

Public Document Pack

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board

21st November 2024

WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY 21ST NOVEMBER 2024, AT 4.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors H. J. Jones (Chairman), D. Harrison, C. Palmer, M. Stringfellow, M. Dormer, K. Holmes, A. Scott, R. Deller, M. Goodge, T. Onslow (Vice-Chairman) and C. Rogers (substituting for Councillor I. Hardiman)

Officers: Mr P. Carpenter, Mr. S. Wilkes, Ms. N. Cummings, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr. M. Cox, Mr. D. Mellors, Ms. T. Ainscough (observing) and Mrs. P. Ross

Partner Officers: Mr. L. Griffiths, Worcester City Council, Mr. I. Miller, Wyre Forest District Council (both via Microsoft Teams) and Mr. I. Edwards, Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Council.

21/24

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council and Councillor I. Hardiman, Wyre Forest District Council, with Councillor C. Rogers in attendance as the substitute Member for Councillor I. Hardiman.

22/24

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 26th September 2024 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 26th September 2024, be approved as a correct record.

24/24

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - SEPT 2024

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the

Recommendations as detailed on pages 17 and 18 of the main agenda pack. The report covered the period April to September 2024.

Members were informed that the detailed revenue monitoring report, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report; showed a projected outturn 2024/25 of £5k surplus; and was based on the following assumptions: -

- A 3% pay award had been added to the projected outturn figures, as per the original budget. A final agreement for the 24-25 pay award of £1,209 per annum on all pay points below spinal points 43 had been received. The agreement was received after the completion of Quarter 2 revenue monitoring. Therefore, the impact would be reflected in Quarter 3 revenue monitoring.
- WRS had budgeted for a 3% pay award in 2024-25. The current pay award of £1,290 per annum on all pay points (pro rata for part time work) had now been accepted by employers and unions, the additional pressure on WRS salaries would be £21,405. WRS were unable to cover this increase, therefore an increase to partner funding would be required of:-

| Council | 2024/25 |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| | £'000 |
| Bromsgrove District Council | 3 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 3 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 4 |
| Worcester City Council | 3 |
| Wychavon District Council | 5 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 3 |
| Total | 21 |

- If April to September 24 spend on pest control continued on the same trend for the rest of year, there would be an overspend on this service of £13k. WRS officers would continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of any changes in the projected outturn figure at Quarter 3.

The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners was:-

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Redditch Borough Council | £7k |
| Wychavon District Council | £6k |

- The following were the actual bereavements costs April – September 24 to be funded by partners. These costs were charged on an as and when basis. Due to the nature of the charge, it was not possible to project a final outturn figure:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Bromsgrove District Council | £3k |
| Malvern Hills District Council | £4k |
| Redditch Borough Council | £6k |
| Worcester City Council | £1k |

Other items for Members to note were: -

- £122k Ukrainian employees, offset to income on Appendix 1.
- £4.1 million salary budget on Appendix 1.

In response to a question raised on using reserves to meet any overspend, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources explained that, although there was a small general reserve, it was not wise to use this for something that would be ongoing expenditure and it was better corrected now to reflect the costs of the partnership.

RESOLVED that the Board

1.1 note the final financial position for the period April – Sept 2024

1.2 partner councils are informed of their liabilities for Apr – Sept 24 in relation to Bereavements, as follows:-

| Council | Apr–Sept Actual Bereavements £000 | 24 for |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 3 | |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 4 | |
| Redditch Borough Council | 6 | |
| Worcester City Council | 1 | |
| Total | 14 | |

1.3 partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2024-25 in relation to additional Technical Officers, as follows:-

| Council | Estimated Projected Outturn 2024/25 Envirocrime & Planning | Estimated Projected Outturn 2024/25 Tech Officer | Estimated Projected Outturn 2024/25 Gull Control |
|---------|---|---|---|
| | | | |

| | Enforcement £000 | Animal Activity £000 | £000 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 304 | 9 | |
| Malvern Hills District Council | | 7 | |
| Redditch Borough Council | 171 | 2 | |
| Worcester City Council | | 3 | 35 |
| Wychavon District Council | | 15 | |
| Wyre Forest District Council | | 9 | |
| Total | 475 | 45 | 35 |

1.4 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2024/25 in relation to the additional increase in pay award and recommend the increase to individual partner councils, as follows:-

| Council | £000 |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 3 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 3 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 4 |
| Worcester City Council | 3 |
| Wychavon District Council | 5 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 3 |
| Total | 21 |

25/24

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGETS 2025/26 - 2027/28

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced a report detailing the draft Worcestershire Regulatory Service Budgets 2025/26 – 2027/28. Members’ attention was drawn to the

Recommendations as detailed on pages 25 to 27 of the main agenda pack.

Members were informed that, Appendix 1 to the report showed the 2025/26 – 2027/28 budget breakdown for the district councils' partnership.

The following assumptions had been made in relation to the projections:-

- The enhanced pay award for 2024/25 had been accepted by employers and unions, the additional pressure on WRS salaries would be £21k. WRS were not able to fund this increase, therefore an increase in partner funding would be required.
- 3% pay award across all staff for 2025/26, 2% for 2026/27 & 2027/28. This would be subject to the National Pay Negotiations that were ongoing and therefore the final position would reflect any formally agreed increases, the budget also included any employee entitled to an incremental increase.
- Increase in Rent of £2.6k in 2025/26, a further 3% in 2026/2027 and 2027/2028.
- Increase in ICT Hosting of £2.6k, a further 3% in 2026/27 and 2027/28.
- Increase in Support Hosting of £3.8k in 2025-26, a further 3% in 2026/27 and 2027-28.
- Pension back-funding to be paid by all partners.

The unavoidable salary pressures were not able to be met by WRS generating additional income, therefore, an increase to partner funding would be required year on year, as detailed on page 28 of the main agenda pack. Salaries equated to 80% of the turnover so the higher pay award cost needed to be met.

Following the autumn budget, NI costs had increased from 13.8% to 15%, also the per-employee threshold at which employers become liable to pay NI reduced to £5k. This had created a pressure of £71k on the salary budget

It was understood that this increase in cost pressures would be covered for local authorities by way of additional new burdens funding, however, in the absence of clarity about how this would be delivered, officers would ask Members to approve the budget at this stage and would commit to bringing a further paper back to the Board at the meeting scheduled in February 2025, hopefully having received clarity on the Government's intentions of how that funding would be delivered.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources mentioned the re-valuation of the pension fund, which happened every three-years and the potential this had for having further financial impact going forward. He suggested to the Board that, should Members so require, he would invite a representative from the Government Actuary's Department to a future meeting of the Board with regard to this as the shared service and staff were part of the Worcestershire Pension Fund.

In response to questions from Board Members on the rent, ICT hosting and support hosting, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources explained that these increases were in-line with the RPI (Retail Price Index) for the current year. Therefore, the actual increase may change in April 25. For 2026/27 and 2027/28 a further 3% had been added to rent, ICT support & hosting support.

These pressures were not able to be met by WRS, therefore an increase to partner funding would be required, as follows:-

| Council | 2025/26 Increase in Rent | 2025/26 Increase in ICT Hosting | 2025/26 Increase in Support Hosting |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|--|
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| Bromsgrove District Council | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.5 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| Worcester City Council | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| Wychavon District Council | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.9 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| Total | 2.7 | 2.6 | 3.9 |

The Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), responded to a question on income generation targets and in doing so, highlighted that income generation was far better this year than the previous two years. The Technical Services team were a driving force in income generation. The Muller Primary Authority contract would generate income, and officers would look to build on the Primary Authority income stream. Officers were also looking to further promote the dog warden service to other authorities located within viable locations.

The Director of WRS responded to further questions on the setting of Fees and Charges, and in doing so explained that fees and charges were a reserved matter, being set by each partner authority. He

explained that with some based on cost recovery only, no significant profit could not be made so WRS officers worked closely with their finance colleagues in the individual authorities to ensure that any increase in fees and charges was defensible so that authorities were not challenged or judicially reviewed. Furthermore, some other fees and charges were set by Central Government, and many had not changed in many years, despite local government representatives lobbying for this. WRS officers also worked together with finance officers to increase and align relevant fees and charges across the six partners where appropriate, being mindful of consistency where WRS was wholly responsible for the cost of any process e.g., stray dog fees were set across Worcestershire for economy of services.

Members expressed some concerns with regard to the increase of partner contributions and what could be done to avoid further increases in 2025/26.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources and Director of WRS explained that WRS staff had received the same pay award as Government local authority employees. Officers would continue to scope income generation and look at economy of scale. Members were further informed that in 2010 WRS were asked to deliver 17% of savings of expenditure within the 3-year time scale of the WRS project, and that WRS had achieved 24%. During the following 3 years WRS had delivered differing levels of savings to all partners but in total reducing district partner costs by over £300,000. Between 2016/17 and 2020/21, WRS was asked to manage cost increases through income generation and received no additional funding in base budget through the period. WRS officers had a better grip on their financial costs and always tried to ensure a reasonable margin with any income taken on. The current increase was mainly due to salaries with the recently agreed pay award.

The Director of WRS commented that the quality-of-service individual partners received from WRS, was at a level that partners would struggle to deliver at the cost of their individual contributions. Therefore, there was significantly less spend by partner authorities than many similar local authorities and WRS delivered a good service. Members were reassured that officers continued and would continue to keep an eye on ongoing cost.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1.1 the 2025/26 gross expenditure budget of £5,356k as shown in Appendix 1, be approved;
- 1.2 the 2025/26 income budget of £1,258k as shown in Appendix 1, be approved;
- 1.3 the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 25/26 onwards, be approved, as follows:-

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| Council | £'000 | Revised % |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 592 | 14.45 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 538 | 13.13 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 725 | 17.68 |
| Worcester City Council | 658 | 16.07 |
| Wychavon District Council | 960 | 23.43 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 625 | 15.24 |
| Total | 4,098 | |

1.4 the additional partner liabilities for 2025/26 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure, be approved as follows:-

| Council | 2024/25 £'000 | 2025/26 £'000 Excluding NI increases | 2025/26 £'000 NI increases |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 3 | 14 | 10 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 3 | 12 | 9 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 4 | 17 | 13 |
| Worcester City Council | 3 | 15 | 11 |
| Wychavon District Council | 5 | 22 | 17 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 3 | 14 | 11 |
| Total | 21 | 94 | 71 |

1.5 the additional partner liabilities for 2025/26 in relation to increase in hosting costs, be approved as follows:-

| Council | Increase in Rent £000 | Increase in ICT Hosting £000 | Increase in Support Hosting £000 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.5 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| Worcester City Council | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| Wychavon District Council | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.9 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| Total | 2.7 | 2.6 | 3.9 |

26/24

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES - ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE DATA - QUARTER 2 2024/2025

The Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager presented the Activity and Performance Data, Quarter 2 2024/2025 report, and in doing so the following key points were highlighted: -

Activity Data

The second quarter of 2024/5 was yet another damp affair. This had impacted on at least one or two of our measures. Worcestershire continued to be a draw for outdoor activities with a range of events and festivals continuing to feature now we were beyond the pandemic, the crowds appeared to be returning, but it was clear that this was not to everyone's liking.

Some 891 proactive interventions at food businesses were undertaken during the year to date, with only 3% resulting in a business being rated as "non-compliant" (i.e., being issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2). A higher proportion of non-compliant ratings continued to be issued to the takeaway sector and small retailers.

The overall number of Licensing cases recorded between 1st April 2024 and 30th September 2024 represents an increase of 5% compared to 2022/23 and an increase of 6% compared to 2023/24. Applications had fallen slightly following the Q1 peak, probably reflecting that most businesses had tried to get their Temporary Event notices served well ahead of time.

The number of Licensing enquiries, such as queries about regulations, by-laws, and licence conditions, invariably exceeded the number of actual Licensing complaints. Of the actual complaints received during the year to date, approximately 43% had related to taxi licensing, such as reports of poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards, and 21% were related to alcohol licensing, usually indications that a business may be breaching the licensing objectives. A further 14% of complaints related to animal licensing with most cases relating to the unlicensed breeding and/or sale of dogs. Work remained on-going during the period in relation to the investigations relating to Operation Lisbon 2.

Planning enquiries continued to show an increasing number of cases, with volumes between 1st April 2024 and 30th September 2024 representing an increase of 26% compared to 2022/23 and 16% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 90% of enquiries had been consultations for air quality, contaminated land, and nuisance. Around 20% of enquiries continued to be processed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

The overall trend on dog related complaints and enquiries remained slightly upwards, officers a significant increase in strays compared to Q1. Most of the cases had been reports of lost or stray dogs with most categorised as "contained strays," meaning dogs were found and held by members of the public. There had, however, been a notable increase in the number of dogs picked up with welfare concerns and subsequently requiring veterinary treatment or examination. Around 55% of dogs were successfully reunited with their owners, although this figure varied between district authorities. The number of dog control complaints remained low, with 42 complaints received during the year to date, 19 of which related to dogs which were persistently straying from residential properties and 12 related to dog fouling.

Performance

Compliments continue to significantly outnumber complaints.

The overall rate of noise complaints against population was 0.67, lower than the figure at this point last year (0.79,) and well below the figures at Q2 in the most recent years (0.9, 1.08, 0.94 and 0.85, respectively.) This was again a good reflection of the poor weather over the Spring and Summer.

Income brought in during the first half of 2024/25 was £258,989, which was slightly higher than the previous two years (£204,718 and £232,520 respectively,) and significantly up on the 2-years before this. Using the historic budget figure for 2016/17 (£3,017,000) to maintain the comparison with previous years, this came out at 8.6% of that budget. Looking back at this point over recent years for comparison, the figures were 6.8%, 7.7%, 5.42%, 4.37%, 5.3% and 4.7% going back to 2018/19. The figure was approximately 5.7% of current revenue budget, so still healthy.

Members expressed some concern with regard to the notable increase in the number of dogs being picked up with welfare concerns and subsequently requiring veterinary treatment or examination. Members questioned if this was due to the deliberate abandonment of dogs that had been mistreated?

The Technical Services Manager, WRS explained that these dogs had not been deliberately abandoned due to mistreatment, but due to the cost of living increase and feeding their dogs or not being able to afford veterinary costs. Plus, with a lot of dogs purchased or homed during the pandemic, owners had not been able to socialise their dogs, and some dogs could have been purchased with underlying conditions. Also, dogs that had not been groomed properly which leads to dirty, matted fur, therefore making them more prone to fleas and ticks.

Following a question from the Board on the recruitment of the five new officers into the Community Environmental Health Teams, the Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager announced that all five positions had now been recruited into and that the new team members would receive the required training enabling them to be embedded into the team.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor A. Scott, Worcester City Council referred to the new Business and Planning Act 2020, Pavement Licensing policy. Councillor Scott commented that Worcester City probably received the vast majority of Pavement Licensing Applications, and that the policy had recently been presented to a meeting of the Licensing Committee, whereby Members had suggested a number of amendments. Councillor Scott took the opportunity to invite Board Members to look at the suggested amendments made.

The Director of WRS highlighted that licensing was a reserved matter and therefore each partner authority may / could have a different Pavement Licensing policy tailored to their authorities' local needs and demographics.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 2024/25, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

27/24

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE AUTOMATION PROJECT

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) provided Members with an update on the Automation Project.

The Temporary Events Notice (TEN) form went live for 5 of the 6 districts in Worcestershire by close of play on Friday 27th September. Due to a planned internet update Worcester City Council had requested to wait until a week later to launch the form on their website.

Members' attention was drawn to the figures in Table 1 and Table 2, on pages 79 and 80 of the main agenda pack. The tables showed the number of TENs received as of the 6th November 2024.

Overall, the shift to moving to online forms had been a huge success, duty officers had received a few queries and there were a few technical glitches.

Currently a total of 160 TEN forms had been received, so the vast majority of forms were now being received on-line. There had been a few challenges, including the requirement for the Uniform database system being switched off for routine back-up scheduling. This needed to be looked at and was being swiftly dealt with.

Members were further informed that the 'Next Steps' scheduling had changed since the last meeting of the Board, and that Personal Licence Application forms were due to be the next set of on-line forms being launched.

Following a query raised at the last meeting of the Board, Members were reassured that the on-line forms were accessible, this had now been confirmed by IDOX that the forms met the WCAG2.2 AA standards, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Progress continued on the 'service request' form where the task and finish group had developed a series of questions for different scenarios received by all the teams across WRS.

It had proved to be quite a challenge to scope out by the teams involved as it had required the need to address a very wide range of potential requests relating to the work of all three WRS service areas. It had also required members across WRS teams to get together at various points of the scoping exercise.

Officers continued liaising with the communications leads to ensure district websites were easy to navigate alongside the 'help' guidance and FAQ's. These were tested with external stakeholders.

With regards to taxi ID cards, alongside the wider automation project, officers were working with MyTAG to implement the roll out of electronic ID Cards for the taxi trade for both safeguarding and nighttime enforcement measures. There had been some challenges with MyTAG but worked continued. IT colleagues at Wyre Forest had have progressed with work on the dashboard and SANDBOX requirement and were now working with SmartTag to enable remote access to the IDOX database. This would enable testing to commence and templates of the Taxi ID cards to be created.

In response to questions from Members, the Licensing and Support Services Manager, explained that officers were not at that stage yet to

explain the MyTAG scheme to the taxi trade. Once this stage had been reached, officers would ensure that there was a communications plan in place for each partner authority, in order to explain MyTAG and fully engage with the taxi trade. Officers were scoping 'early adopters' and 'champions' for the scheme before rolling it out fully, there needed to be buy in from the trade. Officers had a good knowledge of each of the districts, which districts had taxi associations etc. and therefore communication plans would be bespoke for each district.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager and the Director of WRS responded to further questions with regards to Uber, the possibility of evolving a Worcestershire wide taxi booking system, the deregulation act and the taxi trade accepting the deregulation act and how young people used apps on their mobile phones to book taxis. The Director of Regulatory Services stated that, whilst officers understood the issues created, it would not be appropriate for WRS as the regulator to try to drive change in the market locally and that it was down to the taxi trade to make such changes.

The Director of WRS further emphasised that the roll out of the electronic taxi ID cards, alongside the wider automation project, was an incredibly positive step forward.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, explained that, primarily on-line application forms were being delivered rather than written application forms being submitted to WRS. With regards to consultations and consultation responses received and service requirements of any complaints being received, e.g., noise from barking dogs, a smokey fire, he was working on such on-line forms. It was envisaged that the level of information included / required on these forms would enable people to be signposted to the relevant partner authorities' websites or to the 'next' stage of a complaint, whichever was relevant. By using these on-line forms, it would ensure that information was provided, and any relevant questions answered on the forms 'up front,' therefore reducing the amount of manual data inputting for duty officers.

As highlighted to Board Members at the last meeting of the Board, the Victoria forms project had taken precedent so some other work had stalled slightly but officers were working on what was required to ensure this element of the project could be delivered with in scope and to the required objectives.

In response to a further part of one question, it was explained that certain legislative conditions, such as the requirement to advertise in the press and display information on-site for any premises licence applications would continue, as this was a statutory requirement which had to be adhered to; as was the requirement for any representations received to such applications being brought to a Licensing Sub-Committee meeting for Member consideration and decision making.

RESOLVED that the Progress Report on the Automation Project be noted.

28/24

AIR QUALITY BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROJECT

The Technical Services Manager, WRS presented a report on the Air Quality Behaviour Change Project, and in doing so, stated that he welcomed the opportunity to share, with Board Members, information on key initiatives and activities that aligned with WRS priorities and policies.

Members were informed that between 2018 and 2022, staff from WRS had engaged with Public Health at Worcestershire County Council (WCC) to mirror work done by other Local Authorities to fund and engage behaviour change work.

WRS had utilised external funding to develop a behaviour change project. A Behaviour Change Officer (BCO) was recruited in late February 2024 on a fixed term contract for 2.5 years. The aim of the project was to improve air quality through encouraging sustainable travel initiatives, particularly within schools and local businesses in specific locations. Key aims included reducing short car journeys by encouraging walking and cycling, raising awareness of air quality impacts, and encouraging community partnerships. The funding received was tied to certain areas. The specific target areas for the project included London Road, Worcester and the Lickey End M42 Junction, Bromsgrove

The report therefore sets out the work of the BCO to date and future work plans.

Key Activities and Achievements:

The BCO's work could be classed into 4 workstreams, as detailed on pages 84 to 88 of the main agenda pack, and titled as follows:-

1. *Survey Insights.*
2. *School Engagement.*
3. *Community Outreach.*
4. *Promotional Materials.*

Survey Insights:

HoW College – WRS AQ Survey

Since the main baseline survey failed to gather sufficient information from the younger end of the population, those aged between 16 and 30 years old; a new survey was conducted in September and October 2024 with the participation of the HoW College group, which involved all campuses, in Worcester, Malvern, Bromsgrove and Redditch. This survey was developed in-house, and the online survey reached 741

college students and staff, to assess transportation habits, awareness of air quality and barriers to sustainable commuting.

Respondents were mainly aged 16-30, with many living more than four miles from the relevant campus. Findings showed a reliance on cars, gaps in understanding of pollution sources, and identified personal and infrastructure barriers to low-emission travel options like walking or cycling. Further details of the results were detailed in Appendix 2 to the report. Key Information derived from the Surveys was further detailed on pages 85 and 86 of the main agenda pack.

School Engagement

Survey data indicated that some focus was necessary on young people, with schools and colleges as potential venues for promoting air quality awareness. Hence, the BCO prioritised outreach to schools to foster engagement and identify participation opportunities.

A database was created with 264 schools as potential contact points across the County (242 state schools and 22 independent schools.) Between March and June 2024, 49 school visits were conducted, introducing the BCO role and promoting the AQ Worcestershire 2024 initiative.

From July to October 2024, emails were sent to schools to arrange meetings and explore potential air quality projects, resulting in 10 responses and collaborative meetings with schools in Worcester, Bromsgrove, Pershore, and Kidderminster, including the University of Worcester.

Following these efforts, 59 schools were contacted, achieving a significant milestone with six schools - including five schools and Heart of Worcestershire College (HoW)—committing to ongoing behaviour change projects and activities such as workshops and assemblies. Further details of these were included in Table 3 in Appendix 3, and Figure 1 on page 87 of the main agenda pack.

Community Engagement

The BCO also established key partnerships with community groups, including Breathe Easy in Redditch and local care homes along London Road in Worcester. This had helped reveal gaps in community awareness regarding air quality issues and emphasised the need for targeted monitoring and education.

Future Work

With funding until approximately September 2026, the BCO's work programme was expected to continue, as detailed on page 89n of the main agenda pack.

The Chairman took the opportunity to express sincere thanks to the BCO for the great work in engaging with young people.

Members also expressed their sincere thanks and complimented the work being carried out and agreed that all stakeholders needed to engage with initiatives and to tackle air quality. Members further commented that they had found the report informative and that they had not heard of all of the initiatives detailed in the report.

The Technical Services Manager therefore reiterated, that as recommended at the beginning of the report, that Members note the actions being taken by WRS officers and assist in enabling positive discussions to improve air quality in Worcestershire. The information needed to be shared with all Members of each partner authority.

With monitoring air quality (including particular matter) and the collection of all of the data gathered; officers' thoughts were to change or influence the behaviour of those at risk of adverse impacts from poor air quality, and to change the behaviour of those impacting on air quality. Also to encourage and promote positive initiatives.

Following on from a query with regards to the following statement on page 90 of the main agenda pack, which stated that 'It shortens lives', the Technical Services Manager briefly explained the statement, in that poor air quality was medically proven to shorten lives and this was factually correct. The Director of Regulatory Services indicated that officers understood this message might be stark and the way these things were communicated would be tailored to the audience to avoid unnecessary alarm.

RESOLVED that Members note the report and actions taken by WRS Staff and assist in enabling positive discussions to improve air quality in Worcestershire.

29/24

URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 5.40 p.m.

Chairman