

EFFICIENCY PLAN

WYRE FOREST FORWARD – OUR EFFICIENCY PLAN 2016-19

This is Wyre Forest District Council's efficiency plan for 2016-19. It is called "Wyre Forest Forward", the transformation programme that we have been running since 2012.

Wyre Forest Forward is a review of all aspects of the Council. It is not just about saving money. It's a comprehensive programme of transformation and includes changing our ways of working and culture. The review will help us to deliver our [Corporate Plan 2014 - 2019](#). The Corporate Plan has two priorities:

- o **Support you to contribute to a successful local economy.**
- o **Support you to live in clean, green and safe communities.**

How we are changing

The Council has been, and continues to be, under severe financial pressure. This has made us look even harder at the value of what we do and how we do it. We therefore apply an approach called Systems Thinking to improve services by focusing on delivering exactly what the customer wants and at the first point of contact.

Our purposes

Everything we do is linked to our [purposes](#) which support the delivery of our Corporate Plan and our customers are at the heart of this. We want to improve community well-being and economic prosperity, but we have fewer resources. We will therefore work with others, including community groups, to fulfil our purposes and move forward.

Wyre Forest Forward in action

We are actively applying Systems Thinking across the Council. We're looking at everything we do and considering how we go forward in a more focused and efficient way. Our employees are engaged in this process at every level.

The Council has an excellent track record in delivering savings, with almost £5m achieved from 2010 to 2015.

The Council's approach to aligning its expenditure with income over time has successfully used three main levers:

- a) **Making the Council as efficient as it can be** in its structures and external and internal processes. This is driven through the Wyre Forest Forward transformation programme, supported by work to ensure that services are on line and "digital by default" and by the ICT strategy;

b) **Implementing alternative delivery structures** where this represents best value. Examples include the shared services that have been implemented since 2010 and the Council's strong track record in localism, transferring responsibility for assets and services to local organisations, including town and parish councils;

c) **Growing its income.** For example, the depot has increased its external income forecast by circa £250,000 since 2013/14, while over £160k a year of income has been generated from tenancies and ICT support charges at Wyre Forest House. Another innovative example is the Evergreen Fund initiative, which was approved in July 2014. It will provide a sustainable source of funding for future investments in projects that produce a revenue return.

The future

We will **continue to use these three levers of efficiency, alternative delivery structures and growing income.** The targets to deliver efficiency savings under Wyre Forest Forward are as follows:

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Targets: minimum Wyre Forest Forward savings	£261k	£334k	£1,008k

There will be opportunities for more shared services in the future, and we will actively seek opportunities for Wyre Forest District Council to host them in line with our strengths. There is not a dogmatic approach that seeks externalisation or shared services, as has been seen with the recent decision to bring the HR function in house from April 2016 when the current service level agreement with the County Council comes to an end.

The Council is not joining the West Midlands Combined Authority at this time as a non-constituent member. The devolution deal for the West Midlands was announced in November and includes some elements that might be relevant to the footprint of three local enterprise partnerships, which would therefore include North Worcestershire. This may have an impact on economic development and regeneration or other aspects relevant to this efficiency plan.

Devolution proposals for Worcestershire accompanied by a public services leaders' board have been submitted to Government and are due to be discussed with Government Ministers shortly. Some of the proposals for public service reform could contribute to this efficiency plan. Examples include:

- a pioneering service delivery model focused around a single vehicle comprised of resource from multiple organisations, working to coordinate the public sector approach to moving individuals and families from dependency to independence. The pilot went live in Redditch in January 2016 with the expectation of roll out across the county towards the end of 2016/early 2017;
- to consider working towards ensuring all principal authorities in Worcestershire that are not already members of the Place Partnership commission and procure estates

services through the partnership by late 2016/early 2017. This could affect as a minimum, activities such as facilities management and property surveyors.

The Council has taken positive steps to empower parish councils and local groups to deliver more services. The Council will continue to support this local devolution to increase the pace of change to help preserve services, including the excellent opportunities for joint working following creation of Kidderminster Town Council.

There is an increased impetus for growing the Council's income:

- a) growing business rates income in line with government forecasts so the local economy can benefit from the funding we are able to retain under the changing regime;
- b) growing council tax income by supporting housing growth, including through the review of the local development plan;
- c) increasing fees and charges where possible ahead of inflation. This ensures that users of services contribute more to support those services than council tax payers as a whole;
- d) continuing the Council's commercial income from a variety of sources such as ticket sales and events, rents, work undertaken for other organisations and private households, advertising and sponsorship.

Next steps

Under this efficiency plan, the Council will continue on the trajectory towards becoming a much leaner organisation. This will require bold and far-reaching decisions by the Council in the coming period including changes that are likely to be challenging for the public and councillors alike.

Given that these changes need to be implemented before April 2018, the council has two years in which to agree a programme of reform and implement it. In order to ensure that there can be confidence about the Council's financial viability in 2018-19, the Cabinet will take relevant decisions no later than the end of 2016 on changes within its remit, while any that require full Council approval will feature in the Financial Strategy prepared in the latter part of 2016 for 2017-2020.