

# Cabinet

## 13 January 2016

**Time** 5.00 pm **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Executive

**Venue** Committee Room 3 - Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton WV1 1SH

### Membership

**Chair** Cllr Roger Lawrence (Lab)

**Vice-chair** Cllr Peter Bilson (Lab)

### Labour

Cllr Claire Darke

Cllr Steve Evans

Cllr Val Gibson

Cllr Andrew Johnson

Cllr Elias Mattu

Cllr John Reynolds

Cllr Sandra Samuels

Cllr Paul Sweet

Quorum for this meeting is five Councillors.

### Information for the Public

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the democratic support team:

**Contact** Dereck Francis

**Tel/Email** Tel: 01902 555835 or [dereck.francis@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:dereck.francis@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

**Address** Democratic Support, Civic Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, St Peter's Square,  
Wolverhampton WV1 1RL

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**Tel** 01902 555043

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Some items are discussed in private because of their confidential or commercial nature. These reports are not available to the public.

# Agenda

## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*    *Title*

### MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- 1            **Apologies for absence**
- 2            **Declaration of interests**
- 3            **Minutes of the previous meeting (9 December 2015)** (Pages 5 - 8)  
[For approval]
- 4            **Matters arising**  
[To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting]

### DECISION ITEMS (RED - FOR DECISION BY THE COUNCIL)

- 5            **Housing Revenue Account business plan (including 2016/17 budget rents and service charges)** (Pages 9 - 40)  
[To present an updated business plan, including proposed Housing Revenue Account budgets and rents and service charges for recommendation to Full Council]

### DECISION ITEMS (AMBER - DELEGATED TO THE CABINET)

- 6            **2016/17 budget and medium term financial strategy 2016/17 - 2018/19 - provisional local government finance settlement update** (Pages 41 - 48)  
[To provide an update on the 2016/17 provisional local government finance settlement]
- 7            **Council taxbase and business rates (NDR) net rate yield 2016/17** (Pages 49 - 52)  
[To set the estimates for the Wolverhampton Collection Fund for 2016/17, which the Council managers on behalf of local precepting bodies and central government]
- 8            **Collection Fund estimated outturn 2015/16** (Pages 53 - 58)  
[To report the estimated outturn for council tax and business rates transactions on the Collection Fund in 2015/16]
- 9            **Local council tax reduction scheme** (Pages 59 - 62)  
[To seek approval to maintain the current local scheme for 2016/17 onwards]
- 10          **Universal Credit delivery partnership** (Pages 63 - 70)  
[To enter into a Universal Credit delivery partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions to deliver Universal Support – delivery locally]

- 11 **Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy** (Pages 71 - 98)  
[To endorse the strategy]
- 12 **Playing pitch strategy and assessment report** (Pages 99 - 104)  
[To approve the strategy and note the assessment report]
- 13 **Active travel strategy** (Pages 105 - 114)  
[To adopt and implement the strategy]

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# Meeting of the Cabinet

## Minutes - 9 December 2015

### Attendance

#### Members of the Cabinet

Cllr Roger Lawrence (Chair)  
Cllr Peter Bilson (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Claire Darke  
Cllr Steve Evans  
Cllr Val Gibson  
Cllr Andrew Johnson  
Cllr Elias Mattu  
Cllr John Reynolds  
Cllr Sandra Samuels  
Cllr Paul Sweet

#### Employees

Dereck Francis	Democratic Support Officer
Keith Ireland	Managing Director
Tim Johnson	Strategic Director - Place
Linda Sanders	Strategic Director - People
Mark Taylor	Director of Finance

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## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

- | <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Title</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1               | <b>Apologies for absence</b><br>No apologies for absence were received for the meeting.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 2               | <b>Declaration of interests</b><br>No declarations of interests were made.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 3               | <b>Minutes of the previous meeting (11 November 2015)</b><br>Resolved:<br>That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 4               | <b>Matters arising</b><br>There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5               | <b>Capital programme 2015/16 to 2019/20 quarter two review</b><br>Cllr Andrew Johnson presented the report which provided an update on the financial performance of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programmes for 2015/16 and the revised forecast for 2015/16 to 2019/20 as at quarter two of 2015/16. Cabinet was also asked to recommend revised General |

Fund and HRA capital programmes for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 to Full Council for approval.

Resolved:

1. That Full Council be recommended to:
  - a. Approve the revised medium term General Fund capital programme of £213.6 million, an increase of £5.6 million from the previously approved programme, reflecting the latest projected expenditure for the medium term.
  - b. Approve the revised medium term Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme of £208.0 million, a decrease of £6.9 million from the previously approved programme.
  - c. Approve the additional resources for six new and twenty five existing General Fund projects totalling £5.6 million.
2. That the nine General Fund virements totalling £8.1 million detailed at appendix B to the report be approved.
3. That the schedules of works for the capital projects under the following directorates be approved:
  - a. Corporate: ICTS and in relation to Education; Primary Expansion programme, Capital Maintenance and Universal Infant Free School Meals (appendix C1).
  - b. People: Sports Investment Strategy, Co-location programme and Learning Disability (appendix C2).
  - c. Place: Corporate Asset Management, Urban Parks Refurbishment Programme, Disposals Programme, Targeted Disposals, Accessing Growth Fund, Managing Short Trips and Structural Maintenance (appendix C3).
4. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Education, in consultation with the Director of Education and the Director of Finance, to accept suitable tenders for the required works.
5. That the expenditure position for quarter two of 2015/16 which stands at 25.3% of the approved general fund capital budget be noted.
6. That the expenditure position for quarter two of 2015/16 which stands at 30.1% of the approved Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital budget be noted.
7. That it be noted that at the time of writing the report, work was being undertaken in relation to a number of specific capital projects. As a result of this work, should any amendments to the capital programme be approved by Cabinet (Resources) Panel subsequent to this meeting and prior to Council on 16 December 2015, then the report to Council would fully reflect such changes and provide a comprehensive update to the capital programme.

**6 Treasury management activity monitoring - mid year review 2015/16**

Cllr Andrew Johnson presented the monitoring and progress report on treasury management activity for the second quarter of 2015/16 as part of the mid-year review, in line with the Prudential Indicators approved by Council in March 2015.

Resolved:

That Full Council be recommended to note:

1. A mid-year review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement had been undertaken and the Council had operated within the limits and requirements approved in March 2015.
2. Savings of £1.9 million for the General Fund and £2.9 million for the Housing Revenue Account are forecast from treasury management activities in 2015/16.
3. In the event of updated capital programme figures being reported to Cabinet (Resources) Panel on 15 December 2015, a revised version of this report would be presented to Council on 16 December 2015.

**7 Corporate Parenting Strategy**

Cllr Val Gibson asked Cabinet to approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015/2017 for Looked after Children and Care Leavers and endorse its use across the Council and its partners in order to prioritise the needs of this vulnerable group of children and young people.

Resolved:

That Full Council be recommended to:

1. Approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015/2017.
2. Endorse the Council's corporate commitment to the needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
3. Pledges personal commitment to raising the profile and support offered to Wolverhampton's Looked After Children and Care Leavers

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# Cabinet Meeting

## 13 January 2016

<b>Report title</b>	Housing Revenue Account business plan (including 2016/17 budget rents and service charges)	
<b>Decision designation</b>	RED	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Peter Bilson City Assets Councillor Andrew Johnson Resources	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Lesley Roberts, City Housing Mark Taylor, Finance	
<b>Originating service</b>	Housing Service	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Kenny Aitchison	Service Manager Housing Strategy and Development 01902 554841 <a href="mailto:kenny.aitchison@wolverhampton.gov.uk">kenny.aitchison@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
	Martin Fox	Finance Business Partner 01902 553470 <a href="mailto:martin.fox2@wolverhampton.gov.uk">martin.fox2@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>		

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### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to recommend that Council:

1. Implements the 1% reduction in social housing rents in accordance with the Welfare Reform and Work Bill and to give 28 days' notice to all secure and introductory tenants of the rent reduction from 4 April 2016.

2. Adopt the business plan set out at appendix A as the approved Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan including
  - a) The revenue budget for 2016/17 at Appendix A3
  - b) The capital programme for 2015/16 to 2019/20 at Appendix A4
3. Agree the increases to garage rents and service charges set out in appendices B1-B3 and formally notify tenants.

**Recommendations for noting:**

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. That all Council dwelling rents will reduce by 1% in line with the proposals contained in the Welfare Reform and Work Bill.
2. The consultation responses as outlined at Appendix C
3. Proposals to meet the requirements of the Heat Network regulations 2014 for the district heating schemes at Heath Town and New Park Village
4. The potential impact of the current Housing and Planning Bill on the HRA business Plan

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 This report presents an updated Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan for recommendation to Full Council.
- 1.2 The report also provides, as an integral part of that business plan, a proposed HRA budget for 2016/17, including proposed rents and service charges to take effect from 4 April 2016, and a proposed HRA capital programme for the period 2016/17 to 2019/20 for recommendation to full Council.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Since the implementation of HRA self-financing in 2012, the Council has been required to set out its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan. The business plan is monitored quarterly and reviewed annually to ensure that assumptions remain robust and resources within the plan are sufficient to meet expenditure requirements. Appendix D provides more detail on HRA self-financing.
- 2.2 Prior to 2014 the increase in rents was based upon a formula of retail price index (RPI) plus 0.5% plus £2.00. In 2014 the government introduced a new formula for increases of Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1%. In order to provide certainty for councils, the government stated that this rent policy would exist for 10 years. The Council's HRA business plan was therefore predicated upon rents going up by more than inflation each year throughout the lifetime of the plan.
- 2.3 In the Chancellor's budget of July 2015, it was announced that all council dwelling rents would reduce by 1% each year from 1 April 2016 for the next four years to 2020. This announcement was subsequently included in the Welfare Reform and Work Bill currently progressing through parliament. Previously, there was no statutory underpinning for local authority rent setting, the formulae in paragraph 2.1 were provided as guidance. The proposed 1% reduction would be mandatory once legislation is enacted.
- 2.4 In Wolverhampton, a 1% reduction in dwelling rents each year for the next four years compounds to an overall reduction of 12% when the anticipated increases based upon CPI plus 1% are also taken into account.
- 2.5 Updating the plan to take into account the 1% reduction and other assumptions such as inflation resulted in an indicative shortfall of resources of £622 million over the 30 year lifetime and a potential breach of the borrowing cap in 2030. This, in addition to recognising the need to create headroom for new build, meant it was necessary to complete a comprehensive review of the plan.

## **3.0 Addressing the HRA business plan shortfall**

- 3.1 Since the July budget announcement, employees from Housing Services, Strategic Finance and Wolverhampton Homes have been working together to address the £622 million shortfall within the HRA business plan. In addition opportunities have been

considered to release additional resources to enable an acceleration of new build housing within the HRA.

### 3.2 Five key areas were looked at

- Remodel the business plan with different assumptions on inflation, interest, stock numbers etc.
- Review the capital programme
- Review the allowances paid to Wolverhampton Homes and the four tenant management organisations
- Increase income to the HRA by raising service charges and consider converting some voids from social rent levels to affordable rent levels.
- Identify opportunities to increase the level of new build

### **Remodelling the business plan assumptions**

- 3.3 The previous HRA business plan was predicated on the principle that rents will rise year on year by CPI plus 1%, using the government's assumptions on future rates of inflation. After the proposed 1% reduction in rents for the next four years the proposed plan returns to the assumption that rents will rise by CPI plus 1% and a CPI rate of 2%.
- 3.4 Building costs within the plan were linked to RPI rather than CPI; the business plan has been remodelled using CPI plus 0.5% as inflation for building costs.
- 3.5 Assumptions in properties lost through demolition and right to buy have been amended assuming that right to buy sales will tail off over the next few years and plateau at around 130 per year. After the proposals for Heath Town are implemented, there are no other demolition schemes being considered.
- 3.6 These measures combined reduce projected costs within the HRA business plan by £188 million.

### **Reviewing the Capital Programme**

- 3.7 At the conclusion of the Decent Homes programme a significant amount of work has gone into reviewing the entire capital programme and the asset management plan and building cost model that underpins it. Based upon up to date stock condition information adjustments to when components replaced with decent homes investment will need to be replaced again have resulted in a further reduction in costs of £340 million over the 30 years of the business plan.
- 3.8 When this figure is adjusted for inflation over 30 years it reduces costs by an additional £80 million. It also results in less borrowing over 30 years and therefore less interest payable reducing projected costs by a further £120 million.
- 3.9 The overall impact of these measures equates to a reduction of £540 million over the lifetime of the business plan.

### **Allowances paid to the managing agents**

- 3.10 Wolverhampton Homes and the four tenant management organisations each get paid allowances from the HRA to reflect the services they provide on behalf of the Council to tenants. Since 2013 their allowances have not increased year on year; this freeze was due to continue to 2018.
- 3.11 As part of the exercise to review the HRA business plan, the allowances paid to each organisation were considered. Two options were put to each of the managing agents; one which proposed to reduce their allowances by 1% for each of the four years of the rent reduction then an annual increase based upon CPI plus 1%; alternatively the freeze in allowances would be extended to 2020 followed by an annual increase in line with CPI.
- 3.12 Each of the TMOs and Wolverhampton Homes have agreed to the second option which reduces costs to the business plan of £220 million over 30 years.

### **Increasing income to the HRA – Service Charges including central heating charges**

- 3.13 The imposed 1% reduction in dwelling rents does not apply to service charges or other rental income charged alongside social rent. Affordable rents and any service charges within the affordable are rent are subject to the 1% reduction. As part of the consultation with tenants and managing agents, service charges for concierge services and hostels charges, and garage rents were proposed to increase by CPI plus 1%. Based upon CPI in September 2015 this means these will each rise by 1%. This was generally accepted.
- 3.14 It is proposed that service charges for communal areas, communal cleaning, digital TV and fencing remain unchanged with no increases or decreases for 2016/17. The costs of these services are fully recovered from the existing level of service charge.
- 3.15 It is also proposed not to increase the services charges to tenants who benefit from heating/hot water supplied by district heating schemes at Heath Town and New Park Village. The Heat Network Regulations 2014 require all councils who have district heating schemes to charge tenants for actual usage and not by a set fee.
- 3.16 Working with Wolverhampton Homes and New Park Village TMC, employees from Housing Services will support tenants affected over the next 18 months. At New Park Village this will mean transferring the “landlords supply” electricity meter over to the tenant and assisting the tenant in changing from a dual meter to a single meter as well as offering support in budgeting and energy efficiency. The weekly charges of £16.61 for a two-bed property and £18.32 for a three-bed will be removed from the rent account and the tenant will be responsible for paying their electricity supplier directly.
- 3.17 At Heath Town, as part of the conclusion of decent homes works and the proposed regeneration works, each property will have a meter installed to measure the heat and hot water being used. The tenant will then be billed individually for their usage. The heating charge is currently made up of two elements; a maintenance charge and a

consumption charge. Once the meter has been installed the consumption charge will end but the maintenance charge of £6.20 per week will remain. This charge covers the cost of running and maintaining the Boilerhouse and district heating system and for those tenants eligible is covered by housing benefit.

- 3.18 In line with government guidance, all service charges recover 100% of the cost of the service provided and are no longer subsidised by the HRA. The exception to this is the central heating charge paid by approximately 20,000 tenants. Introduced over 25 years ago the charge was raised after new central heating systems were installed on a rolling programme. The charge has varied over the years going up to £3.00 per week but currently stands at £2.00 per week. However £2.00 per week only provides half of the costs of servicing and replacing central heating systems.
- 3.19 To bring the central heating service charge in line with the other service charges and to make the charge cover the whole cost of the service, the charge would need to be doubled from £2.00 per week to £4.00 per week.
- 3.20 During the consultation with tenants the question was raised why tenants with electric heating paid the same weekly charge as those with gas heating if the rationale behind the proposed increase was to make the service charge cover the cost of the service to those tenants who directly benefit from it. Electric heating does not require the same level of servicing as gas.
- 3.21 Taking account of this issue the proposal is now to reduce the central heating service charge for electric heating to £1.00 per week and to increase the gas central heating to £4.00 by increasing it by £0.50 on 4 April 2016 and then by £0.50 each year for the following three years.
- 3.22 Service charges are set out at Appendix B2.

### **Affordable rents**

- 3.23 Since 2011 the Council has been able to convert up to 50% of voids arising each year from social rents to affordable rents, if the council signed up to an agreement with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) which would commit the Council to utilising all of the increased income to a council house new build programme. An affordable rent is set at up to 80% of market rent; social rents are generally about 60% of market rents within the city.
- 3.24 In April 2014 Cabinet adopted an “affordable rent strategy” which agreed to set affordable rents for new build properties but not for existing stock.
- 3.25 During the consultation with tenants this issue proved to be the most controversial, probably due to the coverage within the Express & Star. In general tenants felt that having different rents for the same properties would create inequality among tenants living next door to each other.

3.26 It is proposed that further work is carried out to determine the equality impacts upon tenants and to discuss with the HCA the terms of any framework contract with them for building additional new council homes. A further report will be presented to Cabinet in due course when further consideration has been given to the benefits and disbenefits of converting void properties from social to affordable rents when relet.

3.27 Summary of proposals to be implemented

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Current Assumption</b>	<b>Proposed Assumption</b>	<b>Notional Impact over 30 years</b>
Use CPI+0.5% for inflation on revenue/capital costs	RPI	CPI+0.5%	£188M
Revised Capital Programme	£2.0 Billion over 30 years	£1.6 Billion over 30 years	£540M
Management Allowance to WH/TMOs	Freeze to 2018 then CPI +1%	Extend freeze to 2020 then increase by CPI	£220M
Increase gas heating Service Charge incrementally to full cost recovery	£2 per week	Stepped increase 50p per week each year to £4 p/w by 2020	£75M
Decrease electric heating service to cost recovery	£2 per week	£1 per week	(£4M)

The proposals above address the indicative shortfall of £622 million over the 30 year business plan and the potential breach of the borrowing cap highlighted in paragraph 2.5, whilst building in headroom for future new build and ensuring borrowing reduces over the 30 year plan.

3.28 If, after further consideration, a policy of converting voids from social rent to affordable rent is introduced, then the notional impact over 30 years would be a further £220 million.

Conversion of social rent to affordable rent	Only for new build	Up to 500 per annum from 16/17 up to a max of approximately 5000	£220M
----------------------------------------------	--------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------	-------

#### 4.0 New build programme

- 4.1 In addition to addressing the notional shortfall caused by the rent reduction, greater headroom has been created within the HRA to increase the number of new council houses that can be built.
- 4.2 Within the current HRA business plan there is a funding provision to build 64 new units. The increased headroom created will allow for an additional 400 new units by 2020. Based upon a unit cost of £140,000 this will require an investment of approximately £56 million over the next four years.

	Current Programme	Additional annual programme	Additional cost
New Build	64 (CaSSH 1, SCP 1 & Tap Works)	2016/17 – 100 2017/18 – 200 2018/19 – 50 2019/20 - 50	(£56m)

#### 5.0 New Housing and Planning Bill

- 5.1 The Housing and Planning Bill currently making its way through parliament will have a significant impact upon the HRA business plan. This impact has not yet been assessed and the measures outlined in paragraph 3 above do not take into consideration the implications of the Bill.
- 5.2 The most significant impact upon the HRA business plan will be from the sale of high value council homes to support the funding of the extension of Right to Buy to housing association tenants. The Bill will enable the government to set out a definition of 'high value' homes and will create a duty on the Council to consider selling homes that meet this definition when they become vacant. The Bill will also allow the government to estimate the amount of money it would expect the Council to receive, in each financial year, from sales of high value homes. The Council will then be required to pay this amount to the Treasury. In all probability, this will need to be paid in advance of any receipts being realised. Details of both the definition of high value homes and the mechanism by which the government will calculate the amount owed by the Council are not known yet.
- 5.3 The Bill will require social tenants with a higher income to pay a higher rent. Generally known as 'Pay to Stay' it will mean that any household earning more than £30,000 per year will be required to pay up to private market rent levels for their council home. The Bill will require council tenants to declare their income to their landlord and will also allow social landlords to share data with HMRC. The Bill will require the Council to return any additional rental income generated by this policy (minus administrative costs) to the Treasury. The government has yet to set out how increased rents will be calculated.



5.4 The Bill also requires local authorities to introduce flexible tenancies. Flexible tenancies are fixed term tenancies lasting from two to five years. The Council was given the power to utilise flexible tenancies in the Localism Act 2011 but its Tenancy Strategy approved by Cabinet on 12 January 2013 chose not to do so. All new tenancies starting after 1 April 2017 will be required to be for a fixed term up to five years.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

- 6.1 The announcement by central Government that social housing rents are required to be reduced by 1% per annum over the next 4 years has required a significant review of the HRA business plan in order to bridge the funding shortfall of £622 million. Reviews have been undertaken on underlying assumptions within the business plan, the required scale of the 30 year capital programme, payments to management organisations, service charges, and future rent levels for void properties. The changes set out in the report are reflected in the revised business plan included at Appendices A1-A3. This also includes funding for additional new build housing within the HRA.
- 6.2 The HRA is expected to have sufficient resources to fund £1.6 billion of capital works that will be required to its houses over the next 30 years, as well as meeting its management and maintenance obligations over the same period. In addition, the savings achieved on the review of the capital programme and other changes has released resources that will enable an additional 400 new homes to be built over the next 4 years.
- 6.3 The capital programme showing the allocation of resources over the main areas of activity is shown at Appendix A4. Further detail in specific areas will be presented to Cabinet (Resources) Panel in March for approval.
- 6.4 The level of rent increase has been determined by central government. Increases to non-dwelling rents and service charges are set out in Appendix B. These have generally been increased in line with inflation other than central heating charges which for gas heating will be increased over the next four years to a level that recovers the cost of the service
- 6.5 As part of the self-financing arrangements introduced from April 2012 there is a cap placed on the level of debt that can be incurred in the HRA. The maximum amount for Wolverhampton is £356.8 million. Appendix A2 graphically presents the forecast debt curve based upon the capital expenditure, including new build, included within the business plan after implementing the proposals recommended in this report. This shows the maximum anticipated debt of £319.4 million in 2017/18 providing headroom for realisation of some of the risks to the business plan as set out in Appendix E.
- 6.6 There remains considerable uncertainty around the impact on the HRA of the Housing and Planning Bill currently passing through Parliament. In particular there could be a one off payment required as early as 2016/17 to cover the potential sale income from high cost voids which will be required by Government to support its policy of right to buy for housing association properties. There is no information currently available as to the basis of calculation of the one off payment or what sum might be required to be paid. This

could have a significant impact on the business plan, dependant on the value of payment, and a further update will be provided once final information is available.  
[JB/23122015/F]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

- 7.1 Statutory requirements as to the keeping of a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) are contained in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ('the 1989 Act'). The 1989 Act include a duty, under Section 76 of the 1989 Act, to budget to prevent a debit balance on the HRA and to implement and review the budget.
- 7.2 Under Section 24 of the Housing Act 1985, local housing authorities have the power to "*make such reasonable charges as they may determine for the tenancy or occupation of their houses*". Section 24 also requires local authorities, from time to time, to review rents and make such changes as circumstances may require. This provision conferring discretion as to rents and charges made to occupiers, will now be subject to further restrictions arising from the provisions of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill ('the bill'), when brought into force.
- 7.3 The bill is in the latter (House of Lords) stages of the law-making process and is subject to amendment during these stages. The final version of the bill is expected to become law in early 2016. The bill provides a mechanism through which social landlords will be required to ensure that rents payable by tenants reduces by 1% each year between 2016 and 2019. It is envisaged the first reduction will take place in April 2016.
- 7.4 Rent and other charges are excluded from the statutory definition of matters of housing management in respect of which local authorities are required to consult their tenants pursuant to Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 and Sections 137 and 143A of the Housing Act 1996 in relation to secure, introductory and demoted tenants respectively.
- 7.6 The Council has nevertheless undertaken to consult with tenants before seeking to change rent and other charges.
- 7.7 It is further provided by Section 103 of the Housing Act 1985 in relation to secure tenancies, (which also applies in respect of introductory tenancies) that its tenants are notified of variation of rent and other charges at least 28 days before the variation takes effect by service of a notice of variation.  
[RB/17122015/Q]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

- 8.1 There is a difficult balance to be struck in deciding the levels at which rents and services charges are set and the income required to maintain and to improve services and properties. This is based upon a thirty-year forecast which sets out indicative levels of future rental income and forecast changes to expenditure levels. The Council has always operated a very open and consultative approach to service and rent reviews. Events, newsletters and social media have been utilised to engage with tenants.

8.2 An Equality Analysis has been completed and there are no implications to consider further. Details of the consultation with residents and stakeholders are attached at appendix C.

## 9.0 Environmental implications

9.1 This report has no direct environmental implications. The Investment and improvement of the city housing stock will have a significant positive impact on the overall city environment.

## 10.0 Human resources implications

10.1 There are no direct human resources implications resulting from this report

## 11.0 Corporate landlord implications

11.1 There are no direct Corporate Landlord implications resulting from this report.

## 12.0 Schedule of background papers

12.1 Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015-2016  
Housing and Planning Bill 2015-2016  
Heat Network (Metering and Billing) Regulations 2014  
The Housing Revenue Account self-financing determinations 2012

## 13.0 Schedule of Appendices

<b>A</b>	<b>Housing Revenue Account business plan</b>
A1	30-year business plan
A2	Forecast capital expenditure and debt curve
A3	Medium term business plan
A4	Capital programme
<b>B</b>	<b>Recommendations concerning income</b>
B1	Non-dwelling rents
B2	Service charges and heating charges
B3	Hostel rents and charges
<b>C</b>	<b>Summary of consultation responses</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>Background to the Housing Revenue Account</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>Risk analysis</b>

Appendix A1

This report is PUBLIC –  
[NOT PROTECTED]

30 year business plan 2016/17 to 2045/46

REVENUE ACCOUNT	Years	Years	Years	Years	Years	Years
	1 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 20	21 - 25	26 - 30
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Income</b>						
Dwelling Rents	(456,295)	(497,927)	(558,980)	(622,795)	(696,381)	(784,181)
Other Rents	(1,781)	(1,999)	(2,254)	(2,549)	(2,891)	(3,287)
Service Charges	(33,612)	(39,649)	(43,624)	(48,029)	(52,734)	(58,320)
	<b>(491,688)</b>	<b>(539,575)</b>	<b>(604,858)</b>	<b>(673,373)</b>	<b>(752,006)</b>	<b>(845,788)</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>						
Management and Maintenance (net of retained surpluses)	242,290	262,510	288,802	320,897	355,316	393,575
Depreciation and Provision for Redemption of Borrowing	172,972	201,043	256,673	303,267	356,539	408,623
Net Financing Costs	76,426	76,022	59,383	49,209	40,151	43,590
	<b>491,688</b>	<b>539,575</b>	<b>604,858</b>	<b>673,373</b>	<b>752,006</b>	<b>845,788</b>
<b>Balance</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-

Appendix A1

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CAPITAL ACCOUNT	Years	Years	Years	Years	Years	Years
	1 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 20	21 - 25	26 - 30
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Expenditure</b>						
Capital Expenditure	199,313	173,697	196,179	305,578	373,764	380,221
<b>Financing</b>						
Major Repairs Reserve	(110,276)	(108,785)	(107,220)	(105,574)	(103,845)	(102,475)
Grants, Contributions and Receipts	(23,120)	(15,238)	(15,238)	(15,238)	(15,238)	(15,238)
Borrowing	(65,917)	(49,674)	(73,721)	(184,766)	(254,681)	(262,508)
	<b>(199,313)</b>	<b>(173,697)</b>	<b>(196,179)</b>	<b>(305,578)</b>	<b>(373,764)</b>	<b>(380,221)</b>
<b>Balance</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-

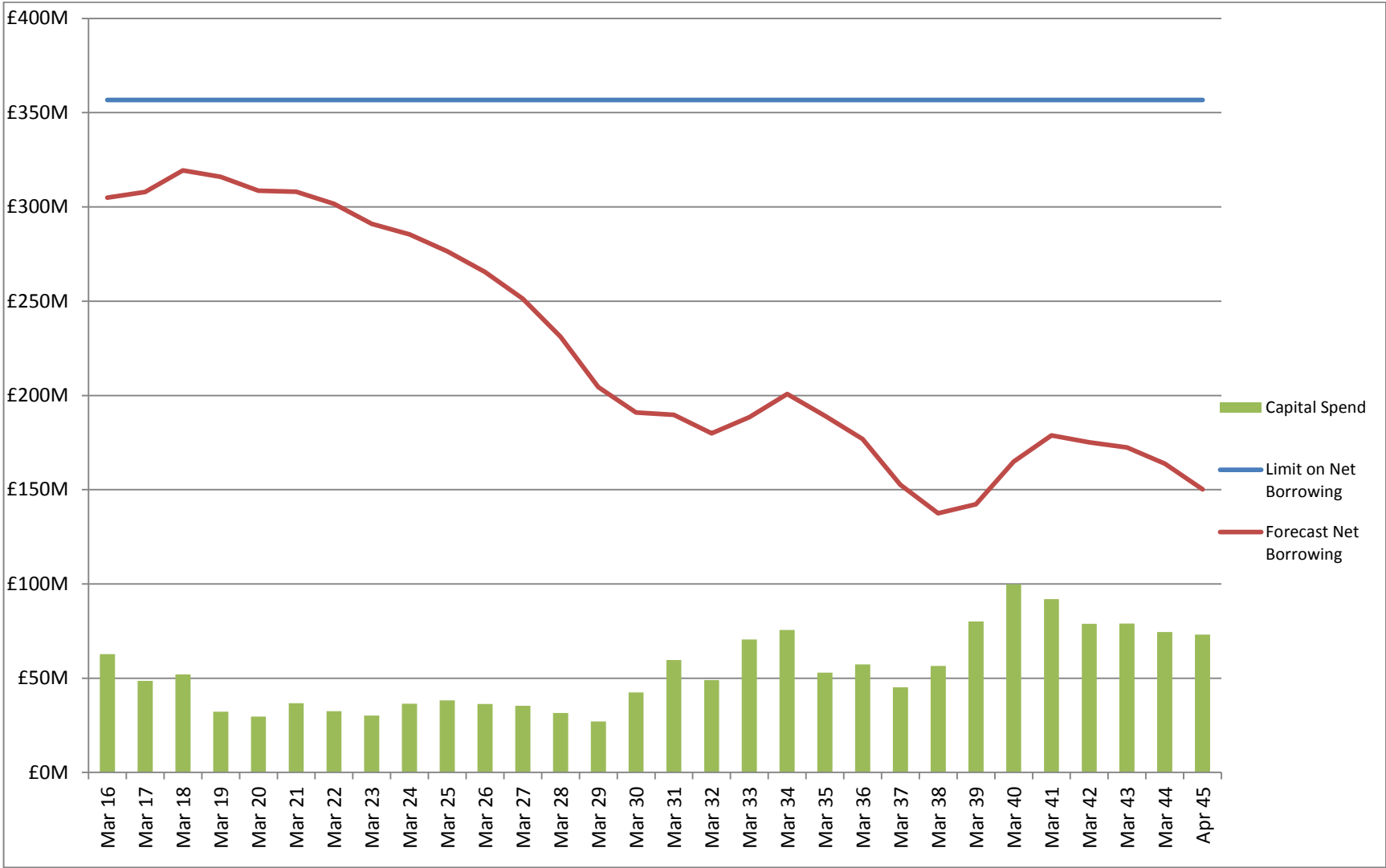
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<b>CAPITAL FINANCING REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>Years 1 - 5 £000</b>	<b>Years 6 - 10 £000</b>	<b>Years 11 - 15 £000</b>	<b>Years 16 - 20 £000</b>	<b>Years 21 - 25 £000</b>	<b>Years 26 - 30 £000</b>
<b>Opening Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>304,876</b>	<b>308,097</b>	<b>265,513</b>	<b>189,782</b>	<b>176,854</b>	<b>178,841</b>
Capital Expenditure Financed by Borrowing	65,917	49,674	73,721	184,765	254,681	262,508
Provision for Redemption of Borrowing	(62,696)	(92,258)	(149,452)	(197,693)	(252,694)	(306,148)
<b>Net Movement in Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>3,221</b>	<b>(42,584)</b>	<b>(75,731)</b>	<b>(12,928)</b>	<b>1,987</b>	<b>(43,640)</b>
<b>Closing Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>308,097</b>	<b>265,513</b>	<b>189,782</b>	<b>176,854</b>	<b>178,841</b>	<b>135,201</b>
Borrowing Cap	356,770	356,770	356,770	356,770	356,770	356,770
<b>Borrowing Headroom</b>	<b>48,673</b>	<b>91,257</b>	<b>166,988</b>	<b>179,916</b>	<b>177,929</b>	<b>221,569</b>

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Forecast capital expenditure and borrowing curve 2016/17 to 2045/46 after implementing recommendations of this report



## Medium term business plan

<b>REVENUE ACCOUNT</b>	<b>2015/16 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2016/17 Budget £000</b>	<b>2017/18 Forecast £000</b>	<b>2018/19 Forecast £000</b>	<b>2019/20 Forecast £000</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Dwelling Rents	(94,257)	(92,389)	(90,963)	(90,131)	(91,138)
Other Rents	(262)	(341)	(348)	(356)	(364)
Service Charges	(5,176)	(5,670)	(6,239)	(6,787)	(7,453)
	<b>(99,695)</b>	<b>(98,400)</b>	<b>(97,550)</b>	<b>(97,274)</b>	<b>(98,955)</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Wolverhampton Homes	38,021	38,021	38,021	38,021	38,021
Bushbury Hill EMB	1,261	1,261	1,261	1,261	1,261
New Park Village TMO	375	375	375	375	375
Springfield Horseshoe TMO	353	353	353	353	353
Dovecotes TMO	1,091	1,091	1,091	1,091	1,091
Housing Support	1,270	1,318	1,347	1,378	1,411
Pension contributions	2,378	2,373	2,428	2,486	2,548
SLA/Recharges	882	1,032	1,056	1,081	1,108
Depreciation	22,228	22,171	22,113	22,056	21,997
Net Financing Costs	12,859	13,273	14,345	16,340	16,428
Provision for Bad debts	2,250	2,250	2,250	2,250	2,250
	<b>82,968</b>	<b>83,518</b>	<b>84,640</b>	<b>86,692</b>	<b>86,843</b>
<b>Surplus/deficit for the year</b>	<b>(16,727)</b>	<b>(14,882)</b>	<b>(12,910)</b>	<b>(10,582)</b>	<b>(12,112)</b>
Provision for the redemption of debt	<b>16,727</b>	<b>14,882</b>	<b>12,910</b>	<b>10,582</b>	<b>12,112</b>
<b>Balance</b>	-	-	-	-	-



## Appendix A3

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<b>CAPITAL ACCOUNT</b>	<b>2015/16 Forecast £000</b>	<b>2016/17 Budget £000</b>	<b>2017/18 Budget £000</b>	<b>2018/19 Budget £000</b>	<b>2019/20 Budget £000</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Capital Expenditure	62,826	48,616	52,014	32,269	29,709
	<b>62,826</b>	<b>48,616</b>	<b>52,014</b>	<b>32,269</b>	<b>29,709</b>
<b>Financing</b>					
Major Repairs Reserve	(28,047)	(22,173)	(22,113)	(22,056)	(21,997)
Grants, Contributions and Receipts	(16,401)	(8,547)	(5,430)	(3,048)	(3,048)
Borrowing	(18,378)	(17,896)	(24,471)	(7,165)	(4,664)
	<b>(62,826)</b>	<b>(48,616)</b>	<b>(52,014)</b>	<b>(32,269)</b>	<b>(29,709)</b>
<b>Balance</b>	-	-	-	-	-

<b>CAPITAL FINANCING REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>2015/16 Forecast £000</b>	<b>2016/17 Budget £000</b>	<b>2017/18 Budget £000</b>	<b>2018/19 Budget £000</b>	<b>2019/20 Budget £000</b>
<b>Opening Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>303,225</b>	<b>304,876</b>	<b>307,890</b>	<b>319,451</b>	<b>316,034</b>
Capital Expenditure Financed by Borrowing	18,378	17,896	24,471	7,165	4,664
Provision for Redemption of Borrowing	(16,727)	(14,882)	(12,910)	(10,582)	(12,112)
<b>Net Movement in Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>1,651</b>	<b>3,014</b>	<b>11,561</b>	<b>(3,417)</b>	<b>(7,448)</b>
<b>Closing Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>304,876</b>	<b>307,890</b>	<b>319,451</b>	<b>316,034</b>	<b>308,586</b>
Borrowing Cap	356,770	356,770	356,770	356,770	356,770
<b>Borrowing Headroom</b>	<b>51,894</b>	<b>48,880</b>	<b>37,319</b>	<b>40,736</b>	<b>48,184</b>

## Capital Programme

	Forecast 2015/16 £000	Forecast 2016/17 £000	Forecast 2017/18 £000	Forecast 2018/19 £000	Forecast 2019/20 £000	Total £000
<b><u>Decent Homes Stock Condition</u></b>						
All Saints Voids	178					178
Heath Town District Heating		350				350
Lincoln and Tremont Heating	100					100
Merridale Court	259	3,276				3,535
Refurbishment of Voids	1,402	2,642	2,711	2,709	2,733	12,197
External Improvement Programme	1,800	1,650	1,350	1,350	1,350	7,500
Boiler Replacement Programme	900	775	675	675	675	3,700
Internal decency Works	2,894	740	1,085	1,300	1,640	7,659
Follow on Decent Homes - Heath Town	10,820	7,126				17,946
Ellerton Walk Maisonette Blocks			1,518	2,167		3,685
Heath Town - Refurb of Retained Properties	3,839	4,597	6,507	6,502	5,466	26,911
Additional High Rise Schemes	4,327	222	542	813	820	6,724
<b>Decent Homes Stock Condition</b>	<b>26,519</b>	<b>21,378</b>	<b>14,388</b>	<b>15,516</b>	<b>12,684</b>	<b>90,485</b>
<b><u>Decent Homes Public Realm</u></b>						
Communal Areas Improvement	243	444	683	759	918	3,047
Street-scaping	70	127	195	217	262	871
<b>Decent Homes Public Realm</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>878</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>1,180</b>	<b>3,918</b>
<b><u>Major Stock Condition Improvements</u></b>						
Low Hill Residential Repairs	12,543					12,543
<b>Major Stock Condition Improvements</b>	<b>12,543</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,543</b>
<b><u>Estate Remodelling</u></b>						
Heath Town	4,923					4,923
<b>Estate Remodelling</b>	<b>4,923</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,923</b>
<b><u>New Build Programme</u></b>						
New Build Thompson Avenue	200					200
Tap Works site		4,000				4,000
Care and Support Specialised Housing	2,665					2,665
Tower and Fort Works		1,000	1,000			2,000
Strategic Construction Partnership Phase 1	1,700					1,700
Strategic Construction Partnership Phase 2		3,000				3,000
New Build Programme		10,000	27,000	7,000	7,000	51,000
Starter Homes Project	438					438
<b>New Build Programme</b>	<b>5,003</b>	<b>18,000</b>	<b>28,000</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>65,003</b>

## Appendix A4

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<b><u>Adaptations for People with Disabilities</u></b>						
<b>Disabled Adaptations</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>5,000</b>
<b><u>Other Stock Condition Improvements</u></b>						
Structural Works	1,166	947	953	952	955	4,973
Lift and Disability Discrimination Act Improvements - High Rise	498	544	664	688	694	3,088
Fire Safety Improvements - High Rise	363	264	271	271	273	1,442
Roofing Refurbishment Programme	5,978	2,663	2,549	2,547	2,569	16,306
Energy Efficiency Works	2,179	1,035	1,053	1,051	1,060	6,378
Door Entry Security Programme	296	370	380	380	383	1,809
<b>Other Stock Condition Improvements</b>	<b>10,480</b>	<b>5,823</b>	<b>5,870</b>	<b>5,889</b>	<b>5,934</b>	<b>33,996</b>
<b><u>Other Improvements to the Public Realm</u></b>						
Pathway Improvement and Safety Programme	265	264	298	308	331	1,466
<b>Other Improvements to the Public Realm</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>1,466</b>
<b><u>Service Enhancements and Miscellaneous</u></b>						
Right to Buy Social Mobility Fund	200					
City Council Capitalised Salaries	250	250	250	250	250	1,250
RTB Sale Admin	30	30	30	30	30	150
Wolverhampton Homes Capitalised Salaries	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300	6,500
<b>Service Enhancements and Miscellaneous</b>	<b>1,780</b>	<b>1,580</b>	<b>1,580</b>	<b>1,580</b>	<b>1,580</b>	<b>7,900</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>62,826</b>	<b>48,616</b>	<b>52,014</b>	<b>32,269</b>	<b>29,709</b>	<b>225,234</b>

**Non-dwelling rents**

**Garage rents**

1. The table below sets out recommended garage rents to take effect from 4 April 2016. It is recommended that the increase in the basic rent (before VAT) is 1% based upon the previous rent guidance of CPI plus 1% where CPI is zero.
2. Under VAT rules, garages that are let along with a dwelling do not attract VAT, whereas those that are let separately do. Furthermore, exemption from VAT only extends as far as two garages per tenant/leaseholder. Therefore there are three different levels of garage rents

	Rent per week 2015/16 (excl VAT)	% increase 2016/17	Rent per week 2016/17 (excl VAT)	Rent per week 2016/17 (incl VAT)
Dwelling tenants and leaseholders (No VAT)	£4.54	1%	£4.59	
Dwelling tenants and leaseholders – three or more garages (VAT)	£4.54	1%	£4.59	£5.51
Privately let garages	£6.51	1%	£6.58	£7.90

## Appendix B2

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### Service charges

Service Charge	Services funded	Rationale for charge	Charge paid per week 2015/16	Proposed change	Charge paid per week 2016/17
Communal Facilities	Communal facilities in former sheltered schemes	Cost of service is fully covered by current charge	£3.00	No change	£3.00
8 hour concierge support	8 hour on site concierge support without remote CCTV and door entry	Increase to ensure cost of service is fully recovered	£8.44	1% increase	£8.52
Concierge mandatory only	Essential caretaking duties	Increase to ensure cost of service is fully recovered	£5.51	1% increase	£5.57
Concierge mandatory plus remote CCTV and door entry	Essential caretaking duties and remote CCTV and door entry	Increase to ensure cost of service is fully recovered	£9.71	1% increase	£9.81
Concierge mandatory plus remote CCTV and door entry - phased	Essential caretaking duties and remote CCTV and door entry phased increase of £2pw each year until parity with rest of service	New service introduced in 2013, phased increase charge of £2pw each year to 2017	£6.00	£2 per week	£8.00
Communal cleaning	Cleaning services in communal areas in certain properties	Cost of service is fully covered by current charge	£3.24	No change	£3.24
Digital TV	Installation and maintenance of the wiring required to convey digital TV signals to certain high rise blocks	Cost of service is fully covered by current charge	£0.64	No change	£0.64
Fencing	Replacement of boundary fencing delivered by Wolverhampton Homes. All funds raised by this charge are ring-fenced to replacement fencing	Sufficient income raised to fund fencing programme	£2.00	No change	£2.00

## Appendix B2

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### Service Charges – Heating

Service Charge	Services funded	Rationale for charge	Charge paid per week 2015/16	Proposed change	Charge paid per week 2016/17
District Heating maintenance	Maintenance of boilers and district heating at Heath Town	Cost of service is fully covered by current charge	£6.20	No change	£6.20
District Heating Usage (Heath Town)	Provision of heating and hot water at Heath Town Estate	No change to existing charge pending implementation of “pay for what you use” metering	£4.64 - £21.05	No change	£4.64 - £21.05
District Heating Usage (Lincoln and Tremont)	Provision of heating and hot water at Lincoln House, Tremont House and Wednesfield Road, Heath Town	No change to existing charge pending implementation of “pay for what you use” metering	£6.77 - £9.04	No change	£6.77 - £9.04
Electric Heating at Ellerton Walk	Electricity usage for Economy 7 heating	Proposal to change landlords meter over to tenant	£16.61 - £18.32	Remove charge	Nil
Central Heating – Gas	Servicing, maintenance and replacement of gas central heating systems	Current charge only covers 50% of costs. Raise by 50p per week each year for next 4 years	£2.00	£0.50 per week increase	£2.50
Central Heating - Electric	Servicing, maintenance and replacement of electric heating	Charge reducing to reflect actual costs of service	£2.00	£1.00 per week reduction	£1.00

## Appendix B3

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### Hostels rents and charges

1. It is recommended that rent be increased in line with previous guidance rents. (CPI + 1% where CPI is zero). Rents and charges will increase by 1%.

Charge	2015/16 White House £pw	2015/16 Other* £pw	Proposed Increase	2015/16 White House £pw	2015/16 Other* £pw
Gross Rent	£204.92	£130.35	1%	£206.97	£131.65
Charges:					
- Support/Care	£57.51	£54.90	1%	£58.09	£55.45
- Heating, lighting, water	£18.78	£18.78	1%	£18.97	£18.97
Total minimum cash payable	£18.78	£18.78	1%	£18.97	£18.97
Total maximum cash payable	£76.29	£73.68	1%	£77.06	£74.42

\*Properties at Ellerton Walk, Lathe Court and Heath Town



### Housing Rents and Service Charges Consultation

9 November – 11 December 2015

#### 1.0 Consultation methods

- 1.1 Unlike previous years, the Council led the consultation with tenants, stakeholders and managing agents. In previous years Wolverhampton Homes carried out the consultation on behalf of the Council.
- 1.2 Meetings were arranged with Wolverhampton Federation of Tenants Associations (WFTA) and each of the managing agents and the public were invited to two meetings held in the Civic Centre.
- 1.3 Tenants also received a newsletter delivered by Wolverhampton Homes explaining the proposals the Council was considering.
- 1.4 A response form was set up on Wolverhampton Homes' website and social media, both the Council's and Wolverhampton Homes' was used extensively.
- 1.5 All councillors were emailed to explain the Council's proposals and press releases sent to the local media.

#### 2.0 Consultation Responses

- 2.1 Tenants will all see their rents reduce by 1% each year for the next four years and this was broadly welcomed. However there was a good understanding of the impact this would have on the ability of the Council to manage and maintain existing stock and to build new council housing.
- 2.2 Most of the comments received at meetings and via responses to the websites concentrated on the proposal to convert some voids from social rent to affordable rent. This was a direct result of sensationalist headlines in the Express & Star claiming the Council was intending to put up rents by £15 per week.
- 2.3 At the meeting with WFTA and in their written response, the logic of having the same service charge for both electric and gas central heating was queried. The Council had proposed to make the service, maintenance and replacement of central heating fully recoverable by raising the service charge to £4 per week. This has been considered and the original proposal revised which will result in a reduction of £1 per week for those with electric heating and a 50p per week increase each year for the next four years for those with electrical heating.
- 2.4 In written responses from four of the five managing agents, all preferred to have their allowances frozen until 2020 then rising with inflation, rather than a 1% reduction each year to 2020 then rising with inflation plus 1%.
- 2.5 At the public meetings, 12 tenants attended the afternoon session and two attended the evening session. Once more the main concerns were around the Express & Star headline and the proposal to convert voids from social to affordable rent.
- 2.6 There were seven online responses to Wolverhampton Homes website, mostly focussing on the alleged £15 per week rent rise.

#### 3.0 Consultation conclusions

- 3.1 In general the Council's approach to setting rents and service charges were acceptable. The proposals to increase the numbers of council new build units was welcomed.

### The Housing Revenue Account

1. Local authorities are required by the Local Government and Housing Act (1989) to maintain a ring-fenced revenue account containing expenditure and income relating to their housing landlord service. This is known as the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
2. Statute governs what may be charged and credited to the HRA, the underlying principle being that housing rents and service charges should only pay for the housing landlord service. In particular, it prevents cross subsidy of those income streams and others that the council receives, for example council tax. The main items which are shown in the HRA are:
  - Income from rents and lettings from dwellings and non-dwellings
  - Costs associated with maintaining the rental stock (but not improving it or the Decent Homes programme, which are capital budget items)
  - Costs and income associated with providing landlord services to tenants such as heating and concierge services
  - The net costs of providing Housing Support services including those to Homeless Families and Carelink as well as HRA feasibility work.
3. Authorities have a duty to prepare and make available to rent payers an annual budget for the HRA in advance of the year in question. The budget must identify how all planned expenditure is to be funded. This may include the use of retained surpluses from previous years, but the HRA must never go into an overall deficit.
4. In accordance with the council's financial procedure rules, the budget, rents and service charges must be approved by full council, which receives recommendations from the Cabinet.

### Administration of the HRA at Wolverhampton

5. The Strategic Director of Housing has responsibility for the overall HRA budget, and administration
  - The council's Housing function, which manages central costs and recharges with the General Fund in conjunction with strategic Finance, as well as specialist housing services such as Homelessness and warden-supported dwellings.
  - Wolverhampton Homes and the Tenant Management Organisations who manage the rent collection, day to day maintenance and in the case of Wolverhampton Homes, the programme for maintaining properties at decent homes standard.

### HRA Subsidy and Self-financing

6. Until April 2012, one of the key factors in the budget preparation process was the Government's annual HRA subsidy determination. HRA subsidy was a housing resource redistribution system administered by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Authorities either paid into or received money from a national pool, based on a formula that assessed their assumed need to spend and assumed income.
7. HRA subsidy was complex and difficult to predict, but had significant impacts on the funds available to an authority's HRA, which made it central to the budget process.

8. With effect from 1 April 2012, HRA subsidy was abolished. Instead of annual determinations, authorities paid or received a one-off settlement at the end of March 2012. This settlement was calculated as the net present value of forecast subsidy payments or receipts over the next 30 years. The final HRA subsidy payment was made in 2012/13.
9. As part of the self-financing process the government imposed a debt cap on the HRA, this being the higher of the Subsidy Capital Financing Requirement and the self-financing valuation. For Wolverhampton this means a debt cap of £356,770,000 which cannot be breached without approval from central government.

### Service Charges

10. Service charges are intended to pay for the receipt of services over and above the provision of a standard dwelling, and not provided to all tenants. They should meet the full cost of providing the service in question, but never exceed it.

### HRA Contingency Reserve

11. The contingency reserve is set aside for emergencies and other unforeseen expenditure, and is the minimum level below which the council does not allow its reserves to fall when preparing budgets and medium term forecasts. On 25 February 2012, the council approved the setting of the contingency reserve at 5% of gross HRA turnover (rounded to the nearest million pounds).

## Appendix E

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Risk Number	Category	Risk- cause/event	Impact of Risk	Probability of Risk (P) Score 1-5	Impact of Risk (I) Score 1-5	Score (PxI)	Red (R) Amber (A) Green (G)	Risk Control Measures	Owner	Review Period
1	Government Legislation	There are changes to Government policy that have in year service and budget impact.	Overspend against budget requiring either in year savings or use of housing revenue account balance.	4	5	20	R	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly monitoring at service level and quarterly monitoring to Members.</li> <li>Close monitoring of developing national position and reporting to Members.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Quarterly
Page 36	Income and Funding	Right to Buy sales are higher than forecast.	Less revenue will be received over the life of the plan than has been forecast.	3	4	12	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prudent estimates of the level of Right to Buy sales are used in forecasting.</li> <li>Review impact of new government policies</li> <li>Weekly monitoring of sales</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Monthly
	Income and Funding	Inflation rates are lower than budgeted for.	Rents cannot be raised as much as has been forecast.	2	5	10	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prudent estimates of inflation rates are used in forecasting.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Monthly
	Income and Funding	General interest rates are higher than forecast.	If interest rates are higher than forecast there will be greater interest payments.	2	5	10	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prudent estimate of interest rates are used in forecasting.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Monthly
	Income and Funding	Higher than anticipated bad debts.	Overspend against budget requiring either in year savings or use of housing revenue account balance.	3	3	9	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robust debt collection and recovery mechanisms in place.</li> <li>Monthly monitoring at service level and quarterly monitoring to Members.</li> <li>Monitor effect of Universal Credit.</li> </ul>	Strategic Director of Housing	Monthly

## Appendix E

This report is PUBLIC –  
[NOT PROTECTED]

Risk Number	Category	Risk- cause/event	Impact of Risk	Probability of Risk (P) Score 1-5	Impact of Risk (I) Score 1-5	Score (PxI)	Red (R) Amber (A) Green (G)	Risk Control Measures	Owner	Review Period
6	Financial and Budget Management	Ineffective budget management.	Overspend against budget requiring either in year savings or use of housing revenue account balance.	2	4	8	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly monitoring at service level and quarterly monitoring to Councillors.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Monthly
7	Financial and Budget Management	The 30 year asset management plan is inaccurate.	Capital expenditure is not budgeted correctly.	2	4	8	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close interrogation of information generated from asset management systems.</li> </ul>	Strategic Director of Housing	Monthly
Page 37	Financial and Budget Management	Treasury Management Activity, including increases in the cost of borrowing (e.g. LOBO loans being called) and/or reductions in the return on investments.	Overspend against budget requiring either in year savings or use of housing revenue account balance.	2	4	8	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robust Treasury Management Strategy.</li> <li>Established and experienced Treasury Management function.</li> <li>Proactive approach to the management of the council's cash flow, on a daily basis, including seeking opportunities to take advantage of borrowing opportunities when interest rates are favourable and seeking to maximise returns on investment whilst effectively managing the risk associated with those investments.</li> <li>External treasury management advisors who provide a proactive and timely service and advice.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Daily

## Appendix E

This report is PUBLIC –  
[NOT PROTECTED]

Risk Number	Category	Risk- cause/event	Impact of Risk	Probability of Risk (P) Score 1-5	Impact of Risk (I) Score 1-5	Score (PxI)	Red (R) Amber (A) Green (G)	Risk Control Measures	Owner	Review Period		
Page 38	9	Financial and Budget Management	Loss of ICT facilities, e.g. due to failure of systems and/or disaster recovery arrangements or key personnel	Lack of robust financial information on which to monitor budgets, leading to in-year budget deficit requiring savings to be identified or the use of Housing Revenue Account balances	2	4	8	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ICT disaster recovery project and arrangements.</li> </ul>	Head of ICT	Monthly	
		Financial and Budget Management	The HRA borrowing cap preventing the council from carrying out essential capital works.	Inability to borrow to fund capital projects results in delays or cancellations.	2	3	6	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close monitoring of capital spend requirements and borrowing limits.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Monthly	
		11	Income and Funding	Reduction to other income.	Overspend against budget requiring either in year savings or use of housing revenue account balance.	2	3	6	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of the 2016/17 budget process income budgets were reviewed and revised accordingly.</li> <li>Monthly monitoring at service level and quarterly monitoring to Members.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Monthly
		12	Income and Funding	Stock Transfer without corresponding debt write off	Attributable debt remains without stock which provides income to repay this debt.	2	3	6	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with DCLG.</li> </ul>	Strategic Director of Housing	Monthly

## Appendix E

This report is PUBLIC –  
[NOT PROTECTED]

Risk Number	Category	Risk- cause/event	Impact of Risk	Probability of Risk (P) Score 1-5	Impact of Risk (I) Score 1-5	Score (PxI)	Red (R) Amber (A) Green (G)	Risk Control Measures	Owner	Review Period
13	Third Parties	Third parties and suppliers / contractors cease to trade or withdraw from the market.	Short term expensive solutions may be necessary. Requirements to undertake tender exercise. Increased ongoing cost due to reduced competition. Overspend against budget requiring either in year savings or use of housing revenue account balance.	1	4	4	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Departments using external service suppliers work closely with them and are kept abreast of their service and business situation. At worst this gives the council notice of emerging problems.</li> <li>Monthly monitoring at service level and quarterly monitoring to Members.</li> <li>SCP uses 2 different contractors.</li> </ul>	Budget Holders	Monthly
14	Income and Funding	Lower than anticipated levels of capital funding through receipts and grants.	Capital schemes are cancelled or delayed or have to be funded from revenue budgets and/or prudential borrowing resulting in an over spend against budget requiring either in year savings or use of housing revenue account balance.	2	2	4	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The capital programme is actively and closely managed and when so doing expenditure and income streams are continuously monitored.</li> <li>Quarterly monitoring to Members.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Monthly
15	Financial and Budget Management	Non pay inflation increase insufficient.	Overspend against budget requiring either in year savings or use of housing revenue account balance.	1	2	2	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly monitoring at service level and quarterly monitoring to Members.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Monthly

**Appendix E**

This report is PUBLIC –  
[NOT PROTECTED]

Risk Number	Category	Risk- cause/event	Impact of Risk	Probability of Risk (P) Score 1-5	Impact of Risk (I) Score 1-5	Score (PxI)	Red (R) Amber (A) Green (G)	Risk Control Measures	Owner	Review Period
16	Service Demands	Increased demand for services including the impact of social and demographic pressures on demand for services.	Overspend against budget requiring either in year savings or use of housing revenue account balance.	1	2	2	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of the 2016/17 budget process budgets were reviewed and revised accordingly taking account of known and anticipated increases in demand.</li> <li>Monthly monitoring at service level and quarterly monitoring to Members.</li> </ul>	Budget Holders	Monthly
40	Financial and Budget Management	Pay award greater than budgeted.	Overspend against budget requiring either in year savings or use of Housing Revenue Account balance.	1	1	1	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly monitoring at service level and quarterly monitoring to Members.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Monthly

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# Cabinet Meeting

## 13 January 2016

<b>Report title</b>	2016/17 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 – 2018/19 – Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement Update	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Andrew Johnson Resources	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Keith Ireland, Managing Director	
<b>Originating service</b>	Strategic Finance	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Mark Taylor Tel Email	Director of Finance 01902 554410 <a href="mailto:mark.taylor@wolverhampton.gov.uk">mark.taylor@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Confident, Capable, Council Scrutiny Panel Audit Committee	3 February 2016 14 March 2016

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### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to approve:

1. That the Director of Finance notifies the Secretary of State that the council intends to take up the 2% option to increase council tax to support Social Care.

### Recommendations for noting:

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. The outcome of the 2016/17 provisional local government finance settlement.

2. The report to Cabinet on 24 February 2016 will reflect the outcome of budget consultation, which is due to be complete on 18 January 2016. This report will also include the outcome of the scrutiny process and the detailed budget work for 2016/17 including a review of all savings and the risks associated with their delivery.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the 2016/17 provisional local government finance settlement, which the Government announced on 17 December 2015.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Budget 2015/16 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2015/16 to 2018/19 was presented to Full Council for approval on 4 March 2015. After taking into account savings proposals approved during the 2015/16 budget setting process, equating to £26.9 million over the four year period to 2018/19, it was projected that the Council would be faced with finding further estimated savings totalling £46.3 million by 2018/19.
- 2.2 A strategy to address the projected budget deficit over the medium term was approved by Full Council in March 2015, with an initial focus on identifying £20.0 million of additional savings for 2016/17 during the first few months of the current financial year, in order to demonstrate that a balanced budget can be achieved in 2016/17. Whilst the projected budget deficit for 2016/17 stood at £14.8 million, a savings target in excess of the projected budget deficit was deemed necessary due to the increased uncertainty surrounding future government funding. It was deemed that in the unlikely event that government funding is in line with, or better than, current projections, this strategy would give the Council some choice over the implementation of savings proposals.
- 2.3 It is important to note that a £2.0 million Adult Services savings target was incorporated into the existing MTFS within 2016/17, taking account of this the total savings target for 2016/17 stood at £22.0 million in July 2015.
- 2.4 A review of the anticipated assumptions and projections built into the Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 – 2018/19 was undertaken following the Government Summer Budget 2015 announcement which indicated that there would be some additional cost pressures and potential further cuts to grant, in addition to reviewing existing assumptions concerning the successful delivery of significant levels of challenging savings. As a result on 21 October 2015, Cabinet approved that the savings target for 2016/17 be revised upwards from £22.0 million to £24.0 million. It is important to note, that this new savings target for 2016/17 still includes a prudent uplift of £5.2 million due to the extremely uncertain times within which the Council is operating.
- 2.5 On 21 October 2015 Cabinet approved that Savings, Redesign and Income Generation proposals totalling £14.1 million and Financial Transactions and Base Budget Revisions totalling £7.1 million proceed to the formal consultation and scrutiny stages of the budget process. This left a shortfall against the revised saving target of £2.8 million.
- 2.6 On 17 December the Government announced the provisional local government finance settlement for 2016/17. This report analyses the impact of the announcement on the assumptions included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### 3.0 Headlines

3.1 The main points from the Ministerial statement were as follows:

- Core Spending Power for local government will be reduced from £44.5 billion in 2015/16 to £43.3 billion in 2016/17;
- A Council Tax referendum limit of 2.0% will be maintained;
- New Homes Bonus will be kept indefinitely, but will be subject to reform following consultation;
- The Government is also setting out an offer to any authority that wishes to take it up of a four year funding settlement to 2019/20;
- Councils will be able to use new capital receipts from April 2016 to March 2019 to pay for revenue set up costs of projects that are designed to make revenue savings.

### 4.0 Impact on Wolverhampton

4.1 The following table provides a comparison of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) assumptions as at October 2015 and the provisional settlement.

Description	MTFS	Provisional	Difference Over /	
	Assumption	Settlement	(Under)	
	£M	£M	£M	%
Revenue Support Grant	53.772	50.280	(3.492)	-6.5%
Top Up Grant	36.258	36.200	(0.058)	-0.2%
New Homes Bonus	3.957	3.957	-	0.0%
Education Services Grant *	2.710	2.600	(0.110)	-4.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96.697</b>	<b>93.037</b>	<b>(3.660)</b>	<b>-3.8%</b>

\* The provisional settlement (£2.807 million) is based on pupil numbers as at November 2015 but due to impending academy conversions it is estimated that the grant will be reduced to £2.6 million during 2016/17.

4.2 It can be seen that the provisional settlement figures show further overall reductions in funding of £3.6 million in 2016/17 in addition to that previously reported. The MTFS assumptions as reported to Cabinet in October included assumptions which are broadly in line with the confirmed cut in grant. Subject to finalisation of the detailed budget work, this means that the council anticipates that it should be possible to set a balanced budget for 2016/17 within the expenditure envelope predicted in that report.

### 5.0 Other Grant Funding

5.1 At this stage we are still waiting notification about levels of other grant funding for 2016/17. When information is received this will be incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Strategy and in future reports to members. Information outstanding includes:

- Public Health Grant
- Independent Living Fund
- S31 grant for council tax new burdens
- S31 grant for business rates relief
- Housing Benefit Administration grant

## **6.0 Use of an increase in the council tax referendum threshold for Adult Social Care**

- 6.1 In the Autumn Spending Review the government announced that it is to allow local authorities with adult social care responsibilities, the power to raise an additional 2% through council tax to fund adult social care. The 2% would be in addition to the council tax referendum limit and would need to be used for adult social care only.
- 6.2 The 2% additional council tax income is included in the Governments calculation of the council's spending power which is used to determine the grant allocations.
- 6.3 The provisional settlement stated that by 15 January Section 151 officers are required to indicate whether their authority is minded to take up the 2% increase in council tax threshold. Section 151 officers will then be expected to notify the Secretary of State of the amount intended to be raised through the additional social care income and what impact it has on previous plans for social care budgets. The additional information is required within 7 days of setting the budget. This report recommends that Cabinet approve that the Director of Finance notifies the Secretary of State that the council intends to take up the 2% option to increase council tax to support Social Care.

## **7.0 Four year settlement**

- 7.1 In addition to 2016/17 information, the Government have released indicative figures for 2017/18 to 2019/20 taking us to the end of the Spending Review period. In order to secure a four year settlement it is necessary to publish an efficiency strategy which must be approved by Full Council. Further work is required to understand exactly how this might impact on Wolverhampton and therefore an update will be provided in the report to Cabinet on 24 February 2016.
- 7.2 The provision of four year settlement information is welcome and would, to some extent, enable greater certainty in medium term financial planning however, due to the outstanding grant funding information, not only for 2016/17 but also the years beyond, the impact of the settlement over the medium term is uncertain at this stage.
- 7.3 The position beyond 2019/20 is less clear still, in part this is due to the transition to 100% retention of business rates. In addition, details have not been released about proposals to transfer any additional responsibilities to local government which would bring additional cost pressures.

## **8.0 Flexible use of capital receipts**

- 8.1 The Government have announced that councils will be able to use new capital receipts from April 2016 to March 2019 to pay for revenue set up costs of projects that are designed to make revenue savings. It will be for individual local authorities to decide if a project qualifies. In order to qualify, councils will be required to list all qualifying projects in the annual efficiency strategy referred to previously. This strategy, and any variations to it, will need to be approved by Full Council. Work is being undertaken to identify potential projects which will qualify for the use of capital receipts. An update will be provided to Cabinet on 24 February 2016.

## **9.0 Detailed Budget Review**

- 9.1 The report to Cabinet on 24 February 2016 will reflect the outcome of budget consultation, which is due to be complete on 18 January 2016. This report will also include the outcome of the scrutiny process and the detailed budget work for 2016/17 including a review of all savings and the risks associated with their delivery.

## **10.0 Financial implications**

- 10.1 The financial implications are discussed within the body of the report.  
[CN/05012016/Q]

## **11.0 Legal implications**

- 11.1 The Council's revenue budgets make assumptions which must be based on realistic projections about available resources, the costs of pay, inflation and service priorities and the likelihood of achieving any savings proposals.
- 11.2 The legal duty to spend with propriety falls under S.151 Local Government Act 1972 and arrangements for proper administration of their affairs is secured by the S.151 Officer as Chief Financial Officer.
- 11.3 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Financial Officer to report to the Council when it is making the statutory calculations required to determine its council tax. The Council is required to take this report into account when making its budget decision. The Chief Financial Officer's report must deal with the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of the reserves for which the budget provides. Both are connected with matters of risk and uncertainty. They are inter-dependent and need to be considered together. In particular, decisions on the appropriate level of Reserves should be guided by advice based upon an assessment of all the circumstances considered likely to affect the Council.
- 11.4 The relevant guidance concerning reserves is Local Authority Accounting Panel Bulletin 77, issued by CIPFA in November 2008. Whilst the Bulletin does not prescribe an appropriate level of reserves, leaving this to the discretion of individual authorities, it does set out a number of important principles in determining the adequacy of reserves. It emphasises that decisions on the level of reserves must be consistent with the Council's MTFS, and have regard to the level of risk in budget plans, and the Council's financial management arrangements (including strategies to address risk).

- 11.5 In addition, Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the Chief Financial Officer to ‘...**make a report ... if it appears to him that the Authority, a committee or officer of the Authority, or a joint committee on which the Authority is represented**’:
- (a) has made or is about to make a decision which involves or would involve the Authority incurring expenditure which is unlawful,
  - (b) has taken or is about to take a course of action which, if pursued to its conclusion, would be unlawful and likely to cause a loss or deficiency on the part of the Authority, or
  - (c) is about to enter an item of account the entry of which is unlawful.
- 11.6 The Chief Financial Officer of a relevant Authority shall make a report under this section if it appears to him that the expenditure of the Authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure.
- 11.7 These statutory requirements will have to be taken into account when making final recommendations on the budget and council tax requirement for 2016/17.  
[TS/04012016/M]

## **12.0 Equalities implications**

- 12.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the council has a statutory duty to pay due regard to the impact of how it carries out its business on different groups of people. This is designed to help the council identify the particular needs of different groups and reduce the likelihood of discrimination.
- 12.2 In relation to determining the overall revenue budget for the council there is always a difficult balance to be struck in deciding the levels at which to invest, reduce expenditure and raise income set against the often competing needs of different groups within the Wolverhampton community.
- 12.3 In summary the council’s annual budget and medium term financial strategy supports a range of services designed to meet key equalities objectives. A cumulative equalities analysis will be conducted on the overall budget proposals. This is will be made available on the Council’s website.

## **13.0 Schedule of background papers**

Budget 2015/16 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 – 2018/19, report to Full Council, 4 March 2015.

Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 – 2018/19, report to Cabinet, 22 July 2015

Draft Budget 2016/17, report to Cabinet, 21 October 2015

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# Cabinet Meeting

## 13 January 2016

<b>Report title</b>	Council Tax Base and Business Rates (NDR) Net Rate Yield 2016/17	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Andrew Johnson Resources	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Mark Taylor, Director of Finance	
<b>Originating service</b>	Strategic Finance	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Claire Nye	Chief Accountant
	Tel	01902 550478
	Email	claire.nye@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	None	

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### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Set the Collection Fund Council Tax Base for 2016/17 at 60,405.94 Band D equivalents.
2. Set the Collection Fund Business Rates, also referred to as Non-Domestic Rates (NDR), Net Rate Yield for 2016/17 at £78.6 million.
3. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Resources in consultation with the Director of Finance to approve amendments to:
  - a) the final Business Rates net rate yield as required as a result of changes to the NNDR1 form (National Non-Domestic Rates return) by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) or data revisions and changes in projections;
  - b) the Council Tax Base as a result of any data revisions and changes in projections.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To set the estimates for the Wolverhampton Collection Fund for 2016/17, which the Council manages on behalf of local precepting bodies and central government.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 made a number of significant changes to the operation of local government finance. The two most important in relation to this report were:
- The abolition of Council Tax Benefit (in the Welfare Reform Act 2011) and its replacement by the requirement to establish a local Council Tax discount scheme in the Local Government Finance Act 2012.
  - The localisation of Business Rates, also referred to as Non-Domestic Rates (NDR), such that a proportion of the change from a baseline set at the beginning of the year will be borne by the administering local authority. This means that local authorities can both benefit from, and are exposed to, variation in local business rates.
- 2.2 The Council must set a Council Tax Base before the end of January which will be used to set the Council Tax Requirement for the following financial year. It represents the total number of Band D equivalent council tax payers from whom the council will collect council tax in the year ahead. The total tax collected is shared in agreed proportions with the West Midlands Police and the West Midlands Fire Service.
- 2.3 The Council must also set a Business Rates baseline net rate yield which is used to estimate the amount that the authority will keep as its local share of business rates, and pay over to the West Midlands Fire Service and central government. It represents the total estimated liability for business rates, net of discounts and reliefs, in the Council's area for the year ahead.
- 2.4 The setting of the Council Tax Base and the Business Rates baseline net rate yield both impact directly on the Council's General Fund budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.5 The Council Tax Base for 2016/17 must be determined by 31 January 2016 and notified to the West Midlands Police and the West Midlands Fire Service on or before that date, so that they can use the information in setting their precepts for 2016/17. This will determine cashflows between the Collection Fund and precepting bodies during 2016/17.
- 2.6 The Business Rates baseline net rate yield must be determined by 31 January 2016 and notified to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on their NNDR1 form. This will determine cashflows between the Collection Fund and central government and the Collection Fund and the West Midlands Fire Service during 2016/17.
- 2.7 The completion of the NNDR1 Form which sets the Business Rates baseline net rate yield has been a requirement since the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and has to date been completed by employees. Following the localisation of NDR the legislative

requirement of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 referred to at paragraph 2.1 of this report, the NNDR1 Form takes on greater significance, in that, it provides the forecasting information upon which the retention of Business Rates on behalf of the Authority will be based.

2.8 At the time of writing this report, the final NNDR1 form had not been issued by the DCLG. For this reason, approval is sought to delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Resources and the Director of Finance to resolve any changes without further recourse to Cabinet approval prior to the deadline for submission of 31 January 2016.

### 3.0 Council Tax Base Estimate

3.1 The method used to calculate the Council Tax Base for 2016/17 is set out in the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 which came into force on 30 November 2012.

3.2 The calculation starts with the base figures from December 2015 and then adjusts these for known and projected growth.

3.3 The total Tax Base, expressed in terms of the number of Band D equivalents, has then been multiplied by a net collection rate of 96.94%.

**Table 1 - Council Tax Base 2016/17**

	<b>Number of Band D equivalents</b>
December 2015 baseline	75,550.72
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	(13,384.11)
New build and growth to March 2017	144.00
Total taxbase before collectability adjustment	62,310.61
<b>Final taxbase including collectability adjustment</b>	<b>60,405.94</b>

### 4.0 Business Rates Yield Estimate

4.1 The method used to calculate the Business Rates net rate yield for 2016/17 is set out in the NNDR1 form issued by central government and associated guidance.

4.2 It specifies that an authority starts with the base figures from the September 2015 Valuation Office Agency (VOA) list, then adjusts them for known and projected growth in the base, reliefs and losses from appeals which are currently in hand. In particular, this includes the effect of the transition of schools to academy status.

**Table 2 - Business Rates Net Rate Yield Estimate 2016/17**

	<b>£000</b>
Baseline	95,264
Mandatory reliefs	(8,277)
Unoccupied property	(2,058)
Discretionary reliefs	(656)
Losses on collection	(3,877)
Appeals	(1,483)
Cost of collection	(346)
<b>Net rate yield</b>	<b>78,567</b>

## **5.0 Financial implications**

- 5.1 The recommended Tax Base, based on 2015/16 levels, would provide the Council with council tax income of £82.7 million.
- 5.2 Of the £78.6 million net rate yielded by business rates forecast to be collected in 2016/17 the council will retain £38.5 million. However, at the time of writing this report, the final NNDR1 form had not been issued by the DCLG; this figure is therefore preliminary and subject to change.  
[MH/04012016/P]

## **6.0 Legal implications**

- 6.1 Relevant legislation is contained in the body of the report.  
[TS/04012016/O]

## **7.0 Equalities implications**

- 7.1 There are no relevant equalities implications arising from this report.

## **8.0 Environmental implications**

- 8.1 There are no relevant environmental implications arising from this report.

## **9.0 Human resources implications**

- 9.1 There are no relevant human resources implications arising from this report.

## **10.0 Corporate landlord implications**

- 10.1 There are no relevant corporate landlord implications arising from this report.

## **11.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 11.1 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2016/17 Onwards, report to Cabinet, 13 January 2016.

Council Tax Formal Resolutions, report to Full Council, 4 March 2015.

# Cabinet Meeting

## 13 January 2016

<b>Report title</b>	Collection Fund Estimated Outturn 2015/16	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Andrew Johnson Resources	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Mark Taylor, Director of Finance	
<b>Originating service</b>	Strategic Finance	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Claire Nye Tel Email	Chief Accountant 01902 550478 claire.nye@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	None	

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### Recommendations for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the payments to the precepting authorities of their share of the Council Tax surplus in equal instalments.

The estimated outturn in 2015/16 is a cumulative surplus of £2.6 million. Based on their proportion of the 2015/16 council tax bill, as approved by Council in March 2015 the amounts are as follows:

- City of Wolverhampton Council £2.3 million
- West Midlands Police £179,000
- West Midlands Fire Service £92,000

2. Approve the payments to central government and the precepting authority of their share of the Business Rates, also referred to as Non-Domestic Rates (NDR), deficit in equal instalments.

The estimated outturn in 2015/16 is a cumulative deficit of £8.3 million. As prescribed by legislation the amounts are as follows:

- City of Wolverhampton Council £4.1 million
  - Central Government £4.1 million
  - West Midlands Fire Service £83,000
3. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Resources, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to confirm any final changes to the forecast outturn reflecting any further information received ahead of the statutory deadline of 31 January 2016.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the estimated outturn for Council Tax and Business Rates, also referred to as Non-Domestic Rates (NDR), transactions on the Collection Fund in 2015/16.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Council Tax billing authorities are required to maintain a Collection Fund in accordance with Sections 89 and 90 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The operation of the Collection Fund is prescribed in detail by a series of specifications, regulations and directions made under various sections of the Local Government Finance Acts 1988 and 1992. Broadly, the Collection Fund's income comes from receipts of Council Tax and Business Rates, also referred to as Non-Domestic Rates (NDR), collected from taxpayers and any amounts transferred in (e.g. in respect of previous years' deficits). Expenses met from the Fund consist of adjustments to individuals' and companies' tax liabilities (refunds etc.), the billing authority's own budget demand, write offs, precepts and previous years' surpluses transferable out.
- 2.2 Each billing authority must make an estimate of the surplus or deficit for the Council Tax and Business Rates transactions of the Collection Fund for the current financial year. Such estimated surpluses or deficits do not remain in the Collection Fund but are shared between the billing authority, precepting authorities and central government in the year following the financial year to which they relate. Precepting authorities should be notified of their share of any surplus or deficit within seven working days of the estimate being made.
- 2.3 The surplus or deficit is then transferred in instalments in the financial year following the year for which the surplus or deficit has been estimated. In the case of billing authorities, the amounts are transferable in accordance with the schedule of instalments adopted for the payment of precepts and demands. Transfers to or from precepting authorities must take place in no more than ten equal instalments in the following year. The first and final instalments are to be paid by 31 May and 31 March respectively with an equal number of working days between instalments.
- 2.4 All Collection Fund surpluses or deficits for Council Tax transactions are to be ignored for the purpose of calculating the billing or precepting authority's budget requirement. They are, however, to be taken into account in calculating a billing authority's basic Council Tax or a joint authority's precept.

## **3.0 Council Tax Estimated Outturn 2015/16**

- 3.1 The estimate on the Collection Fund for 2015/16 in relation to Council Tax is set out below, and includes assumptions about collection rates. It is forecast that there will be an accumulated surplus of £2.6 million at 31 March 2016 after taking into account the £1.6 million surplus in 2014/15.

**Table 1 - Forecast Council Tax Outturn 2015/16**

	£000	£000
<b>Actual accumulated surplus at 1 April 2015</b>		<b>(1,563)</b>
<b>Estimated income 2015/16</b>		
Income from Council Tax		(94,305)
<b>Total estimated income</b>		<b>(94,305)</b>
<b>Estimated expenditure 2015/16</b>		
Demands on Collection Fund		
City of Wolverhampton Council	80,951	
West Midlands Police	6,298	
West Midlands Fire Service	3,247	90,496
Provision for non-collection of council tax	1,706	1,706
<b>Total estimated expenditure</b>		<b>92,202</b>
<b>Distribution of 2014/15 estimated surplus</b>		
City of Wolverhampton Council	980	
West Midlands Police	76	
West Midlands Fire Service	39	<b>1,095</b>
<b>Estimated accumulated surplus at 31 March 2016</b>		<b>(2,571)</b>

- 3.2 The overall position in terms of the allocation of the surplus between the Council and the precepting bodies is summarised in the table below. The split is based on the 2015/16 council tax bill that was approved by Full Council in the formal council tax resolutions on 4 March 2015.

**Table 2 – Recommended split of forecast Council Tax surplus for 2015/16, to be distributed in 2016/17**

	2014/15 Actual Surplus £000	2015/16 Estimated Surplus £000	Total Estimated Surplus £000
City of Wolverhampton Council	(1,398)	(902)	(2,300)
West Midlands Police	(109)	(70)	(179)
West Midlands Fire Service	(56)	(36)	(92)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(1,563)</b>	<b>(1,008)</b>	<b>(2,571)</b>

- 3.3 The sums due to the two precepting authorities will be paid in equal instalments alongside the precepts payable for 2016/17 as set out in paragraph 2.3.



#### 4.0 Business Rates (Non-Domestic Rates) Estimated Outturn 2015/16

4.1 The estimate on the Collection Fund for 2015/16 in relation to Business Rates, also referred to as Non-Domestic Rates (NDR), is set out below. It is forecast that there will be an accumulated deficit of £8.3 million at 31 March 2016 after taking into account the £7.8 million deficit in 2014/15.

**Table 3 - Forecast Business Rates Outturn 2015/16**

	£000	£000
<b>Actual accumulated deficit at 1 April 2015</b>		<b>7,830</b>
<b>Estimated income 2015/16</b>		
Income from Business Rates (NDR)		(76,322)
<b>Total estimated income</b>		<b>(76,322)</b>
<b>Estimated expenditure 2015/16</b>		
Demands on Collection Fund		
City of Wolverhampton Council	37,387	
Central Government	37,989	
West Midlands Fire Service	761	76,137
Provision for non-collection of NDR (incl. appeals)	2,083	
Cost of Collection Allowance	346	
Reconciliation payment arising from audited NNDR3	76	2,505
<b>Total estimated expenditure</b>		<b>78,642</b>
<b>Distribution of 2014/15 estimated deficit</b>		
City of Wolverhampton Council	(914)	
Central Government	(933)	
West Midlands Fire Service	(19)	(1,866)
<b>Estimated accumulated deficit at 31 March 2015</b>		<b>8,284</b>

4.2 The overall position in terms of the allocation of the deficit between the Council, central government and the precepting body is summarised in table 4 below. The split is prescribed by legislation.

**Table 4 – Recommended split of forecast Business Rates deficit for 2015/16, to be distributed in 2016/17**

	2014/15 Actual Deficit £000	2015/16 Estimated Deficit £000	Total Estimated Deficit £000
City of Wolverhampton Council	3,837	222	4,059
Central Government	3,915	227	4,142
West Midlands Fire Service	78	5	83
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,830</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>8,284</b>

4.3 The sums due to central government and the precepting body will be paid in equal instalments alongside the precepts payable for 2016/17 as set out in paragraph 2.3.

## **5.0 Financial implications**

5.1 The total Collection Fund accumulated deficit in 2015/16 is estimated to be £5.7 million, of which the Council will be expected to retain £1.8 million.

5.2 During the 2014/15 outturn process, a Business Rates Equalisation reserve was established to support the Council in relation to the deficit on the Collection Fund, primarily arising as a result of Business Rates appeals. A forecast deficit has been reflected in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2016/17, with the forecast use of the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve to neutralise the impact on the Council's General Fund.

5.3 It is important to note however that the forecast outturn is based upon information available at a point in time, and therefore any changes to these assumptions will have an impact on Council Tax and Business Rates collected. Any resulting change to the surplus or deficit will be recovered in future years.  
[MH/04012015/G]

## **6.0 Legal implications**

6.1 Relevant legislation is contained in the body of the report.  
[TS/04012016/N]

## **7.0 Equalities implications**

7.1 There are no relevant equalities implications arising from this report.

## **8.0 Environmental implications**

8.1 There are no relevant environmental implications arising from this report.

## **9.0 Human resources implications**

9.1 There are no relevant human resources implications arising from this report.

## **10.0 Corporate landlord implications**

10.1 There are no relevant corporate landlord implications arising from this report.

## **11.0 Schedule of background papers**

11.1 Council Tax Formal Resolutions, report to Full Council, 4 March 2015.

# Cabinet Meeting

## 13 January 2016

<b>Report title</b>	Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Andrew Johnson Resources	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Mark Taylor, Director of Finance	
<b>Originating service</b>	Revenues and Benefits	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Sue Martin Tel Email	Head of Revenues and Benefits 01902 5547723 <a href="mailto:sue.martin@wolverhampton.gov.uk">sue.martin@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Strategic Executive Board	22 December 2015

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### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Maintain the existing local Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme for 2016/17 onwards.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1. This report seeks approval from Cabinet to maintain the current local CTR scheme for 2016/17 onwards.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1. On 16 September 2015 Cabinet agreed to publish a draft scheme for consultation which contained a revision specifically designed to offset the impact of changes to national Tax Credits.
- 2.2. The report highlighted the fact that these changes, announced in the July 2015 budget, could have increased the cost of the local scheme by an estimated £200,000 - £250,000 per year.
- 2.3. On 23 November 2015 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Autumn Statement that the proposed changes to Tax Credits would not proceed in 2016/17.
- 2.4. As a consequence there is no longer any financial reason for making the revision to the local CTR scheme.

## **3.0 Financial implications**

- 3.1. As tax credit rates will now remain unchanged there is no longer any consequential increase in the cost of the local scheme.  
[MH/04012016/N]

## **4.0 Legal implications**

- 4.1. Section 67 (2)(aa) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the 2012 Act states that the implementation of a local council tax support scheme and any subsequent revisions to the scheme will be a function reserved to full Council.
- 4.2. There is a statutory duty on the Council to agree any changes to the local scheme by 31 January in order to implement those changes in the following financial year.  
[TS/04012016/T]

## **5.0 Equalities implications**

- 5.1. There are no equalities implications as it is recommended that the scheme remains unchanged and the current scheme was subject to a full equalities analysis prior to adoption in December 2014.

## **6.0 Environmental implications**

- 6.1. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

## **7.0 Human resources implications**

7.1. There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

## **8.0 Corporate landlord implications**

8.1. There are no corporate landlord implications arising from this report.

## **9.0 Schedule of background papers**

9.1. Local Government Finance Act 2012  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/17/contents/enacted>

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# Cabinet Meeting

## 13 January 2016

<b>Report title</b>	Universal Credit Delivery Partnership	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor John Reynolds City Economy	
<b>Key decision</b>	No	
<b>In forward plan</b>	No	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Keren Jones, City Economy	
<b>Originating service</b>	City Economy	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Heather Clark Tel 01902 555614 Email Heather.Clark2@wolverhampton.gov.uk	Service Development Manager
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Strategic Executive Board	21 July 2015

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### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Enter into the Universal Credit Delivery Partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to deliver Universal Support – delivered locally.
2. Approve a budget of £59,000 funded through DWP grant to deliver universal support services
3. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for City Economy, in consultation with the Service Director City Economy to commission Universal Support – delivered locally.
4. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for City Economy, in consultation with the Service Director City Economy for ongoing negotiations should demand for Universal Support – delivered locally exceed that anticipated by the DWP.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the Universal Credit Delivery Partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to deliver Universal Support – delivered locally in preparation for the rollout of Universal Credit.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Universal Credit, will replace both out of work and in work benefits and started in Dudley in the Black Country April 2015. Wolverhampton is in the fourth tranche where the rollout will start for single claimants on 8 February 2016. Universal Credit will require claimants to apply for and manage their account online, receive their payments monthly in arrears and pay their rent direct to their landlord. The DWP are entering into Delivery Partnerships with local authorities with the aim of delivering a joined up and coherent journey between services for claimants.
- 2.2 Some residents in Wolverhampton will face challenges in the transition to Universal Credit. For example, claimants will need to apply for and manage their account online. However, currently 36% of Wolverhampton residents do not have access to the internet at home and 20% lack the skills and expertise to use a computer independently. In addition, claimants will receive their benefit monthly in arrears and need to pay their rent direct to the landlord. Wolverhampton currently has the 9<sup>th</sup> highest indebtedness in England and Wales and Wolverhampton's Welfare Reform Impact Assessment (January 2013) highlighted debt as a significant issue in Wolverhampton thus the importance of personal budgeting support. The transition to monthly payments will be difficult for some with some people having to wait four weeks between their last normal payment and new consolidated payment leaving people short of money and there is a risk should there be other demands on their income, rent may not be paid. The potential impact of getting this wrong for residents – debt, homelessness, mental health issues – is significant, however is could also lead to a significant increase in demand for public services.

## **3.0 Universal Support Delivery Partnership**

- 3.1 The Delivery Partnership between DWP and the City of Wolverhampton Council outlines our respective roles to deliver services required by claimants of Universal Credit as part of “Universal Support – delivered locally” with the aim of delivering a joined up and coherent journey between services for the claimant. This will include:
- Getting online to make a claim (digital inclusion)
  - Receiving budgeting support to prepare and support claimants for the financial changes Universal Credit brings – single household payment, monthly payment and housing costs paid directly to the claimant.
- 3.2 Partnership working should be based on and leveraged against infrastructure and services that are already in place, building on existing successful partnerships and learning from successful models. In recognition of the importance of wider partnership working, Wolverhampton Inclusion Board is maintaining an oversight of preparations for the rollout and a task and finish group, including City Direct, Housing Benefits, Welfare Rights and Wolverhampton Citizens Advice (personal budgeting support), libraries and community venues (digital inclusion) to drive forward preparations.



- 3.3 Outlined below are the requirements for the Council under the Delivery Partnership, together with existing progress to deliver these requirements:
1. **Ensure agreed local service provision is available from 8 February 2016** – the task and finish group has developed a series of actions that will ensure that enhanced local service provision is in place before the rollout of Universal Credit;
  2. **Deliver relevant learning and development products to support delivery of Universal Credit within the Council** – Welfare Benefits team are already delivering Universal Credit awareness sessions across the Council and key partners. We are also exploring the potential for e-learning;
  3. **Monitor the impact and take appropriate actions to mitigate the impact on current business** relating to administering the housing benefit provision as a result of the introduction of Universal Credit – City Direct and Housing Benefits are key members of the task and finish group. In recognition of the importance of this agenda and potential adverse consequences on council budgets, a dedicated project manager has been appointed to ensure all systems are in place in advance of the rollout.
  4. **Inform the Department of any potential barriers to the delivery of local service provision** – we have already raised our concern that given the needs of Wolverhampton residents, the estimated five percent of new claimants in need of additional support will be insufficient to meet the needs of our residents.

3.4 The Council will undertake the following services and activities:

- **Provide support to Universal Credit Service Centre staff around housing cost issues that may arise.**
- **Support for claimants to make a Universal Credit claim on-line** – a mapping exercise of digital access points including libraries and community venues has been completed as part of Wolverhampton's Digital Inclusion Strategy. In recognition that there is unlikely to be sufficient staff time to give some residents the one-to-one support they will require to complete the form online, we are working with a voluntary community sector partner to submit a bid to rollout the libraries digital mentor scheme training up volunteers to give one-to-one support.
- **Manual processing for Local Council Tax Relief Scheme (LCTRS).**
- **Support for claimants who require personal budgeting support to manage their UC payments.** We are working very closely with Citizen's Advice Wolverhampton and the wider Local Advice Wolverhampton (LAW) partnership to ensure personal budgeting support is available. Public Health Replacement funding has been secured to run a pilot for personal budgeting support in advance of the rollout.
- **Work with DWP locally in preparing landlords:** Housing Strategy and Wolverhampton Homes are members of the task and finish group to ensure messages meet both private sector and social landlords. Activities to date have included promoting a regional event to raise awareness of Universal Credit to private sector landlords.

#### 4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 DWP Funding will be available for online supported access (digital), personal budgeting support, LCTRS manual process, support for Universal Credit service centre and management costs as set out below. Initial funding announced by DWP is £59,000 and is based on five percent of those claiming Universal Credit requiring support based on figures provided by DWP.

<b>DP Costs</b>	<b>Cost/Volume Assumptions to March 2017</b>	<b>Payment Basis</b>	<b>Maximum cost to 31 March 2017</b>
On-Line supported access (Digital)	Average 17 per month	volumes	£6,000
Personal Budgeting Support	Average 17 per month	volumes	£13,000
LCTRS Manual processes	Average volumes for Feb/March 2016 = 131 (automated process thereafter)	volumes	£3,000
Support for Universal Credit Service Centre	Feb-Mar 2016 Apr 2016 – March 2017	Volumes 131 1272	£3,000 £9,000
Management Costs	Over 14 months	Reimburse agreed cost on a monthly basis	£20,000
One off costs if applicable; Specify details of the agreed expenditure	Details:	Agreed costs which are reasonable and proportionate, not capital, novel or contentious nor paid in advance	£5,000
<b>Total</b>	To be confirmed		<b>£59,000</b>

- 4.2 Should the actual numbers of claimants requiring these services exceed the stated volumes, the Department and the Council will enter into discussions to re-negotiate and agree any increased funding to reflect the revised volume. DWP will pay the Council on presentation of a valid invoice outlining costs incurred by the Council in providing those services and activities in accordance with the Delivery Partnership.
- 4.3 Given the needs of Wolverhampton residents, there is a risk that funding from DWP will be insufficient to meet demand. The Partnership is proactively looking for funding to supplement DWP funding including working with the Voluntary Community Sector to attract resources.
- 4.4 Without the provision of support to claimants there is a risk of additional demands on a variety of public services.  
[MF/21122015/L]

## **5.0 Legal implications**

- 5.1 Various specific powers contained in statute and general powers to act for the good of the area enable the Council to support the delivery of UC including funding arrangements, management information required by DWP, data sharing and governance arrangements..
- 5.2 Legal Services, has reviewed the Delivery Partnership and will finalise and complete the appropriate agreement.  
[RB/16112015/Q]

## **6.0 Equalities implications**

- 6.1 Universal Support – delivered locally will have positive equalities implications since we anticipated that some of the most vulnerable residents will require the support offered in relation to digital inclusion and personal budgeting support, in particular young people. Initial screening has been undertaken and the project will have positive equalities implications. Systems will be put in place as part of the delivery to monitor equalities implications.

## **7.0 Environmental implications**

- 7.1 There are no environmental implications to this report.

## **8.0 Human resources implications**

- 8.1 A 12 month fixed term project manager has been employed to project manage and co-ordinate preparations.

## **9.0 Corporate landlord implications**

- 9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications.

## Appendix 1: Roles and Responsibilities

The DWP will:

- provide support to the Council in the development and implementation of local service provision, following Universal Support – delivered locally (previously Local Support Services Framework) principles;
- provide timely and relevant guidance and products to inform delivery of local service provision;
- provide data to support the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS);
- carry out an initial process that will highlight claimants needing budgeting support and/or an alternative payment arrangement;
- For those who are unable to self-serve, refer to the Council for provision of budgeting support;
- Ensure claimants consent is obtained to share information with the Council;
- Provide the Council with the following information:
  - Name
  - National Insurance Number
  - Date of birth
  - Address
  - Telephone contact details
  - Whether an alternative payment arrangement is in place and if so;
  - The review date.

The Council will:

- ensure agreed local service provision is available from 8<sup>th</sup> February 2016;
- deliver relevant learning and development products to support delivery of UC within the Council;
- monitor the impact and take appropriate actions to mitigate the impact on current business relating to administering the housing benefit provision as a result of the introduction of UC;
- inform the Department of any potential barriers to the delivery of local service provision;
- Participate in discussions with the DWP, pursuant to the Partnering Principles, that will further support the ambitions of the wider Department and Local Authorities in the delivery of Universal Support. Where deemed appropriate, and as a result of those discussions, any resultant changes to this DP will be subject to agreement in accordance with the Change Control procedures contained in this DP; see section 5;
- Complete the Business Readiness Certificate before the go live date, see Schedule 4.

The Council will undertake the following services and activities:

Provide support to UC Service Centre staff around housing cost issues that may arise. This will be achieved through:

- Identifying named points of contact for Universal Credit Service Centre staff.
- Providing expertise for complex housing cost issues.
- Responding to requests for information on UC claimant's current housing benefit claim status within 2 working days.

Complete and return the Migration Gather Proforma (MGP1) (LA) within five working days of receipt of the request. A reminder will be issued after this time has lapsed but the non-return of the completed form may result in an incorrect Universal Credit award.

Support for claimants to make a UC claim on-line. This will be achieved through:

- Identifying PC/public internet sites across Wolverhampton
- Identifying which of these locations will have trained staff present to provide 'supported access'.
- Publicising these services to residents of Wolverhampton;
- Providing the Management Information to support number of claimants assisted.

Manual processing for LCTRS. This will be achieved through:

- Providing the necessary resource to undertake this activity;
- Manually inputting agreed data into the Council's systems;
- Responding to the Department's queries around Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme;
- Providing the Management Information; see section 3;

Support for claimants who require personal budgeting support to manage their UC payments. This will be achieved through:

- Processing personal budgeting support referrals from the Department including those claimants who have alternative payment arrangements;
- Identifying the appropriate channel, frequency and provider to deliver personal budgeting support (may not be the Council) and referring the claimant to the right place within the set time frame – set at 2 weeks;
- Providing (or arranging provision of) telephone or face to face personal budgeting support and follow up action as appropriate;
- Reporting the outcomes of personal budgeting support provision against the agreed outcome measures by timely completion of LA Outcome Template and Knowledge Check Template to DWP. Details of this process and the associated forms can be found in the L&D pack.
- Providing the Management Information relating to personal budgeting support including the number of claimants assisted; see section 3;
- Referring claimants to the Department who need personal budgeting support (but have been missed in the core process);
- Referring claimants to the Department who may need an alternative payment arrangement e.g. because of rent arrears or vulnerability.

Work with DWP locally in preparing landlords. This will be achieved through:

- Working with landlords to help get claimants on-line;
- Signposting landlord queries to the Department for resolution;
- Promoting the appropriate use of on-line channels within the Registered Social Landlords (RSL) community in Wolverhampton.

## SCHEDULE 2

### FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

The total UC cost under this Delivery Partnership shall not exceed £xxxk for services delivered to 31 March 2017.

This arrangement is designed to support initial roll out only from (insert date).

Funding is linked to the delivery of the agreed services and activities as set out below (as more particularised in Part 2 of Schedule 1).

The full breakdown of the agreed total cost of UC Live Service roll out in Wolverhampton Council is shown in the table below. The volume of claimants using services will be reviewed at the regular partnership meetings. If the actual numbers of claimants requiring these services exceed the stated volumes, the Department and the Council will enter into discussions to re-negotiate and agree any increased funding to reflect the revised volumes and any increased funding will be based on the figures shown on the table.

<b>DP Costs</b>	<b>Cost/Volume Assumptions to March 2017</b>	<b>Payment Basis</b>	<b>Maximum cost to 31 March 2017</b>
On-Line supported access (Digital)	Average 17 per month	volumes	£6,021
Personal Budgeting Support	Average 17 per month	volumes	£12,907
LCTRS Manual processes	Average volumes for Feb/March 2016 = 131 (automated process thereafter)	volumes	£3,372
Support for UC Service Centre	Feb-Mar 2016 Apr 2016 – March 2017	Volumes 131 1272	£3,372 £8,544
Management Costs	Over 14 months	Reimburse agreed cost on a monthly basis	£19,948
One off costs if applicable; Specify details of the agreed expenditure	Details:	Agreed costs which are reasonable and proportionate, not capital, novel or contentious nor paid in advance	£5,000
<b>Total (excluding VAT)</b>	To be confirmed		<b>£59,164</b>
<b>Total (including VAT)</b>	To be confirmed		<b>£70,996</b>

# Cabinet Meeting

13 January 2016

<b>Report title</b>	Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Sandra Samuels Public Health and Wellbeing	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Linda Sanders Strategic Director People Ros Jervis Service Director Public Health and Wellbeing	
<b>Originating service</b>	Public Health and Wellbeing	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Karen Samuels Tel Email	Head of Community Safety Group 01902 551341 <a href="mailto:karen.samuels@wolverhampton.gov.uk">karen.samuels@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel People Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board	22 September 2015 30 November 2015 8 December 2015

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## Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Endorse the city's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-19.
2. Note that the strategy document will also be subject to formal approval by the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership Board.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To endorse the city's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG) 2016-19 and highlight key areas of focus and support.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The city's new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG) 2016-19 addresses domestic (DV) and sexual violence (SV), female genital mutilation (FGM), honour based violence (HBV) and forced marriage (FM). Wolverhampton's Domestic Violence Forum has led on developing the strategy through its multi-agency Executive Board.
- 2.2 The strategy name, acknowledges the gendered nature of these crimes, (as the majority of victims are female – in Wolverhampton, this averages 83% over the last ten years). However both the national strategy of the same name, and the local strategy recognise that there are both male and female victims and perpetrators of these crimes; consequently, provision will encompass work around women, girls, men and boys.
- 2.3 The previous VAWG strategy 2012-15 resulted in some marked improvements in our city-wide partnership response to VAWG. Achievements included:

### **Processes**

- Processes for identifying and managing victims and risk, including a reviewed and improved co-located team Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), delivery of a specialist DV court, safety planning meetings for victims at high risk of serious harm and homicide, domestic homicide review process
- Establishment of Barnardo's joint screening meetings of children and pregnant women affected by DV

### **Policy Developments**

- adoption and implementation of an overarching DV protocol
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) protocol implemented
- West Midlands DV Standards developed
- Development and launch of the first UK multi-agency joint adult and child FM and HBV protocol
- VAWG integration into policies of safeguarding board agency members

### **Partnership Working**

- Joint working across adults and children's Safeguarding Boards
- Regional Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) learning event
- Two FM and HBV conferences held to raise both the local and regional profile

- 2.4 Building on progress made in the previous 2012-15 VAWG strategy, the refreshed strategy develops work across each of the strands listed above. It focuses on developing a more systematic approach to identifying victims of violence at a much earlier point through work with schools and specialist support organisations; ensuring services are in place to respond to lower risk cases, avoiding escalation of risk; it will raise awareness across frontline practitioners and targeted work with communities to challenge a culture of VAWG.



### **3.0 Governance and Accountability**

- 3.1 The strategy details the governance and inter-relationship between the various strategic forums operating across Wolverhampton due to the cross-cutting nature of VAWG. Whilst there will be shared areas of delivery and oversight, governance sits with the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership, with development and delivery managed through Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum.
- 3.2 New joint operating protocols are currently being formalised with sign off sought by the Chairs of Adults and Children's Safeguarding Boards, Health and Well Being Board and SWP.

### **4.0 Strategic Alignment**

- 4.1 The VAWG strategy actively contributes towards a number of strategic priorities and new developments across the city. VAWG is a strategic priority for the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP) with the commitment detailed in the SWP Crime Reduction, Community Safety and Drugs Strategy 2014-17.
- 4.2 Delivery against the VAWG strategy is directly aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan, where it contributes to both the Keeping the City Safe and the Safeguarding People in Vulnerable Situations priorities. In addition to the corporate commitment, delivery will be partnership based, and has the full support of both adults and children's safeguarding boards.
- 4.3 As new developments and working practices evolve, such as with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and proposals for a revised model for children's services are shaped, the Strategy and resulting action plan will aid integration with cross sector mainstream services and provide clearer pathways to access information and support.
- 4.4 Since April 2011, SWP has been required to undertake Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) for every domestic violence related death occurring in the city, a number of which have attracted media interest. The strategy directly supports implementation of recommendations from the city's DHRs, serious case reviews (SCRs) and safeguarding adult reviews, enabling partners to evidence the proactive approach taken in response to review findings. SWP remains committed to ensuring that any learning from DHRs and SCRs is effectively disseminated across the partnership.

### **5.0 Remaining Challenges**

- 5.1 Despite progress made so far, there remain a number of key challenges which require a fresh approach to VAWG. Research indicates that domestic and sexual violence remains severely under-reported despite local increases in reporting of these crimes which have risen by 68%; although this trend is welcomed, it does pose capacity challenges for specialist support services and the issue of repeat victimisation (in particular in relation to DV) which remains a concern. DV in particular is a high volume crime, with 5,900 reported incidents during 2014-15, of which 34% were crimed by police.

5.2 Whilst the city celebrates its cultural diversity, hidden crimes remain. Wolverhampton is home to residents who are from communities where FM, FGM and HBV are prevalent, yet there are very few or no reports of this practice coming to the attention of agencies; crimes recorded for 2014-15 were 5, 0 and 5 respectively across these crime types. Unicef FGM prevalence data lists the top 12 countries where this practice is undertaken in which between 66 – 98 % of the female population of 15-49 year olds are affected. The government has reinforced the need for a strengthened local approach to identify those at risk and encourage reporting. FGM reporting requirements were introduced within primary care from October 2014, and reporting by registered health and social care as well as teaching practitioners from 31 Oct 2015. Forced marriage became a criminal offence in 2014, and the legislation around female genital mutilation was strengthened in 2015.

5.3 The draft strategy has been informed by developments in national policy underpinned by legislative change, an analysis of local need, current performance and reviews of current practice. In May 2015 Safe Lives (the national body developing best practice around MARAC) undertook an independent review of the city’s MARAC arrangements and noted marked improvements in practice; in 2013, West Midlands Police were subject to a Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) Inspection where recommendations were made to improve practice and quality assurance.

## 6.0 VAWG Strategy 2016-19 Development

6.1 With the city’s approach much more embedded within agency safeguarding practice, this new strategy will work across each of the strands detailed above, focus on earlier identification and support with a more systematic approach to identifying victims of violence at a much earlier point through work with schools and specialist support organisations, raising awareness across frontline practitioners and targeting communities at heightened risk where there is an accepted culture of VAWG.

VAWG Strategy Objectives	VAWG Strategy Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the early identification of and intervention with victims of VAWG by utilising all points of contact with front line professionals</li> <li>• Build capacity to provide effective VAWG advice and support services</li> <li>• Improve the criminal justice response to VAWG</li> <li>• Support victims through the criminal justice system and manage perpetrators to reduce risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce serious harm resulting from VAWG including homicide prevention</li> <li>• Reduce the prevalence of VAWG</li> <li>• Reduce the rate of repeat incidents for domestic violence</li> <li>• Increase the rate of reported VAWG offences brought to justice</li> </ul>

## **7.0 Early Areas of Focus**

7.1 HBV, FM and FGM - an early key area of focus will be on embedding understanding of issues around FGM, FM and HBV; these hidden crimes are grossly under-reported and the often familial links to perpetrators of these crimes means they are less easily identifiable. An effective response to strands of work will require awareness raising and training of front-line practitioners, an understanding of their mandatory responsibilities and a growth in confidence to initiate professional curiosity as part of their safeguarding practice on subjects which have historically been seen as cultural within certain communities. Work is already underway to map our settled communities where there is a heightened risk of these crimes being committed to inform targeted delivery.

7.2 DV and SV – the increased recorded crime for both these crime types is seen as a reflection of increased confidence in reporting. With an increase in referrals of high risk cases to MARAC, there is a need to more effectively manage low-medium risk cases through safety planning to avoid escalation of risk. There will also be a greater emphasis on reducing repeat victimisation, managing complex cases and provision of offender management and perpetrator programmes which shifts the focus of responsibility and accountability from the victim to the offender.

### **7.3 Action Plan Development/ Model of Delivery**

A multi-agency action plan will be developed to underpin the strategy and drive delivery. The accompanying model of delivery will be centred on:

#### **7.3.1 Prevention**

Raising awareness amongst practitioners, communities and other stakeholders, delivery of training, education and embedding improved practice as part of existing safeguarding responsibilities.

#### **7.3.2 Provision, Protection & Justice**

Focusing on victim safety, effective management of offenders, increasing the accountability of perpetrators and use of the full range of criminal and civil justice remedies.

#### **7.3.3 Performance**

Capturing performance data systematically, reviewing progress, disseminating learning and identifying best practice.

## **8.0 Consultation**

8.1 A 12 week consultation on the strategy was launched on 1 September 2015 and ended on 24 November 2015 which sought input from stakeholders. As part of that consultation process, a presentation was delivered to Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel on 22 September 2015, outlining areas of focus for the VAWG strategy and prompting discussion; comments from Scrutiny Panel were noted and have been fed into the revised strategy. Comments were centred largely on aspects of delivery, and the

overwhelming endorsement of Scrutiny Panel was secured. Approval of the strategy will be sought from SWP Board early in January 2016.

- 8.2 There is a significant level of support for the strategy from elected members, public sector partners, voluntary and community sector organisations and residents. Group responses have included feedback from Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust, Wolverhampton Youth Council, Youth Zone, Wolverhampton University research cluster, The Haven Wolverhampton and Women of Wolverhampton; in addition, a total of 50 partial and 13 full individual responses have been received. Comments have included:
- Calls for an increased awareness of VAWG to be targeted within communities with a need to challenge community cultures where this is part of accepted practice.
  - Positive feedback that proposals for delivery to include an earlier focus on prevention and early intervention.
  - Need for more specific work with health partners in identifying girls at risk of FGM, along with a request for an increase in joint working with schools and third sector organisations.
  - A request to include contextual information on child sexual exploitation and gangs so it is clear where this is being progressed.
  - A request for more detail around delivery – which will feature within the Action Plan
  - Contradictory views about ease of read and formatting/layout.
  - A preference for a shorter strategy
  - Suggestion for a separate men and boys strategy

## **9.0 Financial implications**

- 9.1 Implementing the VAWG Strategy will require a multi-agency approach with a required change in mainstream practice across the contributing partners. Where specialist commissioned services are needed, these will be delivered through a variety of funding streams including the annual allocation of Community Safety Fund, issued to SWP by the Police and Crime Commissioner. Early discussions have also commenced regarding possible joint commissioning opportunities with the Council's Children's Commissioning team which could be linked to strategy outcomes. The Clinical Commissioning Group has indicated its intention to commission new specialist FGM services.
- 9.2 Resource allocations from these funding streams will be finalised early in 2016 and delivery of this strategy will be within this advised allocation.  
[GS/02122015/G]

## **10.0 Legal implications**

- 10.1 Sections 5 and 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 require the Council and other responsible authorities to formulate and implement strategies to reduce crime and disorder in the area; Section 17 places a duty on the Council to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in the area. Implementation of the strategy contributes towards the Council's duties in this regard.

- 10.2 A new mandatory reporting duty for FGM came into force on 31 October 2015 under Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (amended under Section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015). The duty requires regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales to report known and apparent cases of FGM in under 18-year-olds to the police and to comply with statutory reporting guidance.
- 10.3 There is a statutory requirement for SWP to undertake Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) for every domestic violence-related death occurring within its locality, under section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victim Act (2004). This provision came into force on 13th April 2011.  
[AS/02122015/C]

### **11.0 Equalities implications**

- 11.1 A full equality analysis has been completed which highlights the positive contribution the strategy will make to addressing the gendered nature of these crimes, where victims are predominantly women; however the strategy and resulting action plan will encompass work around women, girls, men and boys. It also positively recognises the targeted work to remove barriers to victims with protected characteristics who are seeking help.

### **12.0 Risk Implications**

- 12.1 The Council's corporate risk management framework has been complied with, to identify and assess the risks associated with this decision/ recommendations. This has identified that there are no significant risks that need to be reported.

### **13.0 Environmental implications**

- 13.1 There are no environmental implications.

### **14.0 Human resources implications**

- 14.1 There are no human resources implications.

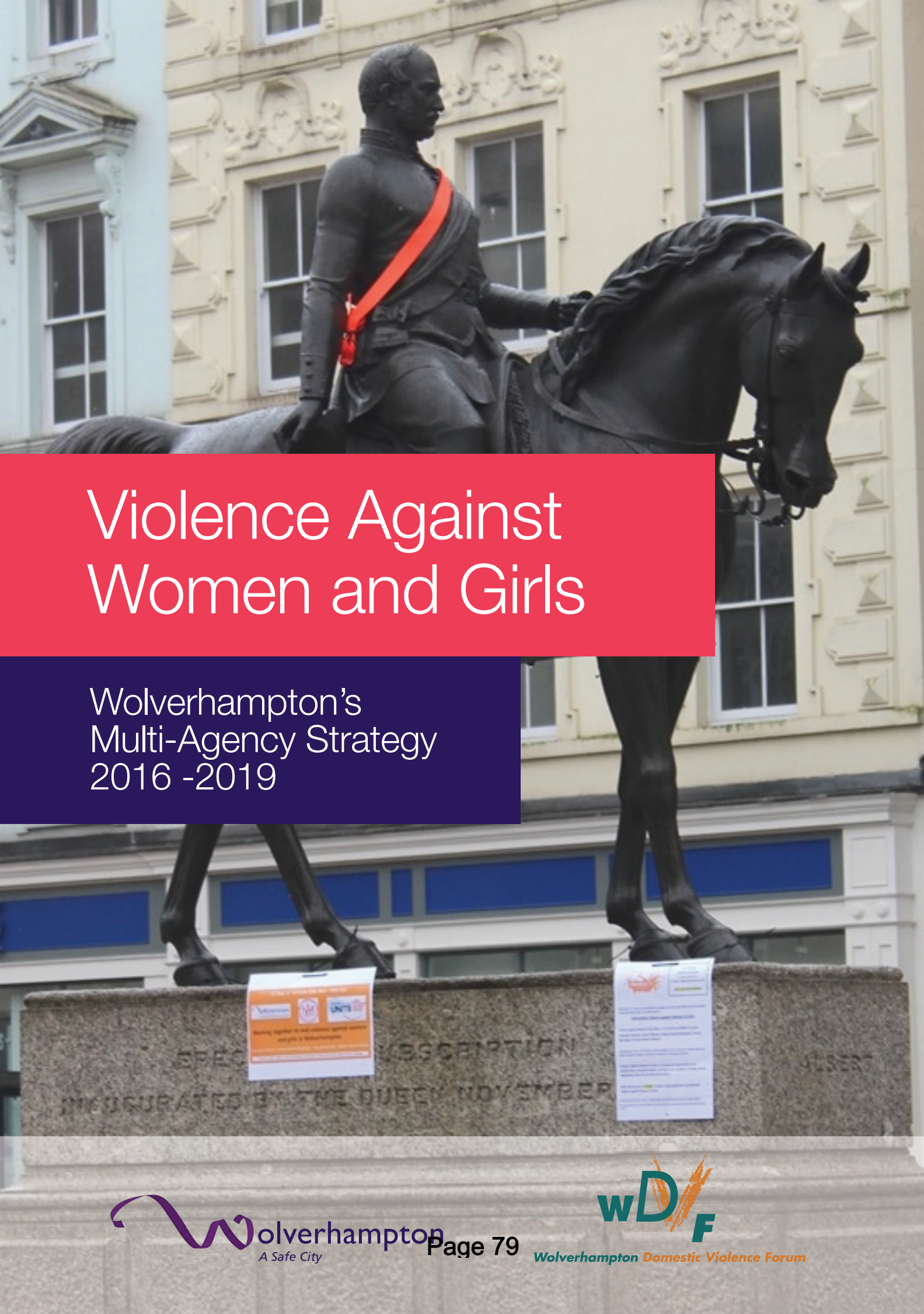
### **15.0 Corporate landlord implications**

- 15.1 There are no corporate landlord implications.

### **16.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 16.1 Presentation to Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel - 22 September 2016.

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# Violence Against Women and Girls

Wolverhampton's  
Multi-Agency Strategy  
2016 -2019

## Foreword

Violence against women and girls has been cited as being perhaps the most pervasive violation of human rights across the globe and continues to have devastating consequences for millions of victims and children.

Too many families are blighted by the long term effects of these violent crimes in all its forms, which have cross-cutting implications; they are crimes and community safety issues, public health issues, vulnerable adult and child protection issues, as well as societal issues in terms of community tolerance.

The Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP) is leading our local response to VAWG. SWP is determined to work towards eliminating these unacceptable practices in our city and adopting a zero tolerance approach where they are perpetrated. We will do this by working closely with other Boards where there are shared responsibilities, empowering our communities with facts and help-seeking pathways, training our front line staff in effective responses, holding perpetrators and offenders to account, and safeguarding and supporting victims, survivors, and children.

SWP will be working collaboratively with Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum (WDVF) to inform and drive forward implementation of this strategy. WDVF is a

long-standing partnership organisation that brings together specialist services to shape VAWG strategic responses and coordinate multi-agency delivery. The Board develops, implements, monitors, and reports on multi-agency working towards preventing VAWG. The Forum's aims align directly with the strategy outcomes, namely to reduce serious harm from VAWG including homicide prevention, reduce the prevalence and repeat rate of VAWG, and to increase the number of offenders brought to justice.

We recognise that the success of this strategy will lie not only with a strengthened agency response, negotiating revised approaches with our partners to achieve improved frontline practice, but also by changing the culture of acceptance within our communities. By working within those communities where there is a heightened risk we can increase confidence in reporting traditionally 'hidden' crimes, stem the cycle of abuse, sometimes spanning generations, and reduce vulnerability.



**Linda Sanders,**  
Chair, Safer  
Wolverhampton  
Partnership



**Lesley Roberts**  
Chair, Wolverhampton  
Domestic Violence  
Forum



**Councillor  
Sandra Samuels**  
City of Wolverhampton  
Council



**Councillor Val Gibson**  
City of Wolverhampton  
Council



This is the second such strategy in Wolverhampton, and we recognise the significant progress that has already been achieved by close partnership working over recent years. We all have a part to play in building on this success, mobilising our communities, as well as using a range of partners' resources and powers. We will develop more effective ways of working.

This will include implementing a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) in the city in order to achieve our shared outcomes of reducing the prevalence of VAWG, reducing repeat victimisation, bringing more offenders to justice and reducing serious harm.

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# Introduction

The Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP) is the strategic lead for addressing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Wolverhampton. The Partnership is committed to addressing the root causes of VAWG, challenging perpetrators and holding them to account, and safeguarding and alleviating the wide ranging effects of all forms of VAWG on victims, survivors, their children, and our communities.

Whilst the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy name acknowledges the gendered nature of domestic and sexual violence, in that the majority of victims are female, it cannot be over-emphasised that the national and local strategies recognise that there are both female and male victims and perpetrators and therefore encompass work around women and girls, and also men and boys.

The Violence Against Women and Girls term covers five key themes. These are:

- Domestic Violence (DV)
- Sexual Violence (SV)
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Honour-Based Violence (HBV), and
- Forced Marriage (FM)

These crimes are cross-cutting issues, requiring robust responses around child protection and safeguarding children and adults, as well as sector specific support such as from education and health. Consequently there are a number of shared responsibilities for VAWG across a range of Boards in the city, in particular the Safeguarding Children and Adult Boards.

Building on the significant progress made against the previous strategy, this refreshed strategy raises numerous challenges for our partnership approach; partners continue to review their core operations, managing budgetary constraints and organisational restructures against a backdrop of increasing

demand. A greater collaborative effort is therefore needed in the commissioning and delivery of services in order to realise efficiencies, mitigate risk, address potential gaps in service, and shape new approaches.

Wolverhampton is making fundamental changes to its model of safeguarding children and adults in line with emerging good practice. The current plans include establishing a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for children early in 2016, with provision extended to include adults later in the year. This will further strengthen our response to assessing and responding to the city's safeguarding needs.

SWP will work with partner Boards to develop an integrated response to VAWG through well informed policies, systems, and leadership. The partnership response will similarly place the safeguarding of survivors and their children as paramount, with development of risk-based responses.

Perpetrators will be held to account, and their behaviours challenged through effective perpetrator and offender management processes. A risk-based stepped model response to dealing with perpetrators and offenders will be deployed, recognising those who are ready to address their behaviours, and those for whom enforcement is required.

The burden of progressing criminal proceedings has traditionally been placed on victims and survivors, even in our Specialist Domestic Violence Courts. In our drive to



reduce repeat victimisation, and in line with national policies, we will seek to deliver an effective criminal justice system that places the burden of responsibility on offenders.

The Partnership also acknowledges the critical role that our communities need to play in addressing VAWG in all its forms. The strategy addresses the importance of our communities having a shared perspective that all VAWG is unacceptable, and for communities to be conversant in accessing help, seeking advice and understanding reporting pathways.

It is important that our local approach is aligned to regional and national efforts to address VAWG if our local impact and opportunities for joint working are to be maximized. This local strategy is strengthened by both national and regional policies which will support delivery and aid the development of innovative approaches.

### **National Context**

In 2010 the Government launched its objectives for addressing VAWG, followed by the national 'Call to End Violence' and development of a national VAWG Strategy in 2012 and subsequent action plans.

The declaration included in the national strategy enshrines women's rights to live without the fear of violence and abuse and demonstrates the UK's ratification of the 'UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women'.

The national and local VAWG Strategy upholds this declaration, encompassing domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, honour based violence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation.

Recent years has seen a significant shift in government policy to aid local delivery against VAWG. This has been supported by the introduction of new legislation requiring domestic homicide reviews to be undertaken

with a view to learning lessons where a domestic violence death has occurred; a range of new tools and powers including DV, FM and FGM protection orders, a national DV disclosure scheme, the criminalization of FM and FGM and mandatory reporting of FGM by registered teaching, social care and health practitioners.

### Regional Context

Across the West Midlands a multi-agency response to tackling VAWG has also gained momentum in recent years as efficiencies of cross-border working are realised. The 7 Local Authority areas spanning the West Midlands Metropolitan area have a strong established history of collaborative working, covering not just the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), but also encompassing Local Authority leads, Safeguarding Boards and the work of the West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC).

The PCC has committed to improving services for victims of crime, including provision of a regional victims' service and establishment of an independent Victims' Commission to inform a wide range of provision across the West Midlands. The PCC's Strategic Police & Crime Plan also highlights the commitment to protect people from harm, tackling hidden crimes including FGM, HBV and FM. Similarly, through the work of the Preventing Violence Against Vulnerable People Programme, new approaches are being developed with a view to sharing best practice with local areas. This includes establishing a FGM Task Force following a review of FGM practice across the region and commissioning a pan-West Midlands DV perpetrator programme.

There are already positive examples of joint working that can be cited across the West Midlands. West Midlands DV minimum standards were approved by all 7 areas in 2014, setting out eleven key principles of working. Wolverhampton is developing plans to meet these standards. In 2014, research funded by the PCC to identify strategic learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) was disseminated to West Midlands' strategic partners and forums. Opportunities for future cross-border working will continue to be identified during the life of our refreshed VAWG strategy.



### VAWG Strategy (2012-2015) Successes

Since Wolverhampton's VAWG Strategy (2012-2015) partnership working has significantly strengthened. SWP and Safeguarding Boards' member organisations have adopted and implemented an Over-Arching Domestic Violence Protocol, new legislation has been implemented and the business case for evidencing joint working across the partnership is influencing mainstreaming resource allocation and joint commissioning opportunities; for example, a specialist Independent Domestic Violence Adviser post based at our local Hospital Emergency Department, has now been mainstreamed following a successful pilot.

A summary of some of the successes from the 2012-15 VAWG strategy is detailed below.

Processes	Policy	Partnership working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference - manages high-risk cases) process reviewed and improved</li> <li>• MARAC coordinator employed</li> <li>• Mainstreaming of services, ie, IDVA post in A &amp; E</li> <li>• Set-up and completion of a two-year non-mandated DV perpetrator programme</li> <li>• Continuation of critical processes, eg, Specialist Domestic Violence Court, MARAC and co-located team safety planning meetings, Barnardo's Joint (multi-agency) Screening meetings of children and pregnant women affected by DV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overarching Domestic Violence Protocol adopted and implemented</li> <li>• MARAC Protocol implemented</li> <li>• Development and launch of the first UK multi-agency joint adult and child Forced Marriage and Honour-based Violence Protocol</li> <li>• Safeguarding Board organisations have put in place policies around DV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WDFV Multi-Agency Executive Board continuing focus on DV</li> <li>• Two conferences, media publicity, local events, literature, and campaigns to raise awareness of the newer VAWG subject areas of forced marriage, honour-based violence, and female genital mutilation</li> <li>• Regional Domestic Homicide Review learning event</li> <li>• Closer links with key Boards across the city, ie, Safeguarding Boards</li> </ul>

### Facing our Challenges in Partnership

It is now widely recognised that VAWG impacts widely on a range of partners and both the individual and collective service response. In Local Authorities, DV is a key contributor towards families in need; included as a specific criteria within phase 2 of the Troubled Families programme since April 2015, of the 468 families eligible for the programme, almost half have been identified as meeting the DV/abuse criteria.

DV is recognised by many sources as a key predicator for Looked after Children (LAC), as well as throughout the child in need and child protection population. Indeed, alongside substance misuse and mental health problems, domestic violence is one of the three factors that are viewed, individually and collectively, as indicators of increased risk of harm to children and young people. Local and national evidence demonstrates that there is a significant cross-over of children becoming looked after where their parent(s) were a past or current victim of DV or where they have experienced and/or witnessed domestic violence.

Whilst the crime types span all age groups, there are a number, where cultural practice within certain communities places children and young people at a significantly higher risk of harm. Young girls within recognised communities are particularly vulnerable to FGM; the Forced Marriage Unit suggests young people aged 16-25 are most at risk of being forced into marriage, whilst reported cases of HBV involved victims aged 16-17. Local levels of risk within the city are currently being assessed.

VAWG issues are not widely understood by practitioners on the frontline, yet there is an expectation that partners must play an increased role in identifying risk and responding effectively. There is often a lack of awareness across agencies, especially amongst those operating on the frontline, and an increased need for training to raise awareness and develop the capacity and confidence of staff to respond.

The Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance issued to schools in 2015 sets out clear expectations of schools and individual staff in identifying risks associated with FGM, alongside other safeguarding responsibilities. Practical support is still needed, however, to ensure schools are appropriately equipped with age-appropriate resources with staff up-skilled to fulfil these new requirements. The strategy will continue to work closely with schools on their responsibilities for promoting safe relationships amongst young people.

With an escalation in the numbers of victims seeking support, any expectation that partners can purely respond by allocating increased resources need to be managed. Despite improvements made in the partnership approach to respond to VAWG, an effective city-wide response must be developed with a shift in focus from crisis management to prevention, to stem the growing demand for high risk VAWG support

services; maintaining the status quo is not an option. As a partnership, we need to move towards a position where we are preventing the cycle of abuse, identifying and supporting victims at a much earlier point to stem the escalation towards crisis and addressing abusive behaviours with perpetrators.

This required shift in practice has already been recognised by some partners; organisational restructures are taking account of the growing need to target vulnerability. The underlying principle of developing a MASH is aimed at improved sharing of information allowing for a speedier identification of individuals and swift access to the relevant multi-agency support. Similarly, West Midlands Police has reorganised its Public Protection Unit and increased internal staff capacity to cater for demand; since 2013, Operation Sentinel has raised the profile of vulnerability across a number of crime types to galvanise partner support.

Partners' commitments have been reflected in their organisational pledges made against delivery of VAWG outcomes. Also required is an integration of the VAWG response within the core business of our partners; informing future commissioning intentions and developing innovative approaches to this growing demand.



# VAWG Strategy 2016-2019 Outcomes

## VAWG Strategy Objectives, Outcomes and Principles

### Our Objectives

Increase the early identification of and intervention with victims of VAWG by utilising all points of contact with front line professionals

Build cross-agency skills and capability to provide effective VAWG advice and support services

Improve the criminal justice response to VAWG

Support victims through the criminal justice system and manage perpetrators to reduce risk



### Outcomes

- Reduce serious harm resulting from VAWG including homicide prevention
- Reduce the prevalence of VAWG
- Reduce the rate of repeat incidents for domestic violence
- Increase the rate of reported VAWG offences brought to justice

### Our Principles

Survivors/victims and perpetrators have access to services without discrimination due to disability, sexual orientation, race, religion/faith, culture, age or income group. Women-only services will be supported as will ensuring men's access to other services.

Services to survivors/victims and perpetrators will be designed and proportionate to the level of risk they face or pose.

We are committed to providing quality services and will draw on national and international best practice and standards

Although our response to the growing challenges of VAWG, whether addressing high volume crimes such as DV and SV or low/nil reporting for FGM, HBV will vary depending on the crime type, all will require a partnership approach to deliver effectively. Each of the VAWG strands is detailed below, outlining our current position and areas of early focus.

### Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is defined as ‘any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, & emotional abuse’.

Legislation such as the Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act, 2004 has extended partnership response capability. Domestic Violence Protection Orders, introduced in 2014 permit the Police to apply to Court for a short term exclusion of the perpetrator from the victim’s home; the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare’s Law) allows Police to disclose information, under the right circumstances, about a partner’s previous abusive and violent history.

The number of recorded domestic abuse incidents recorded as crimes and non-crimes by the Police rose by 27% in 2014/15. This increase in reporting is in part attributable to more accurate recording on Police systems, an increase in incidents reported in public places that have been witnessed and reported by third parties and public confidence in reporting. DV is known to have the highest repeat rate of any crime and to escalate in frequency and severity over time, so it is important to monitor repeated reports of DV as an indicator of increasing risk, and the need to focus on managing that risk.

Despite this increase, the British Crime Survey recognises that ‘the under-reporting of crime to the Police is known to be particularly acute for intimate violence offences’. At present, Wolverhampton has insufficient specialist capacity to manage

standard and medium risk cases within the city; with an increase in the number of cases escalating to high risk.

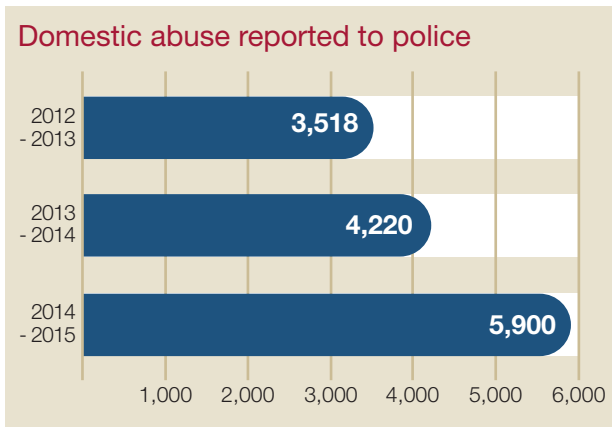
The increasing volume of domestic incident reports is impacting on existing services and the number of high risk cases taken to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), has doubled in 2014/15 compared to the previous year.

Four deaths deemed domestic-related in Wolverhampton have met the criteria for a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) since 2011. Of these, one was not taken forward due to the nature of the case and three have been completed and published. Learning from these reviews has aided the move towards integrated partnership working.

### Areas of Early Focus

- A review of collective resources across partners is required if we are to meet the growing demand for services.
- More effective management of low-medium risk cases through safety planning to avoid escalation of risk.
- Greater emphasis needed on reducing repeat victimisation.
- Improved provision for the management of complex cases.
- Development of a stepped risk-model for managing offenders and perpetrators to shift the focus of responsibility and accountability from the victim to the offender.
- Direct preventative work in schools and other settings around positive relationships and protective behaviours.
- Embedding learning from DHRs.





### Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation refers to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003) makes it illegal to practice FGM in the UK, to take abroad British nationals or permanent UK residents for FGM, and to aid FGM being conducted abroad.

Wolverhampton has long rejoiced in being a well-integrated multi-cultural city, currently with a 35.5% non-white British population. Alongside the advantages of our diversity, the City is home to residents who are from communities where forced marriage, honour based violence, and female genital mutilation are prevalent, yet of significant concern is the fact that we have received few or no such reports over the period of the previous strategy. As these crimes are often perpetrated by family members, there is an understandable reluctance for victims to report to police or seek support. Unicef data<sup>1</sup> estimates the majority of FGM practice is carried out on girls under 14, with the majority cut before the age of 5, closely followed by those aged 5-9.

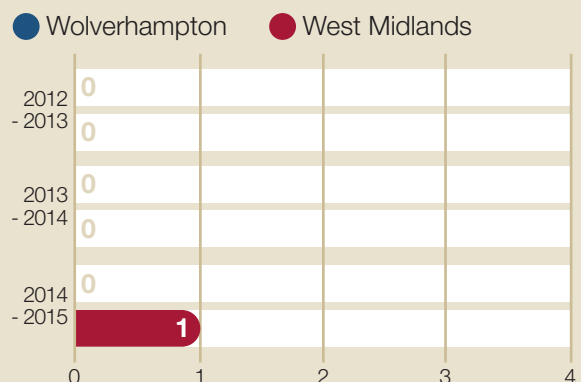
There is a need to address significant knowledge gaps and challenge accepted practice within our communities and amongst young people to dispel myths, and present the legal and medical facts, and consequences of these crimes to make it easier for victims to report with confidence. We also need to train our front line staff in identifying risk of FGM and how to respond appropriately using the full range of powers available to the partnership.

### Areas of Early Focus

- Develop an improved understanding of settled communities where there are high rates of FGM prevalence within countries of origin and how to reach them.
- Raise awareness within targeted communities to emphasise the full legal, health and safeguarding implications of FGM.
- Seek feedback from survivors to shape future services to meet the needs of our diverse communities.
- Raise awareness of FGM amongst frontline practitioners and increase understanding of mandatory reporting requirements.

### Female genital mutilation

FGM across the West Midlands is significantly under reported given known vulnerable communities reside in the area.



<sup>1</sup>UNICEF FGM prevalence data female populations 2013

## Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not (or in the case of some adults with learning or physical disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. Coercion is likely to have been used with one or both spouses; by family members, friends and the wider community. This may include: threats of violence, being held against their will, emotional threats and harassment, such as not being allowed to go anywhere unaccompanied. The practice of forced marriage is not confined to one culture or religious group and can happen regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, age, gender and sexuality.

A forced marriage is different from an arranged marriage which is a respected tradition in many cultures where both parties give their consent.

FM is now a specific offence under s121 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which came into force in June 2014. Section 1 of The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 inserted provisions into the Family Law Act 1996 enabling the courts to make Forced Marriage Protection Orders to prevent forced marriages from occurring and to protect those who have already been forced into marriage. The order can include prohibitions, restrictions or requirements to protect a victim from a spouse, family member or anyone else involved. Involvement can include aiding, abetting, counselling, procuring, encouraging, or assisting another person to force or attempt to force a person to marry.

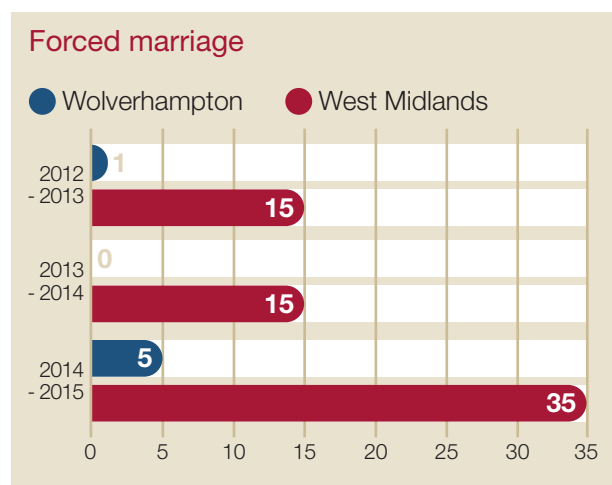
The Mental Capacity Act 2005 starts from the basis that all adults, (unless proved otherwise), have the capacity to make decisions. There is

no legal basis on which someone can agree to marriage, civil partnerships or sexual relations on behalf of someone who lacks the capacity to make these decisions independently. However, in some instances, families may believe they do have the right to make decisions regarding marriage on behalf of their relative.

There were 35 recorded FMs across the West Midlands during 2014/15, of these, 5 related to Wolverhampton. It is accepted, however, that this is not an accurate reflection of the scale of this practice. Third sector reporting such as the self-referrals received by the national specialist organisation, Karma Nirvana, provide a clearer indication of support needs; the organisation recorded 42 self referrals relating to FM and HBV from Wolverhampton residents during 2014.

## Areas of Early Focus

- Refresh of the Wolverhampton FM and HBV protocol for frontline practitioners.
- Raise awareness of FM amongst frontline practitioners.
- Raise awareness across communities of the illegality of FM.
- Support schools to deliver key messages regards FM within the curriculum.



### Honour-Based Violence

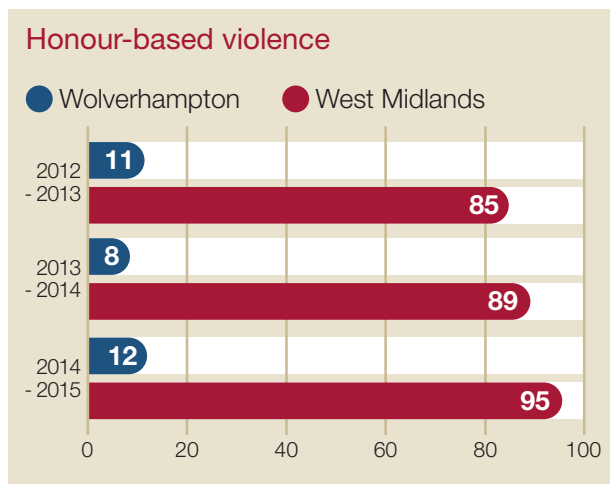
Honour-based violence is defined as ‘a crime or incident, which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community’.

There is no specific offence of "honour-based crime". It is an umbrella term to encompass various offences covered by existing legislation. HBV can be described as a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code. Punishment can be imposed because of a belief, actual or perceived, that a person has not been properly ‘controlled’ and is failing to conform to family or community expectations. Linked offences can include threats, theft (e.g. passport), assault – physical or sexual, kidnap, abduction or imprisonment or rape.

Police levels of recorded crimes linked to HBV show an increase in reporting; there were 12 associated crimes recorded during 2014/15; 2015/16 has seen 14 such crimes reported during the first half of the year.

#### Areas of Early Focus

- Refresh of the Wolverhampton FM and HBV protocol for frontline practitioners
- Raise awareness of HBV amongst frontline practitioners
- Raise awareness across communities of the illegality of HBV-related crimes and engage communities to challenge cultural norms
- Support schools to deliver key messages regards HBV within the curriculum.



### Sexual Violence

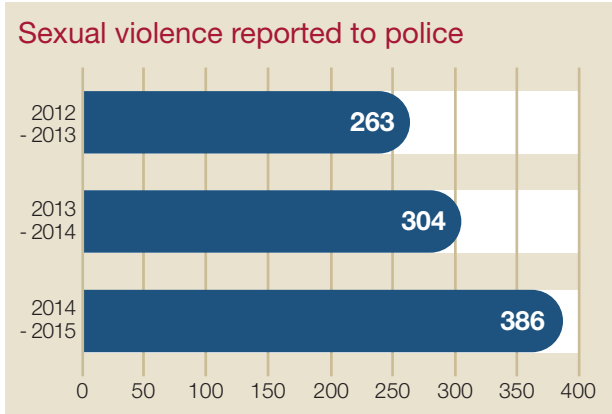
Sexual violence is defined as ‘any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature, which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding’. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 protects individuals from abuse and exploitation, and is designed to be fair and non-discriminatory. Recorded sexual violence offences have increased 17% in 2014/15 compared to the previous year with 256 crimes recorded. As an under-reported crime, this trend is viewed as indication of an increased confidence in reporting. At a national level, historic reporting of sexual violence increased following a series of high profile sexual abuse scandals and publication of the Lampard report in Feb 2015; a trend which is reflected in local reporting.

The quality of services for victims of sexual assaults has been improved by a West Midlands Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), with local Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) services providing specialist advice and support.

#### Areas of Early Focus

- Promotion of reporting and care pathways including to/from the SARC.
- Promoting with frontline staff, the links to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

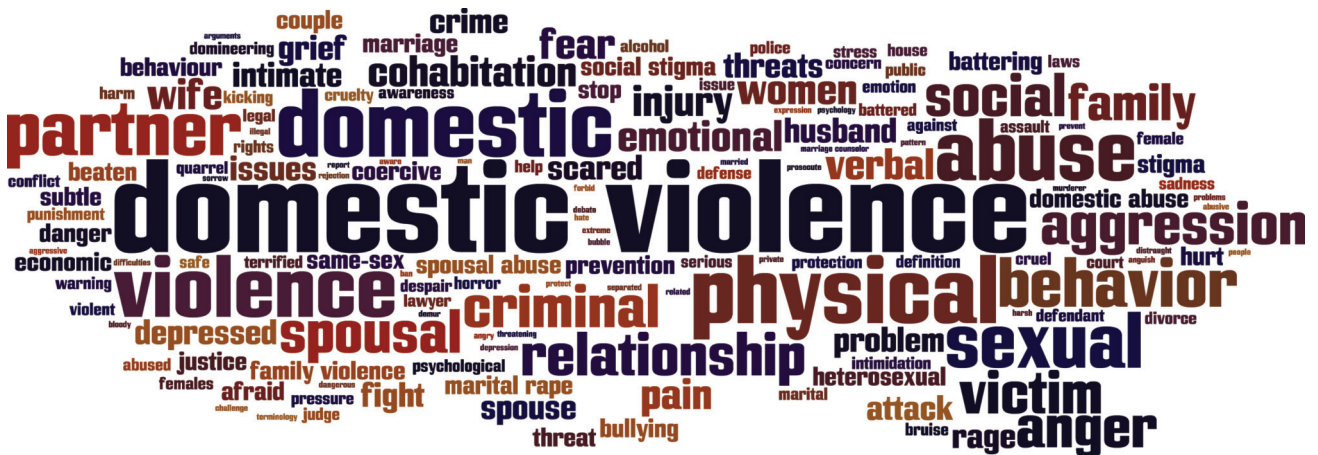
- Strengthen care pathways for specialist adult and child provision.



In addition to bespoke delivery around each of the VAWG strands, there will be more generic activity spanning all strands:

- Deploy all powers available through the partnership to protect victims and manage offenders/perpetrators.
- Embed risk-based decisions and responses across frontline practice.

- Develop and apply robust criminal and civil justice responses.
- Develop systematic data monitoring and analysis.
- Embed learning from homicide reviews & serious case reviews, and evidence changed practice.
- Strengthen governance and reporting arrangements.
- Develop clear referral pathways which are understood by communities and organisations.
- Develop a programme of staff training.
- Develop robust, cross-agency policies and procedures.
- Support schools to cascade key messaging to pupils.



## Delivery

Underpinning the strategy will be an action plan, WDVF Multi-Agency Executive Board will develop and monitor a VAWG Multi-Agency Action Plan, the purpose of which is to set out the main actions that will move us closer to achieving our strategy objectives and outcomes.

The action plan also acknowledges that work against the newer strands of its work will be at an earlier stage of multi-agency understanding, and the actions will reflect the need to initially concentrate on addressing these training and awareness raising needs.

It is well documented that VAWG increases in severity and frequency if left unchecked, and that early intervention is critical to prevent this escalation. Unfortunately, despite high reporting numbers, research confirms that domestic and sexual violence remains severely under-reported by approximately 90%. The strategy and action plan requires a commitment from partners to review their delivery contributions against objectives. Alongside this will be active approaches to seek funding from external sources available through voluntary sector bids to foundation trusts and other grant providing sources.

The key themes of the action plan are **Prevention, Provision, Protection & Justice, and Performance.**



The action plan will be monitored through WDFV's Executive Board, and elements reported to the Safeguarding Children and Adult Boards and SWP Local Police and Crime Board on a quarterly basis. The action plan will be reviewed annually.

There are clear links and overlaps between VAWG and other high profile issues including CSE, gang and youth violence and modern day slavery. In particular familial domestic violence is a common feature in many known CSE cases and gang related abuse. All involve perpetrators who abuse power and control, and many feature some, if not all of the following - physical violence, emotional blackmail, financial pressure such as keeping someone indebted, misuse of substances as a control mechanism, and isolation from support networks to aid the manipulation and grooming of their victims. All are highly under-reported crimes. This strategy will ensure that work is cross-referenced across these subject areas.

Education and awareness raising are key strands in our response to VAWG. We will continue to promote healthy relationships and protective behaviours work in schools and other settings as part of our prevention strategy.

The VAWG strategy and action plan do not sit in isolation; VAWG cuts across a number of other national, regional, and local strategies (see appendix for list of related strategies). There are well established relationships with other key Boards in relation to some of the shared areas of responsibility for these cross-cutting issues.

### **Delivering in Partnership**

A variety of stakeholders were engaged as part of the VAWG strategy development, and pledges made in support of strategy delivery. These pledges continue to be further developed with partners to contribute towards delivery of strategy outcomes.

A full commitment to the development and implementation of the strategy has been made by members of SWP, WDFV, and adult and children's safeguarding Boards. A full list of organisational membership is provided in Appendix 1.

## Model of Delivery

The UK national model of best practice in dealing effectively with violence against women and girls is that of a coordinated community response model.

This coordinated community response model relies upon communities sharing a perspective and agreed approach to counter VAWG; for those who work in the public, voluntary, or private sector, and those who are relatives, friends, or colleagues of anyone experiencing VAWG. This model requires a broad community ownership, so it becomes everybody's business whether you are a Police Officer, Social Worker, Health Visitor, GP, Magistrate, Housing Officer, Teacher, neighbour, friend, colleague, brother, employer, etc. It requires a collective response advocating that VAWG is not acceptable, will not be tolerated, and that it will be dealt with appropriately by holding perpetrators to account and safeguarding victims/survivors and their children.

In order to achieve a coordinated community response to VAWG in Wolverhampton underpinning our strategy outcomes, the action plan focuses on achieving the following fundamental building blocks:



The Safer Wolverhampton Partnership is actively seeking and capturing the views of our communities and our service users in developing the VAWG action plan to ensure that we take into account their needs and experiences. This engagement will utilise existing consultation methods and be further developed through arrangements with our partner Boards and their member organisations.

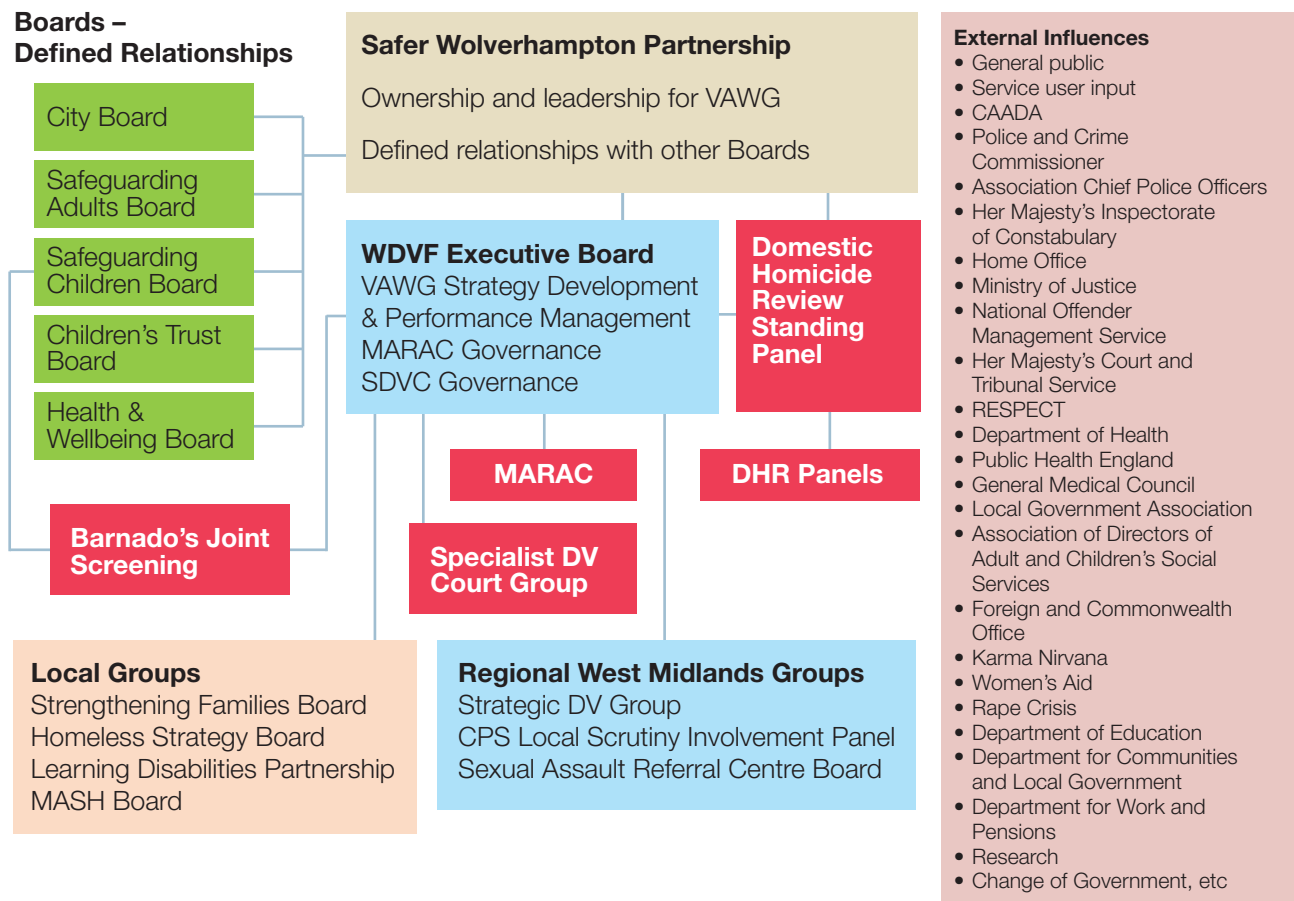
The Wolverhampton Over-Arching Domestic Violence Protocol 2013 provides the framework for organisations to contribute to the coordinated community response. The Safer Wolverhampton Partnership Board, and the Safeguarding Children and Adult Boards have endorsed this protocol, and member organisations are working towards complying with the 8 organisational requirements included in the protocol (Appendix 2). This protocol has been incorporated into a West Midlands Domestic Violence Standards document which is being integrated into partners' core business.

## Equality and Diversity

It is fundamentally important to emphasize that the national strategy name is an acknowledgement of the gendered nature of domestic and sexual violence and abuse, in that the majority of victims are female.

The strategy also acknowledges and aims to address the additional barriers to seeking help for particular groups including male victims, our Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic, and Refugee communities, survivors with disabilities, older victims, victims under 18 years, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Transgender communities, those with no recourse to public funding, and those with complex needs including mental ill-health and substance misuse issues. One of the eleven West Midlands Domestic Violence standards specifically covers issues of equality and diversity. There are specific cultural aspects of DV, some of which have arisen in DHRs, and recommendations in respect of these are being progressed within the VAWG strategy implementation. A full equalities analysis has been completed to inform our approach.

### VAWG Governance and Inter-Relation Diagram





# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Membership list of Safer Wolverhampton Partnership, Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum Membership, Wolverhampton Safeguarding Adults/Children Boards Membership:

- Aspiring Futures
- Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust
- Business Sector representative
- Care Quality Commission
- Child and Family Court Advisory & Support Service
- City of Wolverhampton College
- City of Wolverhampton Council
- Clinical Commissioning Group
- Community Rehabilitation Company
- General Practitioner representative
- HM Prison Service
- Lesbian, Gay and Bi-sexual Transgender Network
- National Probation Service
- Office for Policing & Crime
- Recovery Near You
- Resident Representatives
- Royal Wolverhampton Trust
- Schools representatives
- Service User Involvement Team
- The Haven Wolverhampton
- Third Sector representatives
- West Midlands Ambulance Service
- West Midlands Fire Service
- West Midlands Police
- Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum
- Wolverhampton Homes
- Women of Wolverhampton

## Appendix 2

### Over-Arching Domestic Violence Protocol 2013 - 8 organisation requirements:

- Domestic violence policy for service users.
- Domestic violence workplace policy.
- Include a routine question about domestic violence on service user referral forms.
- Train staff in domestic violence to an appropriate level depending on their role.
- When domestic violence is disclosed, to undertake a DASHH risk assessment or have an agreed referral pathway for a DASHH risk assessment to be undertaken.
- Where the risk assessment identifies high risk of serious harm or homicide, to have a referral pathway to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC).
- Maintain contact details of appropriate local help, information and leaflets to signpost victims to specialist support agencies.
- Commitment to participating at and learning from domestic homicide reviews.

**Appendix 3**  
**Glossary of Terms**

# Cabinet Meeting

## 13 January 2016

<b>Report title</b>	Playing Pitch Strategy and Assessment Report	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Sandra Samuels Public Health and Wellbeing	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Linda Sanders, People	
<b>Originating service</b>	Healthier Place Team, Public Health	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Andrea Fieldhouse Tel Email	Active People and Places Manager  01902 556224 <a href="mailto:Andrea.fieldhouse@wolverhampton.gov.uk">Andrea.fieldhouse@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Corporate Landlord Board	18 November 2015

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### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Playing Pitch Strategy

### Recommendations for noting:

The Cabinet is asked to note and discuss:

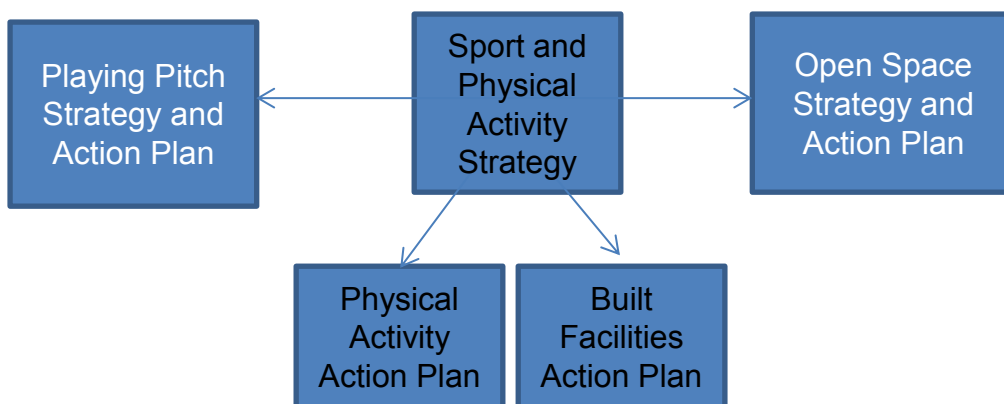
1. The action plan and Playing Pitch Assessment Report.

## 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the completion of the draft Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and outline recommendations and key points raised by the report.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 In 2012, the Council commissioned Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP) to produce a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) in line with Sport England requirements and was assessed under their previous guidance 'towards a level playing field: A guide to the production of playing pitch strategies'.
- 2.2 In parallel, a Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (OSAP) and Wolverhampton Sport Development and Investment Strategy (WSDIS) were produced and adopted by Cabinet. These three strategies form a suite of documents that have since informed investment in playing pitches, open space and built sports facilities across the city.
- 2.3 Since the production of these strategies, the landscape has changed significantly and there is an increasing need to review the usefulness of corporate assets and to consider disposals, change of use or assets transfers on unused or unrequired land. An increasing population and business growth within the city is also adding pressure to this as the need to improve the housing offer and provide land for business use is a growing concern. This is not unique to just City Council assets and other landowners are also looking to use their land in new ways.
- 2.4 This report focuses specifically on the PPS but it is important to note that an updated Open Space action plan will be presented to Corporate Landlord Board at a future meeting as will a new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy that will replace the WSDIS. The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy will focus on increasing physical activity and the impact this will have on the health of the city. A Built Facilities Action Plan will sit under this strategy which will identify key investment opportunities for sport and physical activity. The relationship between these strategies is shown in the diagram below:



- 2.5 Policy R5 of the adopted Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (2006) states that playing pitches should be protected from development unless it can be demonstrated, with reference to an up-to-date needs assessment, that the pitches are no longer required to meet local demand. National planning guidance also expects any open space, sport and recreation planning obligations required by a local authority to be justified with reference to a needs assessment. The Playing Pitch Strategy, together with the Open Space Strategy and Action plan and Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, form a rigorous and up-to-date source of needs assessment evidence. This evidence will be used to make planning decisions affecting built sport facilities and playing fields and will inform future planning policy.
- 2.6 The PPS provides a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities between 2015 and 2020. The PPS covers the following types of pitches used for outdoor sport:
- Football pitches
  - Cricket pitches
  - Rugby league pitches
  - Rugby union pitches
  - Artificial grass pitches
  - Bowling greens
  - Tennis courts
  - Netball courts
  - Cycle tracks
- 2.7 The PPS identifies current levels of provision in the area, across the public, education, voluntary and commercial sectors, and compares this with current and likely future levels of demand.
- 2.8 Pitch assessments were also conducted and undertaken using a variety of methods including site visits, non-technical assessments and user feedback. Pitch quality primarily influences the carrying capacity of a site; for example poor drainage and poor maintenance may lead a pitch to be assessed as poor therefore limiting games per week that can take place without detrimental effect.
- 2.9 The PPS outcome for the Council is to see the provision of a range of good quality and accessible facilities, services and opportunities that:
- Reflect the nature of the city
  - Maximise the strengths of the voluntary sports sector
  - Increase participation in sport and physical activity
  - Contribute to an overall improvement in health and wellbeing

### **3.0 Key Findings**

- 3.1 There are 172 grass football pitches within Wolverhampton across 83 sites. Of these, 129 are available at some level for community use. 49 of these are on school sites. Overall, 13 football pitches are poor quality, whilst 90 are standard and 26 are good.

- 3.2 There is spare capacity to accommodate adult football teams both now and in the future but there is a predicted shortfall of youth 11 v 11 in the future based on predicted growth and the current shortfall of one match session. This can be accommodated by changing unused adult pitches to 11 v 11 youth.
- 3.3 There are 15 grass wicket cricket squares, 11 of which are available for community use. In addition there are 9 standalone non turf wicket pitches.
- 3.4 No wickets are overplayed and there is an overall surplus of 0.5 wickets across the city. However there is a shortfall of 0.5 wickets in the Bilston area.
- 3.5 There are four senior and one mini rugby union pitch across four sites. All pitches are rated as standard. There is spare capacity on mini rugby pitches at two school sites but there is no spare capacity for senior pitches. The pitches at Wolverhampton Rugby Union Football Club are overplayed by six matches per week.
- 3.6 There is one rugby league pitch in the city at Moreton Community High School, this is assessed as standard and has spare capacity.
- 3.7 There are four full sized sand based artificial pitches in Wolverhampton. The sand based pitch at Heath Park Business and Enterprise College will be rebuilt as a 3G artificial pitch and will not be suitable for hockey use. Supply is deemed adequate enough to meet demand for both senior and junior hockey.
- 3.8 There are 2 full sized 3G artificial pitches available for community use in the city, both are assessed as good quality. On the basis that 267 teams are playing competitive football in the city, in order to satisfy training demand, there is a recommended need for at least five full size 3G pitches. However, new 3G pitch developments at Codsall High School and Sporting Khalsa in Willenhall, Walsall may satisfy some of this demand due to their proximity to the Wolverhampton boundary.
- 3.9 There are 22 crown green bowling greens in Wolverhampton across 20 sites. 14 are assessed as good quality and the remainder are assessed as standard. There is spare capacity for clubs to increase use of their home greens at the majority of sites.
- 3.10 There are a total of 122 tennis courts across 26 sites, 72 of which are available for community use. 34 courts are assessed as good, 33 are standard and 5 are rated as poor.
- 3.11 Use of park courts is more common than in other local authorities and no education sites are available to the community report any regular demand.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

- 4.1 The PPS recommends that Wolverhampton should pursue three strategic objectives. These are outlined in the table below:

**Objective 1:** To protect the existing supply of outdoor sports facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs

**Recommendations:**

- a. Ensure, through the use of the Playing Pitch Strategy, that sports facilities are protected through the implementation of policy.
- b. Secure tenure and access to sites through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- c. Maximise community use of outdoor sports facilities where there is a need to do so.

**OBJECTIVE 2** To enhance outdoor sports facilities through improving quality and management of sites

**Recommendations:**

- d. Improve pitch quality on poor quality sites.
- e. Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites.
- f. Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding
- g. Secure developer contributions.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** To provide new outdoor sports facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

**Recommendations:**

- h. Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current pitch stock
- i. Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

4.2 An action plan is included in the PPS that shows how Wolverhampton can best deliver these recommendations.

## 5.0 Financial implications

5.1 There are no immediate financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

5.2 Whilst there are a range of suggested costs outlined in the action plan, the action plan is a City plan and suggested improvements to facilities would be the responsibility of external partners and the Council. Any projects which fall under Council responsibilities will follow the appropriate governance procedures for approval.

5.3 The information outlined in the action plan will be used to inform future planning contributions and funding applications by the Council and other partners.  
[GS/21122015/Y]

## 6.0 Legal implications

6.1 There are no immediate legal implications from this report. [RB/04012015/W]

## **7.0 Equalities implications**

7.1 The consultation undertaken was an integral part of the PPS and all clubs and organisations involved with playing pitches within the identified sports were consulted. A main aim of the PPS is to highlight areas deficient in playing pitch provision and to recommend ways of achieving equal access for all to a sufficient quality and quantity of sports pitches of different types.

## **8.0 Environmental implications**

8.1 Any environmental implications would be addressed within a planning application should this be required for the site.

## **9.0 Human resources implications**

9.1 There are no human resources implications

## **10.0 Corporate landlord implications**

10.1 This report will assist in informing any proposed disposal strategy for sites and also any future planning proposals.

10.2 Whilst there are a range of suggested costs outlined in the action plan, the action plan is a city plan and suggested improvements to facilities would be the responsibility of external partners and the Council. Any project which would fall under Council responsibilities would be reported on a case by case basis to the Corporate Landlord Board for approval.

## **11.0 Schedule of background papers**

11.1 [Draft Wolverhampton Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan \(KKP, Oct 2015\)](#)  
[Draft Wolverhampton Playing Pitch Assessment Report \(KKP, Oct 2015\)](#)



# Cabinet Meeting

## 13 January 2016

<b>Report title</b>	Active Travel Strategy	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Peter Bilson City Assets	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Nick Edwards, City Assets	
<b>Originating service</b>	Transportation	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Tim Philpot Tel Email	Professional Lead – Transport Strategy 01902 555465 Tim.philpot@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Place Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board Vibrant and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel	14 September 2015 22 September 2015 1 October 2015

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### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Agree the adoption and implementation of the Active Travel Strategy.

### Recommendations for noting:

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. That implementation of the Active Travel Strategy has wide-ranging implications for future deployment of resources and decision-making.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 This report details the development of an Active Travel Strategy (the Strategy) for Wolverhampton, and seeks its adoption.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Concerns about the consequences of high levels of private motor traffic including the economic impact of congestion, safety, poor air quality and noise have been instrumental in encouraging Government policy to promote alternative means of transport through initiatives such as the Local Sustainable Travel Fund (LSTF).
- 2.2 Concurrently, concern about obesity has grown on the national and local agenda, and Wolverhampton has adopted obesity as its principal Public Health focus. The role inactive lifestyles play in obesity has prompted interest in promoting active travel as a means to addressing this.
- 2.3 In response to these issues, an Active Travel Strategy for Wolverhampton has been drafted. In addition to providing direction for decisions on active travel issues this was intended to support the case for future bids to funding opportunities. Resources for this project were secured from the Public Health Transformation Fund (PHTF) and supplemented by contribution from the LSTF.

## **3.0 Development of the Active Travel Strategy**

- 3.1 The Active Travel Strategy is built around a vision for Wolverhampton to become “a city where active travel modes become the preferred choice, supported by a connected network of high quality and inviting cycle routes and walkways”. The scale of task involved in achieving this vision is such that the Strategy assumes a timescale of 20 years.
- 3.2 The Strategy is rooted in an Evidence Base, which is critical to the integrity of any future bids for resources for active travel. The Evidence Base includes information on the health and activity patterns of the local population, and establishes these key facts:
- Participation in sport and recreational exercise continues to fall behind regional and national averages.
  - 40.6% of children travel to school by car and only 2% cycle.
  - Obesity continues to climb, with excess weight affecting almost 70% of adults and over 40% of children (at age 11).
  - 65% of all journeys to work are made by car despite 45% of all journeys being less than 5km in length.
- 3.3 While the Strategy seeks to influence the well-being of all residents, demographic information has been used to identify three specific “target markets”, so as to direct action in ways most likely to be successful. These are:-
- The “near” market – defined as individuals currently cycling and walking for leisure purposes who could be incentivised to do more. A ‘near market’ area has been defined as a geographical target area in the west of Wolverhampton.

- “Hard to reach” groups – defined as those living in areas suffering from multiple deprivation. These areas encompass low-wage and economically inactive communities, which have very high levels of people being overweight or obese who undertake very low levels of physical activity.
- Children and disabled People – A citywide approach will be taken that focuses on promotion and marketing, as well as development of appropriate infrastructure, to give children the skills and confidence to walk and cycle more safely in the local urban environment.

- 3.4 Following the collation of the Evidence Base, an exercise in Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement was undertaken. Stakeholder engagement events were held at the beginning and draft stages of the strategy development process. An online/smart phone survey was conducted promoted via social media, partners’ websites, the City Council Consultation portal, and links directly emailed to a range of local organisations, with follow-up calls undertaken. The survey was also conducted face-to-face at the annual City Show, and sent to members of the public who have attended local cycling activities previously.
- 3.5 Responses to the consultation from pedestrians identified that barriers to walking more were mainly connected with practicality, for example the need to visit multiple destinations, transport others, and to carry goods. Suggestions for ways to overcome these barriers included infrastructure improvements such as better crossing places, and recreational improvements such as leisure routes and supported walking groups.
- 3.6 Responses from cyclists identified mainly safety concerns relating to the available infrastructure, including speed of motor traffic, lack of segregation, and poor surfaces. They recommended a variety of routes both on- and off-road, along with appropriate signage, mapping and promotion.
- 3.7 Following analysis of the consultation survey results, a review of the existing infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists was undertaken. This concluded that there was considerable scope for improvement particularly in the cycling infrastructure. It recommended a route-based approach connecting up the existing provision into a network enabling cyclists and pedestrians to access all parts of the city safely.
- 3.8 Taking into account the Evidence Base, Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation, and Infrastructure Review, alongside a range of examples of good practice, the Strategy was developed in three sections: Pedestrians, Cyclists, and Marketing & Engagement. The principles underpinning these are contained in appendix 1.

#### **4.0 Implementation of the Active Travel Strategy**

- 4.1 A significant part of implementing the Strategy relates to development of appropriate infrastructure. This necessitates seeking opportunities both for funding and for synergy with other related infrastructure projects.

- 4.2 The Local Sustainable Travel Fund has over recent years provided a source of funding for both infrastructure in the form of new cycling and pedestrian routes between Bilston and the city centre and marketing and engagement activity through the Smart Network, Smarter Choices programme. This will be complemented by development of the Bilston Urban Village providing an opportunity to integrate active travel into a new road network and connect it into the adjacent urban centre.
- 4.3 Wolverhampton is also engaged along with the other Black Country authorities in the Managing Short Trips programme, to develop the pedestrian and cycling network using both canal towpaths and on-road schemes. Funded through the Local Growth Fund, this provides significant opportunity for enhancement of the infrastructure over the next three years.
- 4.4 A pipeline of schemes is being prepared working with partners such as Wolverhampton University so that as funding opportunities are made available a successful submission can be developed and tailored according to the requirements of the fund.
- 4.5 The Strategy recommends development of a “flagship” route as an early priority to focus interest on the vision. To support marketing and promotion Hugh Porter, local resident and champion cyclist, has been approached to act as the Active Travel Champion for Wolverhampton

## **5.0 Financial implications**

- 5.1 Adoption and implementation of the Strategy will require considerable ongoing investment of capital and revenue resources yet to be ascertained. While no specific figures can be given at this stage, the West Midlands Cycle Charter, recently adopted by all West Midlands Authorities, contains an aspiration to invest a minimum of £10 per head of population annually. This equates to an indicative figure of £2.5 million per year for Wolverhampton.
- 5.2 Financial resources will be predominantly used in developing dedicated infrastructure for active travel in the form of a network of purpose-built cycling and walking routes connecting all parts of the city, particularly major trip generators. Revenue funding will also be needed for support and promotion of active travel.
- 5.3 A key source of funding will be grants from Government, such as the current Local Growth Fund and the recent Local Sustainable travel Fund. In demonstrating Wolverhampton’s commitment to active travel, the Strategy will be an essential tool to support bids for funding. [TT/02122015/X]

## **6.0 Legal implications**

- 6.1 Implementation of the Strategy may involve changes to highway space allocation and speed limits, requiring Traffic Regulation Orders. [KR/22122015/T]

## **7.0 Equalities implications**

7.1 Implementation of the ATS aims to create wider opportunities for travel which are low cost and open to all. It seeks to address particularly barriers to active travel arising from deprivation, which appear to correlate with incidence of obesity. It also identifies children and the disabled as one of three key target groups for whom the Strategy seeks to create and promote healthier options for travel.

## **8.0 Environmental implications**

8.1 Implementation of the ATS aims to increase travel by environmentally benign modes.

## **9.0 Human resources implications**

9.1 The ATS is anticipated to sit alongside the Staff Travel Plan and further promote alternative travel modes to the private motor vehicle.

9.2 Implementation of the Strategy will of necessity draw on existing staff resources for design, development and management of projects.

## **10.0 Corporate landlord implications**

10.1 There are no corporate landlord implications in the development of the ATS.

## **11.0 Schedule of background papers**

11.1 There are no background papers to this report.

**APPENDIX 1: Principles for Walking, Cycling, and Marketing & Engagement Elements of the Active Travel Strategy**

a. Walking

Guiding Principle	Where we want to be	Guiding Principles
Our Routes	Safe, pleasant-to-use route infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide high quality and well lit pedestrian footways on all highway routes</li> <li>• Have conveniently located and well-designed crossing facilities suitable for all users.</li> <li>• Provide more, well located, greenways and off road pedestrian routes to increase walking options where possible.</li> </ul>
Network Development	High-quality networks with access from neighbourhoods and transport hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link routes up in coherent, legible networks</li> <li>• Review and improve Public Rights Of Way and alleys / connecting routes to encourage walking to key destinations such as schools and local shopping.</li> <li>• Provide open and easy access by walking to bus and Metro stops and the local bus and railway stations</li> <li>• Improved pedestrian connections to jobs, education and local services</li> <li>• Ensure seamless end-to-end journeys where walking can be easily accommodated</li> <li>• New development to be designed to include high quality infrastructure that supports walking and cycling</li> </ul>
Public Realm	To have an inviting and engaging urban environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the design, lighting, landscaping and general environment provides a feeling of safety and security</li> <li>• Have a more 'open' approach that allows people to walk freely along the routes of their choice – requiring a review of on-street furniture and the use of guard rail.</li> <li>• Implement a high quality design that has the pedestrian as the key user</li> </ul>

Disabled Access	Ensuring access for all users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance user needs with intelligent use of infrastructure design – e.g. contrasting colours in footways; well-located and designed crossing facilities with adaptations for disabled users as appropriate.</li> <li>• Ensure close involvement with disabled user groups to ensure appropriate facilities and assist in addressing conflicting needs.</li> </ul>
Shared Space	Rebalancing the environment to make it calm and safe for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce targeted interventions where traffic levels and space allow</li> <li>• Balance the needs of all users and learn from experience in the design of the spaces</li> </ul>
Traffic speeds	Attractive neighbourhood streets and spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicle speed reduction measures in residential areas and the implementation of additional 20 mph areas across the city as set out in the Centro cycle charter</li> <li>• Community led traffic speed awareness and enforcement initiatives</li> <li>• Speed of traffic on the principal road network to be considered in terms of impact on community severance and connectivity as well as traffic flow and safety</li> </ul>
Information	Everyone be able to access information to enable clear way-finding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide high quality and frequent on and off highway signage</li> <li>• Keep maps of routes and facilities up to date</li> <li>• Provide information in both paper and digital forms</li> <li>• Provide mile markers where appropriate on leisure routes to encourage more walking for health.</li> <li>• Make imaginative use of new technology and trends to encourage more active modes of travel e.g. counting steps and walking as a mode of transport</li> </ul>

b. Cycling

	Where we want to be	Guiding Principles
Routes	Safe, pleasant-to-use cycle route infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The segregation or separation for cyclists, where traffic speeds or volumes require this and where the highway space allows;</li> <li>• Prevent inappropriate on-street parking by upgrading the advisory on-road cycle lanes to routes supported by Traffic Regulation Orders that can be enforced.</li> <li>• More greenways and off road routes accompanied by legible and signposted links to these routes with a view to increasing leisure cycling options;</li> <li>• Changes in junction layouts with cycle friendly design to tackle the higher profile, difficult locations;</li> <li>• All future highway infrastructure schemes to be designed with cyclists considered as equal users of the highway.</li> </ul>
Network Development	High-quality networks with access from neighbourhoods and transport hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a ‘hub and spoke’ network of cycle routes using the existing radial highway network</li> <li>• Link routes up in coherent, legible and logical networks</li> <li>• Integrate cycling with the wider public transport network and provide secure parking facilities at rail, bus and tram stations</li> <li>• Develop the route network to prioritise improved connectivity to jobs, education and local services</li> </ul>
Shared Space	Rebalancing the environment to make it calm and safe for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce targeted interventions where allowed for by traffic levels and space</li> <li>• Balance the needs of all users and learn from experience in the design of the spaces</li> </ul>
Disabled Users	Ensuring access for all users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligent use of infrastructure design to balance user needs – e.g. contrast colours in footways; well-located and designed crossing facilities with adaptations for disabled users as appropriate.</li> <li>• Ensure close involvement with disabled user groups to ensure appropriate facilities and assist in addressing conflicting needs.</li> </ul>
Traffic speeds	Attractive neighbourhood streets and spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicle speed reduction measures in residential areas and the implementation of additional 20 mph areas across the city as set out in the Centro cycle charter</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community led traffic speed awareness and enforcement initiatives</li> <li>• Speed of traffic on the principal road network to be considered in terms of impact on community severance and connectivity as well as traffic flow and safety</li> <li>• Install accident reduction measures at conflict points</li> </ul>
Parking	Provision of safe and secure parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure there is seamless, easy, end-to-end journeys</li> <li>• Extensive provision of safe and secure parking along with other facilities, such as showers at key locations –workplaces, retail areas, transport hubs</li> </ul>
Information	Everyone be able to access information to enable clear way-finding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information in both paper and online forms</li> <li>• Provide high quality and frequent on and off highway signage</li> <li>• Keep maps of routes and facilities up to date</li> <li>• Provide information in both paper and online forms</li> <li>• Provide Mile Markers where appropriate on leisure routes to encourage more walking for health.</li> <li>• Make imaginative use of new technology and trends to encourage more active modes of travel e.g. counting steps and walking as a mode of transport</li> </ul>

### c. Marketing & Engagement

	Where we want to be	Guiding principles
Promotion	Cycling and walking are recognised as a safe, effective, healthy and enjoyable way to travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focussed promotional activities towards key target groups to encourage change</li> <li>• 12 month event calendar that combines 'Go Active' with the wider activities across the city</li> <li>• One shared promotional portal for all 'active' initiatives such as led walks/cycle training/led rides</li> </ul>
Training	For the whole population to hold the tools to be able to walk and cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcoming barriers by providing the equipment needed to ensure participation, such as walking groups or 'Bikeability' cycle training</li> <li>• Provision of adult cycle training and 'Wheels to Work' schemes</li> <li>• Provision of cycle maintenance courses</li> <li>• Driver training – the Transport for London Exchanging Places initiatives gives HGV</li> </ul>

		drivers and cyclists the opportunity to appreciate the others experience on the highway. Some local authorities and large organisations have this type of training as a requirement of employment or as part of the procurement process.
Support	Gender, age and cost will not be barriers to walking or cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcoming barriers by providing appropriate support and messages</li> <li>• Promote initiatives such as the 'Bostin Bikes' programme to provide people with affordable access to a bike, safety accessories and cycle training.</li> <li>• Supporting local cycle and walk champions with training for them to provide appropriate activities in their communities</li> </ul>
Activities	Providing more opportunities to give walking and cycling a try	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of local events, led cycle rides and walks</li> <li>• Provision of cycle maintenance classes, cycle buddy schemes and general business, school and community support</li> <li>• Cycle hire schemes in public places</li> <li>• Training and promotion on 'how to share spaces' to include speed awareness, use of bells, being visible and generally being considerate and respectful.</li> </ul>