

Meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee

**Wednesday 31st March, 2021 at 6.00pm
On Microsoft Teams**

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Agenda - Public Session

(Meeting open to the public and press)

1. Chairs Announcement

Welcome to this virtual meeting. This is a formal Council Committee. The public proceedings will take place live on the Internet. The meeting will be recorded for future viewing.

It will assist the conduct of business if participants speak only when invited.

Members of the public are welcome to view the proceedings but should not make contributions at this meeting.

All Members of the Committee have received the reports in advance and had the opportunity to read them. The reports are published on the Internet.

All participants should mute their microphones and video feed when they are not speaking.

Anyone wishing to speak should indicate using the 'raise your hand' button on Microsoft Teams. Please remember to unmute your microphone and switch on your video feed when it is your turn to speak. Speak clearly and slowly into your microphone.

If you do not have the hand button, please type your request to speak in the chat function.

When the item on which you have contributed is concluded, you may leave the meeting by using the red 'hang up' button if you wish.

Finally, I ask for everyone's patience with the use of the technology. I apologise in advance if we experience any unforeseen difficulties which we shall try to resolve.



2. Apologies for absence.
3. To report the appointment of any substitute members serving for this meeting of the Committee.
4. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct.
5. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 28th January, 2021 as a correct record.
6. Public Forum
7. Housing Maintenance Grey Fleet (Pages 1 – 8)
8. Housing Board Update (Pages 9 – 12)
9. Homelessness Prevention and Response (Pages 13 – 19)
10. Housing Market: Affordable housing and potential assistance to first time buyers to access the housing market (Pages 20 – 26)
11. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Housing Investment (Pages 27 – 29)
12. Annual Report and Draft Scrutiny Programme 2020/21 (Pages 30 – 37)
13. To consider any questions from Members to the Chair where two clear days notice has been given to the Monitoring Officer (Council Procedure Rule 11.8).



Chief Executive

Dated: 23rd March, 2021

Distribution:

Members of the Place Scrutiny Committee:

Councillor M Rogers (Chair)

Councillor A Finch (Vice Chair)

Councillors M Aston, I Bevan, B Challenor, K Finch, D Harley, Z Islam, L Johnson, J Martin and P Sahota.



Please note:

- This meeting will be held virtually by using Microsoft Teams. The meeting will be held live via the Internet link.
- This is a formal Council Committee and it will assist the conduct of business if participants speak only when invited by the Chair.
- The Chair reserves the right to adjourn the meeting, as necessary, if there is any disruption or technical issues.
- All participants should mute their microphones and video feed when they are not speaking.
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**Minutes of the Place Scrutiny Committee
Thursday 28th January 2021, 2021 at 6.00 pm
on Microsoft Teams**

Present:

Councillor M Rogers (Chair)
Councillor A Finch (Vice-Chair)
Councillors M Aston, I Bevan, B Challenor, K Finch, D Harley, Z Islam, L Johnson, J Martin
and P Sahota

Officers:

M Williams – Acting Deputy Chief Executive, G Dean - Acting Director of Public Realm,
T Johnson – Acting Head of Street and Green Care, D Wesson – Team Manager (Directorate
of Public Realm), J Cunningham – Project Lead – Midlands Metro (Directorate of
Regeneration and Enterprise), P Davies – Director of Housing and Community Services,
S Evans – Head of Housing Options and Support, P Griffiths – Head of Assets and
Development, T Mountford – Head of Housing Options and Support (Directorate of Housing
and Community Services), I Newman - Director of Finance and Legal, C Ludwig – Finance
Manager, K Griffiths and K Taylor – Democratic Services Officers (Directorate of Finance and
Legal).

Also in attendance:

one member of the public

16 **Declarations of Interests**

No member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of
Conduct.

17 **Minutes**

Resolved

That subject to the inclusion of Councillor M Aston being in attendance at the
meeting, the minutes of the meeting held on 19th November, 2020 be confirmed
as a correct record and signed.

18 **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

A joint report of the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and Legal, the Acting Deputy Chief Executive, the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise, the Director of Housing and Community Services and the Director of Public Realm was submitted on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2023/24, with emphasis on proposals relevant to the Committee's Terms of Reference. Items directly relevant to this Committee were those in relation to Regeneration and Enterprise, Housing and Community Services and Public Realm.

In presenting the report submitted, the Director of Finance and Legal gave an overview of the report, and in doing so, stated that the budget had been developed around unprecedented uncertainty caused by COVID-19, and that the financial position continued to change. The final version of the report would be considered by the Cabinet in February and Council in March 2021.

It was reported that additional funding was being awarded to Local Authorities from Government in response to the COVID-19 crisis, and it was expected that a further £5.1m of Contained Outbreak Management Funding over and above the amount that was reflected in Appendix A of the report submitted would be received.

Following receipt of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22, the Director of Finance and Legal confirmed that the budget was forecasted to be better than expected. It was anticipated that resources would be £263m rather than the £259m that had been predicted as outlined in paragraph 31 of the report submitted. It was envisaged that there would be additional ongoing spending pressures in Adult Social Care and Childrens Services and would be included in the final report to Cabinet and Council.

Although the overall financial position varied, it was acknowledged that in the short term the Council had received significant funding to support the Council's response to the COVID-19 crisis which had predicted that reserves would be better than expected by the end of the financial year. However, with Dudley being a relatively low taxing and spending Council, financial challenges continued to be faced which needed to be addressed in the long term.

Following the presentation, Members were advised that the increases to Council Tax charges for empty dwellings in line with The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 had seen a positive impact on income in that service area.

Resolved

That the proposals for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2023/24, set out in the report and Appendices to the report submitted, be noted.

19 Review of Housing Finance

A joint report of the Director of Housing and Community Services and the Director of Finance and Legal was submitted on the Review of Housing Finance.

The Director of Housing and Community Services gave a brief overview of the report and referred specifically to the proposed rent increases. Increases had been discussed with the Housing Board and the Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Association (DFTRA) prior to being submitted to Cabinet for consideration. A consultation exercise was currently being undertaken with tenant representatives, which would be extended once the impact of COVID-19 had subsided. Figures included for future years were an illustration of what could be done around tenant and community priorities should additional funding be granted.

In presenting the report, the Finance Manager highlighted key paragraphs within the report, and referred in particular to the proposals considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 17th December, 2020, as outlined below:-

- Rents for Council homes with effect from 5th April, 2021.
- Charges for sundry services with effect from April 2021.
- Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2021/22 in the light of the latest Government announcements on housing finance and latest spending and resource assumptions.
- Revised Public Sector Housing capital programme for 2020/21 to 2025/2026.
- The HRA's 30 Year Business Plan.

The report provided an update on the position for the current financial year in terms of the HRA. In line with Government guidance and neighbouring authorities, a 1.5% rent increase was being proposed. In terms of service and other sundry charges, it was proposed to maintain current charges, given the low present rate of inflation and the economic pressures resulting from COVID-19. A proposal for a 1.5% increase to pitch charges at Oak Lane was included, in line with proposals for general rents with a further proposal of 2% for Telecare Services for private residents as it was recognised that significant investment would be required to develop the service and move towards a digital telephony service.

Following Cabinet approval in February, 2008, for garage sites and plots to be increased every three years, the next increase was planned in 2023/24. It was noted that an internal review of all Council owned garage sites and plots would be carried out in the near future and should additional investment and maintenance be identified, an earlier increase may be considered. Further information would be submitted to Councillors on a local basis as the review progressed.

In terms of the Capital Programme, a significant increase in capital spend over the next five years was anticipated due to the abolition of the HRA Borrowing cap and the new flexibility on how to spend and invest in current and new housing stock. Specific schemes and projects had not been proposed due to a significant consultation and engagement exercise currently being undertaken and it was envisaged that specific schemes would be determined in line with the outcome of the consultation.

Although the position had improved slightly since reported at Cabinet in December 2020, adverse variances on expenditure and income was still evident at the end of Quarter 3. Capital expenditure for the current year was predicted to be less due to the impact of the November to December and continued lockdown measures, however, it was expected that improvements would be noticed once the impact of COVID-19 had improved. It was proposed to keep the general balances and the HRA higher than were originally proposed for increased protection should there be any further adverse impacts of COVID-19. Updates would be reflected in the report to Cabinet in February and Council in March.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions, make comments and responses were provided where necessary, as follows:-

- The consultation exercise had commenced in September, 2020, involving the Housing Board, High Rise Living Forum and DFTRA and as part of the consultation, stock data and financial information was considered, which had formed the basis of the current Asset Strategy. Housing needs were also being considered and workshops undertaken with tenant representatives which had highlighted key priorities in relation to need and demand. It was recognised that investment was required to ensure that existing homes did not decrease in standard, environmental and community estate regeneration works were carried out on existing stock and the development of new builds across the Borough. Stage 2 of the consultation, once COVID-19 restrictions allowed, was to target three areas, defined by Cabinet Members and tenant representatives with an aim to develop a template to use in all areas of the Borough to fit alongside a neighbourhood planning approach so that people would be more aware of future investment programmes and projects in their communities and estates.
- The representation on the Housing Board was considered unfair as it focused more on the South side of the Borough. It was considered that a fairer approach was essential to ensure all areas of the Boroughs were involved in any consultations and investment projects.

- Concerns were raised in relation to the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). It was acknowledged that the Government grant for the current year had been utilised and was believed to be on target to maximise the funding. For the current year, the Government grant awarded was £863,000 with a current spend of £950,000 and were currently using the HRA top up grant, however, it was predicted that the overall spend would be much higher than last year. Frequent monitoring of the service and budget was carried out and collaborative working with colleagues in Revenue and Benefits was essential to ensure the delivery of the service and to maximise the use of the funding. Advertisement and awareness training to support tenants around claiming DHP was also carried out and considered an important part of the process.
- The Committee acknowledged the importance of the Telecare Service and welcomed the excellent service it provided to the most vulnerable residents in the Borough. It was recognised that the proposed rent increases would cover the cost of the proposed 2% increase on the Telecare Services. Significant investment would be provided to the Telecare Service over the next few years to move towards a digital telephony to improve the services provided to service users, which would improve response rates and offer a more flexible service to the 7,000 users borough-wide.

In referring to the health benefits that the Telecare Service provided, it was recognised that, although the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) did not directly contribute to the day to day operation of the services, which was funded by the HRA and the income from private tenants, however, the CCG and other agencies provided financial support for new projects in specific areas that required development.

Resolved

That the proposals considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 17th December, 2020 relating to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2021/22 onwards, as detailed above, be endorsed.

20 **Street Cleansing Service**

A report of the Acting Director of Public Realm was submitted on the Street Cleansing Service delivered by the Directorate of Public Realm.

The Acting Director of Public Realm gave a brief overview of the report. He indicated that the report was to provide Members with a better understanding of the services delivered by the Street Cleansing Team and the measures undertaken to further improve the service and standards of cleanliness across the borough.

In presenting the report, the Team Manager indicated that the Council had a statutory requirement to provide a street cleansing service and to maintain the streets to an acceptable standard of cleanliness in line with the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse Act 1983, Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990 and Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Further responsibilities included maintaining public conveniences and to support both the winter gritting services and civic and organised events. In 2019/20, the service area received around 5,142 service requests, the majority related to general litter.

Key links to Council priorities were referred to with particular reference to a Cleaner and Greener Place, Stronger and Safer Communities, Growing the Economy and Creating Jobs and a Community Council. It was recognised that collaborative working with communities, voluntary groups and organisations across the Borough to assist in local community clean ups and the promotion of services was essential in delivering the requirements of the service.

Performance Management and Benchmarking was considered key in the active delivery of the service and was measured by the Association of Public Service Excellence. Specific reference was made to the performance data for 2019/20 that had recently been published, which highlighted that Dudley was the second lowest spending Metropolitan Borough Council in the league table. Dudley was also one of the highest key quality performance areas in terms of the other Metropolitan Borough Councils achieving top of the leadership board with a point system of 142. In terms of the actual performance of measuring street cleansing, litter had significantly improved, with 11% of litter and 32% of detritus recorded in 2003/04 decreasing to 2.92% of litter and 5.05% of detritus in 2019/20. Statistics provided were from inspections across a range of different areas and in accordance with the nationally agreed monitoring criteria.

The Team Manager indicated that although COVID-19 had impacted a number of services areas across the Local Authority, a full service commitment had been operated across the Borough with dedicated front line staff deployed to ensure the services continued effectively. Whilst the number of service requests for the removal of litter and dog fouling had reduced as well as requests for cleaning highways due to the reduced number of vehicles on the road, requests for fly tipping had significantly increased by 45% compared to the same period last year.

In terms of the budget growth and future service improvements, focus would be on improving the Borough's gateways and arterial routes. Although budgets had been significantly reduced in previous years, a further £250,000 had been awarded to the budget for 2019/20, to provide additional machinery and manpower to support identified improvements to the service area.

The service was a high profile service and with a budget of £3,513,700 for Street Cleansing including £220,000 for ongoing maintenance and upkeep of public conveniences.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions, make comments and responses were provided where necessary, as follows:-

- Members commented positively on the report and expressed their gratitude to the Street Cleansing Team for the successful continuation of essential services despite the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Reference was made to the lack of information in relation to the ongoing costs associated with the recent development of the Travellers Site in Budden Road. Although specific figures could not be provided at the meeting, The Acting Director of Public Realm undertook to investigate further and provide Members with the costs associated with the site.
- In terms of improvements to gateways and arterial routes into the Borough, it was suggested that consideration be given to plants being placed in key areas to improve the overall appearance.
- It was considered that the service provided by Street Cleaning was essential in delivering the Council's priorities and Members urged officers to consider the challenges the service would face should any future budgets reductions be considered.

Resolved

- (1) That the content of the report in relation to the management of the Street Cleansing Service, be noted.
- (2) That the measures being undertaken to further improve the service and standards of cleanliness across the Borough, be supported.
- (3) That the Acting Director of Public Realm provide Members with figures in relation to the associated and ongoing costs in relation to the Travellers Site at Budden Road.

21 **Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension**

A report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise was submitted on progress with the delivery of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension (WBHE).

In presenting key information through presentation slides, The Project Lead for Midlands Metro indicated that the WBHE was a major catalyst towards the regeneration of Dudley and with a budget of £449.5m it was the largest infrastructure project being delivered by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) through Transport for West Midlands (TfWM).

Three key themes had been identified for the current update, which included WBHE programme delivery, capturing economic impact and skills and employment activity.



The delivery of the project was planned in five phases from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill. The planned date of completion and for the Metro to be operational was December 2023, however, due to the impact of COVID-19, it had led to TfWM forecasting a potential six month delay to the Metro Programme although they were confident that the delay would be recovered over the next three years.

Progress on the key elements in terms of the delivery of the scheme were acknowledged, together with timelines of expected commencement and completion of work associated with the project. Collaborative working with officers was essential to ensure that residents were fully updated on any potential work affecting their communities. Regular updates and briefing session for Ward Members would be provided throughout the project to keep members updated on the delivery and progress of the WBHE.

In terms of the economic impact of the WBHE and steps being taken to ensure that local communities benefited from the project, a number of actions had been considered and undertaken to maximise the economic input of the Metro. Collaborative working had been undertaken to identify local super output areas (LSOA's), capturing key information on the people living in the Borough, the economy and the number of operating business. Statistics were provided in terms of the number of claimants in the WBHE area in November, 2020, however, due to the implications of COVID-19, the number had increased. The number of Enterprises in the area for the same period had seen an increase. The advantages of the new WBHE project and future planned developments in Dudley and Castle Hill were referred to, however, unemployment was an ongoing issue that needed to be addressed. Specific measures were necessary to ensure that the economic advantages associated with the Metro benefited local communities.

A wider offer of support through the Skills Support for the Workforce, Adult Education Budget had been identified, together with support for essential training to address unemployment. Dudley were working closely with the Midlands Metro Alliance to focus on employment benefits for local communities. Reference was made to the Dudley Regeneration Academy, a project developed in conjunction with local colleges providing a one stop shop for local contractors, for local residents to register interest in employment and for local contractors to use for potential employment. Workforce statistics were provided in relation to local residents currently in employment as a result of the WBHE, which was expected to increase by the end of Spring 2021.

In concluding, the Project Lead for Midlands Metro provided a summary of the planned work and progress for 2021 with a focus on ensuring local residents benefited from the project.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions, make comments and responses were provided where necessary, as follows:-

- Members commented positively on the report and acknowledged the progress made in relation to the WBHE. Concern was expressed in relation to the routes buses would be required to take following completion of the project, particularly in the Castle and Priory Ward. New interchanges and the re-routing of buses were essential, however, details were currently being considered and a detailed response would be provided to the Ward Councillor. It was suggested that officers consulted with residents on the plans to enable feedback to be provided to a future Scrutiny Committee prior to any plans being approved.
- Statistics provided in relation to the current labour market within the Borough were concerning, however, Dudley was working collaboratively with the Local Enterprise Partnership to address the issue and ensure that employment opportunities were being offered to local communities. Further information would be forwarded to the Member to provide reassurances that improvements and benefits would be identified in the short term, however, Members were reminded that the project was still in its early stages of development and the current challenges faced with the impact of COVID-19. It was also recognised that the economic benefits of the project would continue following completion of the project. Joint working with the communities, the use of social media and press releases were considered an essential part in the project to promote the economic development and opportunities associated with the WBHE.

Resolved

- (1) That the information contained in the report, presentation, and as presented verbally at the meeting, be noted.
- (2) That the Project Lead for Midlands Metro be required to circulate a detailed response to the Ward Councillor for Castle and Priory on details and plans of the new interchanges and re-routing of various bus routes associated with the project.
- (3) That the Project Lead for Midlands Metro be required to circulate further information to Members in relation to the economic benefits of the WBHE.

22 Housing Allocations Policy

A report of the Director of Housing and Community Services was submitted on the Review of the Housing Allocations Policy.

The Director of Housing and Community Services gave a brief overview of the report. The Housing Allocations Member Working Group was established in November 2019, which included consultation with people on the housing waiting list. Consultation had recently completed on the proposals, which had been identified by the cross party Working Group, and would be considered further at Cabinet in February, 2021.

The Head of Housing Options and Support referred individually to the proposals identified as set out below:-

- i. That households with sufficient capital and income to afford to purchase entry level accommodation to meet their needs are placed in a reserve band for social housing unless they also have care or support needs.
- ii. That parents with shared care of children are recognised as households needing family sized accommodation.
- iii. That families with children are allowed to choose high rise flats if they wish.
- iv. That private tenants in homes that are prejudicial to health are given urgent priority for rehousing (Band 2).
- v. That homes may be directly allocated to households where they have been purchased or built specifically to meet their needs.
- vi. That Looked After young people are able to apply for housing before they reach age 18.
- vii. That potential foster families are eligible for service tenancies.
- viii. That mothers leaving prison are given urgent priority for rehousing.
- ix. That Council tenants are only given the need for releasing a family home if they have another housing need such as overcrowding.
- x. That bands 5-7 are combined into a single reserve band, where offers will only be made if there are no suitable households in Bands 1-4.
- xi. That further consideration should be given to the option of using Flexible (Fixed Term) Tenancies to ensure the best use of our most scarce stock, such as houses with four or more bedrooms, homes with significant adaptations (wheelchair standard) and supported housing.

It was reported that consideration would not be given at this stage to flexible/fixed terms tenancies, however, it would be considered at a later date.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions, make comments and responses were provided where necessary, as follows:-

- Members sought clarification on equity and deposits required for mortgage purposes as it was not clear in the report submitted. The Head of Housing Options and Support indicated that amounts varied depending on the type of housing required. Currently the Policy only considered “equity” available, however, this was considered unfair to some individuals that intended to purchase a house and consideration should be given to all financial resources that was available to individuals. Members considered the Policy in relation to the process for purchasing housing was too strict and that a more realistic approach was essential to ensure that the process was fair. Strategic Housing Market Assessments were carried out to assess future housing requirements in the Borough. Assessment looked at the cost and affordability of each type of housing and housing costs relative to household incomes. Assessment were reviewed yearly to accommodate ongoing changes in housing requirements in the Borough.

In line with the updated Housing Allocations Policy, new people accessing the service would be means tested to assess individual housing needs and requirements. Consideration on affordability of mortgages would be carried out in line with external mortgage lenders, taking into account total household income/expenditure and eligibility. The Local Authority would need to ensure that people enquiring about purchasing a house could financially afford the payments required to reduce the risk of any homelessness due to mortgage payments not being paid. The process was considered complicated and the Head of Housing Options and Support suggested that illustrations highlighting various housing options available based on housing stock and affordability be prepared and circulated to Members to give them an idea of how the system would operate. The Local Authority needed to ensure that the housing market was monitored frequently and the Policy adapted accordingly.

- It was acknowledged that although cross communication with neighbouring Local Authorities did take place in terms of housing stock available in order for residents to consider housing in more than one Borough, however, generally the property type that Dudley struggled to lease/sell or had a shortage of were identical in other Local Authorities. Successful lettings had occurred, however, these were relatively low.

Resolved

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and as presented verbally at the meeting, be noted.
- (2) That the Head of Housing Options and Support be requested to prepare illustrations highlighting various housing options available based on housing stock and affordability and circulate to Members to inform them on how the system, in terms of purchasing properties, would operate.

The meeting ended at 7.30pm.

CHAIR

Place Scrutiny Committee - 31st March 2021

Report of the Acting Director of Public Realm

Housing Maintenance Grey Fleet

Purpose

1. The report aims to update Place Scrutiny Members of progress to date regarding the replacement of the grey fleet of vehicles utilised by the Councils Housing Maintenance team.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:
 - (a) Members note the contents of this report regarding replacement of the grey fleet.
 - (b) Support the measures being undertaken to further improve the service through the effective management of vehicles used by trade operatives.

Background

3. The grey fleet of vehicles referenced in this report relates to Housing Maintenance trade operative vehicles (mainly vans), owned by its employees, which those employees use for business purposes. Grey fleet travel refers to mileage in employee-owned vehicles making journeys for business purposes.
4. Grey fleet travel represents a substantial cost and risk to the Council. Grey fleet accounted for £142K of Housing Maintenance Team's travel costs in 2019/20 in addition to £21K per month in spot hire arrangements for grey fleet breakdowns.
5. The Council has a legal duty of care to all grey fleet users; every mile undertaken on Council business is covered by work-related road safety (WRRS) legislation.
6. This report acknowledges that the reduction in grey fleet vehicles reduces cost and carbon emissions; and also lowers the risk profile associated with the grey fleet.

Current Provision of Vehicles

7. Housing Maintenance has 111 grey fleet drivers across its service area and a mixed economy in terms of the provision of vehicles for trade staff (excluding public transport). Operatives generally spend 7 hours per day working from vehicles which due to the private nature of them are out of the control of the Council. Depending on the specific need there are two ways in which trade staff can move around:
- Grey Fleet – where staff members use their own vehicle and claim mileage based on their specific journey; and
 - Vans supplied by DMBC – where the Fleet Team have provided a vehicle for use by trade staff members. Generally, these vehicles are the subject of a contract lease arrangement with the Councils Fleet Management Team.

Current Policies and Practices

8. The Council, at present, places no limit on the age of a van/car which can be used for grey fleet travel through any of its policies. In addition, details of grey fleet vehicles are largely unknown. Since the shift to online claims, there is no opportunity to capture individual vehicle registration marks in respect of specific mileage claims, and therefore, the Council cannot be certain that grey fleet vehicles have a valid MOT or meet EU safety and emissions standards.
9. Health and Safety - for most staff, driving is likely to be the most dangerous activity undertaken at work. The Council must ensure that appropriate procedures are put in place to cover its responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. As grey fleet vehicles are out of the Council's control, there is a significant risk to the organisation, should any of its grey fleet drivers be involved in an accident in which the condition of that vehicle could be deemed unsafe, especially if the Council cannot demonstrate that relevant documentation has been checked.
10. Claim checking - Whilst difficult to quantify, the Energy Saving Trust estimates that 15-20% rounding up is not uncommon. Although this sounds high, rounding up of an 8-mile journey to 10 miles equates to a 25% overclaim. The provision of a Council owned vehicle would eliminate this issue.

Grey Fleet Issues

11. Privately-owned vehicles used by employees whilst 'at work' are difficult to manage in terms of safety and the environment. Measures need to be in place to ensure that grey fleet vehicles are 'fit for the purpose', roadworthy, properly maintained, taxed and insured. Potentially, therefore, the grey fleet is a problem waiting to happen.
12. Overall, there are three main reasons for replacing grey fleet, health and safety, cost savings and the environment.

13. **Health and Safety** - The two main pieces of current legislation to be mindful of in meeting duty of care responsibilities are the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the UK Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) 2007.
14. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health and safety of all full and part-time workers whilst 'at work', as is reasonably practicable. The Act covers all work-related journeys including drivers in company vehicles, using their own vans for business use, including temporary drivers, freelance drivers and agency or contract workers.
15. The 'Driving at Work: Managing work related road safety guide highlights the legal responsibilities of employers to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the Health and Safety at Work Act, stressing the benefits of managing work-related road safety and suggesting how it should be managed and road risks assessed.
16. Employers need to consider driver competency and training; driver health; knowledge of basic vehicle checks; vehicle suitability, condition and maintenance; a valid MOT certificate if required; and safety equipment. Other considerations include adequate travel time allowance and proper route planning.
17. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guide extends to the use of privately-owned vehicles on business trips. Employers can be liable if employees use an un-roadworthy vehicle on company business. Employers have a duty of care to ensure they have checked employees hold a valid driving license, are monitoring the maintenance history of the vehicle and that the vehicle insurance also covers business use.
18. Besides conducting a professional risk assessment audit of both vehicles and staff, employers need to have an agreed comprehensive 'driving at work' risk management strategy and ensure it is complied with. In the unfortunate event of an 'at work' road accident, employers need to be able to provide evidence that they have taken 'reasonably practicable' steps to manage their duty of care responsibilities to their employees including grey fleet drivers.
19. Following an accident, employers failing to act on the guide run the risk of facing significant fines under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Senior Management can also face large fines and even possible prison sentences. The UK Corporate Manslaughter (England, Wales, and Northern Ireland) makes it possible for an employer to be prosecuted as a result of the failings.
20. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the fine will be seldom less than £100,000 and more likely several hundred thousand pounds. Under the UK Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act (England, Wales, and Northern Ireland) 2007, a work-related road death will result in an organisation being fined rarely less and significantly more.

21. **Cost Savings** – The Housing Maintenance Team have reviewed what grey fleet drivers are paid to use their own vehicles and have concluded that the mileage rates are not sustainable where grey fleet drivers are covering high mileage.
22. Previously it was concluded that a practical ceiling for requiring employees to use a daily rental vehicle rather than their own privately-owned vehicle might be a maximum daily distance of 100 miles at the standard rates. Above 100 miles, it may cost more for the Council to reimburse a grey fleet driver.
23. **The Environment** - Given that the UK Government is committed to halving carbon emissions, the resultant CO2 emissions-based vehicle taxation regime has resulted in an astonishing choice of vehicles available with CO2 emission levels below 120g/km.
24. Against this backdrop, employers looking to significantly reduce their CO2 emissions as part of their corporate social responsibilities (CSR) can easily operate a carbon neutral transport policy as a first step towards running a greener fleet. The only obstacle in the way is the grey fleet.
25. The majority of grey fleet vehicles are older than company vehicles and therefore are higher polluters. In the public sector, the average age of a privately-owned vehicle used 'at work' is 6.7 years. In comparison, the average age of a company van is around 18 months based on a five-year lease period

Replacement Vehicle Programme/Consultation

26. In accordance with the above, measures have been taken to reduce and replace the grey fleet with Council vehicles to mitigate the risk to Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC). Further to this, the replacement vehicle programme is not intended to impact on delivery of services by staff, but to enhance it. A series of discussions were held with individuals and teams from the Housing Maintenance Team to gain an understanding of how the various trades staff deliver services.
27. Items of note included -
 - The Council covers a significant geographical area, which means that trade staff require vehicles to deliver services. This is particularly acute in more rural locations.
 - There are distinct differences across services and teams in respect of the ability to programme work, and the need to be able to react at short notice.
 - Many staff across all services are required to take plant and equipment with them to meetings and site visits.
 - It was recognised through the engagement process with teams that there is appetite to replace the grey fleet with Council owned vehicles. Staff generally feel that they are losing out by using their own van/car for Council business (and some even acknowledge that they feel they are subsidising the Council by doing so) but lack of options means grey fleet use is often essential.

- The perception of the Council in terms of physically delivering services will be improved through utilisation of its own, branded pool vehicles – at present, the public have no visibility of staff delivering services through use of their own van, although in some cases it was recognised that this would not be appropriate, depending on the service being delivered.
- There is a lack of understanding amongst trade staff of the cost (both financial and environmental) in respect of using their own vehicle.

Climate Change

28. Climate change is now recorded as a corporate risk. In addition, the Council has a legal duty to assist the UK to achieve its national carbon emission reduction targets as mandated by the Climate Change Act 2008, to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 80% by 2050.
29. The Council's grey fleet mileage has been responsible for an unknown amount of carbon dioxide emissions. The Council does not capture the specific details of grey fleet vehicles, which would allow a more accurate emissions figure to be calculated. It is however widely accepted that most grey fleets include large numbers of older, higher emission vehicles which are neither as safe nor as efficient as their modern counterparts.
30. To this end, this report supports the decision by the Council to replace the oldest and most inefficient grey fleet vehicles as a priority action.

Advantages of replacing the Grey Fleet

31. A modern fleet provided by the Council, if well managed, can be a simple, cost effective, low emission and safe method of meeting the essential transport needs of staff. The procurement process has set specification criteria:
 - Affordability - target to operate at lower than the spot hire rate offered by leasing companies.
 - Fit for purpose - especially if required to carry equipment.
 - Low or zero carbon - ideally below 188g/km which is the current threshold for emissions.
 - Safe - meets recognised safety standards for the protection of the occupants.
 - Racked out (fitted out) for optimum service delivery and safety; and
 - Attractive, modern, and comfortable - staff should want to drive the vehicles rather than take their own.
32. It should be recognised that Council owned vans do have some disadvantages, but these are minor and generally outweigh the risks presented by the grey fleet.

Conclusions

33. It is important to understand that this is a complex, multi-faceted issue. A range of approaches, including policy reviews, implementation of alternatives and more robust management of travel across the Housing Maintenance Team will be required to achieve cost savings and meaningful behaviour change in respect of trade staff travel.
34. Over and above the potential for cost savings, there is an urgent need for the Council to address this issue given the unacceptable high risk profile currently associated with grey fleet travel. The organisation has significant exposure to claims arising from not having robust vehicle and driver checks in place.
35. Due to the geography of the Borough and the wide range of services the Council delivers, it is clear that there will always be a requirement to travel. Many of our key services, especially in repairs and maintenance, must be delivered within the home and service delivery is often reactive in nature.

The Way Forward

36. It is clear that identifying a method for reducing staff travel costs is vital to ensure accountability and continued scrutiny of performance. These measures include:-
 - A review of methods of service delivery where travel is a key consideration.
 - Reinforcing the responsibility of managers to carry out regular licence, insurance and MOT checking procedures, and to record this. This reduces the risk to the Council of staff not having adequate cover or access to a safe vehicle.
 - Review of Policies - It is recognised that many staff are using their own vehicles to meet the requirements of their post (often at cost to themselves) as no alternative means of transport is provided. To support employees and fulfil our duty of care as an employer where grey fleet travel is essential, the Council's driver safety handbook is periodically reviewed and refreshed.
 - Age of Grey Fleet Vehicles. The vehicles used by grey fleet drivers may be old and poorly maintained – the Council currently has limited control over this. The Council must ensure that vehicles are fit for purpose and meet minimum safety standards. A minimum vehicle age and mileage could be stipulated.
 - The Council will continue to progress its programme to replace the grey fleet in Housing Maintenance with cost efficient Council vehicles.
 - Future Council vehicles will need to consider both hybrid and electric alternatives in addition to suitable infrastructure for regular charging.

Finance

37. Replacement of grey fleet vehicles will increase the number of Council vehicles on the fleet by approx. 20% and will therefore allow overheads to be split across a greater number of vehicles which will improve the unit cost of each vehicle.
38. The vehicles will continue to be procured via a framework contract to maximise discounted unit costs and will be financed via Prudential Borrowing which attracts favourable costs of financing. An annual fee will be applied by the Councils Transport team to cover financing, maintenance, tyres, road tax and overheads less the expected residual value of the vehicle based on an open book arrangement to reflect transparency of costs.
39. A soft market exercise was conducted to demonstrate that operating the Fleet internally would be cost effective and this will continue to be reviewed periodically.
40. Annual costings for financing a vehicle over 5 years are expected to be in the region of £6,300 each and are subject to a reconciliation between expected residual value and actual residual value at the end of the 5-year period. As the vehicles will be owned, there will be the opportunity to retain the vehicles beyond the 5 year period if desired.

Law

41. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 – Responsibility for staff and for visitors to our premises and sites.
42. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council is empowered to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive to, or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

Equality Impact

43. There are no direct equality implications associated with this report, however Housing Maintenance is provided for all residents with Council Housing stock.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

44. There are no direct human resource or organisational development issues associated with this report.

Commercial/Procurement

45. All plant, equipment and materials used in the delivery of the service are procured in accordance with council standing orders and financial regulations.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

46. There are indirect health, wellbeing and safety implications associated with this report in that the reduction of the grey fleet with replacement Council vehicles will provide for a better managed and maintained fleet of vehicles in accordance with transport guidelines and regulations.



.....
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Place Scrutiny Committee - 31st March 2021

Report of the Director of Housing and Community Services

Housing Board Update

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an overview of the Housing Board's role and activity.

Recommendations

2. That the information contained in this report be noted.

To recommend the Council to appoint a non-voting Co-opted Member to represent the Housing Board on the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee in the 2021/22 municipal year.

Background

3. The establishment of the Housing Board (which includes Member and Community representation) was approved by Full Council in October 2014. The Board was established in the light of best practice from consultation with tenants, residents, members, and Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (DFTRA). This was in line with Consumer Regulation, and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

The purpose of the Housing Board, as set out in its Constitution (circulated to Committee Members), is to:

- Provide the community-based scrutiny function of the Housing Service, to the proportionate benefit of tenants, leaseholders and other service users for their collective benefit.
- To improve decision making, provide challenge in Housing Services, and to ensure that high quality services and best value for money are delivered to tenants, leaseholders and service users.

The Housing Board is an advisory board and cannot make decisions on behalf of the Housing Service or in respect of any activity of the Council.

4. The Housing Board has responsibility for raising issues with the Council members who are nominated to attend Full Board meetings. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services has responsibility to feedback and highlight major issues raised to the Cabinet. The Housing Board also recognises the need to feedback to the tenants and residents it represents and are developing ideas to achieve this through a communication plan.
5. The Housing Board operates within a defined Constitution and consists of 13 places, comprising 11 Community Representatives and 2 co-opted places for Independent Board Members (someone with no other link to the Council). There are also places for the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services and the Shadow Cabinet Member. In addition, there is also a place for one representative from Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations.

There are currently 8 community representative Board members, covering all 5 townships from across the Dudley borough.

6. The appointment of the Community Representatives and Independent Board Members is made through a selective process as set out in the Constitution. Appointments are made by an Interview Panel, who submit a report with recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services for approval.
7. Full Housing Board meetings are held quarterly, and Community Representative meetings are held monthly, but due to the global pandemic all physical board meetings were suspended in March 2020. The Community Representatives have been set up to hold virtual meetings on MS Teams and are now confident to recommence Full Board meetings once Covid guidance allows.
8. The Participation Development Team provides general support, coordination of agendas and meetings, training and activities. There is a small budget of £5000 covering training, expenses, and equipment. All Housing Board members have the option of a Council iPad, and access to the internet.

Training is offered and provided to all Housing Board members. This is provided both from within the Council and through external organisations such as the Housing Quality Network (HQN) and Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). Training in recent years has included, a Finance Overview, GDPR, Scrutiny, Political Governance and Decision Making, Professionalism in Housing, Resident Communications Masterclass, Social Housing White Paper overview, Induction for new Board members, and MS Teams. Further training needs will be assessed in April 2021 and a programme set out for the next 12 months.



9. The Housing Board is a consultative group for the Housing Service (along with DFTRA and specific groups) and are consulted on local initiatives. Consultations have included:
- The Homelessness Strategy
 - Asset Management Investing Wisely in the homes the Council manages (via ARK), Allocations Policy Review
 - The HRA budget

Service reviews are commissioned and supported by the Housing Board. Review requests are normally received from DFTRA and Heads of Service, but the Board will also be looking at trends in PIs and complaints in the future to identify other areas. Reviews have included:

- Aids and Adaptations
- Community Improvement Bid Process
- Rechargeable Repairs
- Kitchen and Bathroom Installations

All of the reviews look at services from a customer perspective, and how to improve the customer experience. There are a small team of volunteer service inspectors who work alongside Housing Board members to carry out the reviews.

10. The CIB Working Group (chaired by a Housing Board Member) considers small local projects submitted by tenants and housing officers – these tend to be local environmental/landscape schemes.

Finance

11. All operating costs are contained within the HRA budget.

Law

12. The Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards require effective tenant involvement and consultation, which is due to be strengthened by the Housing White Paper

Equality Impact

13. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken at the set up of the Board and has been circulated to Members of the Committee.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

14. This report has no direct implications for Human Resources or Organisational Development.



Commercial/Procurement

15. This report has no direct procurement or commercial implications.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

16. The links between communities and the Directorate are currently being reviewed and will be improved through Neighbourhood working.



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List of Background Papers

Current Housing Board Constitution
Equality Impact Assessment

Place Scrutiny Committee – 31st March 2021

Report of the Director of Housing and Community Services

Homelessness Prevention and Response

Purpose

1. This report contains information on the current position in relation to homelessness in the Dudley Borough.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the approach to the response and prevention of homelessness in the Dudley Borough be noted.

It is recommended that Place Scrutiny Committee receives the Homelessness Annual Report and Homelessness Strategy in the new municipal year to maintain sight of the approach and response to homelessness in the Borough.

Background

3. The Homelessness Prevention and Response Team (HPRT) responds to around 2,500 enquiries each year operating a proactive, prevention focussed approach to homelessness in the Borough. This is evidenced by the relatively low numbers of households who are accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need (also known as full duty homelessness). These are usually households containing children or vulnerable adults and where it has not been possible to prevent them from becoming homeless and the local authority has a duty to find alternative housing.
4. During 2019/2020 only 10 households were accepted as having a full homeless duty. Importantly, during the same period over 1,000 households were assisted to prevent homelessness from occurring and is testament to the preventative focus of the service.



5. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 sought to reform the approach to tackling homelessness to ensure that everyone, regardless of 'priority need', receives some 'real help' in addition to the statutory duty that may be owed only to certain persons. The Act sets out in detail how each case should be managed and has set out in detail the steps that a Local Authority should take to assist every eligible person who is homeless.

Our practice is to take action to prevent homelessness at the earliest possible stage, and we do not wait for someone to become statutorily homeless before assisting. This approach is different to that of many authorities. We accept applications and begin work at a stage where many other services would reach a 'not homeless' decision.

6. Dudley has a low number of rough sleepers. Although the number of people rough sleeping fluctuates at any one point, on the day of the Government's official estimate in November 2020, there were four. There are currently two individuals regularly rough sleeping, one of which is due to move into a property imminently.
7. The Council encourages the community to report people rough sleeping, advertising routes to do so including the national Streetlink scheme. The Council adopts a No Second Night Out model throughout the year which is beyond the statutory requirements to ensure that all rough sleepers have access to and the offer of safe accommodation.

The reasons for becoming homeless or sleeping rough differ for each person. Many of the people who sleep rough display multiple risk factors, which can mean their needs are extremely complex and difficult to resolve. To further aggravate this already complicated issue a small number of individuals within the group of those known to be rough sleeping in Dudley effectively exclude themselves from all existing services due to the complexity of their needs, challenging behaviours, and/or poor housing histories.

To address the issues caused by rough sleeping officers from Dudley MBC chair a multi-agency meeting which sits monthly to discuss and share information about persons known to be sleeping rough and to agree actions. In addition Dudley has implemented the Housing First initiative; a project to provide housing solutions and intensive support to those who have been rough sleeping and to provide outreach street support to those who are reluctant to engage. To date this project has helped several of the more entrenched rough sleepers known in our area into accommodation.



8. Rough sleeping is often the visible side to homelessness however of significant concern to the Borough are the number of people who are assessed as being homeless but do not have a priority need (231 in 2019/20). These are usually single person households or couples without children. The Council makes the best use of its supported housing resources and its own 21,000+ housing stock where possible to make an offer of accommodation to this cohort of people. Where an offer isn't possible or where it is declined, the person/household often goes to live with friends or relatives (often referred to as sofa surfing). These individuals are those who are often most at risk of becoming homeless/sleeping rough in the future as they do not have secure, long term housing in their own right and their circumstances can change at short notice (e.g. relationship breakdown, asked to leave).
9. Dudley has worked hard to prevent the extensive use of Temporary Accommodation that other Councils have, and rarely uses Bed and Breakfast/ Hotel accommodation, particularly for families with children. Temporary accommodation is used only where necessary for short periods whilst other accommodation is sourced and is generally provided within our own stock, including use of the Lye Family Centre. At any point in time there are around 10 households in temporary accommodation.
10. Dudley is fortunate to have a well established Housing Support team which delivers a range of out reach services collectively aimed at sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness. This work is tailored to the individual but includes checking benefit entitlement, maximising income and providing welfare benefit advice.

The team is split into specialisms and includes a substance misuse service that works closely with Atlantic House, Intensive Family Support Workers which undertake Early Help and Strengthening Families work with Childrens Services, a mediation service and a gardening scheme in partnership with Green Care and Creative Support. In addition, the team undertake, manage and coordinate pre tenancy workshops focussing on education for prospective tenants as well as drop in sessions for more ad hoc support and advice.

The Housing Support service have assisted service users to access in excess of £110,000 one off benefits backdates or grants and in the same period secured benefits and grants exceeding the value of £196,000. In addition the Rents team in Housing Finance have issued over £1m in discretionary housing payments which have supported people through Covid.



11. Dudley has participated in the Housing First Pilot project across the West Midlands Combined Authority area from 2018-2021. Housing First involves supporting individuals who have multiple and complex needs or have adverse tenancy histories into a tenancy as a first step and then providing intensive support to help make the tenancy sustainable. This model has proved successful with 30 individuals due to have been supported into stable housing by the end of the pilot in order to provide security and a foundation to address their wider needs. Without this approach, these individuals would likely create significant demand on a wide range of services with Housing First breaking the 'revolving door' cycle that these individuals often describe as having been trapped in.
12. With a shortening supply of new affordable/social housing alongside increased demand during Covid, the homeless prevention and response team are facing increased pressures on the service as a route into housing rather than its primary function as a statutory safety net. Alongside increasing demands by the number of presentations, the complexity of individual circumstances also places greater pressure on the service. Mental and physical health conditions, learning disabilities, substance misuse and domestic abuse are amongst some of the common vulnerabilities of individuals presenting as homeless, often symptoms of core social issues such as deprivation or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's).

Each presentation is assessed and considered on the individuals circumstances adopting a multi agency approach to complex cases. The team also have Housing Support workers who will work with and support individuals to explore their housing options and personal housing plan to access accommodation.

13. Supported accommodation plays a significant part in helping to prevent homelessness for both young people and for single adults over 25. The Midland Heart provision, Saltbrook Place, which has now been open for over six years, has helped to provide a housing solution for single people of all ages, whether or not they are in 'priority need'. Saltbrook Place provides a mixture of apartment and en-suite accommodation with residents offered one to one support and help with resettlement to permanent housing.

For our young people, aged under 25, YMCA provide Nightstop, Supported Lodgings, and the Highland Road service, whilst CHADD provide our foyer and young parent schemes. These services are in constant use and we continue to provide short term emergency beds at both CHADD and Highland Road for young people in crisis whilst suitable longer term accommodation is sourced.



14. Dudley continues to look for opportunities to develop its services and meet the changing demands of homelessness in the Borough and has been successful in securing grant funding to achieve this. The Housing First Project attracted funding of approximately £425,000 to provide intensive support as well as tenancy set up costs and crisis funds. Due to the success of the delivery of Housing First in Dudley an additional £78,000 has recently been awarded to fund a further intensive support worker to support an additional eight individuals over two years and to meet the Combined Authorities targets for the pilot – this is because other Councils have not been able to deliver to the same targets.

In November 2020, Dudley was awarded approximately £450,000 through the Next Steps to Accommodation Fund a supported housing scheme which will be operational in Spring 2021. This will provide a much needed resource in the Borough and will be managed by the Homeless Prevention and Response Team.

15. The Homeless Prevention and Response Team make use of the Preventing Repossessions Fund and Housing Assistance Grant Fund to provide one off grants in order to prevent homelessness. In addition, they work with Castle and Crystal Credit Union to provide interest free loans to prevent homelessness. These are considered on a case by case basis and may be used to assist people into accommodation through the payment of a rent deposit for a private tenancy, to stabilise mortgage payments or to assist an individual to meet their tenancy obligations which are placing their tenancy at risk.
16. The Covid pandemic has impacted upon homelessness in both the short and probably long term. Traditionally, private tenants being issued with notices accounted for the greatest cause or risk of homelessness and accounted for 19% of enquiries in 2019/2020. With the ban on evictions, this has changed dramatically in the past 12 months and now the “sofa surfing” proportion of people presenting as roofless and therefore in crisis has grown significantly. This is mainly due to relationship breakdown with people no longer willing to accommodate individuals (largely caused by the lockdown impacts on relationships and financial pressures, and concerns about Covid).
17. The extent of the impact on homelessness as a result of Covid is possibly yet to be fully realised due to the ban on evictions, but it is anticipated that there could be an increase in private landlords issuing possession proceedings once that expires. Work is underway with members of the Homeless Strategy Review Group to plan and mitigate the impact of any increased demands to service.



18. Other emerging issues include the impact of individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds. During the Covid pandemic, the Authority has assisted in finding accommodation through the Government's 'Everyone In' initiative however those individuals who are not eligible to receive public services, including the provision of housing. The Government has recently announced that Councils can continue support rough sleepers in this group, but we are working with other services to EU nationals register their dependents as well as themselves through the EU Settlement Scheme so they do not become ineligible for support.

Finance

19. Homelessness services are funded from general fund housing core budgets and government grants.

Law

20. Homelessness is a statutory service, governed by the Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Act 2002, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and associated Codes of Guidance and Statutory Instruments.

Equality Impact

21. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed in relation to the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and the changes to the Housing Allocations policy.
22. The Public Sector Equality Duty under s.149 Equality Act 2010 places positive duties on the Council not just to eliminate such discrimination, but also to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between groups.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

23. This report has no direct implications for Human Resources or Organisational Development.

Commercial/Procurement

24. This report has no direct procurement or commercial implications.



Health, Wellbeing and Safety

25. Homelessness Prevention and Housing Allocation policies have an important role in delivering health, well-being and safety outcomes as there are identified links between homelessness/rough sleeping and poor health, mental health and mortality rates.



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Place Scrutiny Committee – 31st March 2021

Report of the Director of Housing and Community Services

Housing Market: Affordable housing and potential assistance to first time buyers to access the housing market

Purpose

1. This report contains information on the current position in relation to affordable housing and potential assistance to first time buyers to access the housing market as requested by Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the contents of the report are noted.

Background

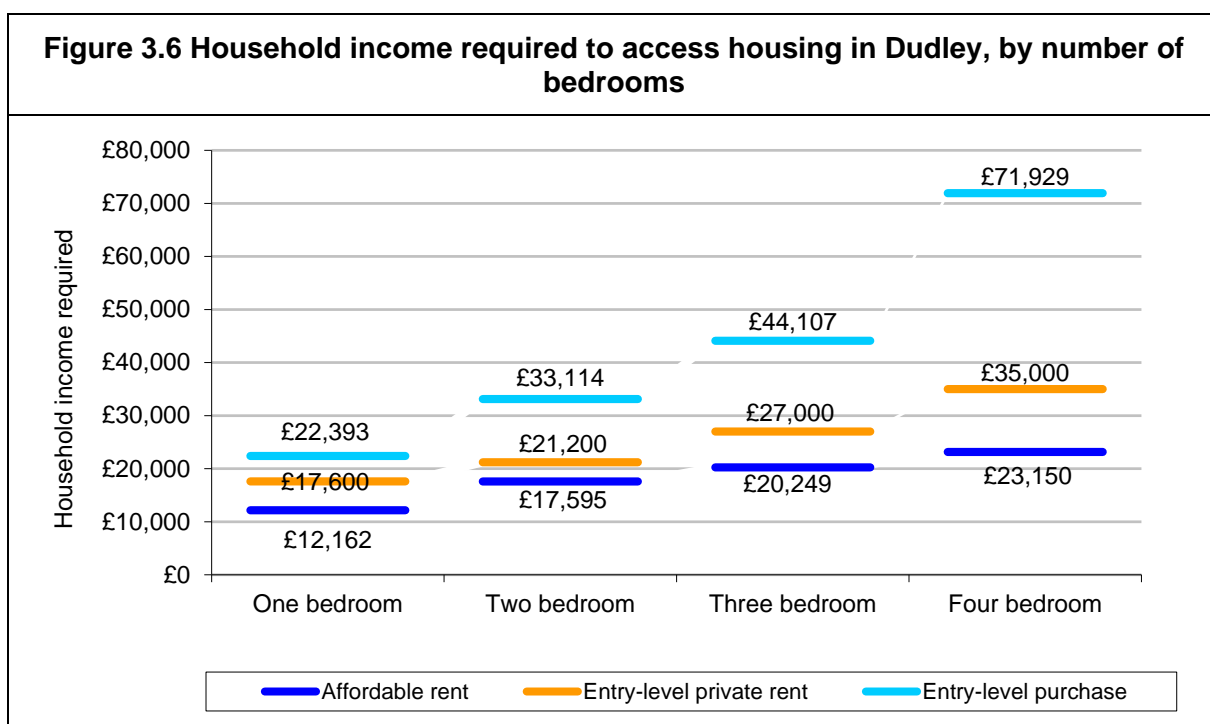
3. The definition of affordable housing is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. In summary, Affordable housing is:
'Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:
 - Affordable housing for rent – This includes social rent or affordable rents that are at least 20% below local market rents
 - Starter homes – This is largely being replaced by First Homes (paragraph 13 of this report).
 - Discounted market sales housing – This is sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined by local incomes and house prices and the discount must remain for future households.



- Other affordable routes to home ownership – This includes a range of products to help those who could not achieve home ownership through the market including shared ownership, equity loans, rent to buy and others.

The Council's current Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) requires all new housing schemes of more than 15 units to include 25% affordable housing, delivered on site and integrated within the wider scheme unless agreed otherwise.

4. The draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicates the income required to access the different types of housing tenures in the Borough and other relevant information. It makes assumptions about using 30% of household incomes on housing costs and access to mortgage products (one of which being the availability of no deposit mortgages).



In summary:

- The household income required to access the owner-occupied housing sector for a 2 bedroom entry level property is £33,114 per year.
- The median gross household income in the borough is £29,854.

The average price of a semi-detached home in the Borough in 2019 was £180,039. A household with the median income in the borough would therefore be limited to purchase a one bedroom home, or privately rent a two or three bedroom home, within the cheapest quarter of such properties in the borough. Households with income



levels below the median or requiring a wider choice are likely to be seeking an affordable housing option of one type or another.

5. Our knowledge of our private rented sector has been developed by a Building Research Establishment (BRE) study funded by MHCLG's Private Rented Sector Innovation and Enforcement Grant Fund (2019/20). This funding supports new, innovative, or targeted short-term initiatives to tackle poor landlords and raise the standard of properties in the Private Rented Sector.

There has been significant growth in the private rented sector in Dudley in the 10 years between 2001 and 2011 - from 5% of the total stock in 2001 to 11% in 2017. This is lower than the change of 9% seen in England as a whole, but significant for Dudley because the sector here has historically been very small. The analysis for this current report estimates that trend has increased over the last three years.

6. Some of the key findings of the report are as follows:
 - The performance of the private housing stock in Dudley compared to the English Housing Survey England average is mixed with Dudley performing slightly better for all excess cold, but worse for all other variables, particularly fall hazards.
 - The private rented sector is generally in worse condition than the social sector. Compared to the owner-occupied stock, the private rented stock has higher levels of all hazards, excess cold, disrepair, fuel poverty, and low-income households. It is estimated that 8% (2,118) dwellings in the private rented sector are in disrepair.
 - There are an estimated 2,208 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the Borough of which, 300 fall into mandatory licensable requirements.
7. Dudley has a reasonably good supply of affordable rented housing in the Borough at just under 20% of the overall housing stock including Housing associations.

DMBC have 21,000 social rented homes and a combined waiting and transfer list of 3,855 households, but we do not have a perfect match of housing supply to meet this demand. There is very high demand for some types of housing such as 2 bedroom family homes (especially houses) and low demand for other properties such as 2 bedroom high rise flats and bedsits.

Over the past twelve months through Covid , there has been an increase in demand for housing, and a reduced supply of vacancies as less people moved. Competition for family houses is particularly intense, for example in February, a two bedroom Council house in Halesowen attracted over 200 bids.



8. The Right to Buy (Local Authority social housing) and Voluntary Right to Buy (West Midlands Pilot) reduces the supply of social housing faster than it is being replaced. Each year just under 200 Dudley MBC tenants exercise their Right to Buy and become home-owners. This helps to build home ownership but depletes social housing supply. During 2019/20 the West Midlands were part of a Voluntary Right to Buy pilot for housing associations which resulted in 27 homes being sold in Dudley in addition to the local authority's own loss of stock. The replacement rate of this stock is well below the 1:1 replacement intended by the Government as 100% of the sales receipt is not returned to the landlord to build a replacement.

The levels of new affordable housing delivery over the last 5 years have ranged between 98 and 209 new homes per year. This includes social rents, affordable rents and shared ownership. Of the 209 new homes completed in 2019/20 190 were rented and 19 shared ownership. The level of new build affordable housing in the Borough rarely exceeds 200 new affordable homes per year so there is a net loss of affordable rented housing most years as a result of the Right to Buy.

9. It follows that there is likely to be a market for low cost or assisted home ownership within the borough from people who cannot afford to buy on the open market, who are unable or unwilling to participate in the private rented sector, and who are unable to access social housing that will meet their requirements within an acceptable timescale.
10. There are Government led initiatives to enable first time buyers and other households to get on to the property ladder.

Nationally, from 1st April 2013 to September 2020, under the Help to Buy scheme, 291,903 properties were bought using an equity loan and 82% of all completions were first time buyers. The total of these equity loans was £17.4 billion. The value of the properties sold under the scheme was £79.2 billion

Since 2013 the Help to Buy scheme has enabled 1,088 households to buy a home in Dudley borough, with 911 of those being first time buyers (83.7%). The equity loan value on these sales in Dudley is £41 million.

Number and value of Help to Buy:Equity loans by local authority											
Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 incl Q3	Total	First time buyers	Total value
Dudley	85	157	163	158	155	131	136	103	1,088	911	41,319,910
Sandwell	93	162	181	197	298	267	129	43	1,370	1,230	50,587,791
Walsall	77	131	241	217	207	175	63	30	1,141	1,030	38,620,668
Wolverham	99	196	188	218	203	212	201	127	1,444	1,295	50,229,577
									5,043	4,466	



Working as One Council in
the historic capital of the Black Country



11. On 18 February 2021 HM Treasury published official statistics on the Government's Help to Buy: ISA Scheme. Between the launch of the Help to Buy: ISA Scheme on 1 December 2015 and 30 September 2020:

- 359,250 property completions have been supported by the scheme.
- 472,702 bonuses have been paid through the scheme with an average bonus value of £1,028.
- The mean value of a property purchased through the scheme is £174,281 compared to an average first-time buyer house price of £204,964 and a national average house price of £244,513.
- The median age of a first-time buyer in the scheme is 28 compared to a national first-time buyer median age of 30.

As at September 2020 2,558 Help to Buy ISA bonuses had been paid by the Government to applicants from the Dudley Borough. This amounted to £2.579 million. The expected number of property purchases was 1,820.

12. The Government is proposing to provide a First Homes product to specifically help potential first time buyers access home ownership. New housing sites will be obligated to deliver First Homes at at least 30% below the open market value. If they are resold in the future they will be sold at least 30% below market value. In the future it is likely that some households who would have entered the private rented sector will buy under the First Homes Scheme. The draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment suggests that 1,186 households could buy First Homes over the next 19 years. Whilst this is potentially good news for first time buyers, the number of First Homes delivered on developments will take precedence over other forms of affordable housing so there are likely to be fewer social rented or affordable rented units on new sites.
13. In the Budget 2021 the Government is proposing to introduce a mortgage guarantee scheme to help people with small deposits to get on the property ladder and offer incentives to lenders who reintroduce 95% mortgages.
14. Dudley MBC has not directly participated in the shared ownership housing market. It has built a small number of homes for outright sale with no discount but these were primarily to fund additional affordable rented housing on other sites as part of the local authority's own new build affordable housing programme. However, we did offer Help to Buy, and this was taken up by 15 of our 59 purchasers (25%).

Dudley MBC is working with housing associations (Registered Providers - RPs) who deliver a range of shared ownership housing options. This amounted to 19 new shared ownership homes in 2019/20.



	Scheme name	Provider	Number	Property	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	Rent type	Funding type	Sec 106
Q1	Himley View	Heylo	2	Apartment		2				Shared ownership	Homes England	N
Q1	Fairfields	Heylo	1	House				1		Shared ownership	Homes England	N
Q2	Fairfields	Heylo	2	House			2			Shared ownership	Homes England	N
Q3	Fairfields	Heylo	3	House				3		Shared ownership	Homes England	N
Q3	Catesby View Tansey Gr	WHG	2	Apartment		2				Shared ownership		Y
Q3	Fairfields	WHG	2	House		2				Shared ownership		Y
Q4	Fairfields	Heylo	2	House			2			Shared ownership	Homes England	N
Q4	Catesby View Tansey Gr	WHG	3	House			3			Shared ownership		Y
Q4	Fairfields	WHG	2	House				2		Shared ownership		Y

There are a number of RP led schemes just starting on site or forecast to start shortly that will deliver a number of opportunities to purchase affordable home ownership homes over the next 12-24 months including:

- Cochrane Rd (Midland Heart/Countryside) - 132 all affordable homes. 32 of the homes are earmarked for shared ownership.
 - Bull St (Platform) 80 units all affordable homes (mix of sales to rented to be confirmed)
 - Leys Rd (TBC) 71 homes (mix of sales to rented to be confirmed)
 - Vine St (Midland Heart/Countryside) 21 homes (mix of sales to rented to be confirmed).
15. The Government has released £7.39 billion funding to promote the creation of social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership homes through the Homes England Affordable Homes Programme 2021 to 2026. It is seeking to deliver 130,000 affordable homes by March 2026 (outside of London). This includes funding to enable prospective home owners to purchase a minimum of 10% share of a new home whilst placing repair and maintenance liabilities for the first 10 years on the housing provider. Dudley MBC is registered as an Investment Partner with Homes England and could choose to deliver shared ownership products. This would require Policy approval, setting up new financing arrangements and probably require additional staffing/expertise to deal with the sales and the administration of loans/mortgages.

Alternatively, we could continue to give strategic support to other providers who can deliver low cost home ownership, without entering the market ourselves.

Finance

16. The Council's strategic work and its provision as a social landlord are funded from housing core budgets and government grants. The financial implications of any change in strategic approach would need to be considered, taking into account available funding streams and maximisation of resources.



Law

17. The Localism Act 2011 gives any local authority in England the general power of competence to do 'anything that individuals may do.' This is provided that it is not prohibited by any other legislation.

Equality Impact

18. An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken on the recent and new initiatives. This would have to be completed prior to the implementation of any Policy recommendations.
19. The Public Sector Equality Duty under s.149 Equality Act 2010 places positive duties on the Council not just to eliminate such discrimination, but also to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between groups.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

20. This report has no current direct implications for Human Resources or Organisational Development.

Commercial/Procurement

21. This report has no direct procurement or commercial implications at this stage as it is for information and discussion.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

22. The provision of good quality, affordable homes have an important role in delivering health, well-being and safety outcomes as there are identified links between poor housing conditions, homelessness/rough sleeping and poor health, mental health and mortality rates.



Paul Davies
Director of Housing & Community Services

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Working as One Council in
the historic capital of the Black Country



Place Scrutiny Committee – 31st March 2021

Report of the Director of Housing and Community Services

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Housing Investment

Purpose

1. This report is to update Scrutiny Committee Members on the work to create an implementation plan for the approved asset strategy. This is being facilitated by the Housing specialists Ark and has involved tenant representatives to date to develop ways to consult tenants. The work will then be widened to include ward level consultation with Members over the summer so that an implementation plan from 2022 to 2030 can be developed.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the contents of the report are noted.

Background

3. The Asset Strategy is a good technical analysis of the condition of the Dudley MBC stock, comprising mainly stock condition and financial modelling. The Strategy was developed before the HRA borrowing cap was removed, and when the previous national rent reduction restrictions were in place. The Strategy is therefore being updated to include the latest analysis, and the opportunity to borrow prudentially a further £100m to invest in the stock.

Importantly as part of this update it is necessary to involve a greater variety of stakeholders, particularly tenants and their representatives. The company Ark were therefore engaged in August 2020 to develop mechanisms to consult and receive feedback on investment options, and ways that could be carried out at a local, neighbourhood level. Covid restrictions have cut heavily across the planned work, which to date has been carried out through virtual workshops, but as circumstances permit this will be widened to include techniques such as “planning for real” and surveys.

4. The results from this will then be shared and considered at Ward level with local Members, and combined with the technical analysis it will be used to develop an overall Asset Investment Plan (Implementation Plan for the Strategy) to be approved by Cabinet. This will be further developed so there are rolling three-year plans for each neighbourhood that are visible to Members, residents, and partners.
5. Since introducing the “Red Amber Green” grading in the Asset Strategy, there has been some concern and queries that red means demolition and green means investment. That could never be the case, it is a stock condition and financial analysis “can opener” to inform strategy, which needs to be balanced with housing need, demographics and tenants aims for their homes.

Information

6. A revised £296m five-year HRA outline capital programme has been agreed (March 2021) to reflect latest forecasts. The implementation plan for this will need to be arrived at through a detailed appraisal of the options against an agreed set of evaluation and decision-making criteria. That will support the neighbourhood plans that will include housing services in the round not just physical investment. Aims can include
 - Works to ensure there is a sustainable stock aligned to changing demographics and local housing need.
 - Additional new build on currently vacant sites, which will increase rental income and provide sustainable and popular homes.
 - Significant remodelling and refurbishment of existing stock, which may reduce rental income at least in the short term whilst major works are on site but will also reduce repair and maintenance costs.
7. Given the scale of the challenge and the need to make some major investment decisions, working with Members, residents and service users’ needs to be at the heart of this approach to planning and delivering the works needed. This will mean involving and consulting with people through an ongoing process of engagement on decision making around options and plans for their area or estate. This process of engagement has already been piloted, with ARK issuing a questionnaire and holding on-line workshops with the main groups of involved residents in late 2020. A Phase 2 consultation is now being planned by ARK between May and July 2021.

Finance

8. Section 76 of the Local Government and Housing Act places a duty on the Council to ensure that no action will be taken that may cause a deficit to arise on the HRA at 31 March 2022. A duty is also placed on the Council to review the financial prospects of the HRA from time to time.



Law

9. HRA finances are governed by Section 74-78B and 85-88 in Part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Sections 167-175 in Part VII of the Localism Act 2011 abolish the HRA Subsidy system (Sections 79-84 in Part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989) and introduce self-financing. The HRA is also governed by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government guidance on the operation of the HRA ring-fence published in November 2020.

The Localism Act 2011 gives any local authority in England the general power of competence to do 'anything that individuals may do.' This is if it is not prohibited by any other legislation.

Equality Impact

10. The implementation plan will have a detailed impact analysis as part of the decision-making process.

The Public Sector Equality Duty under s.149 Equality Act 2010 places positive duties on the Council not just to eliminate such discrimination, but also to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between groups.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

11. This report has no current direct implications for Human Resources or Organisational Development.

Commercial/Procurement

12. This report has no direct procurement or commercial implications at this stage as it is for information and discussion.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

13. The provision of good quality, affordable homes have an important role in delivering health, well-being and safety outcomes as there are identified links between poor housing conditions, and poor health and adverse education and economic impacts.



Paul Davies
Director of Housing and Community Services

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Place Scrutiny Committee – 31st March, 2021

Report of the Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report 2020/21

Purpose

1. To consider the annual overview and scrutiny report for 2020/21.

Recommendations

2. That the Committee receive and comment on the attached draft annual report.
3. That the Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer), following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to make any necessary amendments to update the annual report prior to its submission to the Council.
4. That the Committee identify any items that need to be rolled-forward for inclusion in the draft Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2021/22.

Background

5. The Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules, as set out in the Council's [Constitution](#), require that an annual overview and scrutiny report is submitted to the Council.
6. The Committee's draft annual report for 2020/21 is attached as an Appendix. Minutes and outcomes of all Scrutiny Committee meetings can be accessed online via the [Committee Management Information System](#). Subject to any amendments, the Annual Report will be presented to the Council on 19th April, 2021.
7. The Council has recognised the importance of retaining an annual review and report process. This is to ensure that the arrangements continue to align themselves to the needs of the Council and that the scrutiny arrangements remain adaptable and flexible to changes in circumstances.



Draft Annual Scrutiny Programme 2021/22

8. Work to develop the Annual Scrutiny Programme at this stage needs to allow for flexibility given any potential changes arising from the annual meeting of the Council. All Scrutiny Committee Chairs/Vice-Chairs, Officers and others will be invited to contribute to the development of the Annual Scrutiny Programme.
9. Arising from the annual report, the views of the Committee are invited on any items that need to be 'rolled forward' to the next municipal year or any items they would like to suggest at this stage for inclusion in the draft Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2021/22.
10. Members will be aware that it is being proposed that the following Scrutiny Committees be constituted by the Council for the 2021/22 municipal year:
 - Future Council Scrutiny Committee
 - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
 - Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
 - Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee
11. A meeting of the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs is being provisionally scheduled for 27th May, 2021 to discuss the Annual Scrutiny Programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.

Finance

12. The costs of operating the Council's scrutiny arrangements are being contained within existing budgetary allocations.

Law

13. Scrutiny Committees are established in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and the requirements of the Council's Constitution, which was adopted under the Local Government Act 2000, subsequent legislation and associated Regulations and Guidance.
14. Scrutiny powers relating to health are included in the Health and Social Care Acts 2001 and 2012, and associated Regulations and statutory guidance. The Police and Justice Act 2006 gives the Council powers to scrutinise the work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables local authorities to scrutinise other partners. Much of this legislation is consolidated in the Localism Act 2011.

Equality Impact

15. Provision exists within the scrutiny arrangements for overview and scrutiny to be undertaken of the Council's policies on equality and diversity.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

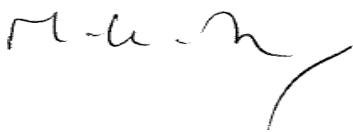
16. Overview and Scrutiny work is primarily administered within the resources available to the Democratic Services Team with support from Directorates and other Officers as required. Any proposals to develop the Council's overview and scrutiny functions have to be set in the context of the resources available and the organisational capacity to support scrutiny work.

Commercial/Procurement

17. This report has no impact on the Council's potential to commercially trade. Individual items included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme may have commercial implications, which will be reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

18. Reports to Scrutiny Committees will consider the impact on the health, wellbeing and safety of the Borough's citizens. This is consistent with building stronger, safer and more resilient communities in line with the Dudley Vision and to protect our residents' physical, and emotional health for the future.



Mohammed Farooq
Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

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Appendix

Draft Annual Report 2020/21

List of Background Documents

[The Council's Constitution](#) – Article 6 and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules

Scrutiny Reports and Minutes available on the [Committee Management Information System](#)



**Chair -
Councillor Matt
Rogers**

Annual Report of the Place Scrutiny Committee

2020/2021 Muncipal Year



**Vice-Chair –
Councillor Alan
Finch**

Our role involves the scrutiny of matters falling within the functions of the former Place Directorate and currently the Directorates of Public Realm, Regeneration and Enterprise and Housing and Community Services and the Cabinet portfolios of appropriate Cabinet Member(s).

Amendments to the process and spend for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood Funding

The Committee considered a report on the proposed approach to the spend of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood Funding.

Outcome of the Place Scrutiny Committee held on 9th July, 2020

- *A presentation be provided to all Members of the Council on the proposed approach to the spend of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood Funding with a view to considering and discussing further options.*

That the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 23rd September, 2020, recommended

- *That the rolling forward of remaining CIL monies for consideration of spend be approved.*
- *That the transfer of up to £60,000.00 Capital and Revenue Infrastructure CIL receipts to Shell Corner Partnership following receipt of costings and completion for public realm improvements to Shell Corner, be approved, and if work is not completed by September 2022, the monies be made available to alternative projects.*
- *That the transfer of £8,367.91 Capital and Revenue Infrastructure CIL receipts to Black Country Radio, following receipt of detailed costings and completion of works for studio equipment relating to the new digital studio, be approved, and if work is not completed by September 2022, the monies be made available to alternative projects.*
- *That the revised CIL Instalments Policy (September 2020) be approved.*
- *That the revised CIL Instalments Policy (2020) be adopted with effect from 24th September 2020.*

The Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension

Members considered an update on the progress with the delivery of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension (WBHE).

At the meeting held on 29th January, 2020, it was agreed that a six monthly update on the WBHE project be provided to Members.

Outcome:

Place Scrutiny Committee – 24th September, 2020

- *A report and presentation from representatives from organisations associated with the WBHE, together with “real life” examples of local residents that had already benefited from the project, engagement strategies, focusing on the more deprived areas of the Borough and key outputs and indicators of the project and how these would be monitored, be provided to the Committee in three months’ time.*

Place Scrutiny Committee – 28th January, 2021

- *A detailed response to the Ward Councillor for Castle and Priory be provided on details and plans of the new interchanges and re-routing of various bus routes associated with the project.*
- *Further information be provided to Members in relation to the economic benefits of the WBHE.*

Potential improvements to Smestow Valley Dis-Used Railway Line

The Committee considered a report on work undertaken to date and the potential for future improvements to the Smestow Valley dis-used railway line.

Outcome:

- *That the content of the report be noted and future opportunities for further development and improvement works to the route going forward be supported.*
- *That detailed designs and cost estimates for the improvement works to the Lines walk from Pensnett to Himley be provided to Members.*
- *That all potential funding streams, including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and prudential borrowing be explored, to allow the improvement scheme to proceed timeously within the next twelve to twenty-four months.*
- *That relevant Scrutiny Committees be updated annually with progress, along with local ward elected members for Brockmoor and Pensnett.*

Air Quality Monitoring in Dudley Borough

Members considered a report on the current position with respect to air quality monitoring within Dudley Borough and compliance with the National Objectives for Air Quality.

Outcomes:

- *The continuation of air quality monitoring to show the general improvement in air quality across the Dudley Borough be supported.*
- *That enhanced air quality monitoring at locations where poor air quality was suspected and to demonstrate that measures to improve air quality had been successful, be supported.*
- *The measures being undertaken to improve air quality be supported.*
- *That data identifying air quality trends in Brierley Hill and other areas of improvement be circulated to Members.*
- *That the Environmental Health Manager be requested to make enquiries to identify what assistance was provided to self-employed taxi drivers/operators and circulate information to Members.*

Street Cleansing Service

The Committee considered a report on the Street Cleansing Service delivered by the Directorate of Public Realm.

Outcome:

- *The measures being undertaken to further improve the service and standards of cleanliness across the Borough be supported.*
- *That figures in relation to the associated and ongoing costs in relation to the Travellers Site at Budden Road be provided to Members.*

Housing Allocations Policy

The Committee considered a report on the Review of the Housing Allocations Policy.

At the Cabinet meeting on 31st October, 2019 it was agreed that a cross-party Member/Officer Working Group be established to consider the Housing Allocation Policy. The Working Group was established in November 2019, which included consultation with people on the housing waiting list. Consultation had recently completed on the proposals, which had been identified by Working Group, and would be considered further at Cabinet in February, 2021.

Outcome

- *That the information contained in the report, and as presented verbally at the meeting be noted and the proposals identified by the cross party Working Group be submitted to the February Cabinet for further consideration.*
- *That illustrations highlighting various housing options available based on housing stock and affordability be prepared and circulated to Members to inform them on how the system, in terms of purchasing properties, would operate.*

The following items to be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 31st March, 2021:-

- Homelessness
- Shortage of affordable homes and potential assistance to first time buyers to access the housing market
- Housing Board
- Housing Investment Strategy
- Review of the Council's Vehicle Fleet

Other Items Considered by the Committee in the 2020/21 Municipal Year

Scrutiny Committee

- *Medium Term Financial Strategy*
- *Review of Housing Finance*

Ongoing items for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee

Items requiring further scrutiny or to be included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2021/22 are listed below:-

- *Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension (Six monthly reports)*
- *Medium Term Financial Strategy*
- *Review of Housing Finance*