



# Capital Strategy

2008 - 2013

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# DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL CAPITAL STRATEGY 2008 - 2013

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## Introduction

- 1 Dudley has a strong reputation for being an outward-looking Council, working with its diverse communities, customers and other partners to identify and work together on local priorities to improve quality of life. We have recognised that tackling crosscutting issues such as regeneration, social exclusion and sustainable development needs a joined-up approach across Council services, and between the Council and its partners. Our key priorities and targets are set out in the Dudley Borough Community Strategy. This Strategy sets out a vision for our community over a 15-year period. It agrees the most important areas for us to work together with our partners, and sets out what we need to do to achieve that vision.
2. At the heart of the Community Strategy is our aim of working together to achieve Stronger Communities. The strength of our community, including its future success requires that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to and achieve their full potential. The Community Strategy outlines six priorities through which progress towards a Fairer Society will be led. These are:
  - **Creating a prosperous borough**
  - **Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone**
  - **Celebrating our heritage and local cultural life**
  - **Safeguarding and improving the environment**
  - **Promoting individual and community learning**
  - **Making Dudley a safe and peaceful place in which to live**
3. We recognise that these six priorities do not stand in isolation. Success in one area often depends on success in one or more of the others, but by highlighting them as key issues, the Community Strategy provides a clear signpost to the areas that we intend to concentrate upon.
4. Within the framework of the Community Strategy, the Council has also adopted a 3 Year Council Plan, which focuses the overall strategic direction of the authority on a clear set of priorities for deployment of resources. The Council Plan contains six key themes, which meet the aspirations of the council's overall vision Local People Matter. It clearly sets out the key priorities, objectives and targets for each theme and its local impact. These themes are:
  - **Caring Matters**
  - **Environment Matters**
  - **Learning Matters**
  - **Regeneration Matters**
  - **Safety Matters**
  - **Quality Service Matters**
5. The Capital Strategy is one of the means by which the priorities of the Community Strategy and Council Plan will be achieved. We recognise that to accomplish our goals, best possible use needs to be made of existing public sector assets, while resources available for new investment must be deployed as efficiently and effectively as possible. The Council's Constitution also recognises the importance of the Capital Strategy by making it one of the key documents which can be revised only by the Full Council.

6. The Capital Strategy itself was developed, and is reviewed annually, by a working group of senior officers including representatives of all Directorates, with input from Directors, and Cabinet & Select Committee members, prior to consideration by the Full Council.

### **Links to other Strategies and Plans**

7. Under the umbrella of the Community Strategy & Council Plan, the Capital Strategy, like the Best Value Performance Plan is one of the key overarching policy documents of the Council that form a framework for the more operational strategies within particular spending or service areas. These include:

- Corporate Property Policy, Office Accommodation Strategy, Commercial Property Policy and Directorate Asset Plans.
- Our approved Local Area Agreement (LAA)
- Schools Asset Management Plan
- Housing Strategy and Housing Investment Programme (HIP)
- Education Development Plan
- Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Highways Asset Plan
- Economic Strategy
- 5 Year ICT Strategy
- Directorate Strategic Plans
- Procurement Strategy
- 30 Year Waste Strategy

The Capital Strategy is consistent with these and other Council plans and policies but should be specifically considered in conjunction with the Corporate Property Policy. The Corporate Property Policy pulls together the Council's various objectives for property and its impact on the wider role of the Council into a coherent framework of values.

8. The Council's Procurement Strategy is also fundamental to Capital Investment processes, and sets out how best value will be achieved in this and all other areas of procurement activity.
9. The Council now has five year Directorate Asset Plans in place for each Directorate. Reviewed annually these documents consider the needs and aspirations of all services in the context of current and future accommodation needs. They are consistent with strategic plans and policies and inform the capital programming process.
10. As these and other policy or strategy documents are developed or revised, they will show clearly how they contribute to the Capital Strategy. The cross-departmental management framework established to develop the Capital Strategy will ensure that the necessary consistency and feedback into service strategies is achieved.

### **Key Capital Investment Priorities**

11. Key Capital Investment priorities for each of the Council's Directorates, and how they contribute to the Council Plan themes (recognising that all services contribute in some way to all themes), are as follows.

## **Children's Services**

### **Schools**

12. *Learning Matters* - By providing high quality accommodation conducive to a stimulating learning environment for school pupils and members of the community, ensuring that educational standards continue to rise. Over the next five years the priorities will be to maximise external investment in the infrastructure, and to ensure that overall patterns of investment from all sources are both "joined-up" and take account of Council priorities. In this broad context, the key investment priorities over the next five years will be:
- To address the backlog of urgent repairs and maintenance identified by condition surveys for all schools.
  - To address issues identified by schools regarding the unsuitability of teaching areas - including the replacement of mobile classroom accommodation in a number of schools and the enhancement of existing provision to make it more appropriate for quality teaching and learning.
  - To address the lack of teaching accommodation where projected pupil numbers are higher than provided for through revised calculations of More Open Enrolment figures for all schools in accordance with DfES Sufficiency criteria.
  - To address the issues of surplus capacity in the both the primary and secondary sectors in line with projects arising from the review of primary and secondary school places.
  - To explore potential for further PFI projects to replace those school buildings with the most urgent need, as identified by the principles of Asset Management Planning, including condition and suitability of existing provision and assessment of sufficiency of pupil places, and in particular to develop proposals for the DfES "Building Schools for the Future" (BSF) secondary school replacement and refurbishment programme.
    - To continue effective bidding for external funding especially Targeted Capital Funding (TCF) to replace those school buildings with the most urgent need as identified by the principles of Asset Management Planning.
  - To develop the infrastructure required to deliver the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Strategy.
  - The development of integrated Children's Centres in the context of the overall Sure Start programme.
  - To continue addressing issues regarding access for disabled persons to all buildings.
  - To explore the use of innovative methods of procurement and building that will deliver cost-effective and high quality buildings for education and lifelong learning.
  - To address effectively issues relating to asbestos in schools.

### **Other Children's Services**

13. *Caring Matters* - by maintaining and developing an asset base which allows the directorate to modernise and improve social care services, further securing high quality and relevance. Priorities are:
- development of integrated services in the context of the Children Bill/Act;
  - development of a Children's Resource Centre focussing on outcomes for looked after children which will also support the implementation of the outcomes of "Every Child Matters."

The recently published National Service Framework (NSF) for children will need a sub-regional and/or local focus to increase capacity to meet placement need, especially for more specialist settings, e.g. Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services. The Directorate is investigating and leasing additional staff accommodation to alleviate the pressure on existing accommodation caused amongst other things by new initiatives in Children's Services, presently being delivered with the aid of central government funding.

## **Adult, Community & Housing**

### ***Housing***

14. *Environment Matters; Quality Service Matters ;Regeneration Matters* - by ensuring everyone has access to a home that is warm, dry and affordable in a secure environment and that homes are compatible with people's needs. Following a rigorous appraisal of the options available to finance a modern housing service by the Council and its stakeholders, in July 2005 Government Office West Midlands signed off the Housing Option Appraisal report which recommended the 'Stay with the Council' option. This provided a clear endorsement that the key investment priorities for Housing up to 2010/11 were to provide a repair service to maintain and improve the Council's housing stock to ensure that Government Decent Homes standards and targets are met.

Significant Housing investment priorities for the next 5 years are:

- Providing a Decent Homes Delivery plan to outline how investment will be maintained to achieve the Government's Decent Homes target of making all homes decent by 2010;
- Maintaining responsive repairs at their current levels to ensure that current service standards can be met and ensuring that a future backlog of routine repairs will not develop;
- Undertaking all required cyclical statutory responsibilities such as servicing of gas appliances, water hygiene testing, warden call equipment and alarms, and lift servicing;
- Maintaining current levels of cyclical maintenance such as external painting of properties, communal decorations to high rise and sheltered accommodation;
- Improving energy efficiency, combating climate change and reducing fuel poverty, targeting those homes with poor energy performance;
- Maintaining waiting times for adaptations for persons with disabilities;
- Maintaining Community Safety budgets at current levels;
- Maintaining other environmental and social programmes to reflect the priorities of the Council Plan and the views of Area Housing Panels, e.g. replacement of Warden Call systems with modern equipment compatible with Telecare technology;
- Use of grant and loan aid to deal with unfitness and substantial disrepair in the private sector;
- To sustain our improved performance in providing Disabled Facilities Grants;
- Continued direction of Housing Corporation funding towards schemes that support regeneration and sustainable priorities and continuing to maximise available and appropriate resources to ensure that local needs determined from the Housing Needs Survey are met.

## ***Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning***

15. *Learning Matters* - by the following investment priorities:

- Provision of a modern Archives and Local History Service;
- Improving and modernising the Libraries building stock to create an excellent modern library service with bright, light flexible libraries acting as a focus for their community, including an external funding bid for a major extension to Kingswinford Library with a Library Link provided for neighbouring Pensnett and investigating the feasibility of delivering a new library facility in Brierley Hill in partnership with Stourbridge College.

## ***Other Adult & Community***

16. *Caring Matters* - by maintaining and developing an asset base which allows the directorate to modernise and improve social care services, further securing high quality and relevance. The changing policy environment for the most vulnerable groups in contact with the Directorate focuses on promoting independence and providing community-based and person-centred solutions. The need for capital to be used to support this focus drives our capital strategy.

In addition, there is a clear expectation locally and from the Government that services need to be seamless and, wherever appropriate and in the best interests of Dudley citizens, integrated with health care services.

These four goals - community based, person centred, seamless and integrated - also drive our approach to effective partnership working as a vehicle for enhancing limited mainstream capital resources.

For adult social care, developments will be required that meet the aims and ambitions of the Community Services White Paper "Our Health, Our Care, Our Say". Aspects of this include continued close working with the local PCTs and linkage with other solutions such as Extra Care Housing.

Current investment priorities are therefore:

- People with Disabilities: work is continuing with partners in the NHS in using the 'flexibilities' of the Health Act 1999 to secure progress on our shared agenda.
- Older People: our residential home provision must comply with care standards and be appropriate to the needs of residents. Continued investment to comply with the various legislative requirements will continue for the foreseeable future,
- Extra Care Housing: procuring and engaging with a strategic partner to deliver up to five extra housing schemes, with one facility being provided in each of the five townships of the Borough - the first facility in Russells Hall Dudley being planned for 2009;
- Day Services: most people with a learning disability will receive their day opportunities in the community but for people with very high dependency, improved centre facilities are required - including the replacement of Lower Gornal centre with a new purpose built centre in the North of the Borough;
- ICT: is continuing to be developed so that it further enhances service delivery for all the vulnerable groups, e.g. through closer working with health services, and ICT-supported assessment processes.

- General Accommodation: improving accommodation for staff and where possible integrating these facilities with relevant partners. For example, the Stourbridge Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) facility opened in October 2007 and will house the Community Team for Learning Disability. Building work on the Brierley Hill LIFT facility will commence in June 2007 with completion scheduled for February 2010. This facility will provide accommodation for the Older People/Physical Disability Team and the District Housing Office which will be co-located with PCT staff. The Council has also now signed up to the Strategic Partnering Agreement for LIFT on a non-exclusive basis.

Prioritisation of resources between schemes is informed by legislative requirements, as well as property and service related data related to schemes under consideration.

The Council's vision for social care provision is based on a mixed economy of care, and decisions on capital expenditure are taken in this context.

## **Urban Environment**

### ***Transport***

17. *Environment Matters; Regeneration Matters; Safety Matters* - by implementing schemes that will support sustainable economic development, offer genuine choice in transport modes, and protect the environment. Key investment priorities set out by the Department for Transport seek to address safety, air quality, accessibility and congestion. Schemes to be delivered in the West Midlands that address these priorities have been agreed with DfT and feature in the 2005 West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP), including:

- Extending Midland Metro from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill;
- The Brierley Hill Sustainable Access Scheme
- The Burnt Tree island improvement
- Refurbishment / replacement of Dudley, Halesowen and Stourbridge Bus Stations;
- Re-establishment of the Walsall to Stourbridge line for rail freight;
- Continued Local Safety, Pedestrian Crossing, Cycleway, Road Maintenance, Minor Highway Improvement, and Bridge Strengthening programmes;
- Continued programme of renewing and upgrading street lighting, illuminated traffic sign and traffic signal installations;
- Examination of options for demand management through the Transport Innovation Fund;
- Consideration of bus network improvements in particular access to Brierley Hill
- Introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement
- Consideration of highway improvements associated with potential Red Route designation for the A458.

The main priority is the Access Strategy for Brierley Hill.

## ***Culture & Community***

18. *Environment Matters; Safety Matters; Caring Matters* - by safeguarding existing culture and heritage facilities, and developing new ones where appropriate. Key investment priorities over the next 5 years are:
- Provision of additional cremators, and renewal of existing at Gornal Wood and Stourbridge Crematoria, and provision of mercury abatement equipment at Gornal Wood.;
  - On-going upgrading of facilities and security of Parks and nature reserves;
  - Improvements to playing pitches and changing facilities as identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy;
  - Modernisation of Health and Fitness facilities within Leisure Centres;
  - On-going restoration of the Leasowes, including the provision of a new visitor centre;
  - Addressing access issues in all our public leisure facilities to ensure that the Council fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act;
  - Feasibility study into the potential amalgamation of the Council's Glass Heritage facilities to create a single iconic Museum and Tourism facility;
  - Feasibility study into the development of a Sports Village complex for Dudley;
  - Responding to the priorities emerging from the Black Country Sports Facilities Strategy
  - Development of Himley Hall North Wing;
  - Provision of network of local leisure facilities, multi-use games areas, ball courts and play facilities;
  - Renovation of Priory Park and Priory Monument through Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) "Parks for People" funding;
  - Implementation of Wren's Nest HLF Big Lottery projects subject to bidding success.

## ***Regeneration***

19. *Regeneration Matters* - by using the Council's enabling role to stimulate economic regeneration. Key investment priorities over the next 5 years are:
- Support to the development of the Wrens Nest National Nature Reserve as a heritage destination through both the Black Country Urban Park Peoples Millions bid to the Big Lottery Fund and Dudley's bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund;
  - Seeking resources from DEFRA to enable replacement of the Mines Drainage system at Pensnett;
  - Regeneration of the borough's town, district and local centres;
  - Maximum use of regeneration funding such as European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and Regeneration Zone resources, for the Council and its partners' regeneration initiatives;
  - Work with partner organisations to bring forward brownfield sites for development and open space purposes;
  - Redevelopment of the Castle Hill site in Dudley to transform the area into a major visitor attraction;
  - Development of an Innovation Campus to attract knowledge based businesses and jobs to the Borough;
  - Development of a Think Local policy with the aim that procurement secures local employment and reduces the carbon footprint associated with working for the Council.



## ***Environment***

20. *Environment Matters, Regeneration Matters; Safety Matters* - by promoting and providing effective and efficient waste management and transport to all sections of the community and user groups in a positive, safe and sustainable manner. Key priorities are:
- improvements to waste infrastructure and implementation of a 30 year strategy;
  - transition to domestic wheeled bin service;
  - additional pollution control equipment at Lister Road Waste to Energy plant;
  - implementation of Asset Management Plan at Lister Road depot;
  - continued investment in the vehicle fleet, exploring options that will reduce carbon emissions;
- Identification and remediation of Contaminated Land in line with the Council's Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy, in order to meet our legal obligations under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

## **Chief Executive's**

21. *Safety Matters; Quality Services Matter* - by the following key investment priorities:
- Investment in projects directly contributing to the local Community Safety Strategy;
  - Development of Customer/Citizen Access to Services through Dudley Council Plus and other initiatives as appropriate. This will also give the Council an opportunity to rationalise its property usage via disposal and consolidation of properties, redevelopment of property and acquisition of new properties. These efficiencies will need to be identified at a Corporate and Directorate level.

## **Finance, ICT & Procurement**

22. *Quality Services Matter* - by further capital investment in ICT In particular, over the next 5 years, we expect to:
- Develop ICT infrastructure to support transformation of Council Services around the needs of the citizen, including: home working; mobile working; improved information management; development of more self-service delivery opportunities; single citizen's index; better integration of systems.
  - Renew critical components of the existing infrastructure to ensure the continued reliability of ICT applications across the council, including the Microsoft Server Platform; Microsoft SQL Server; and Microsoft Office Systems.
  - Integrate the Schools' data network with the Council's main data network at the end of the 10 year PFI contract which will provide opportunities for greater efficiencies through a single solution.

## **Law & Property**

23. *Quality Services Matter* - by the following key investment priorities:
- Exploring options to regenerate areas of Dudley Town Centre that will address the Council's existing office accommodation problems, and recommending a viable proposal for consideration by the Cabinet;
  - Proactive management of the Council's land and buildings assets, and prioritisation of the annual Repair & Maintenance resource allocation;
  - A programme of Access works to ensure that the Council meets its Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) obligations.

## **Planning, Prioritisation and Implementation**

24. All capital investment and disposal decisions are consistent with the aspirations outlined within this and the Council's other key strategic plans and policies. The Council has a rolling three year capital programme setting out its detailed capital investment plans, which is driven by this Capital Strategy and is based on forecast resource availability in terms of:
- Government grants and Supported Capital Expenditure allocations (SCEs);
  - Revenue resources available for direct capital investment and to fund unsupported capital expenditure under the "Prudential Borrowing" regime;
  - Resources likely to be available from property disposals as a result of property reviews;
  - Other grants and contributions from public and private sector partners.
25. All projects included in the Capital Programme are justified against criteria set out within the Council's Financial Management Regime, and as required by external funders as appropriate. Prior to inclusion, every major capital project is evaluated against alternative methods of achieving the same objectives. This options appraisal is an integral part of the decision making process, ensuring best value is obtained from available resources. The Council also ensures robust prioritisation is undertaken, taking account of specific criteria. These processes are outlined in the Council's Capital Investment and Disposal Guide.
26. In addition to prioritising new capital schemes the Council also challenges retention of its existing property via the bi-annual Corporate Land and Property Review. This process enables the Council to explore opportunities for more efficient and effective use of assets in light of changing service needs arising from Best Value reviews, property performance and the annual review of each Directorate's Asset Plan. Should there be no operational, commercial or social need for property retention, surplus assets are released through disposal.
27. Revenue implications of the Capital Programme (debt charges and other costs) are fully taken into account in the Council's annual revenue budget and medium term financial strategy. In particular, pressures and priorities that can be met by (unsupported) capital investment are considered alongside other revenue pressures in the light of overall revenue resource availability.

28. Ongoing review of the Council's activities in pursuance of Best Value - and in line with the "Gershon" agenda will also identify "Invest to Save" type initiatives which can generate long term net efficiencies from upfront capital investment - e.g. energy efficiency projects. The flexibility provided by the Prudential Borrowing regime will be used to implement such projects.
29. In addition to its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, the Council has an established procurement process in place that is clearly set out within its Procurement Strategy. By improving the effectiveness of its procurement activities the Council is able to focus valuable resources where they have maximum impact. Guidelines to support procurement have been established following the Audit Commission's review of Procurement (2005), and The Council's Forward Procurement Plan (FPP) has been developed to manage major contracts.
30. Detailed guidelines for "Management of Capital Projects" are set out in the Council's Manual of Good Practice, which was formulated following the Audit Commission's Reports "Just Capital" (1996), and "Rome Wasn't Built in a Day" (1997), which constituted a handbook for obtaining value for money from capital programmes and construction projects.
31. Reviews of areas of activity with particular relevance to capital investment and asset management form part of the Council's Best Value Review programme.
32. The Strategy not only covers all aspects of Capital expenditure within the Council, but also those areas where the Council works in partnership - using its own resources as "matchfunding" to maximise the overall resources available for its own and its partners' priorities. It will also clearly inform the bidding for and management of additional capital resources (e.g. for Central Government, Europe and the National Lottery), together with sources of funding not under the strict definition of Capital - such as leasing, the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), and other partnerships. A Corporate External Funding Group, which includes a representative of the Dudley Community Partnership, has been established to progress the Council's approach to bidding for external funding.

## **Links to Partners**

33. The Council will continue to work with a wide range of partners at an operational level to carry out and/or facilitate capital projects to enable the successful implementation of the Community Strategy actions. These are too numerous to list completely, but include:

Dudley Community Partnership, and its “theme partnerships”;  
Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership;  
Neighbouring Authorities - including Police & Fire Authorities, and Centro;  
Local Hospital and Primary Care Trusts;  
Infracare (Dudley LIFT)  
Government Office for the West Midlands;  
Advantage West Midlands;  
Westfield and other Private Sector Developers;  
School Governing Bodies;  
Colleges of Further Education;  
Learning & Skills Council;  
Local Housing Associations and Registered Social Landlords;  
Tenant and Residents' Associations;  
Non-statutory care providers;  
Business Link West Midlands;  
Black Country Chamber of Commerce;  
Job Centre Plus.

## **Consultation**

34. The new Community Strategy is the outcome of a range of consultative activities which set out a range of issues and choices facing the Borough, and generated a great deal of positive public comment from individuals, groups and agencies. The Council Plan is also subject to public consultation.
35. As the Capital Strategy is one of the means by which the Community Strategy and Council Plan priorities are implemented, any changes to the Community and Council Plans arising from the above consultation will feed through into the Capital Strategy where appropriate.
36. This is supplemented by detailed stakeholder consultation on particular aspects of the Strategy where appropriate.

## **Performance Management and Innovation**

37. The Council will continue to improve the management of its capital investment activities, and adopt innovative solutions whenever possible.
38. In particular, in pursuance of Best Value (and more recently the “Gershon” agenda), the Council has already:
  - applied the principles of procurement advocated in the Latham Report, (Constructing the Team 1994) and the Egan Report, (Rethinking Construction 1998) in a number of projects;
  - adopted the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model as its framework for continuous improvement in all its functions;
  - established improvement teams to review performance management, project management, process management, people management, planning and leadership. This resulted in a number of improvements being made such as the new Corporate Project Management Guidelines. These provide structured guidance in the management of simple and complex capital projects from inception to post completion review. Use of the guide is also complemented by an improved formal training programme and a new electronic capital project directory;
  - taken a lead in introducing a West Midland Capital Programme Management System to improve governance and aid strategic management of the Local Transport Plan 2 (LTP2) Capital Programme - also introducing generic risk registers for better identification of project risks;
  - taken advantage of the Project Support Framework introduced by the Highways Agency to procure consultancy support for highway schemes;
  - put in place an Early Contractor Involvement partnership to deliver highway improvement schemes within the LTP2 period;
  - adopted the Construction Best Practice Programme national key performance indicators;
  - in addition to adopting the 5 high level national indicators for property management, developed local indicators aimed at measuring the performance of individual and groups of properties;
  - committed itself to sharing the results of performance measurement and benchmarking with stakeholders;
  - recently developed a “Capital Investment and Disposal Guide” which provides an overview of the capital investment and disposal process and sets out guidance to be followed by officers when planning for and undertaking capital investment, and when disposing of surplus assets. A complementary External Funding Code of Practice sets out the key procedures to be followed when bidding for external funding for capital and other projects.