



Meeting of the Cabinet

**Thursday 8th August, 2024 at 6.00pm
In Committee Room 2 at the Council House,
Priory Road, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 1HF**

Agenda - Public Session (Meeting open to the public and press)

1. Apologies for absence
2. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct
3. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2024 (Pages 4 - 11)
4. 2024/25 Revenue Monitoring and updates to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (Pages 12 - 38)
5. Review of Housing Finance (Pages 39 - 45)
6. Dudley Borough Cultural Strategy (Pages 46 - 56)
7. To report on any issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees.
8. To consider any questions from Members to the Leader where two clear days' notice has been given to the Monitoring Officer (Cabinet Procedure Rule 2.5)

Distribution:

Members of the Cabinet:

Councillor P Harley (Leader)

Councillor P Bradley (Deputy Leader)

Councillors P Atkins, I Bevan, S Clark, J Clinton, D Corfield, A Goddard, S Phipps and D Stanley

Opposition Group Members nominated to attend meetings of the Cabinet:

All Shadow Cabinet Members are invited to attend Cabinet meetings. Each of the other political groups on the Council may nominate members from their group to attend meetings of the Cabinet. Such members may speak at the meeting but may not vote.



Chief Executive

Dated: 31st July, 2024

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Minutes of the Cabinet

**Monday 15th July, 2024 at 4.00 pm
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley**

Present:

Cabinet Members

Councillor P Harley (Chair)

Councillor P Bradley (Vice-Chair)

Councillors P Atkins, I Bevan, S Clark, J Clinton, D Corfield, A Goddard, S Phipps and D Stanley.

Opposition Group Members nominated to attend the Cabinet

Labour Group: Councillors S Ali, C Bayton, J Cowell, J Foster, P Lowe, S Mughal, S Ridney and P Sahota.

Liberal Democrat Group: Councillor R Priest

Councillor S Keasey (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee) attended the meeting by invitation.

Observer

Councillor B Collins

Officers

B Heran (Deputy Chief Executive), M Bowsheer (Director of Adult Social Care), L Fulci (Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services), K Jones (Director of Housing and Communities), H Martin (Director of Regeneration and Enterprise), I Newman (Director of Finance and Legal), K Graham (Acting Director of Children's Services), M Wilcox (Principal Lawyer – Deputy Monitoring Officer) and S Griffiths (Democratic Services Manager)

Together with other officers and 4 members of public.



1 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors A Aston and K Casey.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor J Cowell declared a non-pecuniary interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in Agenda Item No. 5 (Review of Housing Finance) as a Council tenant.

3 **Minutes**

In relation to Minute No. 89 of the Cabinet on 20th March, 2024 (Dudley Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy), the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise was asked to liaise with Councillor P Sahota concerning the provision of details of the costs incurred for the appointment of SQW and the additional information as referred to in that Minute.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meetings held on 11th and 20th March, 2024, be approved as correct records and signed.

4 **2023/24 Provisional Revenue and Capital Outturn and Medium-Term Financial Strategy**

A joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Legal was submitted on the provisional revenue and capital outturn for 2023/24 together with changes to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Capital Programme.

The Director of Housing and Communities responded to a question from Councillor J Cowell concerning the introduction of a Transitional Support Fund to support customers struggling with the introduction of service charges.

The Leader responded to a question from Councillor P Sahota concerning the delivery of savings targets and benchmarking with other similar local authorities. An assurance was given that robust arrangements were now in place for the monitoring of savings delivery. The Deputy Chief Executive had offered a briefing to Shadow Cabinet Members on the Target Operating Model. Arrangements for a briefing on the work of the Independent Assurance Board would also be considered.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) outturns for 2023/24, be noted.
 - (2) That the effect of the General Fund outturn on unallocated General Fund balances as at 31st March 2024, be noted.
 - (3) That the proposed savings, as set out in paragraph 22 and Appendix F to the report submitted, be approved as a basis for scrutiny.
 - (4) That the Director of Environment be authorised to progress with on street parking charges and charging on currently free car parks, as set out in paragraph 25 of the report submitted, subject to associated capital and revenue budget changes being approved by the Cabinet and Council.
 - (5) That the proposal to bring forward up to £60,000 of budget from 2027/28 to year 2024/25 of the Capital Programme for works at Tiled House, be approved.
 - (6) That the additional capital budget of £1.9m for the Energy from Waste plant works be approved.
 - (7) That the Council be recommended to approve the amended allocation for the UK Sustained Prosperity Funding in the Capital Programme.
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5 **Review of Housing Finance**

A joint report of the Director of Housing and Communities and the Director of Finance and Legal was submitted on the findings of the Housing Stock Condition Surveys and associated compliance with the Decent Homes Standard. The report set out recommendations for a revised 2024/25 Housing Capital Programme to ensure compliance with the Decent Homes Standard.

The Director of Housing and Communities responded to a question from Councillor J Cowell concerning the risks and the Council's capacity for delivery to avoid an increase in non-decency levels in future years.

Resolved

- (1) That the anticipated costs of achieving Decent Homes compliance for 2024/25 to 2028/29, be noted.
- (2) That the revised five-year Housing Capital Programme, be approved.

6 **New Operating Model for Dudley MBC – Outline Blueprint**

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted presenting a high-level view of the new operating model blueprint for the Council and a summary of the case for change. The Cabinet was requested to endorse the blueprint as the basis of a whole Council transformation.

In response to comments from Councillor C Bayton, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that a briefing would be arranged for the Shadow Cabinet and this would include details of benchmarking undertaken with other public and private sector organisations and the plans relating to governance operations. Councillor P Lowe referred to the ongoing cross-party working and discussions to address key issues referred to in the report.

Resolved

- (1) That the proposed case for change and operating model blueprint, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted, be endorsed.
 - (2) That Option 1, as set out in the report, be endorsed to support the delivery of the estimated savings through implementation of the new operating model, functional reviews, and other Council-wide transformation.
 - (3) That the Chief Executive submit a costed proposal for implementation to a future meeting of the Cabinet.
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7 Long Term Plan for Towns – Update Summer 2024

A report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise was submitted on the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme and setting out the proposed next steps for approval.

The Leader accepted the comment made by Councillor P Lowe to include the relevant Shadow Cabinet Member as a consultee in the recommendation to take the necessary steps to progress the programme.

The Deputy Leader and the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise responded to concerns raised by Shadow Cabinet Members about the composition, structure, membership and local/Ward Member representation on the Town Board. The Leader emphasised that the membership of the Town Board was not decided by the Council and this would need to be pursued through the appropriate channels. The issue would be discussed further at the Town Board meeting on 19th July, 2024.

Resolved

- (1) That the work undertaken to date, the composition of the Long-Term Plan For Towns Board and the proposed next steps, be noted.

- (2) That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, Climate Change and Economic Delivery, together with the relevant Shadow Cabinet Member, be authorised to take all the necessary steps to progress the programme, including the submission of the Town Plan and the three-year Investment Plan to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
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8 Dudley MBC response to the Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire Local Plan Consultations

A report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise was submitted providing an update on recent Local Plan consultations undertaken by other Local Planning Authorities. The Cabinet was invited to note the responses submitted by Officers. The resulting recommendation was required to ensure that the Council fulfilled its legal obligations under the Duty to Cooperate and that the interests of Dudley Borough were being fully considered in the plan-making activities of other local authorities.

Resolved

- (1) That the summary of the Local Plan consultations, including the key issues arising for Dudley MBC, be noted.
 - (2) That the Officer response to the Wolverhampton Local Plan Issues and Preferred Options consultation, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted, be noted.
 - (3) That the Officer response to the new South Staffordshire Local Plan consultation, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report submitted, be noted.
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9 Land at Flood Street, Dudley

A report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise was submitted on the position in respect of land at Flood Street, Dudley. The Cabinet was requested to confirm the aspiration for the development of an Ice Rink on the site; endorse that this was consistent with wider regeneration proposals and consider the associated next steps and timescales.

The Leader responded to concerns expressed by Councillor S Ali that the development should be deliverable, achievable, in line with timescales and not regarded as an open-ended ambition. The Leader outlined that the land would not be transferred until the ice rink was built. The Deputy Leader emphasised this and confirmed that the Council would agree contractual terms for a lease and that such lease would not be entered into until the development was completed.

The Deputy Leader undertook to pursue the issues raised by Councillors C Bayton and J Foster regarding the removal of the standard Climate Change Implications paragraph from reports, particularly in the light of concerns about the potential environmental impact of this development. The Leader also responded to issues raised by Councillor P Sahota regarding potential alternative interest in the site.

In supporting the overall proposal, Councillor S Keasey raised the need to focus more specifically on the wider regeneration opportunities associated with the development. The Leader responded to a comment made by Councillor R Priest concerning possible risks associated with delays in the metro project. The Director of Regeneration and Enterprise also responded to a query from Councillor S Mughal concerning the potential loss of car parking income which would be considered as part of the detailed project.

Resolved

- (1) That the disposal of Flood Street, Dudley, for the purposes of the development of an Ice Rink and associated works, which fits with the wider regeneration proposals for Dudley, be approved and endorsed.
- (2) That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise be authorised to enter into detailed negotiations to facilitate such development with the agreed terms being reported back to Cabinet for approval.

10 Issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny/Select Committees

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

11 **Questions from Members to the Leader (Cabinet Procedure Rule 2.5)**

No questions were raised under this agenda item.

12 **Exclusion of the public and press**

Resolved

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as defined under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

13 **Land at Flood Street, Dudley**

Further to Minute No. 9 above, the Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise concerning land at Flood Street, Dudley.

A further discussion took place including reference to comparable sites, the economic impact, connectivity with Dudley Marketplace and the Town Centre, the wider regeneration benefits for surrounding areas and alternative interest in the site. Further reports would be submitted to the Cabinet in due course and the need for transparency and cross-party working was acknowledged.

Resolved

That the report and recommendations, as approved under Minute No. 9 above, be noted and confirmed.

The meeting ended at 5.10pm

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Meeting of the Cabinet – 8th August 2024

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Legal Services

2024/25 Revenue Monitoring and updates to the Medium Term Financial Strategy

Purpose

1. To report the latest forecast revenue and capital outturn for 2024/25 and consider changes to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Capital Programme.

Recommendations

2. That Cabinet note the forecast variance to budget in 2024/25 and delivery of savings set out in this report.
3. That Cabinet recommend to Council to approve savings identified in paragraph 10 and appendix C.
4. That Cabinet approve the new savings set out in paragraph 12 and appendix D as a basis for scrutiny.
5. That Cabinet consider the proposed override of spending controls as set out in paragraph 14.

Background

2024/25 Forecast Revenue Outturn

6. The latest budget set by Council shows an adverse gap between expenditure and resources of £5.6m which would be filled by using unallocated earmarked reserves. The latest budget monitoring, based on actual expenditure to the end of May, has identified a favourable forecast variance of £0.6m against the budget.

	Latest 1Budget £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Variance £m
Chief Executives	6.8	6.5	-0.3
Adult Social Care	122.2	126.6	4.4
Children's Services	87.5	90.3	2.8
Finance and Legal Services	15.1	15.1	0.0
Health and Wellbeing	2.4	2.2	-0.2
Digital, Commercial and Customer Services	18.3	18.1	-0.2
Environment	48.2	47.5	-0.7
Housing and Communities	2.3	2.2	-0.1
Regeneration and Enterprise	15.6	15.5	-0.1
Corporate & Treasury	14.1	8.0	-6.1
Total Service Costs	332.5	332.0	-0.5
Total Funding	-326.9	-327.0	-0.1
Use of Balances	5.6	5.0	-0.6

7. The significant reasons for variances against budget are summarised as follows:

- Net staff savings (£4.0m)
- Net Children's Placements +£3.0m
- Net Adult Placements +£2.6m
- Risk to Continuing Health Care income +£4.1m
- Treasury (Borrowing and Investments) (£1.5m)
- Street lighting (rollout of LED lighting and latest prices) (£0.8m)
- Green Waste collection and disposal (£0.3m)
- Energy from Waste + £0.6m
- One off income from Local Enterprise Partnership/Enterprise Zone (£1.3m)
- Release of Budget contingency (£3.3m) with no contingency left for any other pressures.
- Loss of income in areas such as Bereavement Services and Building control £0.4m
- Other net pressures £0.5m

¹ Budget represents management responsibilities.

8. Appendix A provides further detail on performance at service level. The forecast outturn as shown above includes variances on delivery of the MTFs savings planned for 2024/25, further details are shown in appendix B.

Proposed General Fund Revenue budget amendments

9. Due to our low level of reserves and significant concerns about financial sustainability, work has been undertaken to identify savings in advance of the normal budget cycle. Work continues to embed the spending controls, to undertake functional reviews and develop the target operating model. Directors will seek to deliver savings wherever possible within their delegated authority to manage their budgets. Where member decisions are required to deliver further in-year savings, these will also be brought back to Cabinet, scrutiny and Council in advance of the normal budget cycle.
10. At its meeting on 15th July 2024, the Cabinet approved a number of savings as a basis for scrutiny. The table below sets out latest proposals taking into account of scrutiny. Following review by a Working Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, discussion and agreement at Cabinet Policy Group, discussion with the Shadow Cabinet and discussion with Liberal Democrat leader, the table also includes savings from the proposed closure of Brookes Bistro. Further detail is provided in Appendix C and G.

Directorate	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
Adult Social Care	0.3	0.3	0.3
Children's Services	0.1	0.1	0.1
Digital, Commercial and Customer Services	0.1	0.1	0.1
Environment	0.7	1.4	1.4
Housing and Communities	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total	1.3	2.0	2.0

11. The impact of these budget changes, if agreed, on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), is shown below.

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
Spend as per March Council	332.4	348.9	362.9
Additional spending May Council	0.1	0.1	0.1
New Savings	(1.3)	(2.0)	(2.0)
Latest forecast outturn ²	(0.6)	1.8	1.8
Total Spend	330.7	348.8	362.8
Total Resources	326.9	338.6	350.9
Funding Gap	3.7	10.2	11.9
Unallocated General Fund b/fwd	-8.8	-5.1	5.1
Unallocated General Fund c/fwd	-5.1	5.1	17.0

12. Further savings proposals have been developed with further detail provided within appendix D. It is recommended that Cabinet agrees these savings as a basis for scrutiny.

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
Regeneration and Enterprise	0.0	0.2	0.2
Total	0.0	0.2	0.2

13. At 31st March 2022 our unringfenced revenue reserves as a proportion of net revenue spend were 19%. The average³ for all Metropolitan Councils at the same date was 55%. Calculated on the same basis, our position at 31st March 2024 has fallen to 9%. Appendix E shows the forecast position of both Dudley's unallocated and earmarked reserves.

Spending controls

14. Spending controls were approved by Cabinet in October 2023 and refined by Cabinet in March 2024. They are designed to minimise spending except where an exception applies. The exceptions are designed to maintain essential services and the Council's ability to

² The assumptions regarding Continuing Health Care income and releasing the Budget contingency have been extrapolated into 25/26 and 26/27

³ The percentage quoted is based on the Median average of all Metropolitan Councils

function. The External Auditor's statutory recommendations include a recommendation that spending controls should be strictly enforced. There is a proposal to override spending controls in order to allow funds to be released from the Community Forums grant earmarked reserve to pay for the costs of Christmas trees, lights and switch-on events in Brierley Hill, Dudley, Halesowen, Sedgley and Stourbridge. It is recommended that Cabinet consider this proposal in light of the Council's financial position and risks as set out in paragraph 22 and elsewhere in this report.

Public Health Grant (PHG)

15. The latest forecast use of Public Health Grant is shown below. This forecast builds in the impact of the grant switches referred to in this report. The estimated ring-fenced reserve as at 31.3.2025 is £1.4m.

	Budget £m	Forecast £m	Variance £m
Total Grant	23.3	23.3	0.0
Total Expenditure	24.7	26.5	1.8
Total Variance	1.4	3.2	1.8
Reserves Bfwd		4.6	
Reserves Cfwd		1.4	

Dedicated Schools Grant DSG)

16. The majority of Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) services are met from the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). As previously reported, we (in common with many other councils) have been experiencing significant financial pressures from increasing demand for children that require additional educational support. Notwithstanding the high-level recovery plan that has been agreed, there is a cumulative deficit of £38.4m on the High Needs Block, resulting in an overall DSG deficit at 31st March 2024 of £34.1m. The Government has regulated temporarily to ensure that this pressure does not impact the General Fund and has confirmed that this statutory override will be extended until 31st March 2026.
17. The Department for Education (DfE) acknowledges the pressures which local systems are experiencing delivering special educational needs and disability (SEND) services. Its 'Delivering Better Value in SEND programme' is aiming to support local authorities to improve delivery of SEND services for children and young people while ensuring services

are sustainable. This optional programme is currently providing dedicated support and funding to 55 local authorities. Dudley was selected to participate in the programme to work alongside Newton Europe, in collaboration with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) and £1m grant has been awarded to support the improvement of outcomes for children with Special Educational Needs.

18. Progress is being made in relation to the Delivering Better Value programme, which is resulting in a slowing of the increase rate in spend against the HNB, and a reduction in the rate of EHCP Needs Assessment requests. The core areas of the DBV Programme are:

- Service Redesign & Ordinarily Available;
- Developing our sufficiency;
- and Preparation for Adulthood.

19. We have completed the redesign of our specialist services (which has provided some saving to the DSG) in order that these better align to the new arrangements for Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision (as an area of co-production with partners on what is available prior to the requirement for additional HNB funding). We are continuing our sufficiency reviews which are due to complete and report later this year, and we have undertaken a range of activities with partners and providers on our Post 16 arrangements for young people and young people with SEND.

20. The latest forecast position is shown below:

	Budget £m	Forecast £m	Variance £m
Individual Schools (excluding Academies)	99.6	99.6	0.0
Central School Services	1.8	2.2	0.4
Early Years	31.3	31.3	0.0
High Needs	53.7	58.6	4.9
Total	186.4	191.7	5.3

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

21. The latest 2024/25 forecast revenue outturn for HRA is £0.5m favourable variance to budget. Summary information is provided below, but further detail is provided within appendix F.

	Budget £m	Forecast £m	Variance £m
Total Income	(109.3)	(108.0)	1.3
Total Expenditure	105.7	103.9	(1.8)
Total Variance	(3.6)	(4.1)	(0.5)

Finance

22. As set out in paragraph 13, the Council has a relatively low level of reserves. The External Auditors have on a number of occasions highlighted this fact, as well as the relatively low level of spending and Council Tax. The Director of Finance and Legal has previously highlighted the risk that it may become necessary to issue a notice under Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The forecast in paragraph 11 (subject to Council approval of proposed savings in paragraph 10 and Appendix C) shows a deficit of £3.7m leaving an Unallocated General Fund reserve at year end of £5.1m. Although this is an improvement on previous forecasts, it still leaves little scope to meet unexpected pressures.

Law

23. The Council's budget setting process is governed by the Local Government Finance Acts, 1988, 1992, and 2012, and the Local Government Act 2003.

Risk Management

24. The Corporate Risk Register recognises the risk that the Council may be unable to set and/or manage its budget so as to meet its statutory obligations within the resources available. At the last review point, this risk was allocated the rating of 20 (Very High). This rating will be reviewed in the light of the resolutions of Cabinet and Council.

Equality Impact

25. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 - the general public sector equality duty - requires public authorities, including the Council, to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't;
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.
26. Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it
 - encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
27. The duty covers the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, Directors were asked to identify which savings proposals may have a significant impact on people who share a protected characteristic and to complete equality impact assessments on these proposals in order to establish the extent of the impact. These are published on the council's website at: <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/council-community/equality/plans-policies-and-reports/equality-impact-assessments/>

Human Resources/Organisational Development

28. Severance costs required to achieve the proposed savings, including those relating to pension strain, are dependent on the proportion of savings to be met from staffing reductions and the age and length of service of the individuals being made redundant, and therefore cannot be precisely calculated at this stage.
29. Provision has been made as part of the Council's Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy to cover these costs from capital receipts.

Commercial/Procurement

30. Proposed savings in paragraph 10 and 12 include savings from a number of commercial services including Brookes Bistro.
31. The spending controls include controls over the letting of contracts.

Council Plan

32. The recommendations within this report support the financial sustainability, efficiency and providing best value priority of the 2024/25 Council Plan.

Balvinder Heran

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Balvinder Heran
Deputy Chief Executive

Iain Newman

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Iain Newman
Director of Finance and Legal Services

Contact Officers:

Rachel Cooper, Head of Financial Services

Telephone: 01384 81 4844 email: Rachel.cooper@dudley.gov.uk

2024/25 Forecast General Fund Revenue Outturn

	Latest Service Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000	Comment
Chief Executives Office	2,623	2,608	(15)	Vacancy and efficiency savings
Communications and Public Affairs	836	668	(168)	Vacancy and efficiency savings
People and Inclusion	3,320	3,200	(120)	Net vacancy and efficiency savings offsetting reduced traded service income £276
Chief Executive	6,779	6,476	(303)	

	Latest Service Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000	Comment
Access & Prevention, adults commissioning, Performance & complaints	13,324	13,299	(25)	Vacancy savings
Adult Mental Health	8,029	9,196	1,167	Residential pressure £0.252m, nursing £0.275m, Supported Living £0.695m - 10 clients above budget and fee pressures. Offset by £0.055m in other care and efficiency savings.
Adult Safeguarding & Principal Social Worker	1,812	1,812	0	
Assessment and Independence	50,116	49,092	(1,024)	£0.524m movement due to one-off MTFS adjustments. £0.500m bed based savings. Grant funding and savings in bed based packages offsetting 118 client homecare pressure. 86 client net pressure.
Dudley Disability Service	60,384	66,648	6,264	£3.859m CHC funding. £1.151m Direct Payments pressure (+8 above budget), £0.797m residential care (+5 above budget), homecare & supported living £1.049m pressure (+30 above budget) net 28 clients over, (£0.593m) short term care and other savings.
Other ASC	(11,470)	(13,470)	(2,000)	Vacancies
Adult Social Care	122,195	126,577	4,382	

	Latest Service Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000	Comment
Adolescent Safeguarding	5,292	5,233	(59)	Staff Vacancy savings
Family Safeguarding	5,273	5,273	0	
Through Care	9,626	9,626	0	
Placements	32,728	35,774	3,047	Significant emerging pressures on residential placements and supported accommodation, driven both by caseload and increasing placement costs, projected to be partially offset by service efficiencies and ongoing work to bring forward permanency arrangements wherever possible
Front Door and Partnerships	4,190	4,190	0	
Safeguarding Practice & QA	3,209	3,222	13	Salary overspend due to maternity cover costs
Other Children's Services	1,120	1,120	0	
Commissioning, Governance & Support	11,199	11,199	0	Significant risk of transport pressure, offset by vacancy savings
Family Solutions	3,602	3,162	(441)	Additional grant optimisation for 2024/25 only
Lead for Education Outcomes	4,926	5,021	96	Netherton Arts centre £60k and historic pension contribution
Children's Disability Service and SEN Team	6,381	6,504	123	
Children's Services	87,546	90,324	2,779	

	Latest Service Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000	Comment
Audit and Risk Management	445	411	(34)	Vacancy savings of (£80k) offset by £47k reduction in traded service income
Data Protection and Information Governance	160	156	(4)	Mainly Vacancy savings
Financial Services	6,894	6,629	(265)	Insurance fund review assumed to generate at least (£243k) of savings on top of (£22k) Vacancy savings
Law and Governance	5,461	5,616	155	£626k Cost of locums partially offset by (£497k) vacant posts and efficiency savings. £27k pressure on legal fees for lease agreements
Revenues and Benefits	2,170	2,318	148	£74k pressure due to reduction of DWP administration grant. £20k Additional cost of software licenses. £36k pressure on Council tax discretionary funding. £29k Additional cost of printing contract. (£11k) other net savings.
Finance and Legal Services	15,130	15,130	0	

	Latest Service Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000	Comment
Communities and Healthy Places	161	161	0	
Environmental Health and Trading Standards	3,184	3,010	(174)	Vacancy savings
H&W other	(1,055)	(1,055)	0	
Substance Misuse	132	132	0	
Health and Wellbeing	2,422	2,248	(174)	
Commercial	430	452	22	Bistro +£37k (23/24 agency cost presented in April) offset by Bars -£15k
Procurement	686	686	0	Vacancy savings offset by payroll turnover
Libraries	4,426	4,449	23	Risks on lease and legal charges, pressure due to fibre lines (Technology offsets).
Digital Customer Services	3,841	3,658	(183)	vacancy savings -£334k, agency +£150k
Technology Systems and Services	8,940	8,833	(107)	vacancy savings -£120k offset by minor variances £13k
Digital, Commercial and Customer Services	18,323	18,078	(245)	

	Latest Service Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000	Comment
Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change	7,399	7,906	507	EfW Pressure £573k (reduced forecast on Clinical Waste Income £300k, reduced forecast on PPA Income £291k, Diversion Costs £26k, offset by other savings (£44k)). HWRC Saving (£90k) South Staffs Income offset with pressure from not implementing MTFS saving. Other net favourable variances £24k
Neighbourhood Services	11,299	10,948	(351)	Street Scene (£173k) Vacancies offset by income shortfalls, utility and skip hire pressures. Parks & Arbor (£245k) Parks Development Fund -£300k offset by other net pressures +£65k. Parking £114K reduced fines £250k offset by vacancies and reduced R&M. Waste Enforcement +£57k Enviro crime and income shortfalls. Other net variances (£104k)
Transport & Highways Services	19,290	18,485	(805)	Highways (£696k) net staffing (£140k), Saving on Utilities of (£801K) due to price and LED replacement programme, and other net pressures £245k . Traffic & Transport various net savings (£94k). Other net variances (£15k)
Waste & Transport Operations	10,244	10,163	(81)	Green Waste (£349k) being income (£1,350k) offset by net staff pressure £439k, additional vehicles £331k, Permit Pressure £36k and Haulage / Disposal £193k. Recycling +£315k – net staffing £445k, Vehicle Pressure £75k offset by income (£201k) due to price mainly on glass. Other net favourable variances £47k
Environment	48,232	47,502	(730)	

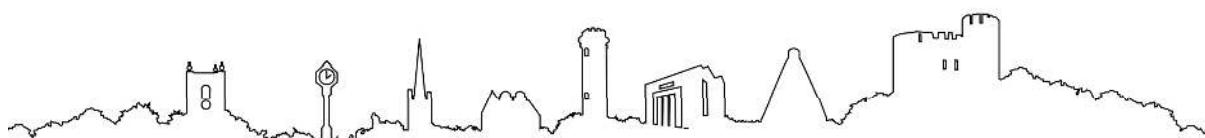
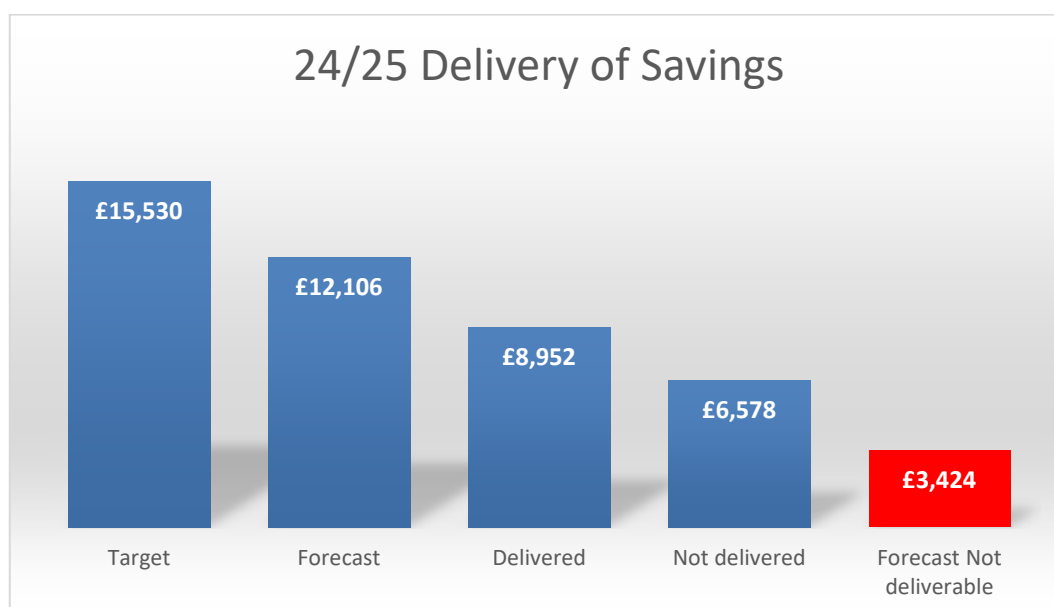
	Latest Service Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000	Comment
Community Safety	1,251	1,154	(97)	£250k grant switch achieved (representing 100% of anticipated saving under spending controls) plus making use of New Burdens Grant £30k plus vacancies.
Housing Assets & Development	211	210	(1)	
Housing Options	291	291	0	
Housing Strategy	607	620	13	Unbudgeted Licence cost
Maintenance	-50	-50	0	Reviewing utilisation of staff between General Fund and HRA
Housing and Communities	2,310	2,225	(85)	

	Latest Service Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000	Comment
Corporate Landlord Services	7,552	7,204	(348)	-£150k net savings from Harbour disposal, -£247k vacancies / implications of restructure and savings on utilities -£105k offset by under recovery on fees +£120k and legacy costs from leisure centre cafe's.
Culture, Leisure & Bereavement Services	1,581	2,029	448	Bereavement +£162k Income under-achievement based on 2023/24 outturn offset by utility savings. Sport & Leisure +£130k made up of £210k staff pressure (Includes £90k staff turnover, £70k overtime and £50k agency costs), offset by utility savings-£90k. Executive Support +£146k - Interim pressures built in all year funded and resulting from CLS restructure savings. Halls & Museums +£10k Minor variances on staffing and income.
Economic Growth & Skills	1,981	1,661	(320)	Based on 2023/24 outturn: Additional EZ savings -£70k, additional ACL savings -£150k and further maximising external funding such as UKSPF -£100k.
Planning	2,102	2,249	147	Based on 2023/24 outturn, shortfall of income after vacancies.
Projects and Placemaking	916	916	0	Assumes that any pressures can be managed across the service.
Regeneration Projects	1,415	1,415	0	Assumes that any pressures can be managed across the service.
Regeneration and Enterprise	15,547	15,474	(73)	

	Latest Service Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000	Comment
Corporate	-22,009	-25,309	(3,300)	Contingencies released, £3.3m.
Levies	15,062	13,723	(1,339)	LEP one off windfall
Treasury	21,006	19,530	(1,476)	MRP saving due to reduction in capital projects and slippage £0.470m, £1.126m saving on interest received due to reduced borrowing and favourable interest rates. £0.120m adverse movement due to latest update on airport dividends.
Corporate and Treasury	14,059	7,944	(6,115)	
Total Service costs	331,524	331,978	(464)	
Total Funding	- 326,936	-327,054	(118)	Business Rates Disregard 2023-24 recognised on General Fund in 2024/25 £0.118m
Use of unallocated General Fund balance	5,507	4,924	(582)	

Delivery of savings in current Medium Term Financial Strategy

	Target 2024/25 '000	Last Reported £'000	Delivery as at P2 £'000	Delivery as P2 %age	Latest Forecast Delivery £'000
Adult Social Care	6,730	1,402	1,402	21%	3,020
Children's Services	1,780	1,240	1,240	70%	1,780
Chief Executive	430	430	430	100%	430
Health and Wellbeing	370	370	370	100%	370
Finance and Legal	40	40	40	100%	40
Digital, Commercial and Customer Services	500	360	370	74%	500
Environment	4,150	3,680	3,690	89%	4,436
Housing and Communities	350	350	350	100%	350
Regeneration and Enterprise	1,180	1,060	1,060	90%	1,180
Total	15,530	8,932	8,952	58%	12,106

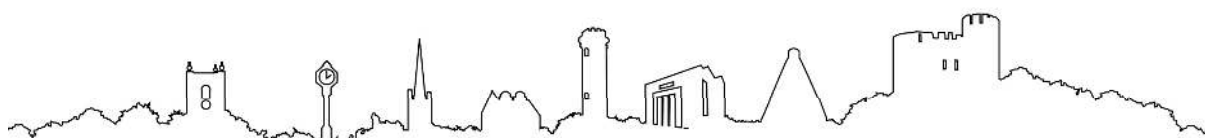


Proposed Savings to be recommended to Council

Adult Social Care	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Contribution from Public Health Grant towards the Pleased to Meet You service	300	300	300
Total	300	300	300

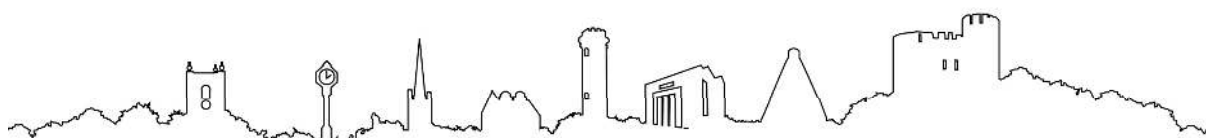
Children's Services	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Contribution from Public Health Grant towards supporting children to be ready for school, with a focus on those in the most deprived areas	100	100	100
Total	100	100	100

Digital, Commercial and Customer Services	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Redirection of centralised in-person DC+ services to local customer access points.	0	130	130
Closure of Brookes Bar & Bistro net of Dudley Townhall bar increased revenue	55	0	0
Total	55	130	130



Environment	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Reintroduction of 1 hour (tiered charges between £1.80 and £1.20) and 2 hour (£2.50) parking charges, and increasing other charges as follows - 3 hours from £2 to £3, 4 hours from £3 to £4, all day from £5 to £6. Further details shown in Appendix G	725	1,450	1,450
Total	725	1,450	1,450

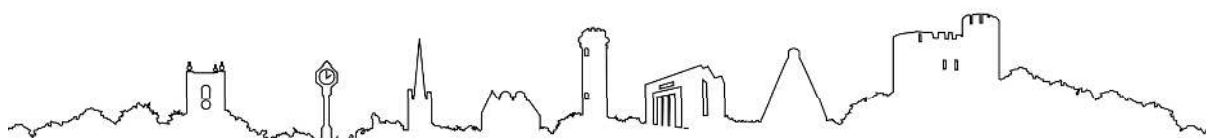
Housing and Communities	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Contribution from Public Health Grant towards private sector housing to lead on implementing the housing and health programme	116	116	116
Total	116	116	116



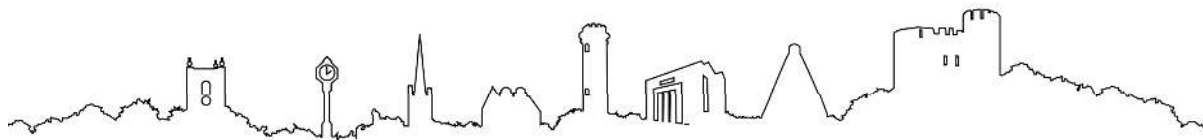
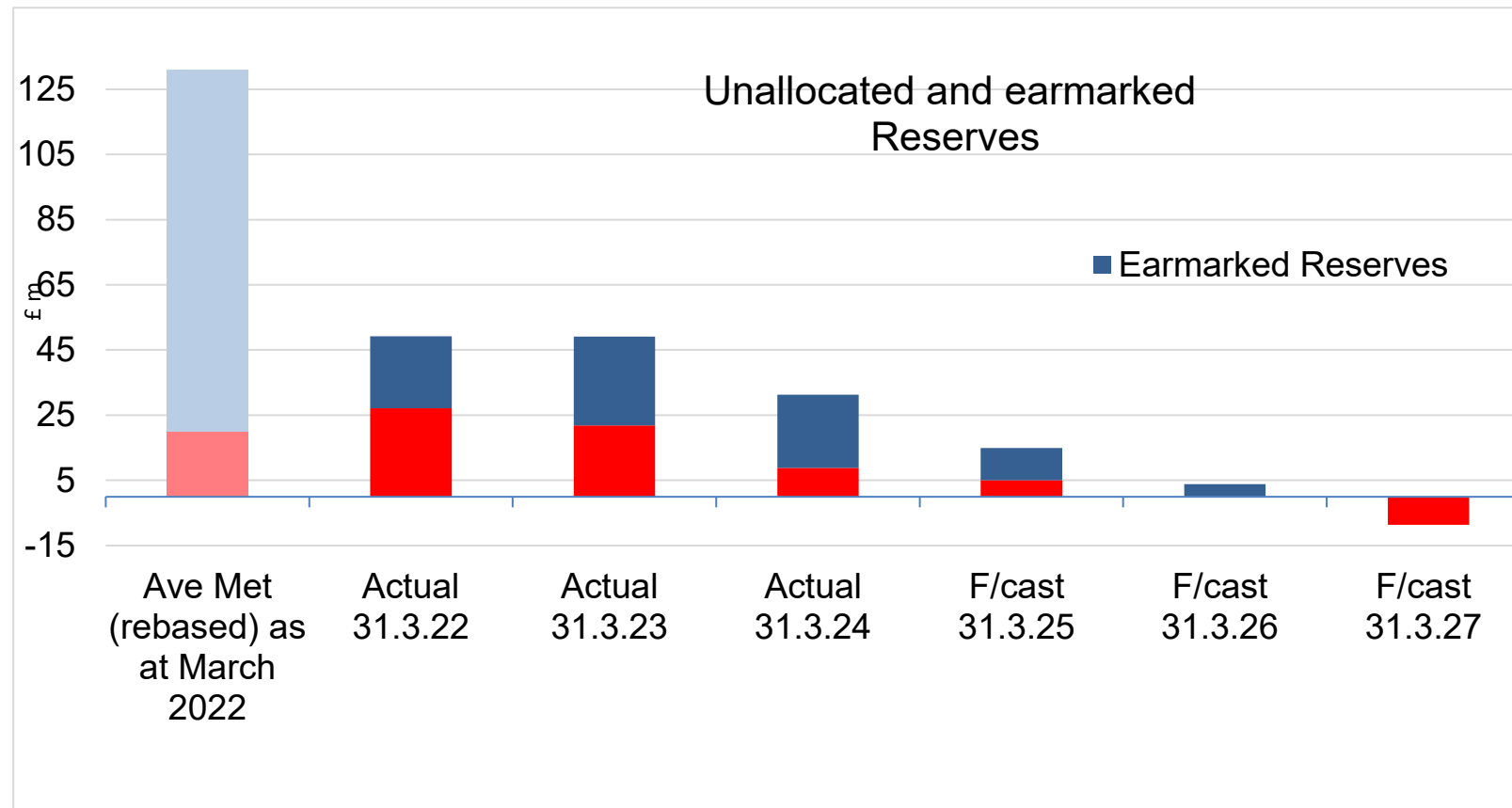
Proposed Savings to be recommended as a basis for Scrutiny

Regeneration and Enterprise	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Closure of Stourbridge Town Hall Bar (closing the bar removes a budgeted surplus that has not been achieved)	0	-40	-40
Seek new operator for Stourbridge and Halesowen Town halls with target of removing subsidy by April 2025. Failure to identify a new operator could result in closure of the venues.	0	270	270
Total	0	230	230

These proposals have not been included in the forecast MTFS table under paragraph 11

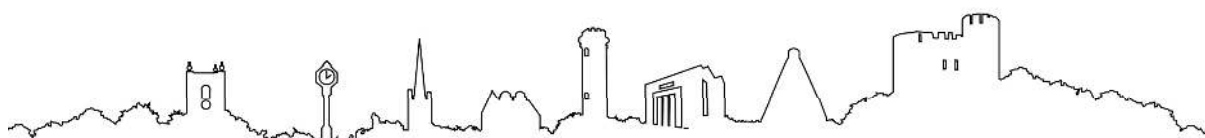


Earmarked and Unallocated General Fund Reserves

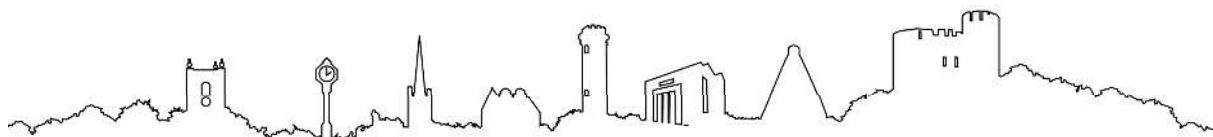


2024/25 - Housing Revenue Account

	Budget 24/25 £'000	Forecast Outturn 24/25 £'000	Variance £'000	Comments
<u>Income</u>				
Dwelling rents	-101,945	-102,889	-944	Stock profiling (Reduced Right to buy 23/24 and 24/25)
Non dwelling rents	-778	-778	0	
Charges for services and facilities	-4,500	-2,200	2,300	Reduced service charges now average £8.58 and commencement now 1st July 24 to ensure appropriate validation of costs prior to consultation.
Contributions towards expenditure	-939	-887	52	Reduced house sales (Transactional Costs)
Interest on Balances	-1,144	-1,207	-63	Increased balances
Total income	-109,306	-107,961	1,345	
<u>Expenditure</u>				
Finance	2,795	2,758	-37	Vacancies net of payroll turnover (assumed 3 months)
Community Safety	1,614	1,383	-231	Vacancies net of payroll turnover (assumed 3 months)

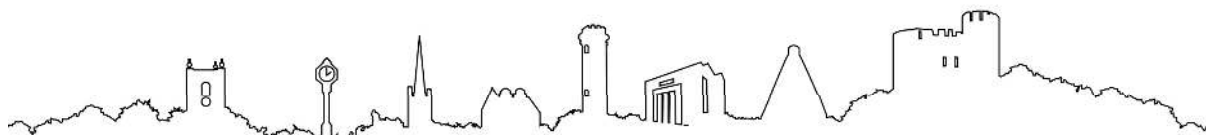


	Budget 24/25 £'000	Forecast Outturn 24/25 £'000	Variance £'000	Comments
Strategy	2,358	2,318	-40	Vacancies net of payroll turnover (assumed 3 months)
Management & Admin	10,986	10,828	-158	CEC refund - corporate landlord
Community Housing	13,502	11,931	-1,571	£1m growth linked to service charges removed plus impact of vacancies net of payroll turnover
Overheads	-11	-11	0	
Responsive & cyclical repairs - Maintenance	17,324	17,138	-186	Vacancy savings net of payroll turnover
Responsive & cyclical repairs - Assets	9,806	10,095	289	£350k Garage Management fee offset by vacancies net of payroll turnover
Depreciation and impairments of fixed assets	26,517	25,962	-555	Lower than expected inflation on component parts
Interest Payable	19,041	19,645	604	Increased borrowing costs due to reduced void sales unit price
Other Expenditure	1,726	1,800	74	Increased council tax on voids
Total expenditure	105,658	103,847	-1,811	
Total: (surplus) or deficit for the year	-3,648	-4,114	-466	



Car Park Tiers

Car Park	Tier
<u>Brierley Hill</u>	
Bank Street (1,2&3)	Tier 2
Cottage Street	Tier 2
Level Street	Tier 2
Little Cottage Street	Tier 2
<u>Dudley</u>	
Flood Street (1)	Tier 1
King Street (1)	Tier 1
New Mill Street	Tier 1
Stafford Street (part)	Tier 1
Tower Street	Tier 1
Flood Street (2&3)	Tier 2
King Street (2)	Tier 2
Stafford Street (part)	Tier 2
Pitfield Street	Tier 3
Wolverhampton Street	Tier 3
<u>Halesowen</u>	
Pool Road (part)	Tier 1
Andrew Road	Tier 1
Birmingham Street	Tier 1
Pool Road (part)	Tier 2
High Street	Tier 2
<u>Kingswinford</u>	
Manor Park	Tier 1
Penzer Street	Tier 2
<u>Stourbridge</u>	
Coventry Street	Tier 1
Ryemarket (short)	Tier 1
Ryemarket (long)	Tier 2
Birmingham Street	Tier 3
Church Street	Tier 3



Meeting of the Cabinet – 8th August 2024

Joint Report of the Director of Housing and Communities and Director of Finance and Legal Services

Review of Housing Finance

Purpose of report

1. To provide an update to Cabinet following discussions at the Housing Select Committee on the findings of the Housing Stock Condition Surveys and associated compliance with the Decent Homes Standard, and the recommendations for a revised 2024/25 Housing Capital Programme to ensure compliance with the Decent Homes Standard. The contents of the report presented to the Select Committee were approved by Cabinet on 15th July 2024.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - Receive and discuss any verbal feedback from the Select Committee meeting held on 1st August 2024.
 - Agree any amendments to the proposed Capital Programme as a result of Select Committee and further Cabinet discussions.
 - Recommend to Full Council to approve the proposed Housing Capital Programme, subject to any amendments.

Background

3. On 27th February 2023 Council approved the Deployment of Resources – Housing Revenue Account and Public Sector Housing Grant report, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1. Within the report the five year Housing Capital Programme was set out as a thematic programme as detailed below:

Thematic Programme	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Maintaining existing homes	£14.2m	£14.3m	£13.8m	£16.0m
Major works to empty homes	£9.4m	£9.7m	£10.0m	£10.3m
Building safety	£4.5m	£4.5m	£3.9m	£2.8m
Independent living	£4.0m	£3.0m	£3.0m	£3.0m
Energy, decarbonisation and fuel poverty	£4.0m	£4.0m	£4.0m	£4.0m
Community and estate improvements	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m
New council housing	£12.5m	£5.8m	£9.8m	£7.3m
Strategic asset management	£0.8m	£1.4m	£0.9m	£0.9m
Total	£50.8m	£44.1m	£46.8m	£45.9m

4. Issues with data quality were subsequently discovered and the Council self-referred to the Regulator of Social Housing in March 2023 due to concerns about the data quality, including stock condition data which had previously been used to inform the housing capital programme. Since the self-referral the Council have met monthly with the Regulator to discuss progress and have been open about their intention to await full robust stock condition data before setting a new detailed capital investment programme to ensure the programme focuses on improving those homes which have been identified as not meeting the Decent Homes Standard. Details of the Decent Homes Standard and what is included within the definition are attached at Appendix 2.

Current Position

5. On 26th February 2024 Council approved the recommendations set out in the Review of Housing Finance report, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 3. Within the report Members were asked to approve a high level capital budget as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, and detailed below:

Proposed Capital Programme	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Responsive and cyclical (maintenance)	£17.5m	£18.2m	£18.9m
Programmed investment works (development)	£69.9m	£74.1m	£74.5m
Total	£87.4m	£92.3m	£93.4m

6. Paragraph 26 of the report notes that a more robust and accurate capital programme could not be fully set out until the stock condition surveys on all DMBC housing stock were complete:

26. During 2023/24 the council commissioned stock condition surveys on 100% of homes to gain a robust and up to date position on property condition and compliance. The stock condition surveys will be completed by March 2024 and the data gathered will be used to inform a new capital investment programme and asset management strategy, ensuring that appropriate planned investment works are delivered in occupied properties to maintain and improve the decent homes position.

This was further reinforced in paragraph 29 of the same report:

29. The proposed capital programme at Appendix 3 sets out current anticipated spend for 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 based on what is currently known about investment needs. However, the five year capital programme will need to be further reviewed following the completion of the stock condition surveys, which may inform a change in programme spend in the first three years. At this stage the programme spend has not been profiled for 2027/28 and 2028/29 as this will need to be informed by longer term investment needs and the robust and up to date property information that the surveys will provide.

7. Following completion of the Stock Condition Surveys and subsequent robust data analysis and modelling, undertaken by industry experts Savills, a clear capital investment programme for the next five years to 2028/29 has been developed as detailed in the table below, with the figures in brackets indicating the number of jobs included within the cost:

Theme	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
HHSRS*	£0.4m (975)	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0.4m
Key components	£0.3m (154)	£27.1m (10,613)	£1.6m (931)	£14.2m (4363)	£4.1m (1546)	£47.3m
Non- key components	£0.1m (12)	£4.7m (1277)	£1.2m (315)	£1.2m (326)	£2.7m (713)	£9.9m
Modern facilities	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0.01m (2)	£0.01m
Thermal comfort	£0.7m (539)	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0.7m
Total	£1.5m	£31.8m	£2.8m	£15.4m	£6.81m	£58.31m

	(1682)	(11,890)	(1246)	(4579)	(2261)	
% non-decency	3.43%	56.32%	5.90%	22.16%	10.71%	

8. The Stock Condition Surveys have provided valuable insight into when homes which currently meet the Decent Homes Standard will fall out of decency, and clearly indicate a sharp rise in the number of non-decent homes in 2025/26. If these are not addressed then there will be a corresponding increase in levels of non-decency for the subsequent year.
9. The table below brings together the stock condition data and associated investment programme (referred to as the “SCS Programme” for ease of reference) with the thematic programme approved by Council on 27th February 2023 to ensure that all required elements of capital spend are included. The table also shows the costs of the proposed capital investment programme against the capital budgets for 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2027/28 approved by Council on 26th February 2024.
10. Finally, the proposed capital programme set out in the table enables the council to deliver it's key responsibilities within the overall capital budgets for 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 approved by Council on 26th February 2024. The proposed programme above also includes proposed spend for 2027/28 and 2028/29 to give a full five year capital programme for approval.

Capital Workstream	2024/ 25 £m	2025/ 26 £m	2026/ 27 £m	2027/ 28 £m	2028/ 29 £m	Total five year programme £m
Future Major Works	31.9	14.7	33.4	22.8	29.2	131
Exceptional Extensive Works	16	7.3	16.7	11.4	14.6	66
HHSRS works	0.4	0	0	0	0	0.4
Key Components	0.3	27.1	1.6	14.2	4.1	47.3
Non-key components	0	4.7	1.2	1.2	2.7	9.8
Thermal comfort	0.7	0	0	0	0	0.7
Modern facilities	0	0	0	0	0.01	0.01
Independent Living	3	3	5	4	3	18
Community and Estate Improvement	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	7
New Housing Developments and Acquisitions	10	10	10	10	10	50
Assets professional fees	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	29.4
Voids capitalisation	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.9	49.5
Responsive capitalisation	8.2	8.2	8.2	8.2	8.2	41.1
Total	87.3	92.3	93.4	89.1	89.1	
					Total	451.2

11. Moving forward, the stock condition data and associated analysis has produced an indicative 30 year investment programme for the first two programme workstreams above, indicating that similar investment levels will be required throughout the 30 year programme. These indicative figures are set out below for information and will be used to review and refresh the Asset Management and Investment Strategy during Q2/Q3:

	1-5 £m	6-10 £m	11-15 £m	16-20 £m	21-25 £m	26-30 £m	Totals £m
Future Major Works	151.8	159.3	165.9	188.4	141.5	115.3	922.2
Exceptional Extensive Works	46.1	25	24.7	24.8	24.5	24.5	169.6
Total	197.9	184.3	190.6	213.1	166	139.8	1091.8

Finance

12. This report is financial in nature and relevant information is contained within the body of the report.

Law

13. HRA finances are governed by Section 74-78B and 85-88 in Part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The HRA also has to be mindful of the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities guidance on the operation of the HRA ring-fence published in November 2020.

Risk Management

14. The key risk associated with the proposed capital programme is capacity for delivery. This will be closely monitored on a monthly basis with robust forecasting discussions to ensure early identification of any issues in achieving spend.

Equality Impact

15. There are no direct equality impacts arising from the proposals within this report. However all Dudley housing tenants will be assured that there is a robust programme in place to ensure their homes are safe and well maintained, and that where possible thermal comfort and energy efficiency measures are in place

Human Resources/Organisational Development

16. There are no direct HR implications arising out of this report

Commercial/Procurement

17. All contracts associated with the capital programme will be procurement in compliance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders and relevant procurement legislation.

Council Plan

18. The recommendations within this report support the following priorities within the 2024/25 Dudley Council Plan:

- Financial sustainability, efficiency and providing best value
- Delivering for our customers, residents and communities



Kathryn Jones
Director of Housing and Communities



Director of Finance and Legal Services

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Appendices

- [Appendix 1 – Deployment of Resources – Housing Revenue Account and Public Sector Housing Grant report](#)
- [Appendix 2 - Decent Homes Standard guidance](#)
- [Appendix 3 - Review of Housing Finance report](#)

[All appendices are available to view on the Committee Management Information System \(CMIS\)](#)

List of Background Documents

None

Meeting of the Cabinet - 8th August 2024

Report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise

Dudley Borough Cultural Strategy

Purpose of report

1. To seek Cabinet approval for the proposed Dudley Cultural Strategy and Action Plan.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended:-
 - That Cabinet approves the Dudley Borough Cultural Strategy and Action Plan (Appendices 1 and 4 respectively) noting paragraphs 17 to 20 about governance and resources;
 - That Cabinet endorses the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, Climate Change and Economic Delivery, to implement the strategy and align the spend of available grant funding with its delivery;
 - That Cabinet endorses the Castle Hill Vision (appendix 2), recognising its role and contribution towards the Cultural Strategy;
 - That Cabinet notes the 2020 *Art in the Public Realm* Strategy and agrees that it be reviewed and refreshed to align with the Cultural Strategy and other relevant strategies/policies.

Background

3. In June 2023 the Council appointed SQW to prepare an Economic Regeneration Strategy (ERS) for the borough. This was adopted by the Council in March 2024. As the strategy was being developed there was a clearly identified need for a Cultural Strategy – both in recognition of the

emergence of 'culture and the visitor economy' as one of the four main themes of the ERS, and the need for a culture strategy to underpin applications and business cases for increasing availability of culture funding. The Council is currently in receipt of nearly £650k from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) for different aspects of cultural activity in 2024/25 and is anticipating being able to bid for a similar amount again for 2025/26. This is in addition to funding received from other sources such as £1,458,688 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Townscape Heritage Initiative which concluded March 2024, and just over £2m from Historic England for Brierley Hill's Heritage Action Zone (HAZ).

4. The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has launched a process to support the development of 'Place Based Strategies' across the West Midlands area. These are to be based around five pillars, one of which is local growth and place which includes culture, tourism and heritage. Therefore, the development of a Cultural Strategy for Dudley also helps to inform and support the WMCA's place based work and positions the borough of Dudley for related support and funding which may flow as a result.
5. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding was secured under the Communities & Place pillar for the development and delivery of a Cultural Strategy. The Council commissioned "A View From a Hill" to undertake the development of a Cultural Strategy. The Strategy is intended to be a Strategy for the borough, recognising the breadth of what culture means to people and the diversity of organisations, businesses, partners and stakeholders who all contribute to the Cultural economy of Dudley.
6. The development process by A View from a Hill, included analysis to create a baseline assessment, a set of three exploratory workshops with stakeholders followed by a further three feedback workshops to test the emerging themes and ideas, one-to-one conversations with partners, and alignment with the ERS. Throughout the process there has been close liaison with a core group of Council officers.
7. The strategy represents a refreshed approach to the definition and delivery of cultural activity and services. Culture has a significant role to play across multiple agendas and how these synergies can be exploited will be explored through implementation of the strategy. For example:
 - The economic contribution of the UK creative industries grew by 6.8% in 2022 to reach £124.6bn. In real terms, this means the economic value of the UK creative industries was 12 per cent bigger in 2022 than before the COVID pandemic and more than 50 per

cent larger than its size in 2010. (Source: [The Creative Industries Council](#))

- Research undertaken on behalf of the WMCA in 2023 indicated that 46,000 people are employed across the cultural sector in the West Midlands creating £1.2 billion gross value added (GVA) and £559 million indirect GVA, with heritage tourism in the West Midlands totalling £780 million.
- In addition, the research undertaken by A View from a Hill to support the strategy development estimates that the culture and creative sector in the borough equates to 12,794 jobs and over £88m in GVA
- Arts Council [research](#) identifies that, while arts and culture cannot be expected to bring about significant behavioural change in relation to reoffending, the skills, creativity and social connections made through culture and the arts can reduce 'risk factors' and can help ex-offenders tackle problems linked with their identity away from crime.
- Recently [Historic England](#) has published a report with findings that overall wellbeing value for people's day-to-day encounters with heritage is estimated to be worth £29 billion every year in England.

The Strategy

8. The Strategy is based around a 10 year vision, a set of outcomes that the strategy should achieve, five themes which should shape activity to be taken forward, and proposals for the governance, structures and resources that may facilitate delivery of the actions, outcomes and vision. All of these have been derived through data-led research, and consultation and engagement.
9. The Strategy sets out an ambition for the Borough of Dudley to *"become a place where everyone can participate in culture how and if they want to. There will be equity of opportunity from community led co-creation, to culture that reflects the ethnicity and demographics of all communities, to work that is ambitious and covers every art form. Everyone will be able to access culture as they want to - from the many green spaces within the borough, beside a canal, on a high street, in a neighbourhood, in a venue or on a stage."*

It is therefore covering the cultural creators and contributors as well as those who participate and consume, recognising that culture means different things to different people, but everyone should have an opportunity to engage because of the range of benefits culture brings.

10. The strategy seeks to achieve the following outcomes for the borough:
- Increased numbers of people and organisations will be able to produce cultural activity
 - Cultural activity will support increased vibrancy and activity on local high streets and within neighbourhoods.
 - There will be a greater variety of cultural activity, reflecting the changing ethnicity and demographics of the borough.
 - There will be increased ambition within the cultural sector
 - Greater numbers of people will participate in culture - diverse and multi-generational, reflecting the change demographics of the borough.
 - New cultural clusters will be formed and external cultural organisations will choose to locate to the borough, forming a new cohesive cultural ecology.
 - The profile of the borough will be raised, supporting higher levels of growth for the culture, creative and tourism sectors.
11. It then provides a framework of five key themes which should inform and shape priorities for activity and investment:

Theme 1: investing in capacity building to build stronger resilience within the creative and cultural sectors

12. This theme seeks to help the creative and cultural sectors grow, develop and thrive through facilitating networks, training and capacity building within the sector. Through a strengthening of the sector this should not only ensure the longevity of cultural activity but also its adaptability and expansion of what's on offer.

There are three key actions recommended to contribute towards this theme:

1a) business support to help the sector develop and lead activity.

1b) resource(s) to support collaboration in the sector and provide an interface between relevant Council services and cultural / creative organisations.

1c) External funding and bid writing capacity to lever in funding to support delivery of the strategy.

These support delivery of Theme 3 of the Economic Regeneration Strategy: Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment, and

supporting the Visitor Economy, as well as Theme 4: Reinventing town centres across the borough.

Theme 2: continuing to invest in skills development to support future culture leaders and to support life-long learning

13. This theme recognises the role that culture has in upskilling – which has benefits in terms of economic contribution and health and wellbeing -, and the strong adult education programme which is already being delivered across the Borough. It recommends continuation of this and expansion into a leadership programme for young, aspiring leaders in the sector with a view to developing and retaining their skills and talents in the Borough.

2a) Continue current education programmes to ensure that through cultural activity, opportunities for life-long learning are supported.

2b) Develop a leadership programme for the sector to develop young people as the next generation of culture leaders.

These outcomes support delivery of Theme 2 of the Economic Regeneration Strategy: Investing in people and building skills for tomorrow.

Theme 3: increased diversity of programming

14. This theme seeks to expand and enhance the cultural activity in the Borough to make it accessible to different groups, particularly young people. It particularly refers to where cultural and creative activity is commissioned and how these opportunities can support a range of cultural producers as well as reaching a wider audience.

3a) Work with new and existing partners to specifically deliver activity which engages younger people in culture.

3b) Facilitate area-based culture programmes ‘Cultural Action Zones’ (CAZ) opening up delivery of, and access to, cultural activity at a local level.

3c) Work with Town Boards to use CAZs to contribute to regeneration agendas locally.

3d) To bring together relevant organisations to attract and develop high quality work across different art forms to further add to the diversity of the cultural offer.

This theme of commissioning and leveraging funding is consistent with the *Art in the Public Realm* Strategy, commissioned by the Council in 2020. It is therefore proposed that the *Art in the Public Realm* Strategy is reviewed and refreshed where appropriate to further support delivery of the Culture Strategy where relevant.

Facilitating a diversity of programming aligns with theme 3 of the Economic Regeneration Strategy: Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment, and supporting the Visitor Economy.

Theme 4: fostering and adopting a more collaborative culture

15. This theme speaks to strengthening collaboration and networks in and across the creative and culture sectors to facilitate knowledge sharing, best practise and identify new opportunities. It also refers to the Council's use of Discover Dudley and continued partnerships with regional partners to raise the profile of the Borough's cultural offer with a view to attracting more visitors for longer.

4a) Using commissioning of cultural activity to encourage collaboration.

4b) Strengthening engagement with and across the cultural sector in the Borough.

4c) Working with regional partners to raise the profile of the Borough's cultural offer,

The outcomes of the activity above will support delivery of Theme 3 of the Economic Regeneration Strategy: Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment, and supporting the Visitor Economy

Theme 5: having ambition regarding cultural infrastructure and production.

16. Theme 5 identifies an initial set of specific, generally larger scale projects which would serve as anchors and flagships in the Borough's cultural landscape thereby raising confidence and ambition as well as creating a step change.

5a) A feasibility study for the evolution and development of a creative cluster for future glass makers, leveraging the Stourbridge glass quarter.

5b) Explore the viability of a joint bid to the Arts Council for NPO National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status relating to the glass industry. National Portfolio Organisations are "leaders in their areas, with a

collective responsibility to protect and develop national arts and cultural ecology.”

5c) Supporting the development of the Steamyard project in Lye.

5d) An ‘audience development study’ to explore opportunities to attract new national audiences to the Borough.

5e) Continue to support the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark.

5f) Continue to be ambitious for Dudley’s cultural offer and opportunities. The strategy suggests a further application for another NPO organisation in the borough. It is further proposed that the Castle Hill Vision (phase 2), developed in 2019 be recognised and progressed under this action.

The Castle Hill Vision (phase 2) seeks to bring the rich historical, archaeological, geological and zoological significance of the Castle Hill site to an increased number and wider demographic of visitors, placing it at the heart of wider developments, in an innovative and sustainable way.

This recognises the key role the different elements of Castle Hill have in relation to the Borough’s cultural heritage and identity, and outcomes of the vision align with those of the Culture Strategy.

The outcomes of these projects would support delivery of Theme 3 of the Economic and Regeneration Strategy: Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment, and supporting the Visitor Economy, as well as Theme 1: Unlocking enterprise and innovation

Governance and Resourcing

- 17 The final section of the strategy covers governance and proposes a Cultural Partnership as a central group overseeing the strategy and related actions. Since the strategy was commissioned, ‘Culture’ as a Council service is in the process of moving into the Economic Growth & Skills team to lever synergies with the Economic Regeneration Strategy and other activity and resources.

It is therefore recommended that the proposal for a Cultural Partnership be reviewed alongside other related boards/groups and partnerships with linked agendas to ensure strong, coherent relationships between them, best use of resources and seeking to avoid ‘volunteer fatigue’ as people are asked to sit on one or more groups. This is not to suggest that there isn’t a need, or opportunity, for collaborative oversight, monitoring and ownership of cultural activity, but that it is appropriate to pause before anything is implemented to ensure best fit with other groups and activity.

18. The Council does not have a resource dedicated to culture nor a budget to implement actions within the strategy. However, there are currently tranches of funding available, namely UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund (CWGLEF), and allocations from WMCA for cultural activity, which can be utilised to fund initial activity and some temporary resource with a view to that being a route to securing more funding in the future via WMCA single settlements discussions for instance.

The Long Term Plan for Towns, while it doesn't cover the whole borough, also has some culture and heritage outcomes associated with it and may likewise be a route to some funding via the investment plan depending on the priorities identified and agreed through the Town Board.

19. The strategy recommends the appointment of a 'Cultural Broker' under Theme 1. This should be reviewed in the context of the funding available and the priorities which are agreed following adoption of the strategy.
20. The funding referred to in paragraph 3 is currently delivering a range of activity which contributes to the vision, outcomes and themes of the Cultural Strategy.

This includes:

- UKSPF funded business support, including start up support
- Destination marketing to attract a wider visitor audience.
- Events
- Community engagement with culture
- Dudley Castle public engagement

Action Plan and next steps

21. An initial action plan has been developed which sets out short, medium and long term actions for each of the themes. A summary of these is available at appendix 4 while a more detailed plan will be used to inform decisions about priorities, actions and funding as well as for monitoring.

There is a recognition that the delivery of the strategy needs to reflect and respond to the current economic and funding landscape: leveraging grant funding where it is available, identifying opportunities for co-funding, sharing financial, people and physical resources across the sector and collaborating with many different partners.

In the absence of existing dedicated funding some of the activities identified for the Council to lead in the strategy will be contingent on securing funding to deliver, and therefore one of the first actions will be to

utilise some of the existing grant funding to resource the preparation of funding bids and support information as well as informing a governance review as set out in paragraph 17.

Finance

22. The development of the strategy has been funded through external funding.

There is external funding currently in place which can support some of the early activity in delivery of the strategy and action plan. Beyond that resources and activity will be contingent on the Council and/or partners its securing further funding.

Therefore, at this stage, no financial approvals are required from Cabinet. When the Strategy has been agreed and adopted, the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise will undertake the above next steps and, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, advise Cabinet on financial implications.

Law

23. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions. Pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 a local authority has a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do

Risk Management

24. The approval and adoption of the Cultural Strategy mitigates the risks of not being in a position to secure investment and support for the sector. Risk registers will be developed, as appropriate, for projects which deliver against the strategy.

Equality Impact

25. The Council's Equality and Diversity policies will be applied throughout the implementation of the Strategy, including the identification of any specific equality impacts. Where required equality impact assessments/statements will be prepared.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

26. Resources to contribute to the delivery of the strategy will come from a combination of existing resource, where it interfaces with other teams and projects, and through the utilisation of external funding. Where any new posts and / or secondment opportunities arise this will require a separate decision taking into account any spending control measures in place.

Commercial/Procurement

27. Any contracts or commercial agreements needed to deliver the actions and interventions set out in the Action Plan will be let in accordance with Contract Standing Orders.

Council Plan

28. The approval and adoption of the Cultural Strategy and its implementation thereafter contributes to a number of priorities in the Dudley Council Plan 24/25:

Supporting Businesses and the local economy: the strategy has specific outcomes, themes and actions which relate to supporting businesses, volunteers and leaders in the cultural and creative sector, enabling it to grow in resilience, strength, volume and value. This includes a focus on skills, employment, economic growth and place based activity.

Delivering for our customers, residents and communities: the vision set out in the strategy specifically refers to equity of access to culture and the wider benefits of access to culture, such as health and wellbeing, are identified in this report.

Financial sustainability, efficiency and providing best value: the approach to delivery through collaboration and utilising external funding seeks to provide best value.



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Appendices

- [Appendix 1 – Culture Strategy 2024-2034](#)
- [Appendix 2 – Art in the Public Realm Strategy](#)
- [Appendix 3 – Castle Hill Vision \(phase 2\)](#)
- [Appendix 4 – Action Plan Executive Summary](#)

[All appendices are available to view on the Committee Management Information System \(CMIS\)](#)

List of Background Documents

West Midlands Cultural & Economy

https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/qhndvaqp/1_culture-economy_west-midlands.pdf

Dudley Economic Regeneration Strategy