

## **Meeting of the Cabinet**

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2025 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 30<sup>th</sup> January and 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 (Pages 4 – 23)
4. Dudley Improvement Plan – Organisational Re-Design – Senior Leadership Review (Pages 24 – 30)
5. West Midlands Combined Authority Adult Education Functions (Pages 31 – 40)
6. Economic Regeneration Strategy: Progress Update and Activity Plan (Pages 41 – 83)
7. Education Travel Support Public Consultation (Pages 84 – 98)
8. To report on any issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees:
  - (a) [Bus Franchising Consultation](#)
9. 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.

**Interim Chief Executive**

**Dated: 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2025**

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**Minutes of the Cabinet  
Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2025 at 4.00pm  
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 P Lowe, S Ali, C Bayton, J Cowell, 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.

**Officers**

B Heran (Deputy Chief Executive), M Abu Affan (Director of Public Health and Wellbeing), B Arnold (Interim Director of Finance – Section 151 Officer), J Branch (Assistant Director People & Inclusion), K Graham (Acting Director of Children’s Services), H Martin (Director of Regeneration and Enterprise)(via MS Teams), K Jones (Director of Housing and Communities), E Matthews (Interim Director of Adult Social Care), T Senior – Interim Lead for Law and Governance - Deputy Monitoring Officer) and H Mills (Senior Democratic Services Officer), together with other officers and two members of the public.

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75 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors A Aston, K Casey and Q Mughal.

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76 **Declarations of Interest**

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

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77 **Minutes**

**Resolved**

That the minutes of the meetings held on 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, be confirmed as correct records and signed.

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78 **Change in order of Business**

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 1(c), it was:-

**Resolved**

That the order of business be varied and the agenda items be considered in the order set out in the minutes below.

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79 **Urgent Item of Business – 2024/25 Revenue Monitoring**

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the report of the Interim Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) on the 2024/25 Revenue Monitoring was considered as an urgent item of business. The reason for urgency was the need to apprise Members of the financial situation without delay.

In presenting the report, Members were referred to paragraphs of specific importance, with particular reference made to the adverse movement in Children's Services due to the continued pressures in terms of residential placements and supported accommodation costs.

### **Resolved**

The forecast variance to budget in 2024/25 and delivery of savings, as set out in the report, be noted.

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### 80 **Issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees – Scrutiny of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Draft Budget 2025/26 and Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Lead for Law and Governance on the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2025 following the scrutiny proposals in respect of the Housing Revenue Account draft budget for 2025/26 and changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources (Councillor S Clark) advised the Cabinet that the two proposed recommendations had been considered and could be accepted, with the costs offset against the forecast revenue underspend in the General Fund. It was further commented that the recommendations would make use of existing business processes and schemes within the Council, with negligible or no implementation costs incurred.

### **Resolved**

That the two recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2025 in respect of the Housing Revenue Account draft budget for 2025/26 and changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26, be accepted and incorporated into the respective agenda items.

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81 **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26**

A report of the Interim Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) was considered on the details of the proposed changes to the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26 following two public consultations.

**Resolved**

That the Council be recommended:-

- (1) To approve the changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26, as outlined in Annex C to the report.
- (2) That the Cabinet identifies resources to be made available to supplement the budget currently available to support the Discretionary Council Tax Relief Scheme and that Cabinet commits to set aside an additional sum of £1m for this purpose to be taken from the forecast General Fund underspend of £5.9m in 2024/25 when that outturn position is confirmed to Cabinet in late May/early June 2025.

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82 **2025/26 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Medium Term Financial Plan and Rent Setting 2025/26**

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Director of Housing and Community Services and the Interim Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) concerning the 2025/26 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Medium Term Financial Plan and Rent Setting 2025/26.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the latest HRA outturn forecast for 2024/25 as set out in paragraphs 8 to 14 and Annex 1 to the report, be noted.
- (2) That the Council be recommended:-
  - (a) To approve the HRA revenue budget for 2025/26 as set out in paragraphs 19 to 20 and Annex 2 to the report.

- (b) To approve the public sector housing revised capital budgets for 2025/26 to 2029/30, as attached as Annex 2 to the report, noting consultation arrangements outlined in paragraphs 4 to 7 of the report.
- (c) To authorise the Director of Housing and Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services, to apply the increase in rents for HRA dwellings by 2.7% from 1st April 2025, as set out in paragraphs 15 to 17 of the report.
- (d) To authorise the Director of Housing and Community Services and the Interim Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) to bid for and enter into funding arrangements for additional resources to supplement investment in the public sector housing stock, as outlined in paragraphs 23 to 24 and Annex 2 of the report and that expenditure funded from such resources be added to the Capital Programme.
- (e) To authorise the Director of Housing and Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services, to manage and allocate resources to the capital programme, as outlined in paragraphs 23 to 24 and Annex 2 of the report.
- (f) To authorise the Director of Housing and Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services, to apply service charges, as outlined in paragraph 18 of the report.
- (g) To confirm that all capital receipts arising from the sale of HRA assets (other than any receipts that may be specifically committed to support private sector housing) should continue to be used for investment in new, modern, high quality energy efficient homes, as outlined in paragraphs 23 to 24 and Annex 2 of the report.

- (h) To authorise the Director of Housing and Community Services to continue to buy back former right to buy properties, to buy other properties, and to buy land where required to assemble a viable site for housing development, subject to a robust assessment of good value for money and sustainability in terms of lettings, maintenance and major works, as set out in paragraphs 23 to 24 and Annex 2 of the report.
  - (i) To authorise the Director of Housing and Community Services to procure and enter into contracts for the delivery of the capital programme, as outlined in paragraphs 23 to 24 and Annex 2 of the report.
  - (j) To approve the HRA medium term financial strategy.
  - (k) That the Cabinet identify resources which may be made available to supplement the budget available to support the Discretionary Housing Payments Scheme and that Cabinet commits to set aside an additional sum of £0.2m for this purpose to be taken from the forecast General Fund underspend of £5.9m in 2024/25 when that outturn position is confirmed to Cabinet in late May/early June 2025.
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### 83 **Dudley Council Pay Policy Statement 2025/26**

A report of the Interim Chief Executive was submitted on the Dudley Council Pay Policy Statement 2025/26.

The Leader (Councillor P Harley) and the Interim Chief Executive responded to comments and questions raised by Members of the opposition in relation to how the Council would address ongoing workforce vacancy challenges to limit the use of temporary staff, and the proposed structure and financial implications as a result of implementation of the new Operating Model.

#### **Resolved**

That the Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/2026.

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84 **Gender Pay Gap Report – Snap shot date 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

A report of the Interim Chief Executive was submitted to consider and approve the Gender Pay Gap report 2024, which was due for publication be 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2025 in accordance with the regulations of the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.

Members of the opposition commented positively on the report and the progress made to tackle the gender pay gap. It was requested that comparative information with other organisations and local authorities be included in future reports.

**Resolved**

That the Gender Pay Gap 2024 report, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for public disclosure, and thereafter the report be published and data reported to the Government before the 30th March 2025 to ensure compliance with the requirements of the 2017 Regulations.

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85 **Approval of the Dudley MBC Improvement Plan**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Chief Executive on the progress in developing the single, comprehensive Improvement Plan for the Council, overseen by the Dudley MBC Improvement Panel.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the Council be recommended to approve and adopt the high-level Dudley MBC Improvement Plan detailed within Dudley MBC Improvement Plan Brochure (Appendix 1 to the report) to provide a clear direction for the Council's improvement journey to deliver financial sustainability, overall transformation of Council functions and address recommendations from external reviews.

- (2) That the establishment of the Dudley MBC Improvement Panel, with the terms of reference attached at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved and that the Panel meet monthly to provide external assurance and challenge on progress with the delivery of the Improvement Plan and associated outcomes.
- (3) That Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team receive monthly progress updates to the Improvement Plan, with effect from March 2025, by exception.
- (4) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertake scrutiny on progress twice yearly.
- (5) That the support provided by the groups referred to in paragraph 14 of the report, in the delivery of the Improvement Plan, be noted.

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86 **Trindle Road/Dudley Town Centre Sustainable Connectivity Package – Preparation and Submission of Business Justification Case to West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to deliver active travel infrastructure improvements in Trindle Road/Dudley Town Centre**

A report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise was submitted to provide the Cabinet with an update on the Trindle Road/Dudley Town Centre Sustainable Connectivity Package and seek endorsement for the preparation and submission of a Business Justification Case to West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

**Resolved**

- (1) That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise and the Cabinet Member for Communities, Climate Change and Economic Delivery, in consultation with the Director of Environment and the Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services be authorised to prepare and submit to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) a Business Justification Case for the Trindle Road/Dudley Town Centre Sustainable Connectivity Package.

- (2) That the Business Justification Case be informed by the contents of the Portersfield Development Brief as approved by Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2024.
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87 **Issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees**

No further issues were raised under this agenda item.

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

No questions were raised under this agenda item.

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The meeting ended at 4.51pm

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Cabinet  
Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 at 6.00pm  
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 P Lowe, S Ali, K Casey, J Cowell, Q Mughal, S Mughal, S Ridney and P Sahota.

Unity Group: Councillor R Priest.

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

**Officers**

B Heran (Interim Chief Executive), B Arnold (Interim Director of Finance – Section 151 Officer), K Graham (Acting Director of Children’s Services), H Martin (Director of Regeneration and Enterprise), N McGurk (Director of Environment), K Jones (Director of Housing and Communities), E Matthews (Interim Director of Adult Social Care), T Senior (Interim Lead for Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer) and H Mills (Senior Democratic Services Officer), together with other officers and three members of the public.

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89 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors A Aston and C Bayton.

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90 **Declarations of Interest**

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

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91 **Issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees – Scrutiny of the General Fund Draft Budget 2025/26**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) on the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2025, following their scrutiny of proposals in respect of the General Fund Draft Budget for 2025/26.

In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources referred to the two recommendations previously submitted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in respect of the Housing Revenue Account Draft Budget 2025/26 and changes to the Council Tax Reduction for 2025/26, which had been accepted by Cabinet at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2025 and which both involved setting aside additional monies.

Whilst the positive work undertaken as part of the budget scrutiny was recognised, it was considered that some of the recommendations proposed were not attainable, as no alternative saving options had been suggested.

At this juncture, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor S Keasey), disputed comments made and indicated that the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was not to propose alternative saving options, but to formulate recommendations for Cabinet to review and consider.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources referred to each of the proposed recommendations, providing a financial view as to whether the recommendation could or could not be supported as part of the final budget preparations. In doing so, it was indicated that recommendation (d) and (h), as outlined in the report, could be accepted should the Cabinet be minded to support.

Opposition Members commented on the proposed cuts to the Voluntary Sector and inaccuracies that had been referred to by voluntary sector representatives concerning the Equalities Impact Assessments. Concerns were also expressed in terms of the proposed reduction in scrutiny/select committees and the impact this would have on effective scrutiny.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the General Fund Draft Budget 2025/26, be noted.
- (2) That recommendation (d) and (h), as set out in the report, be accepted.

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## **92 Draft Budget 2025/26: Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Tax Setting 2025/26**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) on the Draft Budget 2025/26: Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Tax Setting 2025/26.

In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources (Councillor S Clark) reiterated that four recommendations suggested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been accepted, with additional resources to support Dudley residents identified. The draft budget proposed Council Tax to be increased by 4.99% and for £5m to be added to the Council's General Reserves each year for the duration of the MTFs term.

Opposition Group Members were of the view that the proposed budget would be to the detriment of local residents, in particular those most vulnerable and would have a devastating impact on communities that all Members were elected to protect. The need to improve the level of Council Reserves was recognised, though it was considered a more balanced approach was needed.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the draft Budget 2025/26, including all appendices to the report, be approved and that the Council be recommended:-
  - (i) To note that the Council Tax Base of 97,895.65 (Band D equivalent) has been set for 2025/26 on the 31st January 2025 by officer delegation in line with the Constitution.
  - (ii) To note that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26 was approved at the Council meeting on 30th January 2025.
  - (iii) To note that on 30th January 2025 the Council approved (a) a housing rent increase (b) confirmation of the service charges (c) the Draft HRA Budget 2025/26 and (d) the HRA Capital Programme and associated matters.
  - (iv) To note the report of the Section 151 Officer, under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the budget calculations and adequacy of proposed financial reserves.
  - (v) To approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as set out at Appendix A to the report, which incorporates the following recommendations:
    - (a) Approve the MTFS and embedded Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) as an estimate of the Council's current financial position at January 2025.
    - (b) Approve the Guiding Principles for Revenue for the period of the MTFS.

- (c) Approve the Guiding Principles for Capital to guide preparation of the Capital Programme in the years ahead.
- (d) Note the current and planned development of the Council's approach to and delivery of Transformation, as set out in Annex 9 of Appendix A.
- (e) Note the Budget Timetable set out in the report and Annex 1 of Appendix A.
- (f) Approve the proposal to employ Flexible Use of Capital Receipts (FUCR) in financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26, as set out in Annex 10 of Appendix A.
- (g) To delegate the further amendment of this document (where needed to ensure financial integrity and reconciliation) to the Interim Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) in consultation with the Cabinet Member of Finance, Legal and Human Resources.
- (h) Approve the onward submission of the Winter 2025 update of the MTFS to the next meeting of the Council.
- (i) Approve the adjustments to Fees and Charges, as set out in Annex 11 of Appendix A to the report, and delegate to the Section 151 Officer (in consultation with Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources) setting or correction of any fees and charges not shown in Annex 11 of Appendix A.
- (j) Approve the savings proposals as set out in Annex 3 of Appendix A.

- (vi) To approve the General Fund Budget net budget of £366.611m at Appendix B, including the proposed total increase of Council Tax for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council of 4.99%, in accordance with the Council Tax Referendum threshold as set by Government for 2025/26.
- (vii) To approve the statutory amounts required to be calculated for the Council's spending, contingencies and contributions to reserves; income and use of reserves; transfers to and from its collection fund; and Council Tax requirement, as referred to in Section 67(2)(b) be now calculated by the Council for the year 2025/26 in accordance with Sections 31A, 31B and 34 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as shown in Figure 1 of Appendix C of the report.
- (viii) To approve an increase of 2.99% in the level of General Council Tax for 2025/26.
- (ix) To approve an increase of 2.00% in the level of Adult Social Care Precept for 2025/26.
- (x) Note the Council Tax amounts by Band, as outlined in a Appendix C pending final notifications of precept amounts by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Fire Authority with formal ratification to be presented as part of the Council Tax Resolution on 24th February 2025.

<b>A</b> <b>£</b>	<b>B</b> <b>£</b>	<b>C</b> <b>£</b>	<b>D</b> <b>£</b>	<b>E</b> <b>£</b>	<b>F</b> <b>£</b>	<b>G</b> <b>£</b>	<b>H</b> <b>£</b>
1,359.05	1,585.56	1,812.06	<b>2,038.57</b>	2,491.59	2,944.60	3,397.62	4,077.14

- (xi) Approve the report as attached at Appendix D on the Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools funding which incorporates the following recommendations such that Council:
  - (a) Approve the Growth Funding Methodology as agreed by Schools Forum on 21st January 2025;

- (b) Approves De-delegation of union duties as agreed by Schools Forum on 12th November 2024;
  - (c) Adopt the funding allocation by block, as outlined in paragraph 5 of Appendix D; and
  - (d) Note the details of the Schools Funding Settlement.
- (xii) To approve the General Fund Capital Programme as set out in Appendix E to the report.
  - (xiii) To approve the Capital Strategy and Capital Financing Strategy as set out in Appendices G and H of the report.
  - (xiv) To approve the Investment Strategy 2025/26 set out in Appendix I to the report.
  - (xv) To approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, as set out in Appendix J to the report, including:
    - (a) The Borrowing and Investment Strategy for 2025/26;
    - (b) The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2025/26, noting that further review work is planned and has been provided for in the draft budget for 2025/26 onwards.
    - (c) The Treasury and Prudential Indicators for 2025/26 to 2028/29, summarised at Annex 3 to Appendix J of the report.
  - (xvi) To approve the Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework, as set out in Appendix K to the report.
- (3) That the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources, be authorised to make any further financial adjustments, corrections or amendments to the suite of reports necessary in forming the final preparation of the papers for the Council meeting on 24th February 2025.
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93 **Proposal to undertake a feasibility study to establish a Town Council**

A report of the Interim Chief Executive was submitted on the proposal to undertake a feasibility study to establish a Town Council, with a summary of the process involved in adopting a Town Council Model provided.

Labour Group Opposition Members contested the establishment of a Town Council, in particular the need to set aside a budget of £75,000 at a time when significant cuts to essential services were proposed.

The Leader of the Unity Group commented positively on the proposed model and emphasised that the final decision would be for the residents to decide.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Council be recommended to provide a steer on whether they endorse the undertaking of a feasibility study to establish a Town Council in Cradley.
- (3) Subject to the Council confirming the approval of a feasibility study:-
  - (i) A project budget of £75,000 be established to enable community consultation to be undertaken, the feasibility work required for the establishment of the Town Council, including defining boundaries and preparing for elections and it be noted that this is an estimated budget, and further work will need to be undertaken to establish the total costs to build the business case for introduction of a Town Council.
  - (ii) That the Interim Lead for Law and Governance submit a further report to the Council setting out the results of the community consultation to provide guidance on the options available to the Council and if appropriate propose the terms of reference for a Community Governance Review for approval by the Council.

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94 **Health Innovation Dudley: Head Lease Documentation and Collaboration Agreement**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise on an update on the Health Innovation Dudley (HID) project.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the principles of the Agreement for Lease, Lease and Collaboration Agreement between the Council and Dudley College of Technology in relation to the Health Innovation Dudley (HID) project, be agreed.
- (2) That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, Climate Change and Economic Delivery, be authorised to enter into the respective agreements.
- (3) That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, Climate Change and Economic Delivery be authorised to enter into a new lease with Dudley College of Technology on completion of the HID building and satisfaction of the conditions precedent set out in the Agreement for Lease.
- (4) That the cost of legal fees associated with the development, negotiation and completion of these agreements for relevant parties be met from within the total overall project budget.

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95 **Black Country Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Plan**

A joint report of the Director of Environment (DMBC) and Director of Transport (Black Country Transport) was submitted on the Black Country Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Plan (BCWWCP).

**Resolved**

That the Black Country Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Plan, be adopted into the ongoing work to develop the Dudley Council Plan.

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

No questions were raised under this agenda item.

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97 **Resolution to exclude the public and press**

**Resolved**

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as set out below:

Minute No. 98 - paragraph 3 - relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

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98 **Proposed Disposal of Corbyn Road Offices, Corbyn Road, Dudley**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise on the proposed disposal of Corbyn Road Offices as surplus to Council needs.

**Resolved**

- (1) The principle that Corbyn Road Offices is surplus to the Councils' requirements, be endorsed.
- (2) That the information in the report concerning the estimated freehold value of the property and that the net receipt may alter as a result of marketing and market interest, be noted.
- (3) That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise be authorised to finalise and agree the terms and conditions of the transaction and any other ancillary agreements to facilitate a disposal.

- (4) That the Interim Lead for Law and Governance be authorised to complete the necessary legal documentation.
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The meeting ended at 6.55pm

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

## **Meeting of the Cabinet – 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

### **Report of the Interim Chief Executive**

### **Dudley Improvement Plan – Organisational Re-Design – Senior Leadership Review**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To provide confirmation to the Cabinet on the final senior management structure (Group Director and Director) which put in place the strategic capacity and revised spans of control required to deliver the improvements and transformation to Council functions and key strategic priorities.

To confirm the budget savings as set out in the agreed medium-term budget.

#### **Recommendations**

2. To note the final senior management structure, as set out in Appendix 1 which fulfils the legal obligation of the Head of Paid Service to determine the staffing arrangements necessary to deliver the Council's functions.

#### **Background**

3. The Council is facing significant financial challenges, alongside increased service demands and address external feedback received. There is a need to carefully review how and which functions are provided, deliver significant budget savings, and transform ways of working whilst ensuring essential services for vulnerable residents and key frontline services are maintained.

Tackling this challenge requires a fundamental review of the staffing structures across the Council alongside the appropriate spans of control for senior managers, the objective to improve joint working and deliver the Dudley Improvement Plan. This report starts to address these key issues, and future phases will further build on the changes required.

## Other Drivers for Change

It is acknowledged that for several years the council has faced significant issues around governance, member/officer working, poor culture, silo working, under delivery of savings and performance concerns.

There was a reliance on windfalls and grants and diminishing reserves to help close the gap between income and expenditure, without robust plans in place to address the root causes of the shortfall.

External reviews commissioned by the council over 2023/2024 helped highlight key issues and areas for improvement and it is now time to move forward as a new Dudley.

A balanced 5-year medium term budget strategy has been set and the need for a more radical approach to delivery of savings and transformation.

In response, our Dudley Council Improvement Plan has been developed which includes addressing the external feedback received from CIPFA, the LGA and our external auditors.

At the heart of the Dudley Council Improvement Plan is the recognition that the council needs the necessary leadership capacity and capability to address the cultural, governance and improvements going forward to transform the council into a financially sustainable organisation, focused on delivering essential services to residents, and communities, without distractions, or conflict.

Phase 1 of the organisational re-structure starts to address this by putting in place a clearly defined layer of senior management. This will be underpinned by a clear accountabilities and performance management framework, revised appraisal and objective programme ensuring that lines of accountability and responsibility are clear.

4. Consultation feedback has been reviewed and where appropriate fed into the final confirmed structure for Phase 1.

This report confirms the posts within phase 1 new senior management Team – Chief Executive, Group Directors and Directors.

Phase 2 proposals are shown in Appendix 1a with formal consultation due to commence from mid-April 2025.

The following posts form Phase 1 of the Council's senior management structure:

- Group Director – Core Business
- Group Director – Social Care & Wellbeing
- Group Director – Communities & Growth
- Group Director – Housing & Assets
- Director for Transformation
- Director for Neighbourhoods
- Director for Economy & Infrastructure
- Director for Housing & Homelessness
- Director for Development & Regulation
- Director for Resources/s151
- Director for Legal, Assurance & Compliance/MO
- Director for Adult Social Care
- Director for Children and Young People (DCS)
- Director for Public Health

Statutory officers (Phase 1):

- Head of Paid Service – Chief Executive
- Section 151 Officer – Director for Resources/s151
- Monitoring Officer (Director for Legal, Assurance & Compliance)
- DASS (Director for Adult Social Care)
- DCS (Director for Children and Young People)
- Director for Public Health (Director for Public Health)

All remaining statutory roles will form part of Phase 2.

The Interim Chief Executive has reviewed all feedback, undertaken benchmarking and confirms the new senior management structure presented in this report is considered the optimum response to the demands placed on the Council.

Making no change to the current structure of the Council would result in an inability to meet the challenges and priorities, not align with budget saving proposals or the new operating model. It would leave the Council in a position where it is not best able to meet its challenges going forward.

## **Recruitment**

Commenced and following posts currently/to be advertised as soon as practicably possible: -

- Chief Executive
- Director for Resources/s151
- Group Director – Communities & Growth

- Group Director – Housing & Assets
- Director for Transformation
- Director for Resources/s151
- Director for Legal, Assurance & Compliance/MO
- Director for Children & Young People

Remaining roles within Phase 1 will be advertised from early April 2025 onwards.

## **Finance**

5. Phase 1 & 2 is still on track to achieve the £1.25m reduction in the salary bill built into the 2025/26 Budget. The new structure Phase 1 and 2 sees a reduction from 58 posts to 36 posts and annual savings of £1.563m.

	<b>Number of posts</b>	<b>£</b>
Current Senior Management Structure	61	7,355,864
Vacant posts remove as part of MTFS	2	214,200
Temp post removed	1	
	<hr/> 58	<hr/> 7,141,664
New Structure	36	5,578,589
Annual saving	<hr/> 22	<hr/> 1,563,075

Further phases will deliver further savings.

Severance costs resulting from this re-structure will be funded from budget set aside in the MTFS.

## **Job Descriptions, Evaluation & Pay Grades**

All roles within Phase 1 of the senior management structure have new job descriptions which set out the spans of control and have been independently evaluated.

Job descriptions have been approved by any regional representatives where required.

## **New Chief Officer Pay Structure**

- CO1 – Group Director – (£135,000 - £155,000)
- CO2 – Director – (£118,000 - £130,000)
- CO3 – Director - £105,000 - £115,000)

## **Law**

6. The Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, has a duty under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (LGHA 1989) to determine the staffing arrangements necessary to deliver the Council's functions.

Under section 4(3) of the LGHA 1989, and as provided for under Article 12.01 (b) of the Constitution, those matters for which the Chief Executive (as Head of Paid Service) is responsible are:

- discharge by the authority of their different functions and how this is co-ordinated.
- the number and grades of staff required by the authority for the discharge of their functions.
- the organisation of the authority's staff; and,
- the appointment and proper management of the authority's staff.

The Council needs to ensure that in implementing a new structure it complies with its own employment policies and employment law. This will include considering whether any redundancy situations arise. Redundancy is a potentially fair reason for dismissal. Specialist ongoing advice is being sought from HR and Legal Services in relation to the management of the process which maximises fairness to employees and minimises potential liability for the organisation.

## **Risk Management**

- 7 The Council's Managing Change Policy and other relevant policies will be applied. The Managing Change Policy has been formally negotiated with the trade unions and complies with the relevant employment legislation and is in line with the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration (ACAS) best practice.

This will ensure staff are treated equitably and mitigate the risk of any future legal challenge and ensure that the process is conducted through a fair, transparent and consistent process.

## **Equality Impact – Equality Act (The Act)**

8. Under the Act's Public Sector Equality Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:
  - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct.

- Advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs.
- Foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- Consider the impact of all individuals affected by the consultation.
- Identifying best use of resources for residents of the borough by aligning workforce activities and services.

To comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

The protected characteristics for the purposes of the Public Sector Equality Duty are age, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation, being pregnant or on maternity leave, being married or in a civil partnership.

The recommendations in this report present no potential impact on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of these recommendations and will be done in phases throughout the consultation periods to ensure due consideration is being given at each stage of the process to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

9. Formal consultation for Phase 1 ended on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025 (slightly extended to facilitate additional time).

A further period of consultation with a small number of impacted officers (because of changes made after feedback received) will take place until 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

Trade unions have been consulted throughout the process

Consultation, on a collective and individual basis, (with the trade unions and individual members of staff) was undertaken in accordance with the Council's workforce change policies and procedures.

Employees will be fully supported throughout the process of change, being offered wellbeing support and support in preparation for interviews and assessment centres.

The Council has a duty to mitigate redundancy and considers all suitable alternative employment across the council to mitigate against cost.

Where there is any conflict of interest involving substantive posts, independent legal advice has been sought and, in such circumstances, will be dealt with by Kim Bromley Derry in conjunction with HR and Legal.

### **Commercial/Procurement**

10. There are no procurement implications as part of this proposal.

### **Environment/Climate Change**

11. There are no direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

### **Council Plan**

12. The organisational re-design project forms part of the Dudley Improvement Plan and the Council Plan 2025/26.



**Balvinder Heran**  
**Interim Chief Executive**

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#### Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Phase 1 – final structure and Phase 2 draft roles – to follow
- Appendix 2 – Senior management accountabilities – to follow

## **Meeting of the Cabinet – 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

### **Report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise**

#### **West Midlands Combined Authority Adult Education Functions 2018**

##### **Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the Department for Education planned amendment of Adult Education Functions to enable the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to fund a new suite of technical qualifications through its adult skills funding.

The consent of the WMCA and each of its constituent Councils is required before the Order can be made.

##### **Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the following recommendations, including all appendices, and the report be forwarded to Full Council for consideration at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2025:
  - Approve the final draft Order and provide formal consent to the laying of the Statutory Instrument in Parliament.
  - Delegate authority to the Director Regeneration and Enterprise to agree to any minor consequential amendments should they arise.

##### **Background**

3. Adult functions are currently funded by the Secretary of State for Education under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (“the 2009 Act”). The Secretary of State has power under

s105A Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 to transfer functions to Combined Authorities and under s19 of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to transfer functions to Combined County Authorities.

4. As part of its ongoing programme of qualifications reform, the Department for Education has worked with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE) and Ofqual to develop a suite of new technical qualifications at level 2 and level 3. These qualifications are available from 1st August 2025 for both 16-19 year olds and adults.

As this is a new type of qualification, it will be funded nationally under section 100 (1B) of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. This is a new sub-clause in the Act and combined authorities do not currently have this power transferred to them.

The Secretary of State wishes to transfer this additional power to combined authorities so that, if they wish, they can use their ASF budget to fund these new high-quality technical qualifications from 2025, alongside the other qualifications that are already available to them.

#### The Proposed Amendment

5. In November/December 2024, the Secretary of State held a public consultation to gather views on the proposal to transfer the additional funding power to combined authorities so they can fund new reformed technical qualifications from August 2025 - the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 requires the Secretary of State to hold a public consultation prior to giving public functions to any existing combined authority. The Government response to this consultation can be viewed on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

The Department of Education requires formal consent from each combined authority, including each of their constituent authorities, before it can proceed with the Parliamentary process to transfer the additional funding power.

6. The WMCA, through its devolved powers, already funds a wide range of qualifications across at multiple levels across many sectors delivered by colleges, local authorities, independent training providers and voluntary community sector organisations. Through existing powers, the WMCA can decide which provision

and qualifications it funds to best support the skills development of residents. The development of new suite of technical qualifications at level 2 and level 3 is welcome, providing our residents access relevant training underpinned by qualifications enabling them to acquire the essential skills needed to build successful careers.

7. This new power will support the further development of the regions ambitions to deliver good foundation level 2 skills offer and upskilling and re-skilling at level 3 and above as set out in the WMCA Employment and Skills Strategy which was approved at WMCA Board in 2024.
8. This funding power will not be applicable for adults aged under 25 who are in receipt of an EHC Plan, as they will continue to be funded from the 16 to 19 budget, nor will it apply to adults in detention, as they are funded by the Ministry of Justice.

#### Risk and withholding consent

9. Withholding consent would likely result in fewer opportunities for residents to access new technical qualifications, negatively impacting their employability, career progression, and the region's economic growth. It could also place WMCA at a disadvantage compared to other combined authorities that approve the amendment, especially those neighbouring the WMCA where residents in those areas could access the new technical qualifications.

#### Finance

10. There are no financial implications to the Council resulting from this report.

#### Law

11. 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

12. There are no risks to the Council resulting from this report.

## **Equality Impact**

13. There are no equality considerations arising from this report.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

14. There are no Human Resource or Organisational Development considerations arising from this report.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

15. There are no commercial or procurement considerations arising from this report.

## **Environment / Climate Change**

16. There are no environment or climate change considerations resulting from this report

## **Council Plan**

17. The report supports the priority within the Council Plan 2024/25:

- Ensure access to quality education and training for all, raising aspirations and increasing skills – one of the ERS's key themes relates to investing in people and building skills for tomorrow.



**Helen Martin**  
**Director of Regeneration and Enterprise**

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 The West Midlands Combined Authority (Adult Education Functions) Order 2018

*Draft Regulations laid before [Parliament] under section of the Act (c. ), for approval by resolution of [each House of Parliament].*

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D R A F T   S T A T U T O R Y   I N S T R U M E N T S

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**No.**

**The West Midlands Combined Authority (Adult Education Functions) Order 2018**

*Made* - - - -

\*\*\*

*Coming into force*

The Secretary of State makes these Regulations in exercise of the powers conferred by section of the Act .

**PART 1**

**General**

**Citation, commencement and application**

1.—(1) This Order may be cited as the West Midlands Combined Authority (Adult Education Functions) Order 2018 and comes into force on the day after the day on which it is made.

(2) Part 2 of this Order applies only in relation to the provision of education or training in an academic year beginning on or after 1st August 2019.

(3) In paragraph (2), “academic year” means a period beginning with 1st August and ending with the next 31st July.

**Interpretation**

2. In this Order—

“the 2009 Act” means the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009(a);

“adult detention” has the meaning given by section 121(4)(b) of the 2009 Act;

“apprenticeships training” has the meaning given by section 83(5)(c) of the 2009 Act;

“the Area” means the area of the Combined Authority; and

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(a) 2009 c. 22

(b) Section 121 was amended by paragraph 30 of Schedule 1 to the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 (c.19); paragraph 22 of Part 2 of Schedule 1, and paragraph 27 of Part 1 of Schedule 14, to the Deregulation Act 2015 (c.20); and by paragraph 8 of Schedule 18 to the Education Act 2011 (c.21).

(c) Section 83 was amended by paragraph 14 of Part 2 of Schedule 1, and paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 14, to the Deregulation Act 2015 (c. 20); by paragraph 89 of Part 2 of Schedule 3 to the Children and Families Act 2014 (c.6); and by paragraph 5 of Schedule 18 to the Education Act 2011 (c.21).

“the Combined Authority” means the West Midlands Combined Authority, a body corporate established under the West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016(a).

## PART 2

### Adult education functions of the Secretary of State transferred to the Combined Authority or to be exercisable concurrently with the Combined Authority

#### Transfer of functions from the Secretary of State to the Combined Authority in relation to the Area

3.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), the functions of the Secretary of State set out in the following provisions of the 2009 Act are exercisable by the Combined Authority in relation to the Area—

- (a) section 86 (education and training for persons aged 19 or over and others subject to adult detention)(b);
- (b) section 87 (learning aims for persons aged 19 or over: provision of facilities)(c); and
- (c) section 88 (learning aims for persons aged 19 or over: payment of tuition fees)(d).

(2) The functions mentioned in paragraph (1) do not include —

- (a) any functions relating to apprenticeship training;
- (b) any functions relating to persons subject to adult detention; or
- (c) any power to make regulations or orders.

(3) The functions mentioned in paragraph (1) are exercisable by the Combined Authority instead of by the Secretary of State.

#### Functions of the Secretary of State to be exercisable concurrently with the Combined Authority in relation to the Area

4.—(1) Subject to ~~paragraph (2)~~ [paragraphs \(2\), \(2A\) and \(2B\)](#), the functions of the Secretary of State set out in the following provisions of the 2009 Act are exercisable by the Combined Authority in relation to the Area—

- (a) section 90 (encouragement of education and training for persons aged 19 or over and others subject to adult detention)(e); ~~and~~
- (b) section 100(1)(provision of financial resources)(f); ~~and~~
- (c) [section 100\(1B\) \(provision of financial resources in connection with approved technical education qualifications or approved steps towards occupational competence\)](#).

(2) The functions mentioned in paragraph (1) do not include—

- ~~(a) any function relating to apprenticeships training; or~~

- 
- (a) S.I.2016/653 as amended by S.I. 2017/510.
  - (b) Section 86 was amended by paragraphs 1, 2 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 14 to the Deregulation Act 2015 (c.20); by paragraphs 88 and 90 of Part 2 of Schedule 3 to the Children and Families Act 2014 (c. 6); and by section 30 of, and paragraphs 1 and 7 of Schedule 18 to, the Education Act 2011 (c.21).
  - (c) Section 87 was amended by paragraphs 1 and 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 14 to the Deregulation Act 2015 (c.20); and by paragraph 91 of Part 2 of Schedule 3 to the Children and Families Act 2014 (c.6).
  - (d) Subsection (1) is amended by section 114(2) of the Digital Economy Act 2017 (c.30), on a date to be appointed. Section 88 was amended by paragraph 11 of Part 1 of Schedule 14 to the Deregulation Act 2015 (c.20) and by section 73 of the Education Act 2011 (c 21).
  - (e) Section 90 was amended by paragraphs 5 and 20 of Part 2 of Schedule 1, and paragraphs 1 and 12 of Part 1 of Schedule 14, to the Deregulation Act 2015 (c.20).
  - (f) Section 100 was amended by section 27 of the Enterprise Act 2016 (c.12); by Schedules 1 and 14 to the Deregulation Act 2015 (c.20); and by paragraphs 1 and 9 of Schedule 18 to the Education Act 2011 (c.21). Section 100 was also amended by article 7 of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Adult Education Functions) Order 2018 (S.I. 1141).

(b) any function relating to persons subject to adult detention.

(2A) The functions mentioned in paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) do not include any function relating to apprenticeship training.

(2B) The function mentioned in paragraph (1)(c) does not include any function relating to a person who, at the time of starting a course of study for an approved technical education qualification or starting to take approved steps towards occupational competence, is—

(a) aged under 19; or

(b) aged under 25 and for whom an EHC Plan is maintained.

(2C) In paragraph (2B), an “EHC Plan” means a plan within the meaning of section 37(2) of the Children and Families Act 2014.

(3) The functions mentioned in paragraph (1) are exercisable concurrently with the Secretary of State in relation to the Area.

#### **Conditions on the exercise of functions mentioned in articles 3 and 4**

5.—(1) The Combined Authority must adopt rules of eligibility for awards by an institution to which it makes grants, loans or other payments under section 100 of the 2009 Act in accordance with any direction given by the Secretary of State.

(2) In exercising the functions mentioned in articles 3 and 4, the Combined Authority must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State for the purpose of this article (as amended from time to time or as replaced by a subsequent document)(a).

(3) In subsection (1), “award” has the same meaning as in regulation 2 of the Fees and Awards (England) Regulations 2007(b).

#### **Modification of provisions in the 2009 Act**

6. For the purpose of the exercise by the Combined Authority of the functions mentioned in articles 3 and 4, sections 86 to 88, 90, 100, 101, 103, 115 and 121 of the 2009 Act apply in relation to the Combined Authority with the modifications set out in the Schedule.

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(a) The Secretary of State’s guidance was published on 23rd July 2018 and is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=department-for-education>. Copies are available on request from the Department for Education, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

(b) S.I. 2007/779, as amended by S.I. 2007/2263, S.I. 2010/1172, S.I. 2010/1941, S.I. 2011/87, S.I. 2011/1043, S.I. 2011/1987, S.I. 2012/765, S.I. 2012/956, S.I. 2012/1653, S.I. 2015/971, S.I. 2016/584, S.I. 2017/114, and S.I. 2018/137.

## SCHEDULE

Article 6

### Modification of provisions of the 2009 Act in their application to the Combined Authority

1. All references to provisions in this Schedule are to provisions in the 2009 Act.
2. Section 86 has effect as if—
  - (a) in subsection (1), for each reference to “Secretary of State” there were substituted a reference to “Combined Authority”;
  - (b) subsection (1)(b) were omitted but not “and” at the end;
  - (c) in subsection (1)(c), for “paragraphs (a) and (b)”, there were substituted “paragraph (a)”;
  - (d) in subsection (5), the words “(except so far as relating to facilities for persons subject to adult detention)” were omitted;
  - (e) in subsection (6), paragraph (c) in the definition of “training” were omitted; and
  - (f) in subsection (7), the words “or (b)” were omitted.
3. Section 87 has effect as if for each reference to “Secretary of State”, there were substituted a reference to “Combined Authority”.
4. Section 88 has effect as if in subsections (1), (2)(b), (2A), (3), (4)(b) and (6)(a) for each reference to “Secretary of State”, there were substituted a reference to “Combined Authority”.
5. Section 90 has effect as if—
  - (a) in subsection (1), for the first reference to “Secretary of State”, there were substituted a reference to “Combined Authority”;
  - (b) in subsection (1)(a), for “section 86(1)(a) and (b)”, there were substituted “section 86(1)(a)”;
  - (c) in subsection (1)(a), (b) and (c) for each reference to “Secretary of State’s remit” there were substituted the words “Combined Authority’s remit”.
6. Section 100 has effect as if—
  - (a) in subsection (1), for the reference to “Secretary of State” there were substituted “Combined Authority”;
  - (b) in subsection (1)(a), for the reference to “Secretary of State’s remit” there were substituted “Combined Authority’s remit”;
  - [\(ba\) in subsection \(1B\), for the reference to “Secretary of State” there were substituted “Combined Authority”;](#)
  - (c) in subsection (3), for each reference to “Secretary of State” there were substituted a reference to “Combined Authority”; and
  - (d) in subsection (4), for the reference to “Secretary of State” there were substituted a reference to “Combined Authority”.
7. Section 101(a) has effect as if for each reference to “Secretary of State” there were substituted a reference to “Combined Authority”.

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(a) Section 101 was amended by paragraphs 3 and 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 14 to the Deregulation Act 2015(c. 20).

- 8. Section 103(a)** has effect as if—
- (a) for the reference to “Secretary of State” there were substituted a reference to “Combined Authority”; and
  - (b) the words “or (1A)” were omitted.
- 9. Section 115(b)** has effect as if—
- (a) for the reference to “Secretary of State”, there were substituted “Combined Authority”;
  - (b) in subsection (2)(a), the word “, and” were omitted; and
  - (c) in subsection (2), paragraph (b) were omitted.
- 10. Section 121(c)** has effect as if—
- (a) in subsection (1), there were added at the appropriate place—
    - ““Combined Authority” means the West Midlands Combined Authority, a body corporate established under the West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016;”;
  - (b) in subsection (2)—
    - (i) for the reference to “Secretary of State’s remit”, there were substituted the words “Combined Authority’s remit”; and
    - (ii) in paragraph (a), the words “or (b)” were omitted; and
  - (c) in subsection (3)—
    - (i) for the reference to “Secretary of State’s remit”, there were substituted the words “Combined Authority’s remit”; and
    - (ii) paragraphs (a) and (aa) were omitted.

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(a) Section 103 was amended by paragraphs 4 and 16 of Part 1 of Schedule 14 to the Deregulation Act 2015 (c.20).  
 (b) Section 115 was amended by paragraph 23 of Part 1 of Schedule 14 to the Deregulation Act 2015(c. 20); and by paragraphs 88 and 93 of Part 2 of Schedule 3 to the Children and Families Act 2014 (c. 6).  
 (c) Subsection (1) is amended by paragraphs 1 and 30 of Schedule 1 to the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 (c.19) on a date to be appointed. Section 121 was amended by paragraph 22 of Part 1 of Schedule 1 and paragraph 27 of Part 1 of Schedule 14 to the Deregulation Act 2015 (c.20); and by paragraphs 1 and 12 of Schedule 18 to the Education Act 2011 (c.21).

## **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

*(This note is not part of the Order)*

This Order provides for the conferral of certain adult education functions of the Secretary of State under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (“the 2009 Act”) on the West Midlands Combined Authority (‘the Combined Authority’).

Article 1 of the Order provides for coming into force on the day after the day the Order is made; and for Part 2 to apply only in relation to the provision of education or training in an academic year beginning on or after 1st August 2019. This enables the Combined Authority to carry out the functions in relation to the 2019/20 academic year from the day the Order comes into force.

Article 3 of the Order provides for the transfer to the Combined Authority of adult education functions under section 86 to 88 of the 2009 Act, with the exception of such functions relating to apprenticeships training, persons subject to adult detention or any power to make regulations or orders. The transferred functions will be exercisable by the Combined Authority instead of by the Secretary of State in relation to the area of the Combined Authority.

Article 4 also provides for the functions of the Secretary of State under section 90 of the 2009 Act, which relate to the encouragement of education and training for persons aged 19 or over, and under section 100(1) of that Act, which relate to the provision of financial resources, to be exercisable by the Combined Authority in relation to the area. The functions will be exercisable by the Combined Authority concurrently with the Secretary of State.

Article 5 sets conditions on the exercise of the functions mentioned in Articles 3 and 4. The Combined Authority must adopt rules of eligibility for awards by an institution to which it makes grants, loans or other payments under section 100 of the 2009 Act in accordance with any direction given by the Secretary of State. In addition, in exercising the transferred functions, the Combined Authority must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (as amended from time to time or replaced by a subsequent document).

Article 6 and the Schedule to the Order apply certain provisions of the 2009 Act with modifications to the Combined Authority for the purpose of the Combined Authority exercising the functions conferred on it by articles 3 and 4.

## **Meeting of the Cabinet – 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

### **Report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise**

#### **Economic Regeneration Strategy: progress update and activity plan**

##### **Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of the report is to provide a progress update on project delivery in relation to the Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy since its adoption in March 2024, together with update on related context and to set out an action plan for 2025/26.

##### **Recommendations**

2. It is recommended:-
  - i. That Cabinet note the progress against the Economic Regeneration Strategy as set out in Appendices 1 and 2
  - ii. That Cabinet agree the action plan for 2025-26 (Appendix 3) on the basis of current known funding and resources
  - iii. That Cabinet note the current position in regard to the Place Based Strategy and Integrated Settlement.
  - iv. That Cabinet acknowledge receipt of capacity funding, as set out in paragraphs 21-25 of this report, for externally funded regeneration projects to be utilised in accordance with the respective guidance and funding agreements. This to include:
    - the £200k capacity funding received to date for Long Term Plan for Towns and receipt of a further £200k capacity funding expected at the start of the 25/26 financial year;

- £63.8k for Levelling Up projects shared across projects in Halesowen and Brierley Hill
  - £500k enabling funding from WMCA to progress projects related to the Place Based Strategy
  - the provision of up to £300k to support Council costs in supporting the delivery of the second phase of Metro.
- v. That, subject to WMCA Board approval on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025, Cabinet approves the acceptance of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) for 2025/26 totalling £3,925,855.71 and the proposed project level outline allocations included at appendix 4. The capital element of this funding will be up to a maximum of £1,477,602.28 and it is proposed that this amount is included in the Council's Capital Programme.
  - vi. That subject to above £150,000 of UKPSF 2025/26 capital funding is ring fenced to support the delivery of the Dudley Market enhancement project.
  - vii. That, subject to WMCA Board approval on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025, approval is provided to commence procurement activity for the delivery of UKPSF related activity in 2025 / 26 in advance of formal contracting with WMCA being finalised to ensure continuity of activity.
  - viii. That onward delegation be provided to the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise to approve the Council entering into any subsequent deed of variation or change control notice with WMCA relating to UKPSF 2025/26 funding.

### **Background**

3. The Council adopted the Economic Regeneration Strategy (ERS) in March 2024. The need for the Strategy was also identified in the Corporate Peer Review. The ERS identified five thematic priorities and a programme of potential activity, including recognition of the projects already underway. In September 2024, the Council agreed Dudley's Place Based Strategy (PBS), which built on the ERS and was a requirement of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to inform investment of the Integrated Settlement (previously called the Single Settlement). This report agreed that the projects currently funded and in flight should be the priorities for the rest of 2024/25.

4. A significant amount of progress across a wide range of projects has been achieved over the year. Appendix 1 provides a summary of the in-flight projects mapped against the five themes of the ERS to demonstrate the action being taken to progress each theme. These are also geo-located to illustrate the spread of activity and investment across the borough following the approach off the PBS. Appendix 2 provides more detailed information about the projects and delivered in 2024/25 which has contributed toward the delivery of the ERS.
5. Appendix 3 sets out an activity plan for the forthcoming year. This is in the current context of the Council's financial position, restructures, vacancy management, and the wider funding landscape which currently limit the staff and resources available to support regeneration delivery. This should be reviewed once structures have been agreed, resources in place, and the WMCA's Integrated Settlement beyond 2025/26 is confirmed. Current and proposed governance structures may also need to be adapted to reflect these changes. Officers maintain a pipeline of potential future projects for profiling and approval to be included in future years' action plans subject to funding and resources, this is separate to the proposed action plan which is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all possible and desired projects, but rather a prioritised approach which is considered to be deliverable over the next 12 months with known current resources.

### Context

6. There have been a variety of significant announcements and changes in the last 12 months since Cabinet agreed the ERS which have a direct impact on the context and delivery of regeneration projects which contribute towards the ERS priorities. These include the General Election, the Autumn Statement, the WMCA Integrated Settlement, and the English Devolution White Paper.
7. The General Election, held in July 2024, paused a number of regeneration programme for which Government funding had been announced but not contracted while the budget and priorities of the new Government were reviewed. This included Levelling Up Funding (LUF) and Long Term Plan for Towns. The consequence of this was that activity on these projects was paused for at least 6 months.

8. The Autumn Statement in October 2024 confirmed the continuation of regeneration funding for different programmes including a number in Dudley borough, namely:

- £20m for Brierley Hill LUF project
- £20m for Halesowen LUF project
- £20m for the Long Term Plan for Towns (LTPfT) programme which will be repackaged and revised guidance issued.
- A further year of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF)

Additionally, it confirmed a funding award for the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension to take the line as far as Merry Hill (phase 2b) based on a business case presented to the Department for Transport (DfT) by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) which has subsequently been agreed.

9. The Autumn Statement set out that there would be a single year settlement for WMCA, the detail of which was announced 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025. A key principle of the Integrated Settlement is that of no detriment, i.e. the region is not financially worse off than if the settlement were not in place and WMCA considers this principle to have been upheld for the West Midlands. The 2025/26 settlement does not, however, provide growth in the funding being made available to the region so will largely support a continuation of activity underway with little headroom for the funding of new projects. This funding will flow from April 2025 and a report will be brought back to Cabinet to agree acceptance of funding (excluding UKPSF for which approval is being sought as part of this report) as appropriate once further information is known and the WMCA Board has taken the necessary decisions in relation to the funds. As the Integrated Settlement will be a primary, though not sole, source of funding for economic regeneration activity, this has significant bearing on the funding available to both fund capacity, and to deliver projects in Dudley borough. It is anticipated that the 2025 Spending Review will set out a multi-year settlement from 2026/27.

10. WMCA board on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025 will be presented with the 2025/26 Integrated Settlement and asked to consider the decisions needed to release the funding. On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025 the West Midlands received confirmation from Government of the first Integrated Settlement agreement for 2025/26 which totals £389 million. Indicative allocations include £152 million for Adult Skills, £46.4 million to support the continuation of UK Shared Prosperity Funding, £62.5 million to support the redevelopment of brownfield

land for housing and £34.4 million for the retrofit of existing housing stock to improve the energy efficiency of buildings and reduce energy costs for residents. This is in addition to the region's existing transport funding of £211 million for 2025/26. The timing of the publication of those papers and this report means that the board won't have agreed the position before this report has been published.

11. The English Devolution White Paper was published in December 2024 and sets out a journey to increased levels of devolution for authorities across England. As a Mayoral Combined Authority, and one of the first places to receive an Integrated Settlement, the West Midlands is already engaged in this process. The Devolution White Paper does set out further changes and opportunities relating to devolution and regeneration, amongst others, not least the proposed areas of competence, i.e. responsibilities of authorities to be set out in law, including economic development and regeneration, skills and employment support, and transport and local infrastructure – all of which are essential elements of the regeneration of a place.

### Projects

12. Appendices 1 and 2 provide a summary and updates on the progress of priority projects over the last 12 months. There are further projects and areas of activity which do not sit squarely in the regeneration agenda but do have a direct impact, and which demonstrate the complex, cross-cutting nature of the work in delivering against the agreed priorities.
13. One such example is the Eton–Star academies proposal for a selective sixth form college in Dudley town centre. Over the course of the last year the Council's work to accommodate the college at Tower Street ceased following confirmation that only capital build costs could be met with the funding from Department for Education (DfE), and a new site at Stafford Street carpark agreed, and Heads of Terms for lease agreed. Further decisions from DfE are still awaited to determine whether the project will progress.
14. Another example is the land at Flood Street which Cabinet agreed in July 2024, could be disposed of for the purposes of the development of an ice rink. Heads of Terms for the disposal of the land at Flood Street have now been agreed in principle. Lawyers are instructed on both sides. Following further discussion on the

terms, an all-parties meeting is in the process of being arranged with a view to assisting with the drafting of the contract documentation.

15. The Council's journey toward financial sustainability creates a tension between Corporate Landlord's aim to deliver significant capital receipts from disposals and the regeneration agenda to optimise development opportunities across the borough. Expectations may need to be managed as there will be times when the best capital receipt for a council asset being sold may not be compatible with the regeneration aims in a particular area.
16. One of the actions from the ERS was to develop a Cultural Strategy for Dudley both in support of the sector and placemaking. Some UKSPF funding was utilised in 2024/25 to bring in specialist support to develop the strategy. This was subsequently agreed by Cabinet in August 2024. Since then, the funding landscape has changed with little funding currently available to resource and implement actions from the strategy directly, however the Council has continued to work with WMCA and other partners to explore options and support the utilisation of funds they hold for studies and activity in Dudley. One element which is progressing is being led by Dudley Zoo and Castle. This relates to a funding bid to National Heritage Lottery to progress the second phase of the Castle Hill Vision. The bidding process has multiple stages to it starting with an Expression of Interest (Eoi) which is planned to be submitted in 2025.
17. The ERS also identifies the role that social value can have in contributing towards delivery of the strategy, working with employers to champion social value and drive community benefit. One example of where this work is underway is on the Health Innovation Dudley (HID) project where the project team is working with local partners, including the Council, to identify opportunities where the Alliance can contribute towards social value outcomes, particularly those aligned with the principles of HID project. To date multiple charity collections have been held as well as CV writing workshops for students, and curriculum development support for the College. A programme of activity is being developed and the learning taken from this will be shared with other projects to drive greater, targeted social value outcomes across the borough.
18. Further to the February Cabinet report regarding the HID agreements, work has continued to progress the respective documents. The University of Worcester (UoW) have now

requested that their occupation and use of the new HID building is documented through a formal five year sub-lease arrangement with DCoT rather than via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) as originally proposed. As DCoT's headlease with DMBC is based on a 30 year term with mutual five yearly break clauses from lease commencement (estimated Feb 2026), the sub-lease between DCoT and UoW will expire Feb 2031. Although there is potential for UoW/DCoT to renew/extend their respective leases after this date, both initial lease terms post-date the MHCLG monitoring date of 2030 when output monitoring ceases.

## **Finance**

19. While there are no new financial implications arising directly from this report, there are a number of related financial matters to draw Cabinet's attention to.
20. Since the adoption of the ERS the Government has not announced any new competitive regeneration funding streams, and team capacity has been fully committed to delivery of in-flight, funded projects with team members picking up additional work where vacancies have not been filled so there has been no available capacity or funding to bring forward new projects.
21. As previously reported, WMCA made capacity funding was made available to each of the Councils in the region to support development of their respective PBSs and early-stage project development work. Following adoption of the Dudley PBS, and the WMCA Board to note this progress in tandem with the Integrated Settlement March Board meeting, this funding is now proposed to be used to fund project development work such as feasibility studies and business cases to work up projects to be ready to secure future delivery funding, resource to support the work, and additional promotional, data and evidence work etc. A proportionate internal governance process is being implemented to manage and apportion calls on this funding towards agreed priorities.
22. Dudley has recently received notification from WMCA of an indicative UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocation of £3,925,855 for 2025/26 which subject to WMCA Board approval on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025, will continue to support activity aligned to the Dudley ERS themes and Local Growth & Place pillars of the Place Based Strategy. This is a circa 17% reduction of the 24/25 allocation which is reflective of the regional reduction. It is proposed

that the capital element of this funding (up to a maximum of £1,477,602.28) is included in the Council's Capital Programme. A project to deliver improvements to Dudley Market was due to be funded through the 24/25 UKSPF allocation but changes to the project to reflect the current and forecast position of the market, have required timescales to be adjusted and therefore this will be one of the first projects to be funded through the 2025/26 allocation subject to cabinet approval as part of this report.

23. Both the LUF projects have a requirement for match funding which is intended to be leveraged from partners to the projects. Cabinet will consider a report in relation to the Brierley Hill LUF3 project in parallel to this report. Having submitted the baselines for these a year ago, officers are currently going through a process of re-baselining the projects to determine what can be delivered with the funding available recognising the impact of inflation the council's current financial position and recently adopted guiding principles for capital strategy and that partnerships have moved on in the meantime. This will be reflected in revised validation / project adjustment requests being submitted to MHCLG and with any further approvals to enter into an MOU and/or funding agreement with Government to be brought back to cabinet for approval. In the meantime Government has awarded the Council a total of £63,800 capacity funding to support development of the two LUF3 projects.
24. Long Term Plan for Towns (LTPfT) does not require any Council match funding, though does encourage matching the funding against other sources to lever greater investment. The refreshed prospectus and technical information for the revised programme have yet to be published at the time of writing this report, however £200k revenue capacity funding has been received, in addition to the £50k granted to Councils to support the set up process, with a further £200k confirmed for 2025/26. The Dudley Town Board is responsible for the programme's oversight and determining the spend of the LTPfT programme, and in this capacity will agree the priorities for the capacity funding at forthcoming Board meetings. This will be reported back to Cabinet in future update reports.
25. The original Metro programme and budget made some financial provision for relevant Council staff and project costs related to highways drawings approvals and traffic management to be charged to the project. Following prolongation of the Metro construction programme it was recognised that further funding would be required to continue to meet Council staff and project costs over a longer period of time. A budget of £300k has included

in the TfWM budget for this purpose, and while it is not possible to accurately forecast staff costs without more detailed information, it is considered that the funding will go a long way to meeting costs incurred by the Council in supporting the delivery of phase 2b. Should the programme be extended and/or should the business case to Brierley Hill High Street (phase 2c) be agreed and funded, further financial support for ongoing staff time and cost will need to be agreed.

## **Law**

26. 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**

27. There are no new risks arising from this report. Each project listed will have a risk register specific to that project, with some risks escalated to sit on the Directorate or Corporate risk registers.

## **Equality Impact**

28. There are no new equality considerations arising from this report. Each project will be required to assess its equality impacts and to respond accordingly.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

29. The development and delivery of economic regeneration projects requires significant cross-council working and it is important to recognise that most staff involved with economic regeneration project delivery are not 100% project staff and have other responsibilities such as supporting development of the Dudley Local Plan, assessing planning applications, undertaking enforcement actions, partnership work and stakeholder management.

In addition, demand for professionally qualified and experienced staff exceeding supply, and significant resourcing pressures arising from vacancies and competition around salaries has impacted and

continues to directly impact on the delivery of both regeneration benefits and capital receipts

30. Specifically in relation to UKSPF the intention is to seek approval to extend the secondment period for a further 12 months for 2 x project co-ordinator roles in advance of UKPSF being formally approved at WMCA Board on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025. This is in line with recommendations of WMCA Financial Directors to ensure continuation of service delivery in advance of formal agreements being signed

### **Commercial/Procurement**

31. There are no new commercial or procurement considerations arising from this report. Projects will work with procurement and commercial colleagues, as appropriate, to ensure that projects are delivered in accordance with relevant regulations.

As noted at recommendation 2 vii) approval is being sought as part of this cabinet report to commence procurement activity for UKPSF 2025/26 related activity in advance of formal agreements being signed to ensure continuity on service delivery.

### **Environment / Climate Change**

32. The ERS states that it must respond to growing environmental imperatives. Each project will have different environment and climate change considerations to be considered, addressed and implemented.

### **Council Plan**

33. The Economic Regeneration Strategy is specifically referenced in the 2024-25 Council Plan and the project updates provide seek to demonstrate how activity over the last year is contributing towards economic change and investment in transport connectivity.

*“Deliver an affordable regeneration strategy that brings about structural economic change and supports the growth of a diverse, broad-based economy and ensure investment in transport connectivity”*

The delivery of the ERS through the projects set out in the appendices, also contributes towards other priorities in the Council Plan:

- *Ensure access to quality education and training for all, raising aspirations and increasing skills* – one of the ERS’s key themes relates to investing in people and building skills for tomorrow.
- *Work with local businesses and communities to develop shared opportunities, create jobs, deliver economic growth and change the role of our town centres.* – this cuts across three of the ERS’s key themes, one relating to unlocking enterprise and innovation, another relating to town centres, and the third seeks to support the visitor economy while creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment.

*Build and strengthen effective governance and control by defining a clear and transparent governance and decision-making structure* – governance structures to support and oversee this activity are being reviewed and refreshed following the proposals set out in the October 2024 UKSPF Cabinet report.



**Helen Martin, Director of Regeneration and Enterprise**

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## **Appendices**

*Appendix 1 – 2024-25 Project Summary Matrix*

*Appendix 2 – 2024-25 Project Updates*

*Appendix 3 – 2025-26 Action Plan*

*Appendix 4 – Proposed Indicative Dudley UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025/26 allocations.*

## **List of Background Documents**

[\*Economic Regeneration Strategy Cabinet report March 2024\*](#)

[\*Place Based Strategy Cabinet report September 2024\*](#)

[\*UKSPF Cabinet Report October 2024\*](#)

[\*WMCA 2025/26 Integrated Settlement\*](#)

## Appendix 1: Project Summary matrix

Our Vision is that by 2034, the borough of Dudley will be recognised nationally for its thriving local economy. With specialisms in advanced manufacturing, it will be a focus for innovation, particularly in respect of the net zero transition, and it will also have a growing profile in 'new economy' sectors. It will be far better connected and it will function as a hub for business – both those formed locally and those that have relocated to the borough. It will be playing a full role in driving the West Midlands as a whole forward. It will be an aspirational place in which individuals, families, communities and businesses thrive.

	Theme 1: Unlocking Enterprise and Innovation	Theme 2: Investing in People and building skills for tomorrow	Theme 3: Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment and supporting the visitor economy	Theme 4: Reinventing town centres across the borough	Cross cutting priority: maximising the impact of Metro and driving investment in future activity
<b>Brierley Hill</b>					
Brierley Hill LUF 3		X		X	X
FHSF				X	
HAZ			X	X	
Metro ph2					X
<b>Dudley</b>					
Health Innovation Dudley	X	X			
Eton-Star Academy		X			
Townscape Heritage 2			X	X	
Long Term Plan for Towns	X	X	X	X	
Metro ph1 complementary measures				X	X
Portersfield				X	X
Flood Street				X	
Dudley Town Centre Partnership			X	X	
Dudley Interchange				X	X
<b>Halesowen</b>					
Halesowen LUF3		X		X	
<b>Lye</b>					
Lye Investment programme			X	X	
<b>Stourbridge</b>					
Stourbridge CRSTS				X	

Stourbridge Business Improvement District (BID)			x	x	
Stourbridge Pocket Park				x	
Stourbridge Changing Places Toilet			x	x	
Stourbridge Parapet			x		
<b>Local Centres &amp; pan borough</b>					
UKSPF	x	x	x	x	x
Cultural Strategy			x		
Himley Play Area			x		
Common Wealth Games Legacy Fund			x		
Stalled and Derelict sites				x	

## Project:

# Brierley Hill Levelling Up Fund, Round 3

## Project Value & Funding:

- The construction of a new Transport Technology Centre at Venture Way and improvement of the Skills Shop at Merry Hill. Both of these projects will be delivered and run by Dudley College. **LUF contribution £16.86m, total project value £17.57m.**
- Enhanced transport infrastructure, with a focus on active travel to address severance issues and improve connectivity within the Strategic Centre. This will include a footpath / cycleway connection between Brierley Hill and Merry Hill as part of the Midlands Metro viaduct in Phase 2c of the proposed extension. **LUF contribution £3.14m, total project value £16m.**

## Timescales:

- Refurbishment of the Skills Shop: commence March 2025 / complete May 2025.
- Initial design works on the Transport Technology Centre will commence during 2025/6, with a start date on site in April 2026 and completion by September 2027.
- Midland Metro Phase 2C Extension from Merry Hill to Brierley Hill High Street subject to preparation of a business case by Transport for West Midlands.

## Activity 2024/25:

- Monitoring return with updated costs, submitted to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in December 2024.
- Memorandum of Understanding issued to Dudley MBC in November 2024. Awaiting DMBC sign off.

## Impact:

- The LUF funded projects will complement the public sector led improvement of Brierley Hill High Street with funding secured through the Future High Streets Fund and Heritage Action Zone programmes.
- The LUF investment will deliver improved access to courses through the Skills Shop.
- The Transport Technology Centre will upskill vehicle technicians in the maintenance of electric and hybrid vehicle systems.
- The connectivity package will support the delivery of the Midland Metro to the High Street and improve connectivity between the High Street and Merry Hill, thereby addressing the long-term severance issues.



Example of the Transport Technology Centre building design

**Project:**

# Brierley Hill Future High Streets Fund

**Project Value & Funding:**

£9.9m from Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) to support a mixed package of interventions across the town centre and £225k from WMCA for Lions Way.

**Timescales:**

Brierley Hill High Street was awarded funding from the Future High Streets Fund in December 2020 and was originally due to complete in March 2024. Following the submission of a number of Project Adjustment Requests, approval was granted for the re-allocation of £3,549,404 of funding from Daniels Land (not proceeding due to Metro delays) to a series of replacement projects. There was also a grant spend programme extension to September 2025, with a requirement all contracts would be let by March 2025.

**Activity 2024/25:**

- **Highway junction enhancements** to improve traffic flows and air quality - complete.
- **Public realm works to improve connectivity and integration of the High Street to the emerging Metro** - this has seen major improvements made to the High Street, Civic Hall Green, Mill Street, Little Cottage Street, Level Street, Bell Street South, St Michael’s Churchyard and Dudley Road.
- **Creation of ‘Lions Way’** - the link space from the High Street to Little Cottage Street (acquisition of land, demolition, site preparation - undertaken in conjunction with WMCA).
- **Marsh Park** - physical improvements to the park as well as community engagement activities, incl. a community archaeological excavation of WW2 structures below ground.
- **Refurbishment of the High Street public library** - complete (incl. replacement lift).
- **Refurbishment and re-opening of the town centre toilets next to the proposed Metro terminus.**
- **Heritage Buildings programme** - repairs and architectural reinstatement improvements made to a number of heritage assets in the town centre, building upon the work completed under the Brierley Hill High Street Heritage Action Zone - incl. the Jones Brothers Clock.

**Impact:**

Brierley Hill is the designated strategic centre of Dudley Borough. It has suffered from severance as the result of the the Enterprise Zone. This has brought new investment to the area in the from of the Merry Hill Shopping Centre and the Waterfront business park. The project interventions are intended to increase footfall, reduce vacancy rates and improve the diversity of facilities on the High Street. Importantly, they are designed to improve connectivity to the Midland Metro terminus at Brierley Hill High Street. The Metro Extension from Dudley Town Centre to Merry Hill was approved in Autumn 2024 and works have now commenced on site. TfWM and partners will be working on the business case to link Merry Hill to the High Street, including the construction of a new viaduct. This will improve connectivity to the town and also support the release of long-term vacant sites for new homes, thereby addressing local housing needs.



(Above) Improved Brierley Hill Public Library  
(Left) 110-113 High Street (former Barclays Bank) – before and after (next to Lions Way)

## Project: **Brierley Hill Heritage Action Zone**

### Project Value & Funding:

**Overall the scheme delivered just under £2.5m of grant-aided works**, with a grant of **£2,042,171.00 from DLUCH** - Dept. of Levelling Up, Communities & Housing (now MHCLG - Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) **and Historic England**. Match funding of **£453,000 from Dudley Council/S106**. **£1m of private investment plus just over £140,000 from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG)** that was made available to businesses as part of the Covid-19 recovery to assist with new shopfronts.

### Timescales:

Project started in 2020 and completed March 2024. The funding was used to grant-aid capital projects for the repair, reuse and reinstatement of architectural features to historic buildings (*to which third parties contributed*), public realm improvements and to fund community engagement, training activities and project administration.

Outputs from the scheme programme included:

- (A) **3,301 square metres public realm improved** at the key gateway ends of the town, Brierley Hill War Memorial, St Mary's Church and Civic Hall Green.
- (B) **The repair of 10 historic buildings/structures.**
- (C) **1,756.9 square metres of vacant floor space brought back into use.**
- (D) **37 new homes created.**
- (E) **50+ stallholders and 3 businesses assisted.**
- (F) **Removal of 2 buildings from the Council's Heritage at Risk Register** (Brierley Hill Institute and Brierley Hill War Memorial).
- (G) **Legacy funding.**

### Activity 2024/25:

The above capital works were complemented by a series of community engagement activities designed to help increase the appreciation and understanding of Dudley's historic environment, of which three examples are:

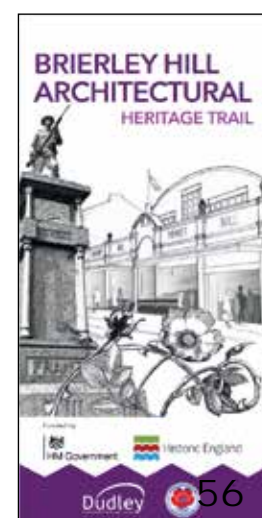
- Developing and publishing a number of heritage trails in order to provide the public with the opportunity to do self-guided trails in the town (Brierley Hill Architectural Heritage Trail, Brierley Hill Geology Trail and Who's Who in St Michael's Churchyard)
- Oral History Programme, training and reminiscence sessions – 20 Oral Histories generated through the programme, transcribed and deposited with the Archives.
- Established a school of Bell Ringing – very successful with a video about it produced by Historic England.

All of the remaining grant was drawn down from the Historic England and the project was successfully closed. Developed a very strong working relationship and good reputation for the Council with Historic England who are keen to support the Council with delivery with future projects.

The project has:

- Improved the physical appearance of Brierley Hill High Street by implementing a buildings repair programme to restore its architectural character.
- Supported the local economy with the grants programme to help offset building repair costs, thereby encouraging new investment and creating conditions for growth.
- Re-establish Brierley Hill High Street as the centre of the local community by improving understanding of its historic past and allowing the community to engage and take ownership over its future.
- Improved environmental quality by enhancing green amenity spaces and public realm to improve connectivity to the new Midland Metro terminus.
- Engaged with and supported the local community to develop a cultural programme to improve distinctiveness and create a vibrant local centre.

### Impact:



Trail leaflet example

Project:

# Brierley Hill Cultural Consortium

Project Value & Funding:

The Brierley Hill Cultural Consortium was awarded a total of £94,000 and it formed a major element of the Brierley Hill High Street Heritage Action Zone.

The funding came from Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England and Department of Digital Culture Media and Sport.

Timescales:

Commenced June 2021 and completed March 2024. The programme was delivered by Brierley Hill Community Forum with support from Dudley MBC and Dudley CVS.

Activity 2024/25:

The programme was successfully completed and all the necessary evaluation reports and financial monitoring submitted to Historic England by March 2024. In accordance with the agreed milestone and instalment schedule the following projects were delivered:

- Toil Art
- Hi Piano
- Hug your 'Hi' Street
- 100 Faces of Brierley Hill
- Radio Public Library (social art project) – Workshop 24
- Pop Up Gallery and Shop – Dudley College
- Brierley Hill Song Book – Dan Whitehouse
- Great Big Green Week – Ekho Collective
- These People, This Place - Ekho Collective
- These Streets - Brendan Hawthorne
- Comic Con – Brierley Hill Library
- Beauty of Brierley Hill
- Closedown event

Impact:

One of the main aims of the programme was to help people feel proud of where they live and to fund cultural activities to engage communities and their local high streets and celebrate the role of the historic area as a hub of the community and help increase footfall in the town. The other major aim was to help capacity build so that the project could continue on beyond March 2024.



Examples of Brierley Hill Cultural Activities

**Project:**

# Round Oak Steelworks Monument

**Project Value & Funding:**

Total £89,500: £44,500 from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) plus £45,000 from Dudley Council funds; further landscape works for surrounds were also funded as part of Brierley Hill HAZ when it was extended to include the parade/site.

**Timescales:**

The monument had originally been discussed with local people including the ex Workers at the time of the Brierley Hillness Project circa 2009-11 and designs made by the Borough Artist. The Consultation indicated local people wanted the monument to be placed somewhere near the original entrance and site, so the project waited for an opportunity to apply for appropriate funding to create the monument.

- **2019:** CIL funding secured.
- **2021:** Revised designs created, site surveys conducted, planning permission granted.
- **2022:** Materials ordered and parts cut. Foundation constructed. Round Oak Day held at Dudley Archives.
- **2023:** Fabrication and assembly commenced and progressed.
- **2024:** Fabrication and assembly completed and Sculpture brought to site; enhanced landscape completed around the monument.
- **2025:** Spring opening organised.

**Activity 2024/25:**

During 2024-25 the Round Oak Steelworks Monument Project was successfully concluded. After continued fabrication throughout the year, in September 2024 it was brought to site, and a landscape setting created around it, in preparation for an official celebratory opening by the Mayor and former steelworkers.

**Impact:**

The monument has supported the local economy through working with three Black Country fabrication firms and celebrates the continued existence of such local metalworking skills. In addition, its presence as a prominent gateway to the town is expected to boost the image and thus the attraction of Brierley Hill, as an area of economic regeneration. The monument is also expected to act as a gathering point and by extension attract local people, visitors and tourists both to the small parade of shops nearby, and also to the town as a whole.



**Project:**

# Health Innovation Dudley, Castle Hill

**Project Value & Funding:**

Total £26.6m funding: £25m from Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) and up to £1.6m from DMBC.

**Timescales:**

- **2020:** Initial grant applications were made.
- **December 2021:** Planning permission granted.
- **Summer/Autumn 2022:** Alliance team under Insurance Backed Alliance (IBA) contract procured.
- **Spring 2023:** Design commenced.
- **November 2023:** Hippodrome demolished.
- **June 2024:** Compulsory purchase order (CPO) for remaining land completed.
- **August 2024:** Construction started.
- **Completion date set as February 2026.**

**Activity 2024/25:**

- Contract sum and programme agreed.
- Non material amendment to planning achieved.
- Third party owned properties acquired and demolished.
- Construction commenced with frame starting in December 2024 and completing end February 2025.

**Impact:**

Redevelopment of a key gateway site within the setting of Dudley Castle (a designated heritage asset) & Hill (scheduled ancient monument) to create a new higher education facility for the provision of University level Health courses.

New building will be operated by Dudley College with courses run by the University of Worcester.

To attract new students to Dudley and provide new technical skills and degree programmes which align with local employment opportunities to raise skills and improve progression rates from local schools and colleges for local people into higher skilled employment opportunities, as well as drive longer term productivity growth through higher level skills and raise the GVA in the borough's local economy.

The project will also provide vital skills resources to the local NHS providers and raise awareness of health and wellbeing issues and opportunities to local people. It will be the first dedicated higher education institution building in the borough.



Artist's impression of the new HID building on Castle Hill

## Project: **Dudley Townscape Heritage Fund (TH2)**

Overall the scheme delivered **£2,071,966 of grant-aided works**, with a grant of **£1,152,810 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)**. **Match funding of £300,000 from Dudley Council**. **£619,000 of private investment plus an additional £186,267 from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG)** that was made available to businesses as part of the Covid-19 recovery to assist with new shopfronts.

The scheme built on the success/investment of previous heritage-led regeneration schemes thereby sustaining that investment:

### Project Value & Funding:

- **Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) - English Heritage funded project - delivered in 2002**, row of historic shops being brought back into use and historic shopfronts installed (Stone Street).
- **The first Townscape Heritage Scheme (TH1) which was delivered between 2008 and 2015**, funded the repair and reuse of 17 buildings in the town centre.
- **LEP Buildings Investment Programme delivered between 2015-2016**, brought more historic buildings back into use and created 30+ new residential units as well as assisting a number of businesses.

Resulting in other external heritage-led schemes coming forward in the borough e.g. Brierley Hill Heritage Action Zone.

### Timescales:

Project started in 2017 and completed March 2024 following an extension (*due to Covid*).

### Activity 2024/25:

All of the remaining grant was drawn down from the NLHF and the project was successfully closed. Developed a very strong working relationship and good reputation for the Council with the NLHF and Historic England (external funders) who are keen to support the Council with delivery on future projects.

The funding was used to grant-aid capital projects for the repair, reuse and reinstatement of architectural features to historic buildings (*to which third parties contributed*) and to fund community engagement, training activities and project administration.

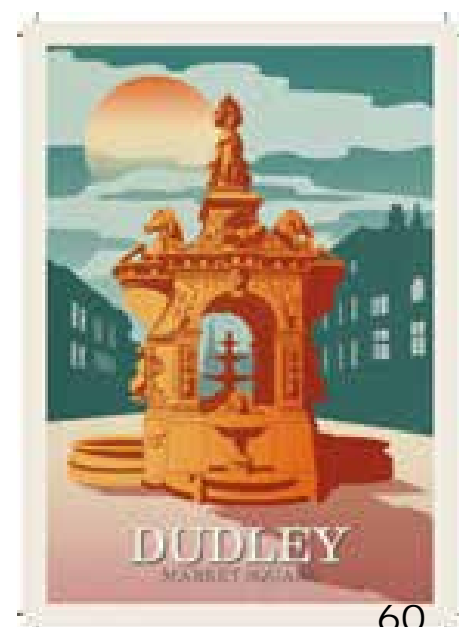
Outputs from the scheme programme included:

- (A) **The repair of 10 historic buildings**
- (B) **Vacant floor space being brought back into use to create new residential units and new businesses in the town.**
- (C) **Improved both the occupancy and the way businesses used their buildings**
- (D) **Much-changed appearance of two key buildings within the marketplace, Fountain Arcade and Plaza Mall.**

The above capital works were complemented by an activities programme designed to help increase the appreciation and understanding of Dudley's historic environment, of which three examples are:

### Impact:

- Working with Dudley People's Archive, Fused and CoLab in the '**Growing Up in Dudley**' project where a wealth of images, oral histories and artwork (*inspired by people's experiences and memories of Dudley*) were gathered and shared.
- **Vintage style postcards and posters.**
- **Re-establishment of the Dudley Coffin Race in 2018** and publication of a heritage leaflet about it (*important as it links the Castle, town centre and Top Church*).



Vintage style postcard example

**Project:**

# Metro Complementary Measures

**Project Value & Funding:**

- £9.1m DMBC and Towns Fund

**Timescales:**

- Cabinet agreed the complementary measures budget in 2019 for areas of uplift and enhancement to key areas of the public realm along the Metro route.
- Works have been underway since then and have been delivered by MMA alongside the main tram route implementation.
- January 2024: specific uplift interventions prioritised for delivery with available funding
- Agreed improvements will be completed summer 2025, in parallel with completion of phase 1 metro extension to Flood Street, Dudley.

**Activity 2024/25:**

- Continued review of relevant drawings to enable MMA and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) delivery of Metro.
- Approval and installation of uplifted lighting columns.
- Design, agreement and installation of signalling solution at Castle Hill.
- Design of town centre public realm uplift together with approval of materials
- Installation of uplifted tramstop shelters.
- Collaboration between Council, MMA and TfWM to secure Metro core project budget to replicate the Hanson's bridge artwork on the new bridge across Birmingham New Road - installed June 2024.
- **Business case for Metro Phase 2b (Flood Street to Merry Hill) approved autumn 2024** having secured funding, and preliminary works have commenced. There is a **shared commitment to develop the case for phase 2c (from Merry Hill to Brierley Hill High Street)** and securing funding to deliver it.

**Impact:**

- The Metro itself will improve connectivity and accessibility for residents to work, education and leisure as part of a sustainable travel plan. It will also enhance accessibility of Dudley for visitors.
- The complementary measures will support sustainable travel through enhanced walking routes and environments, and connectivity with other modes of transport such as the Dudley Interchange.
- They will give a greater sense of arrival at gateway destinations to the borough, enhancing the experience for residents and visitors alike, encouraging people to visit and spend time here.
- They will also uplift key areas alongside the Metro route thereby continuing the high quality public realm, historic building restorations and new developments in Dudley.



*Dudley Town Centre metro stop shelters during construction*



*Hanson's Bridge restored to its former glory*

**Project: Portersfield, Dudley**

**Project Value & Funding:**

GDV estimated at £60m-£70m. Possible sources of funding include West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Homes England, DMBC and private sector equity/debt.

**Timescales:**

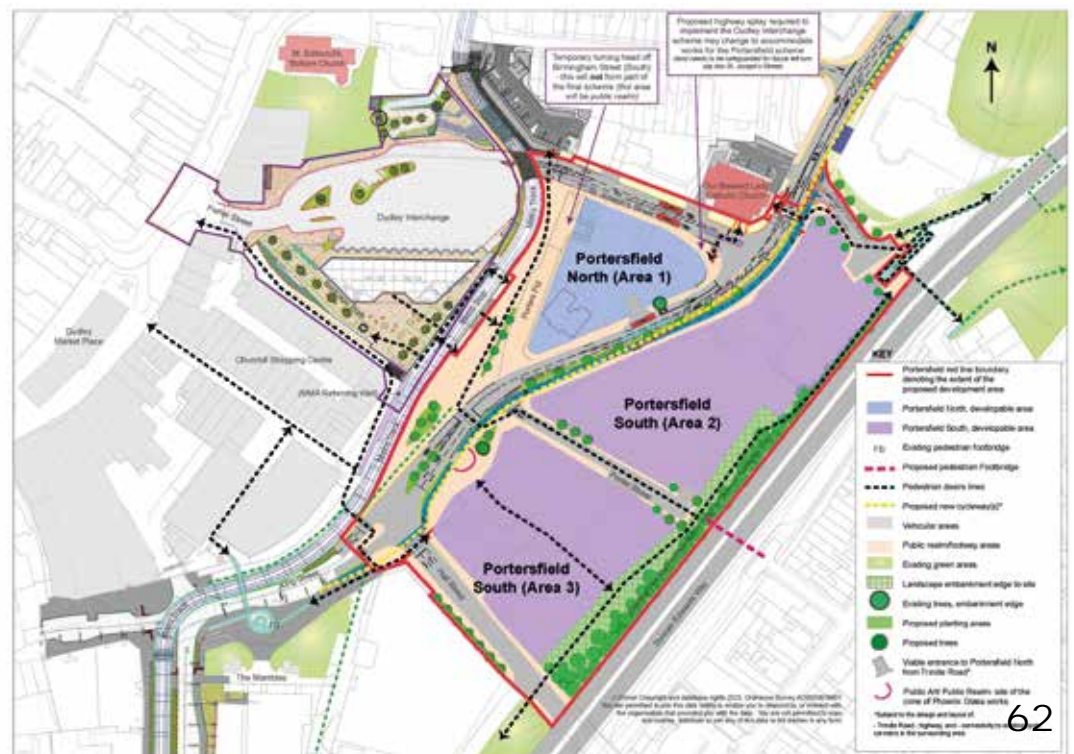
- **Initial identification of project 2010.** Various iterations of the scheme have been produced and different planning uses considered, sometimes in partnership with third parties.
  - Current scheme envisages a **residential led redevelopment** with some ancillary retail and commercial uses together with public realm and transport enhancements.
  - **Key milestones** include securing a collaboration agreement with Avenbury, taking the site to market, identification of a delivery partner, planning and site commencement.
  - **Completion date will depend upon scheme viability** as profit generation may only be created by sales of completed built and let properties on site.
- 
- **Rationalisation of Dudley Motors tenure on site** - new lease granted .
  - **Completion of the Portersfield Development Brief**, which is a non-statutory guide to the development and regeneration of the site.
  - **Completion of viability appraisals** by Avison Young.
  - **Land referencing, valuations and third party land negotiations.**
  - **Progression of £4.5m CRSTS funding package with WMCA.**
  - **Funding discussions with WMCA to support the redevelopment/land assembly.**
  - **Negotiation of a Collaboration Agreement with Avenbury** to support the joint marketing of the site.

**Activity 2024/25:**

**Impact:**

Portersfield is a town centre site comprising 9.2 acres (3.75ha) located adjacent to the new Dudley Interchange and Dudley Town Centre Metro Stop. The site is derelict and vacant and currently detrimental to the perception of Dudley town Centre. It has been identified as a Priority Site in the new Local Plan.

Redevelopment of this site for residential use would add significantly to much needed housing stock within Dudley and allow for regeneration incl. new public realm, transport and cycling initiatives, open spaces and key linkages across the site. Development of town centre living accommodation will assist in supporting Dudley Town and its local economy as well as the creation of jobs during the construction phases.



Portersfield Context - image from the Development Brief

Project:

# Dudley Town Centre Partnership

Project Value & Funding:

- Consultancy and group activity funding from within the overall UKSPF allocation.
- **Dudley Town Centre Vibrancy feasibility study - July 2023**, produced several recommended interventions to improve vibrancy in the town. The report identified a lack of stakeholder partnership / engagement in the town and need for a vehicle to deliver / own interventions.
- **In October 2023 consultants were procured to develop a town centre partnership.**
- **In early 2024 a budget was allocated to the newly formed steering group to deliver some recommendations from the report.** The group decided to focus upon marketing and events for the town culminating in an inaugural Christmas Market and Fun Day in the town centre in December 2024.
- **Development of the steering group, including governance and establishing a bank account, continues to be funded until 31st March 2025** - with the hope that the group will be in a sustainable position to continue.

Timescales:

Activity 2024/25:

- **1 x Inaugural Christmas Market and Fun Day event (Dec 2024)** with 40 small business stall holders (including local business participants from the town) with increased footfall on the day in excess of 3,000 people. Feedback so positive will look to tie in this work with light switch on in partnership with the council moving forward.
- **1 x Shop Dudley website created and associated social media channels and positive content sharing** (includes business database)
- **1 x Core Steering group formed**, meeting every 4-6 weeks comprising local business owners, a charity and the library.
- **1 x business representative from the group also now represents the voice of business on the Dudley Town Board.**
- **Chair of group established, constitution adopted and working towards CIC status for a bank account by end of March 2025.**
- **Provided a platform for engagement with wider services** including community safety DMBC teams, the police and Midlands Metro / TfWM to name a few.

Local partnerships and multi-sector stakeholder collaboration are essential to economic growth, wellbeing, pride in place and place based development.

By having a town centre partnership this gives the opportunity for meaningful engagement in the town and the opportunity to rebuild relationships and trust.

Impact:

It allows the council and other partners to consult, engage and enable co-development of plans, addressing local needs.

It has also enabled more activity and activation in the centre, increasing footfall, and improving perceptions by spreading a more positive narrative.



Dudley Christmas Market

**Project:**

# Dudley Interchange Highways Works

**Project Value & Funding:**

**Current estimated value £4.1M** funded through Transport for West Midlands (TFWM) / West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Funding Agreement.

**Timescales:**

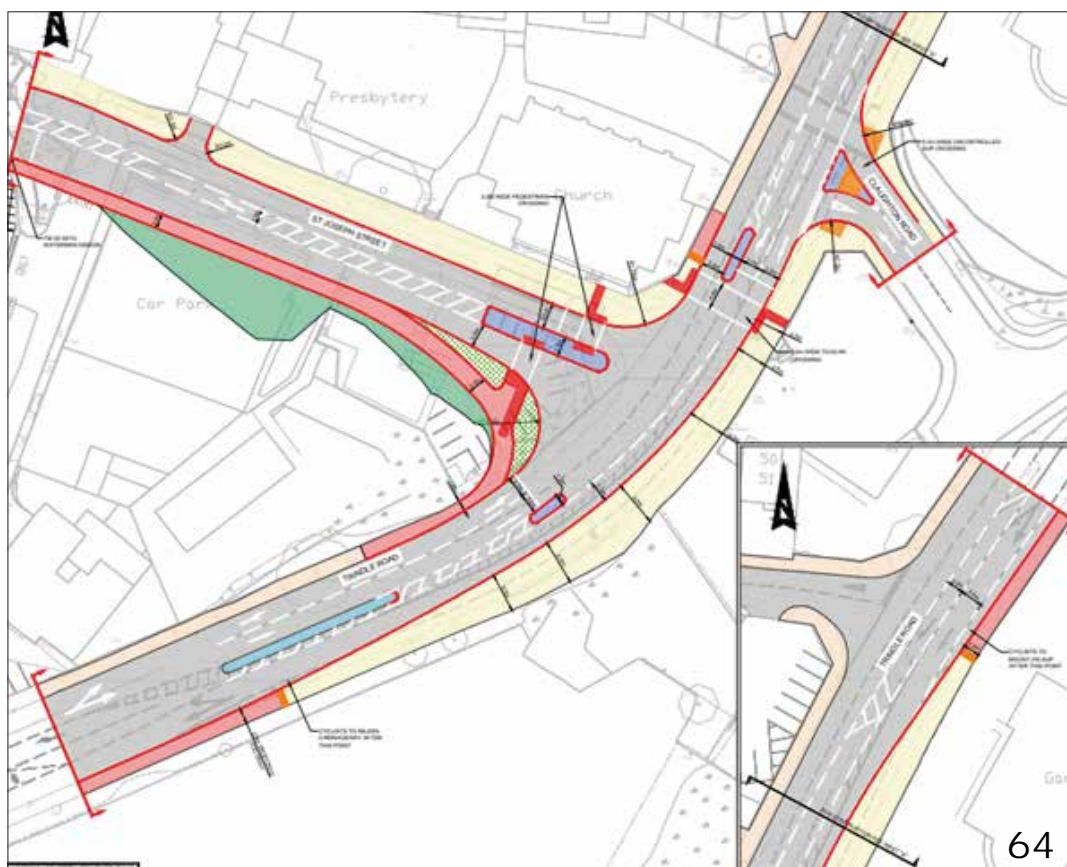
- **Q4 2022:** Project started.
- **Q1 2024:** Construction works started on site.
- **Q4 2024:** Highway works substantially complete.
- **Q1 2025:** accommodation works associated with the Interchange highway works, expected to be completed.

**Activity 2024/25:**

Construction of Interchange highway works commenced on site in June 2024 and are expected to be substantially complete by February 2025, with only accommodation works to the church to be finished. It is expected all highway works will be completed by June 2025. The project has widened St. Joseph Street and formed a new pedestrian crossing across Trindle Road providing safe access for buses and pedestrians to the new Interchange. It has also formed a new public car park on the corner of Birmingham Street/Bourne Street and provided dedicated parking for the Grade II listed Church of Our Blessed Lady on the corner of St. Joseph Street.

**Impact:**

This project supports the delivery of the key regeneration projects (Metro, Interchange and Portersfield) and key Council priorities including the Borough Vision, Council Plan and Future Council Programme, through the improvement of public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure that will support and encourage sustainable and active modes of travel to Dudley Town Centre and the surrounding area. Increases in active travel support both public health and the Council’s response to the Climate Emergency through air quality improvements associated with modal shift to sustainable modes of travel. It also contributes significantly to the increase of footfall to the town centre and borough and has improved the setting a future viability of a Grade II listed heritage asset.



Technical drawing showing the highways design for St. Joseph Street / Trindle Road

# Project: Dudley Market

## Project Value & Funding:

- £150K UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Fund

## Timescales:

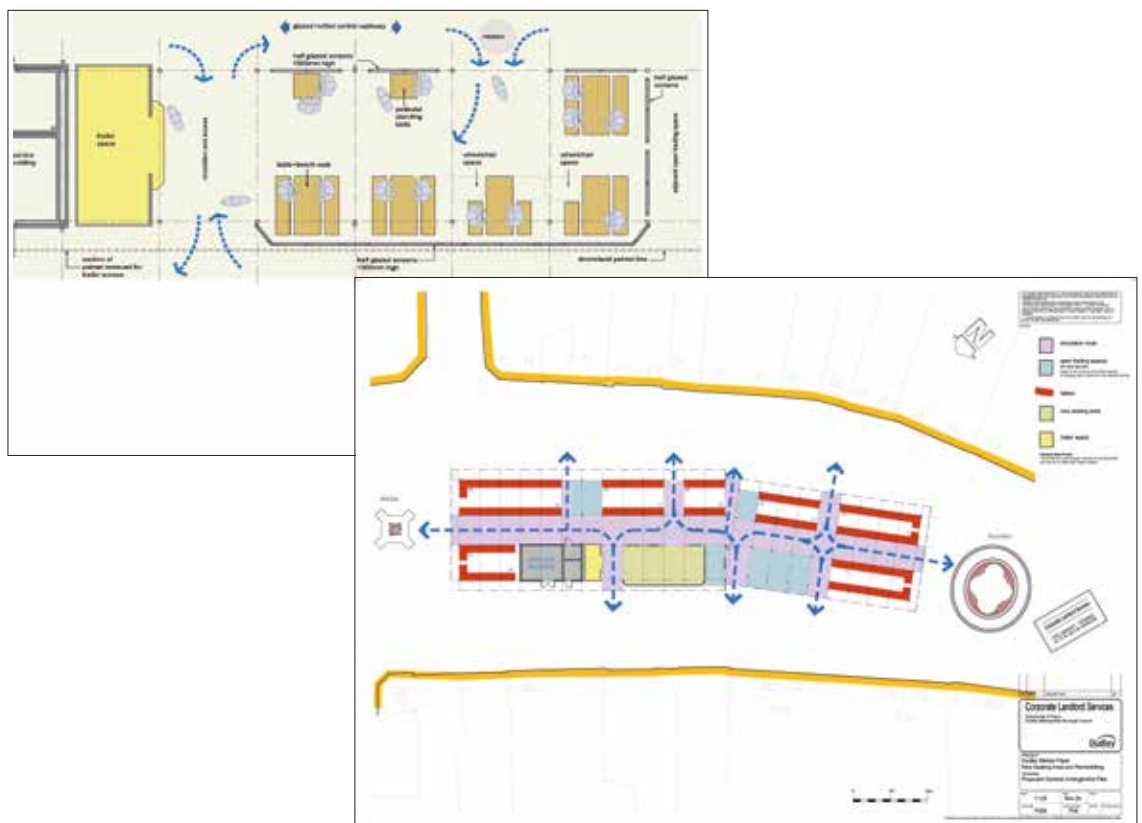
- Council engaged the Retail Group in September 2022 to assess how to improve the marketplace.
- Retail Group surveyed market stall holders, businesses, public etc. - produced a report.
- June 2023 an Action Plan was developed from the report and a meeting held with stakeholders.
- Integrating the market into the High Street, enabling stallholders to display their goods, bringing customers and stallholders together, and providing a community space recommended and resulted in the proposed works.
- The transformation work for the market will begin April 2025 and complete June 2025.

## Activity 2024/25:

## Impact:

- Meetings with the design team to discuss ideas and suggestions on how to improve the market space using the report findings and feedback.
- Designs amended to reflect cost and changing market factors.
- Final drawings agreed and approvals from relevant stakeholders sought.
- Secured planning approval.
- The scheme fully costed for delivery.
- Continued work with the Council's Communications team to design and produce banners to advise the public of what is happening with the market and to complete the refresh of the area.

The realignment of the current market layout will make the space more flexible and better able to support town centre events and activities, supporting increased footfall and dwell time, particularly when coupled with the addition of the seating area. This will benefit all traders in the town, including those on the market. It is expected that the area will become a central hub and gathering point for visitors and residents alike. It is also intended to attract more traders to the market, diversifying the offer and resulting in further increases in town centre footfall and vibrancy. These improvements are part of a wider regeneration strategy to help the town.



# Project: NHS Rainbow Pandemic Memorial

## Project Value & Funding:

- £50,000 funded primarily through financial donations together with contributions from the Council and area forums. The project has also benefitted from in-kind donations from local companies.

## Timescales:

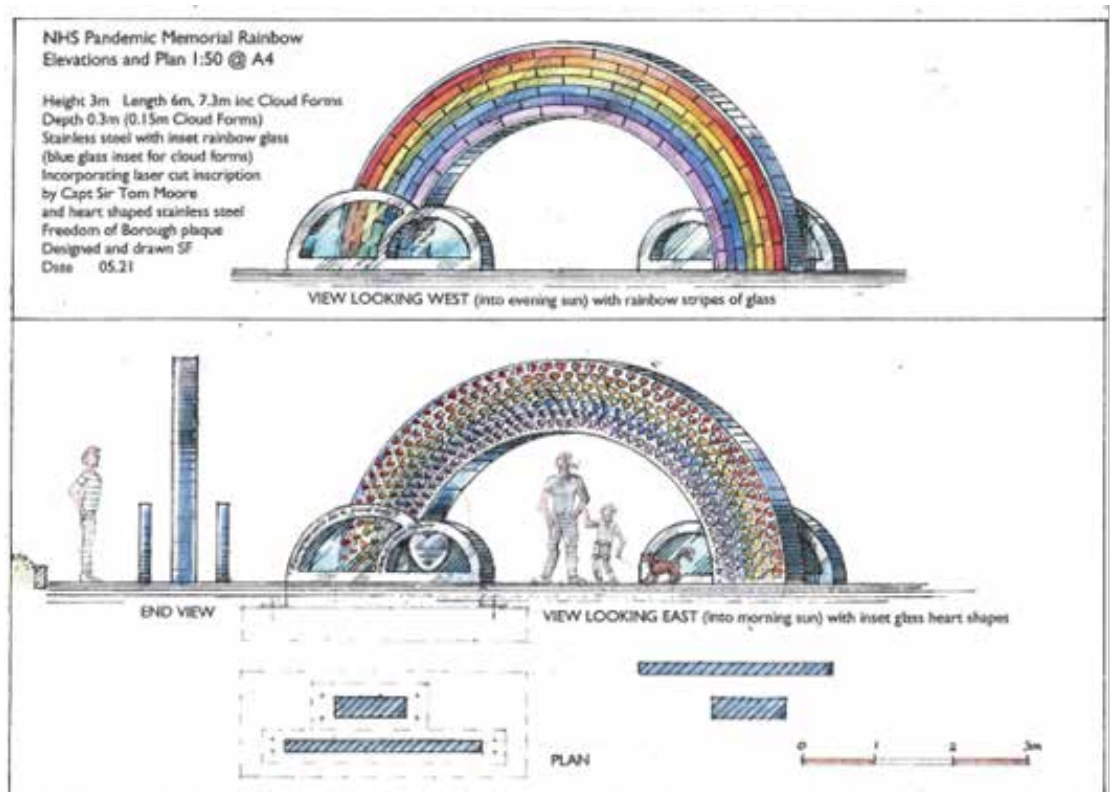
- **2020 (summer):** Project commenced with fundraising campaign; sketch concepts produced.
- **2021:** Fundraising continued, detailed designs created, and planning permission granted.
- **2022:** Materials ordered, and foundation created on site.
- **2023-24:** Detailed fabrication including main stainless steel clouds and rainbow at local fabricator, and completion of many large shaped coloured glass insert panels made by local glassworkers at Ruskin Mill Glasshouse College.
- **2025:** Installation due on site this year including internal lighting and completion of landscape works by Mitie who maintain the hospital grounds.
- **2025-26:** Unveiling due to be held.

## Activity 2024/25:

- **2024-25 steel fabrication and landscape works progressing** - successful completion anticipated by summer 2025; unveiling event to be arranged.

## Impact:

When complete the monument should provide an appropriate memorial to thank those key NHS workers during the Pandemic and also remember lives lost. It has also supported the local economy by working with two local glassworkers based at Ruskin Mill Glasshouse College and to two local metal fabricators.



**Project:**

# Stourbridge Town Centre Sustainable Connectivity Package

**Project Value & Funding:**

- A £3m allocation from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) has been ringfenced to support active travel infrastructure improvements in Stourbridge town centre.
- The funding is dependent on Dudley Council preparing a Business Justification Case (BJC), as required by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Single Assurance Framework process. In addition, revenue funding from Black Country Transport to assist with development of the BJC.

**Timescales:**

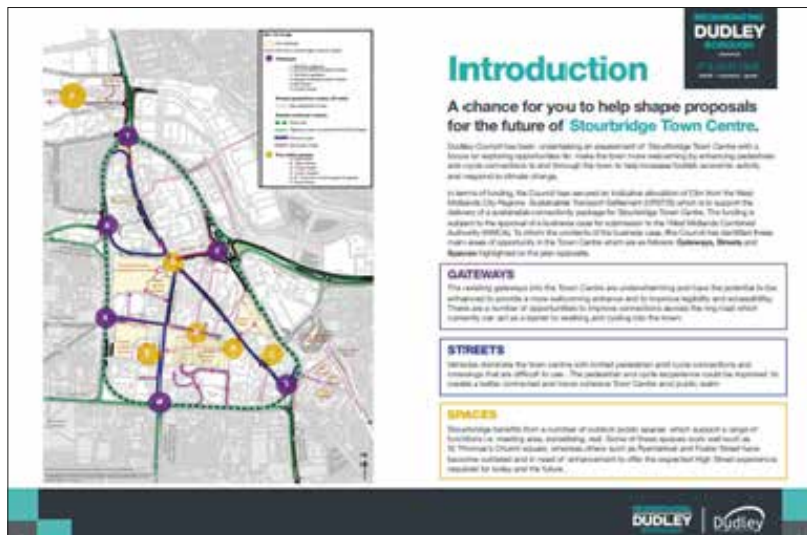
- Draft proposals were prepared in 2023 and public consultation undertaken on them in January/February 2024.
- The deadline for spend is March 2027.

**Activity 2024/25:**

- Analysis and publication of consultation results.
- A consultant was appointed to work with the Council on the draft BJC at the beginning of October 2024 and **work is now underway in getting the document prepared for submission mid 2025.**

**Impact:**

- A welcoming and inclusive environment, accessible to everyone, with enhanced gateways into the town and improved streets and public spaces that will help 'connect communities'
- A safe environment with ease of movement giving people the confidence to move around the town safely at well-defined crossing points with improved connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists
- A healthy environment that supports people's wellbeing, communities coming together and the need to respond to climate change
- An attractive environment that can be enjoyed and appreciated by visitors, enhancing the quality of the town's appearance, rich heritage and character
- Economic benefit for local people and businesses, as a result of the above changes, improved connections to residential areas outside the Ring Road and to the Stourbridge Interchange.



**Project:**

# Stourbridge BID Development



**Project Value & Funding:**

Funded from UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocation.

**Timescales:**

**Activity 2024/25:**

- **June/July 2023:** Feasibility Study started.
- **January 2024:** Development phase started.
- **October 2024:** the Business Improvement District (BID) went to ballot and was declared successful on 1st November 2024. Works continues to set up the governance of the BID, the board, operating agreement and memorandum of understanding ready for **operational go live date of 1st April 2025**. This includes set up liaison with the Business Rates team (DMBC).
- Feasibility study recommended a high propensity for a BID in Stourbridge. Development stage prepared a business plan and co-developed a boundary area in cooperation with a core business steering group of 13 businesses and organisations from the Town Centre. This was taken to ballot in October 2024 and was declared successful on 1st November 2024. The BID will be operational by 1st April 2025 and will bring in approximately £800,000 in business rates levy for supporting the objectives as set out in the BID Business Plan over the period of its first five year term.

## What is a BID?

A BID is a business-led initiative supported by government legislation, which gives local businesses the power to get together, decide what improvements they want to make in their town centre, how they will manage these and what it will cost them. BIDs have the power to raise and spend funds locally, with the sole aim of improving the trading environment. BIDs have a maximum term of 5 years, which gives them a good length of time for businesses to feel the benefit of the services and projects delivered.

The BID levy is ringfenced to develop and deliver projects that will benefit businesses in the local area (specifically the BID boundary area).

BID can provide additional services beyond the baseline services of the local authority to improve the local area, this could for example include extra street cleaning, security patrols and or events and activities to bring people into the town.

It is business-led – giving business a voice and empowering them to take decisions locally on the priority intervention areas. Collective action pools resources to fund improvements and lever in funding and match that otherwise may not be feasible.

**Impact:**

## Stourbridge BID - The Vision:

Through a business-led programme our vision is:

*'To promote Stourbridge and develop its reputation as an attractive, vibrant, historical, market town'.*

## Strategic Objectives:

The BID investment programme will be delivered through the three key strategic objectives and their related activities and projects:

- **Objective 1: Showcase and promote Stourbridge**  
To create a vibrant town centre which has a strong sense of identity and a positive awareness locally, regionally and nationally.
- **Objective 2: Create a welcoming, safe and attractive Stourbridge**  
Work with organisations and businesses in public, private and voluntary sectors to create a place which looks and feels great for families, the local community, businesses and visitors to our town centre.
- **Objective 3: Support businesses in Stourbridge**  
Strive to achieve the best for businesses and organisations in Stourbridge town centre, encouraging everyone to work together to create a positive working environment, a great place to develop a business and a strong business community.

# Stourbridge Pocket Park (Northern Gateway to the Town Centre)

Project:

Project Value & Funding:

£100k from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and £35k from UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

Timescales:

Activity 2024/25:

- CIL funding confirmed late 2022. Draft proposals were prepared in 2023 and public consultation undertaken in Jan/Feb 2024. Applications for additional funding from UKSPF made in 2024, this was awarded in two stages, £15k granted for new lighting early 2024 and an additional £20k granted late 2024 for the installation of CCTV. The CIL funding is currently planned to be spent in 2025.
- Information collected through the public consultation undertaken early 2024, used to inform the designs for the pocket park.
- The UKSPF elements of the project are now complete, the new subway lighting was installed by March 2024 and the new CCTV cameras will be installed by March 2025. The topographical survey for the area was completed in February 2025.
- The current state of the northern gateway to Stourbridge town centre is a detractor to usage. It is unattractive, doesn't alleviate safety concerns, doesn't create space to dwell and as a result doesn't facilitate active travel between communities to the north of the town centre and the town centre itself.
- The project sits alongside the delivery of the Stourbridge Sustainable Connectivity Package funded through CRSTS and other CIL funded projects being delivered in Stourbridge. Together they will enhance the public realm of the town with greening, improvements for active travel, and measures which will contribute towards designing out crime with a view to making people feel safer and better connected so therefore more likely to use the subways and the town centre.

Impact:

## The project supports:

- **active travel:** residents and visitors benefit from improved highways and travel connectivity through multi-modal offer,
- **safety and security:** residents live in safe communities,
- **and town centre footfall:** ensuring all borough towns and neighbourhoods have good access to services, retail and leisure opportunities.



Photograph of the existing northern gateway, in need of further improvement

**Project:**

# Stourbridge Changing Places Toilet

**Project Value & Funding:**

- £118,509 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)
- 

**Timescales:**

- **Completed in May 2024**, the Changing Places Toilet was the fourth such toilet to be delivered in the borough utilising funding secured by the Council from Government .
- 

**Activity 2024/25:**

- The Changing Places Toilet, located in Stourbridge Town Hall, was completed, registered and opened for use in May 2024 having been confirmed as meeting all the requirements for a fully accessible toilet.
- 

**Impact:**

- Changing places toilets are specially designed for people with complex needs and disabilities. They include specialist equipment such as hoists, privacy screens, adult-sized changing benches, peninsula toilets and space for carers.
- The addition of a changing places toilet in Stourbridge increases the town, and the borough's, accessibility for residents and visitors with complex needs, enabling them to go out with greater confidence and less stress.



*Photograph of the completed toilet*

# Stour Bridge Enhancement, Stourbridge

**Project:**

**Project Value & Funding:**

- £58,920 CIL Funding (+ £3600 earlier Area Forum funding for Feasibility Study in 2017)

**Timescales:**

- **2008:** First designs for Bridge enhancement.
- **2017:** Local Area Forums endorsed a refreshed look at feasibility of the designs for the Bridge project in response to community interest.
- **2022:** Live work commenced following a successful application to CIL for project funding.
- **2023:** Fabrication of the Bridge parapet panels commenced.
- **2024:** Bridge parapet panels completed and installed. Detailed designs for Monarch's Way pavement plaques cast in bronze (ready to be installed as part of future public realm works).

**Activity 2024/25:**

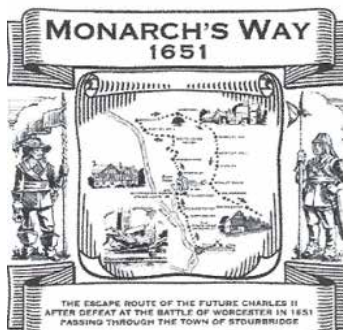
- During 2024-25 the Bridge enhancement was successfully completed.
- The decorative Bridge parapet panels were installed.
- The bronze pavement plaques depicting the story of Monarch's Way were cast and completed (for future siting as part of pavement works).

**Impact:**

- The Bridge enhancement creates an important gateway feature for Stourbridge, celebrating the name of the town and revealing the forgotten presence of the River Stour.
- The secondary references to Monarch's Way via the Bridge and plaques should also attract visitors including tourists, and the project has supported the local economy working with three local fabricators.



(Right) Detail from the new Stour Bridge  
(Below) Bronze pavement plaque designs



**Project:**

# Halesowen Levelling Up Fund, Round 3

**Project Value  
& Funding:**

- £20 million, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

**Timescales:**

- Likely commencement April 2025 for completion by March 2028.

**Activity  
2024/25:**

- **Continuation of the LUF programme confirmed in October 2024.** Continued discussions with Halesowen College, as a project partner, and MHCLG on proposed changes to the delivery of the new education facilities which form part of the project.

**Impact:**

### **New educational facilities developed in Halesowen Town centre resulting in:**

- Increased jobs in the town due to increased trade generated by students and staff.
- Higher levels of productivity for local businesses.
- College widens participation in life long learning.
- Reduction in unemployment and increase in economically active people in our community.
- Enhanced leisure and educational facilities which are easily accessible.
- Links with established community and economic groups.
- Combatting social isolation and ensure fulfilment through life long learning.
- Educational opportunities for all irrespective of age, background or level of prior attainment.

### **In addition, public realm and active travel improvements will aim to:**

- Creation of new segregated cycle lanes and additional cycling infrastructure.
- Implementation of 20mph zones and other traffic calming measures to increase safety for all road users.
- Signalling improvements on key bus routes to improve journey times.
- New wayfinding infrastructure, improving pedestrian access to Halesowen town centre.



*Artist's impression - visual of Hagley Road looking east towards Hagley Street & Summer Hill, Halesowen (streetscape improvements to create a pedestrian-friendly street)*

**Project:**

# UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

**Project Value & Funding:**

- 2024/2025 Budget - £5,623,226, total 3 year budget - £7,236,775  
Government funding via West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)
- 

**Timescales:**

- Programme officially commenced 1st April 2022 , now into year 3 of delivery.
- 

**Activity 2024/25:**

**Business:**

- 94 entrepreneurs assisted, 43 new enterprises created, 418 organisations receiving non-financial support.

**People & Skills:**

- 256 economically inactive residents engaged.

**Community & Place:**

- 14 local events supported, 17 community organisations receiving support, 3350 reached through marketing, 300 inactive residents engaged, 24 neighbourhood infrastructure projects, 1834 m2 of green space improved.
- 

**Business:**

- Start up and growth support to improve the life chances of new businesses.
- Innovation support through key account management, including direct grants to businesses to increase the number of innovation active businesses in the borough.
- Net-zero programme including specialist support and direct grant to businesses to support them towards their net-zero ambitions driven by environmental and financial needs of the business.

**People & Skills:**

- Working with key partners to recruit inactive residents to be referred and remain engaged
- Bespoke information, advice and guidance delivered by qualified staff
- Assessment and plans to overcome barriers to work including health and wellbeing, debt and counselling – engaging specialist providers
- Pre-employment work tasters, work experience, training – Adult Education Budget (AEB)/Community Learning and Multiply providers

**Community & Place:**

- Improving the wider experience for visitors to Dudley who come to visit Black Country Living Museum, Dudley Zoo, Dudley Canal Trust, Stourbridge Glass Centre and Dudley Archives.
- Building capacity in voluntary sector organisations to apply for and manage external funding.
- Improve vibrancy in town centres including physical improvements, crowd funding project, grass roots community engagement, digital infrastructure, and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

**Impact:**



1834 meters squared of green or blue space created or improved

# Project: Long Term Plan for Towns

## Project Value & Funding:

- Funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)

## Timescales:

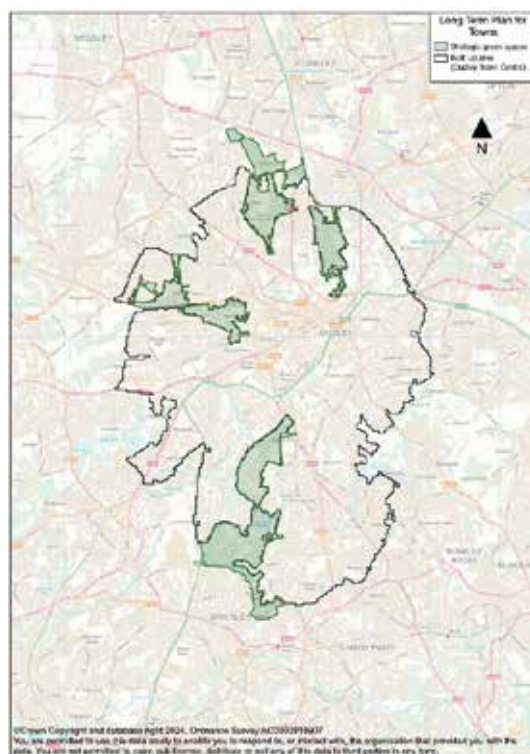
- **October 2023:** Dudley announced as a Long Term Plan for Towns (LTPFT) town
- **May 2024:** First submission to Government - governance and proposed boundary changes
- Programme paused due to General Election
- **October 2024:** Programme continuation confirmed
- **10-year delivery programme from 2026**

## Activity 2024/25:

- **This is a Government funded 10 year programme offering a £20m capital and revenue funding mix to fund a 10 year programme of locally determined activity.** The Dudley Town Board was re-cast to meet the Government's requirements and timescales for LTPFT. Board membership is now broader; with more community representation and has a new Chair.
- **The Dudley Town Board has met quarterly and one of its first decisions was to propose changes to the boundary given for LTPFT to include 4 key green spaces.** This proposal was submitted to Government in May 2024 and a decision is pending.
- **Autumn 2024** - programme continuation announced in the autumn statement following a review after the General Election. Refreshed guidance to be published.
- The first tranche of capacity funding has been made available with the second tranche expected in the new financial year. The programme is anticipated to fund activity relating to high streets, heritage, connectivity and safety.

## Impact:

- The introduction of LTPFT has catalysed a refresh of the Dudley Town Board with new community representatives joining the group.
- The capacity funding will fund support to the board and other groups within the LTPFT area. It may also provide pre-project enabling works and seed funding.
- It is also expected to be used to lever match funding for projects, coinvesting to bring opportunities forward.



Approximate project boundary - full extent to be confirmed

## Project: **Himley Hall Play Area**

### Project Value & Funding:

- £450,000 of Council funding.
- 

### Timescales:

- The play area scheme went out to tender in Summer 2022 and was awarded early July 2022 as a 'Design & Build' contract.
  - The proposals were for a new play area and associated landscape enhancements, with the main area of focus being to improve the area of nearby disused tennis courts.
  - Due to nature of the development and its location (*a Registered Park and Garden, the curtilage of the Himley Hall, a listed building and all located in green belt*), the scheme required planning permission.
  - The initial planning application was refused on ecological and arboricultural grounds by South Staffs Council.
  - The application was re-submitted by Dudley Council and planning permission subsequently approved in November 2023.
- 

### Activity 2024/25:

- Work on site started in May 2024, and was completed in July 2024.
  - In July 2024 the area was opened to the public and has proven to be very popular.
- 

The scheme had an immediate positive impact and Himley Hall was extremely busy, especially in the school summer holidays. Increases in visitors to the site has continued throughout the autumn and winter and we anticipate significant increases in numbers as we go into 2025/26.

### Impact:



Photograph showing part of the new play area

**Project:**

# Stalled & Derelict Sites Programme (S&DSP)

Currently progressing four Council sites to market with an estimated DMBC capital receipt of £750k and two private sector sites with estimated value of £850k. **Collectively, the six sites can accommodate up to 105 homes with an estimated Gross Development Value (GDV) of £20 million.**

**Project Value & Funding:**

**Successfully awarded £100,000 grant finance from Homes England Revenue Fund in the previous 12 months.**

*(Opportunities to align capital grant funding is available through Homes England Affordable Homes Programme, West Midlands Combined Authority land funds and integrated settlement.)*

**Timescales:**

- **Established for a little over 2 years, S&DSP is a rolling programme of priority sites identified by members and officers. Following progression and/or development, new sites are added.**
- **S&DSP has an identified longlist of 65 sites which are stalled or derelict, incl. 20-25 priority sites (which are the focus of the working group and aligned to the resources available). Collectively these sites could deliver up to 500 new homes.**

S&DSP aims to accelerate the re-development of privately and publicly owned brownfield land and property which remains long term derelict, untidy or where development is stalled. The S&DSP will facilitate re-development of brownfield sites through introductions to development partners and purchasers, de-risking development through pre-app and planning advice as well as support to navigate public sector funding opportunities. The programme highlights the importance of investing in smaller brownfield sites which, in aggregate, will make an important contribution to housing and employment land supply.

**Activity 2024/25:**

- Successfully awarded two Homes England revenue grants totalling £100,000 providing enabling funds to appraise priority sites and their development potential.
- Enville Street sold for £178,000 in Dec 24. S&DSP helped prepare the site for market through appraising development potential and obtaining planning permission for 10 homes.
- Appraising and preparing a further four DMBC sites for disposal and regeneration. (Up to 65 homes with anticipated capital receipt of £750,000).
- In principle agreement to enter into Collaboration Agreement with 3rd party landowners for planning, marketing and disposal of a combined (3rd Party/DMBC) site in Stourbridge.
- Supported 3rd party landowners site appraisal, establish clean title and market the development opportunity to registered providers through Dudley Housing Partnership. Site capable of accommodating up to 25 homes in Dudley town centre.
- Established a priority pipeline of 24 priority sites; obtained delegated authority to progress with resources available to S&DSP (DMBC Officer time and grant finance awarded).
- Ongoing engagement and support for priority sites identified by officers and members.

**Benefits of regeneration/S&DSP:**

- Addressing housing needs by increasing the supply of new housing sites to market.
- Efficient use of land supply through removal of blight, contamination and returning of brownfield land into economic use.
- Need to build on greenfield sites is reduced.
- Increase levels of GVA through investment in land and property in Dudley economy.
- Support the provision of affordable homes providing access to homes for families, promoting a better quality/standard of living.
- Delivery of capital receipts to support Council financial stability (DMBC land).
- Increase the commercial floorspace delivered / repurposed which in-turn creates and safeguards jobs in the borough.

**Impact:**



10 new homes in Enville Street, Stourbridge

# Project: Lye Investment Programme

## Project Value & Funding:

- Public sector led strategic pump-priming investment in the region of £30m to support the delivery of a long-term £95m investment programme within Lye Town Centre and adjacent sites.
- Sources of Funding, West Midlands Combined Authority, Transport for West Midlands, Homes England, Historic England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council for England, UKSPF, Charitable Trusts, Private Sector.

## Timescales:

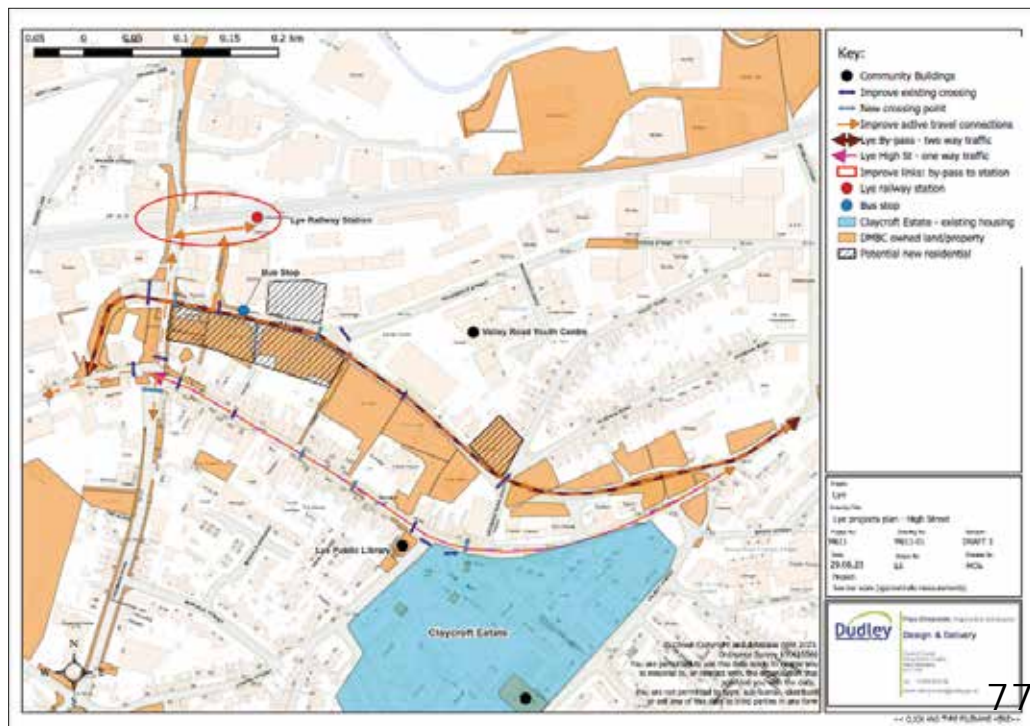
The phased investment programme will run for an initial period from 2024 to 2034.

## Activity 2024/25:

- Approval of Project Plan and Theory of Change Model by Dudley MBC in Autumn 2023.
- Commitment of initial feasibility money by Homes England.
- Commitment of CRSTS funded design fees by Transport for West Midlands to support improved access and movement package for submission to CRSTS 2 programme, commencing in 2027.
- Discussions with West Midlands Combined Authority over strategic programme endorsement and the release of feasibility funding to work up funding applications.
- Initial engagement with NHS over a new £4m medical centre.
- Engagement with WMCA over initial £1.5m land assembly funding at Lye Bypass to create plot suitable for comprehensive development.
- Initial engagement regarding HRA Asset Management Plan and phased improvement of the Claycroft Estate.

## Impact:

The Project Plan has the following thematic areas: Town Centre, Environment, Housing, Employment, Infrastructure, Community. It identifies a structured series of interventions to promote the social, economic and environmental improvement of Lye Town Centre and the surrounding area. It identifies opportunities for new investment and growth in-line with the Dudley Economic Regeneration Strategy, Place Based Strategy, Lye Masterplan and Design Code and the emerging Dudley Local Plan. This is intended to remove barriers to investment and contribute towards the closure of the economic performance gap within the Black Country.



**Project:**

# Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund (CWGLF)

**Project Value & Funding:**

£1.209m split across culture, skills and local capacity funding.  
Government funding awarded via the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

**Timescales:**

Funding commenced in 2023 for delivery by March 2025

**Activity 2024/25:**

**Culture:**

- 2 studies to support projects and funding in the future
- 8 community grants to grass root organisations
- 9 festivals delivered
- 28 freelancers / artists and performers supported
- 7,870 attendees to events

**Skills outcomes following support:**

- 96 people engaged in job search
- 47 people in employment
- 99 people in education/training
- 10 people secured employment following placement
- 57 young people in education/training
- 39 young people in employment/education/training
- 49 young people reported a positive effect on mental wellbeing
- 61 residents completed a wellbeing intervention

**Local Capacity Funding:**

- Development of the Economic Regeneration Strategy as a key document to shape and inform regeneration activity in the borough over a ten year period.
- Also funded progress of regeneration projects.

**Culture:**

- Increased opportunities for residents to co-design and benefit from creative/heritage offer
- Increased levels of civic pride and community cohesion through cultural/heritage activities
- Grants which have funded additional place-based culture and heritage activity

**Skills:**

- Increased opportunities for residents to employment opportunities, reducing unemployment
- Increased opportunities for residents to education/ training opportunities
- Improved wellbeing of people
- Young people supported to remain in education or supported to gain employment

**Local Capacity Funding:**

- Development of the Economic Regeneration Strategy which has provided the framework for prioritisation of projects and established the borough's positioning in terms of the regional and sub regional economy.
- Expert land and buildings skills and knowledge to support project progression

**Impact:**



Photos from a selection of the culture projects

### Appendix 3 – Action Plan for 2025/26

Currently unknown staffing capacity, structures or funding (IS) so propose to focus on in-flight projects which are funded and may be subject to review. Any new activity or projects would be subject to a reprioritisation of resource by Cabinet.

The following indicates what should be achieved for each project by the end of the year and which projects should complete within the year

Location	Project	Funder	Funding Amount	Expected status at March 2026	Completion by end of year?
Brierley Hill	LUF 3 BH	MHCLG TfWM/DCoT	£20m £2m	Design work significantly advanced Implemented the Skills Shop	
	Metro ph2	TfWM (CRSTS & DfT)	£295m	Works will have started on the route from Dudley town Centre to Merry Hill Completion of works on the Parkhead Viaduct	
	Future High Streets Fund (FHSF)	MHCLG	£9.99m	All works completed and funding will be drawn down and spent by September 2025	x
Dudley	Long Term Plan for Towns (LTPfT)	MHCLG	£20m	Public engagement commenced to inform the development of a town plan and associated investment plan showing how funding will initially be spent in Dudley with a view to projects going live in 2026/27.	
	Metro Comp Measures (ph 1)	DMBC	£9.1m	Uplift works in Dudley town centre will have been completed utilising the available budget and the tram will be operational to Flood Street. The complementary measures budget which was frozen until September 2025 will have been reviewed and next steps agreed.	x
	Dudley Interchange Highways Works	TfWM	£4m	The highway works will be complete by May 2025. The main Dudley Interchange being delivered by TfWM is also expected to be completed by the end of 2025/26.	x
	HID	MHCLG & DMBC	£21.6m	The Health Innovation Dudley (HID) building will be complete by March 2026 with a lease in place for operation of the building by Dudley College of Technology.	x

	Portersfield	WMCA DMBC	£6m TBC	Reallocation of £6m WMCA funds to support land assembly and completion of Collaboration Agreement with Avenbury allowing site to be marketed and selection of delivery partner. Progression of CRSTS funding package for Portersfield. Some third-party land acquisition or deals agreed.	
	Dudley Town Centre Partnership	UKSPF	Within UKSPF allocation	The UKSPF funded activity in establishing and developing the partnership will have been completed by March 2025 but may require some funding to continue to build capacity to ensure group continues to run / have a legacy.	x
	Dudley Trindle Rd Sustainable Travel Package (CRSTS)	WMCA	£4.5m	Business Justification Case approved for the sustainable travel package along Trindle Road with funding flowing and work on-site commenced early 2026.	
	Castle Hill Vision Phase 2	NLHF/ Zoo	EOI stage but hopefully up to £10m	Expression of Interest submitted to NLHF (and approved) and Stage 1 Bid in preparation.	
Stourbridge	Stourbridge Pocket Park	CIL	£100k	Hard and soft landscaping works completed by May 2025 (unless deemed best value to deliver in conjunction with the other Stourbridge projects being delivered in 2026).	x
	Stourbridge Sustainable travel package (CRSTS)	WMCA	£3m	Business Justification Case approved and work on-site commenced early 2026	
	Stourbridge Business Improvement District (BID)	UKSPF	Within UKSPF allocation	The UKSPF funded activity in establishing and developing the partnership will be complete and a self-sustaining BID model will be in place.	x

Lye	Lye Investment Programme	WMCA I.S.	£TBC	<p>The programme will be substantially progressed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The highway design work</li> <li>• Discussions to secure third party land</li> </ul> <p>Clarity as to how the Integrated Settlement will be distributed, approved and awarded so as to then be able to navigate securing funding for the programme</p>	
Halesowen	LUF 3 Halesowen	MHCLG	£20m £2m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Change request accepted by MHCLG</li> <li>• Cabinet approval to enter into MOU</li> <li>• Funding agreement signed</li> <li>• Enabling works commenced</li> </ul>	
Local centres and pan borough	Covid memorial rainbow	Public donations DMBC	£40,000 £7500	Completion, installation and unveiling of the Covid memorial rainbow	x
	UKSPF	WMCA I.S.	£3,925,855	Additional year of UKSPF activities agreed, funded and completed, including Dudley market. Clarity as to the value and nature of the Integrated Settlement from 2026/27 and if/how UKSPF funded activities may continue	x
	Stalled & Derelict Sites	Mixed funding package including DMBC and Homes England	Dependent on funding available	<p>Ongoing development of the Stalled and Derelict sites pipeline including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ DMBC site at Cavell Road progressed to market.</li> <li>○ DMBC site at Colley Gate progressed to market.</li> <li>○ 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Land at Wolverhampton Street progressed to market.</li> <li>○ Collaboration Agreement signed and Planning submitted for DMBC and 3<sup>rd</sup> party land at Market Street, Stourbridge.</li> </ul> <p>Appraise and identify options for development for Tranche II short list sites.</p> <p>Apply for Homes England Revenue grant.</p> <p>Build relationships with public and private sector partners.</p>	

**Appendix 4 - Proposed indicative Dudley UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025/26 allocations.**

**Table 1: Dudley Communities, Place and Skills Allocation:**

	<b>Capital</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Total</b>
Comm, Place & Skills	£936,175.00	£1,426,253.43	£2,362,428.43
Business Advice	£0.00	£816,454.00	£816,454.00
SME Grants	£541,427.28	£95,545.99	£636,973.27
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,477,602.28</b>	<b>£2,338,253.42</b>	<b>£3,815,855.70</b>
Management Fee	£0.00	£110,000.00	£110,000.00
<b>Total inc Mgt Fee</b>	<b>£1,477,602.28</b>	<b>£2,448,253.42</b>	<b>£3,925,855.70</b>

**Table 2: Dudley Allocation by Pillar**

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>Total Allocation</b>	<b>Capital</b>	<b>Revenue</b>
Communities & Place	£1,539,308.91	*£936,175.00	£603,133.91
Skills	£823,119.52	£0.00	£823,119.52
<b>Total (to match Table 1)</b>	<b>£2,362,428.43</b>	<b>£936,175.00</b>	<b>£1,426,253.43</b>

\*Please note a request has been made to switch an additional £123,000 capital funding to revenue funding. This is not indicated in the figures above and below

**Table 3: Dudley project level outline plans**

Planned Project	Pillar	Expenditure		Deliverables		Aligns to PBS
		Cap £	Rev £	Themes	Sub Themes	
Employment Support	Skills		£741,786	E & S	Progress Towards & Into Employment. Essential Skills & Employment Related Skills	Yes
Employment Support	Skills		£88,295	As above	As above	Yes
Dudley Market	C&P	£150,000	£15,553	Thriving Places	High Street & Town Centre Imp.	Yes
Discover Dudley	C&P		£27,592	Thriving Places	Development of Visitor Economy	Yes
Town Centre Feasibility	C&P		£82,776	tbc	tbc	Yes
Community Grants	C&P	£100,000	£10,368	tbc	tbc	Yes
Cultural Heritage	C&P		£82,776	tbc	tbc	Yes
C&P Salaries	C&P		£194,801	tbc	tbc	n/a
Community Capacity Building	C&P		£55,976	tbc	tbc	Yes
Targeted Capital Projects	C&P	£686,175	£71,146	tbc	tbc	Yes
Other Feasibility	C&P		£55,183	tbc	tbc	Yes
<b>Total (to match Table 1)</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>*£936,175</b>	<b>£1,426,253</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>	

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## **Meeting of the Cabinet - 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

### **Report of the Acting Director of Children's Services**

#### **Education Travel Support Public Consultation**

##### **Purpose of report**

- 1 To request permission for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (the Local Authority) to conduct a consultation exercise about proposals to change the Local Authority's approach to complying with its statutory duties to provide travel support to pupils and students aged 5-16 and post-16.

##### **Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the request to conduct a consultation exercise about proposed changes.

##### **Background**

3. The Local Authority's Education Travel Support team continues to see a year-on-year increase in the number of students eligible for travel support. This has resulted in ongoing financial pressures to deliver this service within budget.

The DfE's 'Travel to School for Children of Compulsory School Age guidance' sets out the eligibility criteria that all local authorities must adhere to; as such, local authorities have no control over the number of applicants who meet the eligibility criteria and then apply for travel support.

Figure 1 below demonstrates the continued cost pressures on the service, which correlates with an increase in commissioned transport as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 1

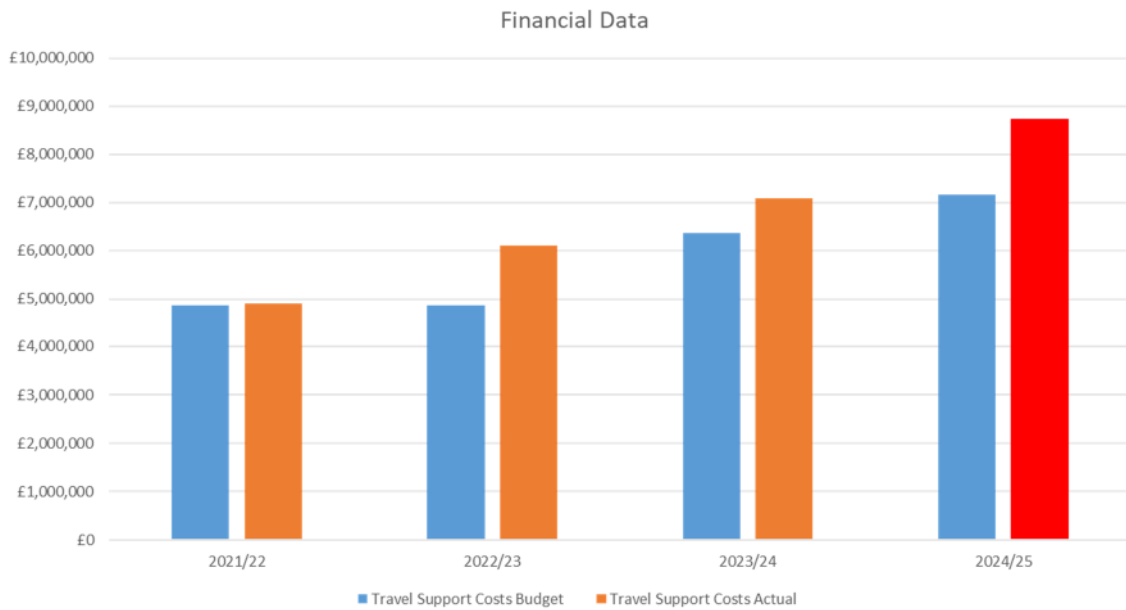
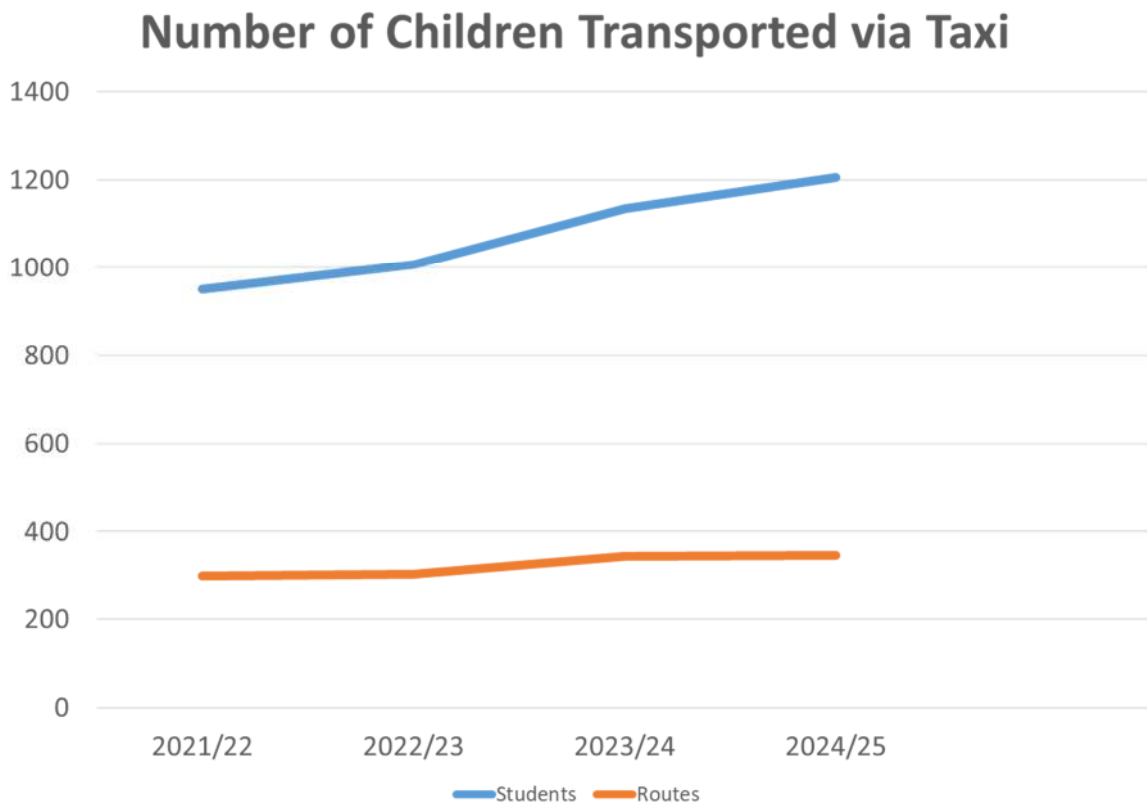


Figure 2



“The cost of delivering free home-to-school travel has increased significantly in recent years. It is important that local authorities take travel costs into account when planning the supply of school places. Capital expenditure, revenue costs and travel costs need to be considered together ensure financial sustainability”. (*DfE Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2024*)

## Context

To help reduce the financial pressures and ensure compliance with DfE guidance, the team have implemented several strategies as below:

1. Post 16 Contribution: DfE guidance states local authorities can request financial contributions from parents / guardians towards the transport cost of their child. We have reintroduced this from September 2024. Current rate is £500 per year, or £300 for low-income families. Forecast income for 2024/25 is between £21,800 - £32,000.
2. Removing the provision of non-statutory transport for early years (nurseries) with effect from 1/4/24. Saving for 2024/25 is £22,314. As part of our April 2024 review. Moreover, ensured we did not exceed statutory requirements for Post 16.
3. Recommissioning of new routes – retendering of 25% of transport routes this academic year, has resulted in savings in excess of £250k.
4. Planned Sycamore School pilot where the LA would provide the school with a vehicle and funding to hire a driver, to transport the children attending their school. Work ongoing to implement but expected to deliver 37% reduction in costs (£141,241 saving).
5. Ceased meeting colleges timetables and instead implemented morning and afternoons collections and drop off. This reduced the number of routes required within Post 16.

## Overview of Proposals for Consultation

In order to address the continued cost pressures and focus on more sustainable modes of travel, below is a brief synopsis of the recommendations we would like to include in the public consultation:

- **Increase Post-16 Parental Contributions:**  
The Department for Education stipulates local authorities can request financial contributions towards the cost of delivering post-16 travel support from parents / carers. Currently, Dudley has two levels of contributions
  - 1). £500 per academic year standard rate and
  - 2). £300 per academic year for low-income families. These rates have remained the same since 2012.

We are proposing increasing these to

- 1) £650 per academic year standard (£16.67 p/wk)
- 2) £360 per academic year low-income families (£9.23 p/wk).

Moreover, introducing an annual price increase in line with September's Consumer Price Index (CPI). This is the indicator Department for Work & Pensions use to uplift benefits in the following financial year. For example, September's 2024 CPI was 1.7%; thus, benefits will increase in April 2025 by 1.7%

Parental contributions for academic year 24/25 impacted 82 parents / carers. Of which, two applied for the local income rate.

- **Tiered Travel Support Options Post 16:** strengthen the assessment of travel support applications to ensure travel support offered best meet the need of the applicant. This would be achieved by assessing based on info in application and EHCP, plus any supporting evidence from professionals etc and establishing an assessment criteria co-designed with professionals and Parents and Carers Forum (PCF). As such, interventions provided by the local authority will better meet the need of applicants, with assessments carried out against the following travel support options: *bus / rail pass, travel support allowance (mileage) and personal travel budget*.
- **Tiered Travel Support Options 5 – 16 years old:** strengthen the assessment of travel support applications to ensure travel support offered best meet the need of the applicant. This would be achieved by assessing based on info in application and EHCP, plus any supporting evidence from professionals etc and establishing an assessment criteria co-designed with professionals and the PCF. As such, interventions provided by the local authority will better meet the need of applicants, with assessments carried out against the following travel support options: bus / rail pass, travel support allowance (mileage) and personal travel budget and commissioned transport. Please note we are not proposing removing any travel support options but focusing on providing support that meet needs. Thus, this is more of an administrative shift.
- **Adhere to Compulsory School Age:** The DfE defines this as 'a child must start full-time education once they reach compulsory school age – this occurs on 31 December, 31 March, or 31 August following their fifth birthday, with the compulsory element commencing in the term immediately following their fifth birthday'. For example, if a child's fifth birthday is on 8th February, compulsory statutory education would commence in the summer term on 1st April. As such **travel support** would not start until the

child is of compulsory school age. For the academic year 2024 /25 this would have impacted on 17 children.

- **Remove discretion:** DfE states local authorities can adopt discretion where an applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria set out in the following policies 'Travel to school for children of compulsory school age' & 'Post 16 transport guidance criteria'. We are proposing removing discretion from our policy; thus, just providing travel support for applicants who meet DfE eligibility criteria.

## **Desired Impact**

The proposed changes will have a significant positive impact on the local authority's ability to deliver home-to-school transport more efficiently and sustainably.

By increasing post-16 parental contributions in line with inflation and strengthening the assessment process through tiered travel support options, the local authority can better allocate resources based on individual needs while maintaining financial stability.

The introduction of tiered travel support ensures that students are provided with the most suitable and cost-effective transport solution, ranging from bus or rail passes to personal travel budgets, rather than defaulting to more expensive commissioned transport.

Adhering strictly to the DfE's definition of compulsory school age and removing discretionary travel support further enhances efficiency by ensuring that resources are directed solely towards eligible applicants.

These measures, combined with previous cost-saving initiatives such as the Sycamore School pilot, route recommissioning, and the removal of non-statutory early years transport, will result in significant savings while maintaining equitable access to education for all eligible children. Ultimately, the proposed changes strike a balance between financial responsibility and continued support for families in need.

The proposed changes may lead to an initial increase in home-to-school transport appeals as families adjust to the updated policies, particularly the rise in post-16 parental contributions and the removal of discretionary travel support. Some families may appeal on financial grounds or due to perceived hardship resulting from the increased contribution rates, despite the continued lower rate for low-income households.

The introduction of tiered travel support options for both post-16 and compulsory school-age children, while aimed at better aligning support with individual needs, could also result in appeals from families preferring commissioned transport over other options, such as mileage allowances or bus passes. However, by strengthening the assessment process, clearly communicating eligibility criteria, and aligning decisions with the DfE's statutory guidance, the local authority will be in a stronger position to ensure consistency and fairness in decision-making. Over time, the clearer eligibility framework and more tailored support options should reduce the number of appeals by setting realistic expectations and improving understanding of the available transport provisions. Moreover, if these recommendations were implemented, we would expect an increase in complaints to Councillors and MPs.

#### **4. Consultation Approach and Timeline**

The proposed consultation is scheduled to commence during early March 2025 and will run for a period of six weeks.

The consultation will involve extensive engagement with key stakeholders, including all schools within the borough (including alternative provision), the Parents and Carers Forum, and individual parents and carers.

The indicative timeline for the consultation and subsequent decision-making process is as follows:

- 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025: Launch of public consultation.
- 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Conclusion of consultation period.
- 16<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Review and analysis of consultation feedback, finalisation of proposed changes, and legal oversight.
- 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Submission to governance boards, including Directorate Leadership Team (DLT), Corporate Management Team (CMT), and relevant committees.
- 26<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Publication of updated Education Travel Support Policy.

#### **Implementation Timeline:**

Subject to approval, the proposed changes are planned for implementation at the start of the 2025/2026 academic year (September 2025). This timeline ensures adequate preparation for both the local authority and stakeholders while maintaining transparency and accountability throughout the process.

## 5. Finance

There is no direct financial cost associated with delivering this proposal; however, successful implementation will rely heavily on effective resource management and the establishment of a robust assessment framework.

Strengthening the application process through clear, consistent criteria will ensure that travel support is allocated appropriately, aligning with the applicant's specific needs while adhering to DfE eligibility requirements. This approach will not only streamline decision-making but also help manage workload within the Education Travel Support team, reducing the risk of inconsistent outcomes and subsequent appeals.

Ongoing staff training, system updates, and regular monitoring will be essential to maintain efficiency and ensure the new processes are implemented fairly and effectively.

The ambition of the recommendations is to reduce the expenditure on commissioned transport (taxis). Figure 3 below shows the current forecast for financial year 24/25 for this provision and the 10% target reduction of this provision in 25/26



## 6. Law

Local authorities are required to comply with the law and, in the case of home to school transport, that law is:

- (a) supplied by legislation, especially the Education Act 1996
- (b) interpreted in the courts by judges; and
- (c) summarised in 'The Home to School Travel & Transport Guidance', published by the Department for Education.

The legislation states that a local authority:

- Has a statutory duty to make the travel arrangements that it?  
“...considers necessary in order to ... [facilitate an eligible] ... child's attendance at the relevant educational establishment ... free of charge ...”

Section 508B of the Education Act 1996

- May, but is not obliged to, make home to school travel arrangements for children and young people, who are not 'Eligible Children', as defined in Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996, although parents can be charged for these arrangements; and
- Is not obliged to provide home to school travel support if a parent or young person has refused an offer from a local authority for a suitable alternative provision or educational establishment closer to their home than their preferred placement.

Furthermore, when making decisions about travel arrangements, the Education Act 1996 also obliges local authorities:

- To have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (section 508D).
- To, where possible, have regard to the religion or belief of the parent (section 509AD); and
- To ensure that parents and young people are aware of the home to school travel support to which they may be entitled.

Section 508E adds that every local authority must have a school travel scheme that, amongst other things:

- (i) Complies with the law, including the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) Sets out the home to school travel arrangements that will be implemented by that local authority; and
- (iii) Explains the appeals process that will be followed.

Nonetheless, in recognition of the need for each travel arrangement policy to reflect local circumstances, local authorities are entitled to develop and modify their policies to fit their area's unique conditions.

However, when proposing substantive changes to such a policy, paragraph 125 onwards of the statutory guidance states that: “... local authorities should consult locally ... [that] ... Consultation should last for at least 28 working days during term time.”

Therefore, as the changes being proposed may affect entitlement to travel support, the Local Authority is required complete a fair and effective consultation exercise regarding the proposals before deciding whether they should implemented.

An individual or organisation that disputes the legality of the proposed changes or believes that the Local Authority has failed to follow the correct procedures when implementing them is entitled challenge their introduction via:

- The Local Authority’s complaints procedure;
- A complaint to the Secretary of State for Education; and / or
- The courts by asking a Judge to review its lawfulness, i.e. a judicial review.

Please note that substantive cost saving changes introduced by local authorities have usually resulted in judicial review applications being submitted by charitable organisations that support parents and children with special educational needs.

### **6.1. Sustainable Travel Promotion (Section 508A)**

Local authorities are required to:

- Promote sustainable travel and transport for all children and young people of compulsory school age.
- Develop and implement sustainable travel strategies, encouraging walking, cycling, and the use of public transport.
- Consider environmental impact, safety, and accessibility in transport planning.
- Collaborate with schools, parents, and transport providers to support eco-friendly travel options.

## **6.2. Duty to Provide Free School Transport (Section 508B and Schedule 35B)**

Local authorities must provide free transport for "eligible children," which includes:

- **Distance eligibility:** Children aged 5-16 living beyond the statutory walking distance:
  - 2 miles for children under 8.
  - 3 miles for children aged 8 and over.
- **Safety eligibility:** Children who cannot reasonably walk to school due to unsafe routes.
- **Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND):** Children whose disabilities prevent them from walking, regardless of distance.
- **Low-income families:** Children entitled to free school meals or whose parents receive the maximum Working Tax Credit, with extended transport rights:
  - 2 miles for children aged 8-11.
  - 2 to 6 miles for children aged 11-16 to attend one of the three nearest suitable schools.
  - Up to 15 miles for children attending the nearest preferred school based on religion or belief.

## **6.3. Discretionary Transport Support (Section 508C)**

Local authorities can choose to provide transport for children who are not "eligible" under the statutory requirements. This may include:

- Children attending schools outside eligibility distances due to parental choice.
- Pupils with temporary health conditions.
- Additional support for families facing exceptional circumstances.
- Transport to preferred schools based on personal, cultural, or religious grounds.

## **6.4. Post-16 Travel Support (Section 509AA & AB)**

Although the duty to provide free transport ends at age 16, local authorities have a duty to publish a transport policy statement outlining support for post-16 students. Considerations include:

- Accessibility of education or training.
- Special provisions for students with SEND.
- Financial assistance schemes.
- Sustainable travel options.

## **Risk Management**

7. The proposed changes present several high-level risks that the local authority must carefully manage.
  - 7.1 Increasing post-16 parental contributions could lead to financial strain for some families, potentially resulting in non-payment, increased appeals, and reduced uptake of post-16 education, particularly among low-income households.
  - 7.2 The introduction of tiered travel support options, while designed to better align with individual needs, may face resistance from families who perceive the new arrangements as less convenient or equitable, leading to an increase in complaints and challenges.
  - 7.3 Adhering strictly to compulsory school age eligibility and removing discretionary support could also result in families feeling disadvantaged, particularly those who previously relied on discretionary transport for exceptional circumstances.
  - 7.4 There is a reputational risk to the local authority if the changes are perceived as reducing support rather than improving efficiency.
  - 7.5 Risk of judicial review.

To mitigate these risks, clear communication, robust assessment processes, and a well-managed appeals system will be essential, alongside ongoing monitoring to identify and address any unintended consequences.

## **Equality Impact**

8. Impacted characteristics under the equality act are:
  - Age
  - Disability

## 9. **9.1. Impact on Protected Characteristics**

The Council must consider how the proposals affect individuals and groups with the following protected characteristics:

- **Age:** Ensure changes do not disproportionately disadvantage young people, particularly post-16 students who rely on transport to access education and training.
- **Disability:** Students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) must not face barriers to accessing suitable education due to changes in transport provision.
- **Race, Religion, and Belief:** Ensure that children attending faith-based schools or those from minority ethnic backgrounds are not disproportionately impacted.
- **Sex, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy, and Maternity:** Consider if the proposals could indirectly affect any of these groups through reduced accessibility or affordability.

## **9.2. Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments**

- Ensure that transport options remain accessible for SEND students, including those requiring adapted vehicles, specialist support, or personal travel budgets.
- Tiered travel support must accommodate individual circumstances, ensuring that all children can access education safely and independently.
- Reasonable adjustments should be made where standard travel options are not suitable, in line with the Council's obligations under the Equality Act.

## **9.3. Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Indirect Discrimination**

- The increase in post-16 parental contributions could disproportionately affect low-income families, potentially leading to indirect discrimination. To mitigate this, the continued lower

contribution rate for low-income families and alignment with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) ensures affordability.

- The Council must ensure that families facing exceptional hardship are supported, either through discretionary funding or flexible payment arrangements.

#### **9.4. Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**

Under the PSED, the Council must:

- **Advance equality of opportunity** by ensuring all students, regardless of background, can access education.
- **Eliminate discrimination** by ensuring changes are applied consistently and equitably.
- **Foster good relations** by engaging meaningfully with affected groups, including parents, carers, schools, and advocacy organisations.

### **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

- 10 Delivering this proposal will require a focused approach to human resource and organisational development, ensuring staff are well-equipped to manage the new processes and navigate potentially challenging conversations with families.

Staff wellbeing must be prioritised, with tailored support provided for team members handling difficult discussions, appeals, and complex cases. This can be achieved through regular coaching and mentoring sessions, equipping staff with the skills and confidence to engage sensitively while maintaining adherence to policy.

Developing a clear and consistent assessment framework will be essential to guide decision-making and reduce the risk of disputes. Additionally, comprehensive training for the appeals panel will be required to ensure fair and transparent outcomes. Ongoing staff development, including refresher training and reflective practice, will further strengthen the team's resilience and effectiveness in delivering the proposal.

### **Commercial/Procurement**

- 11 The Dudley Council Education Travel Support team must carefully consider the potential impact of these proposals on procurement, trade, social value, and compliance with Contract Standing Orders and procurement legislation. While the increase in post-16 parental contributions and the introduction of tiered travel support options are primarily administrative, they may indirectly affect contracted transport

providers. For instance, a shift toward bus and rail passes or personal travel budgets could reduce demand for commissioned transport services, potentially impacting providers' revenue streams.

From a procurement perspective, any changes to travel support services must align with existing contracts and frameworks. If adjustments to service delivery result in contract variations, the team must ensure compliance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Additionally, the focus on tailored, needs-based transport solutions presents an opportunity to incorporate social value principles. This could include prioritising suppliers that demonstrate environmental sustainability, support local employment, and promote inclusive practices.

The team must also ensure that any changes to contracts or procurement processes adhere to value-for-money principles while maintaining service quality. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the new tiered system will be essential to identify any unintended financial impacts on suppliers or service users. By embedding social value considerations and ensuring legislative compliance, the Council can implement these proposals while supporting the local economy and achieving positive community outcomes.

## **Environment / Climate Change**

- 12 The proposed changes to home-to-school transport align with Dudley Council's Environmental Policy and Climate Change Action Plan by promoting more sustainable travel options. The introduction of tiered travel support, including bus and rail passes, encourages the use of public transport, reducing the number of individual vehicles on the road. This shift supports the Council's goal of lowering carbon emissions and improving local air quality. Additionally, the proposed personal travel budgets and mileage allowances incentivize more efficient travel planning, which can further reduce the environmental impact of school transport.

These proposals also contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and Goal 13 (Climate Action). By promoting the use of public transport and reducing reliance on commissioned vehicles, the proposals support sustainable urban mobility and help mitigate climate change. Moreover, the focus on efficient resource allocation and equitable access to transport aligns with Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), ensuring that support is provided based on need while encouraging environmentally friendly choices.

## Council Plan

- 13 The proposals outlined align closely with Dudley Council Plan priorities for 2024–2025, particularly around improving organisational efficiency, supporting communities, and ensuring financial sustainability.

The increase in post-16 parental contributions supports the Council's priority of financial sustainability, efficiency, and best value by ensuring that the cost of transport is shared more equitably between the local authority and service users. The annual increase in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) ensures long-term financial resilience while maintaining affordability for families. This approach aligns with the Council's commitment to tighter spend controls and delivering agreed savings.

The introduction of tiered travel support options for both post-16 and compulsory school-age students reflects the Council's priority of reshaping services and operating models. By tailoring transport solutions to individual needs, the Council ensures best value, avoids unnecessary costs, and promotes efficiency. This also supports the empowerment of individuals to make choices and exercise independence, one of the Council's community-focused priorities.

Adhering strictly to compulsory school age eligibility and removing discretionary support enhances governance and control, ensuring transport resources are allocated fairly and in line with statutory guidelines. This reflects the Council's aim to build effective governance through clear decision-making structures while meeting regulatory compliance obligations.

Furthermore, the proposals contribute to the Council's social value goals by promoting access to education and training for all, raising aspirations, and increasing skills. This aligns with the priority to ensure access to quality education, empowering young people to achieve better outcomes.

Overall, the proposals are consistent with Dudley Council's vision of delivering efficient, sustainable services that support communities while ensuring sound financial management and adherence to governance standards.



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