Council's Area</b>	<b>VALUATION BANDS 2024-25</b>							
	<b>A £</b>	<b>B £</b>	<b>C £</b>	<b>D £</b>	<b>E £</b>	<b>F £</b>	<b>G £</b>	<b>H £</b>
<b>The Parish/Town Council of:</b>								
Kidderminster	200.69	234.15	267.58	301.04	367.93	434.84	501.73	602.08
Upper Arley	195.47	228.06	260.62	293.21	358.36	423.53	488.68	586.42
Bewdley	214.54	250.30	286.05	321.81	393.32	464.84	536.35	643.62
Broome	182.91	213.40	243.88	274.37	335.34	396.31	457.28	548.74
Chaddesley Corbett	194.18	226.56	258.91	291.28	356.00	420.74	485.46	582.56
Churchill & Blakedown	202.24	235.96	269.65	303.37	370.78	438.20	505.61	606.74
Kidderminster Foreign	170.26	198.65	227.01	255.40	312.15	368.91	425.66	510.80
Ribbesford	162.19	189.23	216.25	243.29	297.35	351.42	405.48	486.58
Rock	193.28	225.51	257.71	289.93	354.35	418.79	483.21	579.86
Rushock	193.76	226.07	258.35	290.65	355.23	419.83	484.41	581.30
Stone	201.12	234.65	268.16	301.69	368.73	435.78	502.81	603.38
Stourport on Severn	199.92	233.25	266.56	299.89	366.53	433.18	499.81	599.78
Wolverley & Cookley	194.88	227.37	259.84	292.33	357.29	422.26	487.21	584.66

**TOTAL COUNCIL TAX 2024-25**

<b>Parts of the Council's Area</b>	<b>VALUATION BANDS 2024-25</b>								<b>% CHANGE</b>
	<b>A £</b>	<b>B £</b>	<b>C £</b>	<b>D £</b>	<b>E £</b>	<b>F £</b>	<b>G £</b>	<b>H £</b>	
<b>The Parish/Town Council of:</b>									
Kidderminster	1,476.45	1,722.54	1,968.60	2,214.68	2,706.82	3,198.98	3,691.13	4,429.36	4.93%
Upper Arley	1,471.23	1,716.45	1,961.64	2,206.85	2,697.25	3,187.67	3,678.08	4,413.70	4.79%
Bewdley	1,490.30	1,738.69	1,987.07	2,235.45	2,732.21	3,228.98	3,725.75	4,470.90	4.64%
Broome	1,458.67	1,701.79	1,944.90	2,188.01	2,674.23	3,160.45	3,646.68	4,376.02	4.62%
Chaddesley Corbett	1,469.94	1,714.95	1,959.93	2,204.92	2,694.89	3,184.88	3,674.86	4,409.84	4.69%
Churchill & Blakedown	1,478.00	1,724.35	1,970.67	2,217.01	2,709.67	3,202.34	3,695.01	4,434.02	5.41%
Kidderminster Foreign	1,446.02	1,687.04	1,928.03	2,169.04	2,651.04	3,133.05	3,615.06	4,338.08	4.69%
Ribbesford	1,437.95	1,677.62	1,917.27	2,156.93	2,636.24	3,115.56	3,594.88	4,313.86	4.66%
Rock	1,469.04	1,713.90	1,958.73	2,203.57	2,693.24	3,182.93	3,672.61	4,407.14	4.66%
Rushock	1,469.52	1,714.46	1,959.37	2,204.29	2,694.12	3,183.97	3,673.81	4,408.58	4.67%
Stone	1,476.88	1,723.04	1,969.18	2,215.33	2,707.62	3,199.92	3,692.21	4,430.66	4.57%
Stourport on Severn	1,475.68	1,721.64	1,967.58	2,213.53	2,705.42	3,197.32	3,689.21	4,427.06	4.98%
Wolverley & Cookley	1,470.64	1,715.76	1,960.86	2,205.97	2,696.18	3,186.40	3,676.61	4,411.94	4.67%

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL  
21 FEBRUARY 2024

POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK  
MATTERS WHICH REQUIRE A DECISION BY COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATIONS  
TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW PANEL  
29 JANUARY 2024

**Purpose of Report**

To consider recommendations from the Treasury Management Review Panel on matters outside the policy framework or approved budget of the Council.

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Would Councillors please note that the related reports and documents have not been included in the Council book, as they have already been sent to Members via the review panel agenda pack. The Treasury Management Review Panel is not open to the press or public.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL	CHAIRMAN OF REVIEW PANEL
<p><b>Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25</b></p> <p>The Treasury Management Review Panel recommends to Council to:</p> <p>1.1 Approve the restated Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2024-25 to 2033-34, along with the Liability Benchmark, included in Appendix 3 of the report. <i>These have been revised as per paragraph 7.2 of the report, following changes to the Capital Programme brought about as part of the budget process.</i></p> <p>1.2 Approve the updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 (the associated Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 3 and the detailed criteria is included in Section 10 and Appendix 5).</p> <p>1.3 Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP included in Appendix 1.</p> <p>1.4 Approve the Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3.</p>	<p>Councillor C Rogers</p>

<p><b>1.5 Note that the separate Capital Strategy 2024-34, to be approved separately by Council, sets out the policy statement covering non-treasury investments including the related suite of prudential indicators.</b></p>	
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# UPDATED PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2024-27

## APPENDIX 3

### FOLLOWING CHANGES TO THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME AS PART OF THE BUDGET PROCESS

#### ANALYSIS OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURE BY SERVICE

Detail	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
	Actual £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £	Estimate £
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL	0	0	413,610	0	0
COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	14,990	214,800	3,451,740	240,000	0
STRATEGIC GROWTH	1,446,530	7,589,140	13,548,050	1,000,000	1,000,000
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION	2,561,160	21,236,170	24,299,730	0	0
RESOURCES	531,660	502,480	912,000	257,000	97,000
VEHICLE, EQUIPMENT AND SYSEMS RENEWAL SCHEDULE	728,600	1,119,720	668,890	1,505,290	1,429,690
	5,282,940	30,662,310	43,294,020	3,002,290	2,526,690

#### Notes

1 Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals were funded by operational leases until 31st March 2004. Following the introduction of the Prudential System from 2004-05, the future financing of these renewals will be determined in accordance with Council Policy.

2 Full details of the base Capital Programme are included in the Capital Strategy Report 2024-34.

\* Whilst it is highly unlikely that the full allocations will be spent in 2023-24 these are included as maximum sums to enable the Council to take advantage of relevant opportunities to support regeneration in the wider commercial sense as they may arise.

The final capital position for 2022-23 has been stated above.

#### ACTUAL AND ESTIMATES OF THE CAPITAL FINANCING REQUIREMENT AND ACTUAL DEBT FIGURES

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
	Actual £'000	Estimate £'000	Estimate £'000	Estimate £'000	Estimate £'000
<b>Capital Expenditure</b>					
Supported Spend (RSG Settlement)	0	0	0	0	0
Unsupported Spend	5,282	30,662	43,294	3,002	2,527
Total Spend	5,282	30,662	43,294	3,002	2,527
<b>Financed by:</b>					
Borrowing/Leasing	1,260	5,905	16,760	1,938	1,527
Capital Receipts	61	2,190	627	0	0
Capital Grants	3,961	20,698	24,390	1,064	1,000
Revenue	0	1,869	1,517	0	0
<b>Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)</b>					
CFR	41,194	45,733	61,019	61,239	60,959
Movement in CFR	(42)	4,539	15,286	220	(280)
<b>External Debt</b>					
Borrowing	34,434	34,000	60,000	60,000	60,000
Other Long Term Liabilities	0	0	0	0	0
Total Debt at 31st March	34,434	34,000	60,000	60,000	60,000
Under/(Over) borrowing	6,760	11,733	1,019	1,239	959
MRP	1,302	1,366	1,474	1,718	1,807

#### LIMITS TO BORROWING ACTIVITY

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
	Actual £'000	Estimate £'000	Estimate £'000	Estimate £'000	Estimate £'000
Gross Borrowing	34,434	34,000	60,000	60,000	60,000
Investments	(33,009)	(32,000)	(20,000)	(20,000)	(20,000)
Net Borrowing	1,425	2,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
CFR	41,194	45,733	61,019	61,239	60,959
Under/ (over borrowing) *	6,760	11,733	1,019	1,239	959

\*In the future there is a theoretical possibility that the Council will not be able to comply with this indicator introduced in November 2012 since any fixed term maturity loans would not be reduced until they are repaid, however the Council takes a laddered approach to borrowing and the Council's Capital Programme will continue. Full disclosure is given within the Treasury Management Strategy.

# UPDATED PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2024-27

## APPENDIX 3

### FOLLOWING CHANGES TO THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME AS PART OF THE BUDGET PROCESS

#### AUTHORISED AND OPERATIONAL LIMITS

	2022-2023 Actual £'000	2023-2024 Estimate £'000	2024-2025 Estimate £'000	2025-2026 Estimate £'000	2026-2027 Estimate £'000
<b>Authorised Limit for External Debt</b>					
Borrowing	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000
Other Long Term Liabilities	0	0	0	0	0
Total	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000
	2022-2023 Actual £'000	2023-2024 Estimate £'000	2024-2025 Estimate £'000	2025-2026 Estimate £'000	2026-2027 Estimate £'000
<b>Operational Boundary for External Debt</b>					
Borrowing	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000
Other Long Term Liabilities	0	0	0	0	0
Total	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000

#### RATIO OF FINANCING COSTS TO NET REVENUE STREAM

	2022-2023 Actual %	2023-2024 Estimate %	2024-2025 Estimate %	2025-2026 Estimate %	2026-2027 Estimate %
<b>General Fund *Prudential Code</b>	7.35	3.22	7.98	13.82	15.49
<b>General Fund *Local Indicator</b>	(2.05)	(9.77)	(4.31)	1.67	3.50

\* A local indicator (introduced from 2018/19 onwards) reflects the impact of the estimated rental income stream for the Capital Portfolio Fund scheme (currently excluded from the Prudential Code calculation) demonstrating that the capital investment continues to be prudent and sustainable.

#### TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

	2024/2025 Upper		2025/2026 Upper		2026/2027 Upper	
<b>Maximum principal sums invested for longer than 364 days</b>	£2m		£2m		£2m	
<b>Limits on fixed interest rates</b>	100%		100%		100%	
<b>Limits on variable interest rates</b>	100%		100%		100%	
<b>Maturity Structure of fixed borrowing**</b>	<b>Lower</b>	<b>Upper</b>	<b>Lower</b>	<b>Upper</b>	<b>Lower</b>	<b>Lower</b>
Under 12 months	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%
12 months to 2 years	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%
2 years to 5 years	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%
5 years to 10 years	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%
10 years and above	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%

\*\* The upper limit is 100% in each case to give maximum flexibility for any anticipated borrowing to ensure financial advantages of each transaction.

The Head of Resources reports that the Council complied with the requirement to keep gross borrowing below the relevant CFR in 2022-23, and no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years. This view takes into account current commitments and existing plans.

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL  
21 FEBRUARY 2024**

**QUESTIONS**

**1. Question from Councillor F Oborski MBE to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Could the Cabinet Member tell me what steps are being taken to increase the Recycling Rate in Wyre Forest?

**2. Question from Councillor L Carroll to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio**

In March 2023, the percentage of Wyre Forest District Council employees that were disabled was 1.22%, what is it now?