



Our Annual Report

Key achievements
2023/24



Wyre Forest
District Council

Welcome to our **annual report**

In 2023 we launched a new Corporate Plan. This is like a roadmap for the council, setting out what we want to do over the next four years. Our vision is for the district to be 'a safe, vibrant and clean place to live, work and visit.'

We have priorities we are working towards to achieve this vision and we are proud to report we have already made progress on some of them. This report gives you the highlights.



Economic Growth and Regeneration



We are still focussing on economic growth and regeneration. Since 2020 we have secured £45 million for regeneration projects. These will help create a more vibrant and sustainable community.

Our transformation of the former Magistrates Court in Kidderminster into a creative hub is progressing well and due to be completed in December 2024.

The project includes a complete renovation and redevelopment of the public area on Worcester Street and Coronation Gardens. It is being funded through the Government's Future High Streets Fund.

Kidderminster will be better connected thanks to our Worcester Street project. The demolition of the empty shops was completed in January and creation of new winding steps and an urban park at the top end of Worcester Street is underway. The project is being funded by the Government's Future High Streets Fund and Brownfield Land Release Fund.

Four other key sites in Kidderminster are also on the agenda. We are having a feasibility study on the development of the former Crown House, Wyre Forest Glades, vacant buildings in Worcester Street and Market Street site.

Work is also underway on the redevelopment of Kidderminster Town Hall. We secured the grant from the Government's Levelling Up fund to transform the listed building into a bright new cultural, music and community meeting space. The building is owned by Kidderminster Town Council who is delivering the project in partnership with us.

We are bringing the Grade II listed Piano Building in the middle of Kidderminster town centre back into use. Thanks to funding from the Government's Levelling Up Fund we have been able to buy the building and we are planning to transform it into a mix of food and drinks spaces on the ground floor and office and co-working spaces on the other floors.

In Stourport we are working with the Government's High Street Task Force to develop and implement a vision for the regeneration of the centre of the town.

We offered a free parking scheme in our three towns to improve accessibility and encourage local shopping and business visits over the Christmas period. This was as well as an hour's free parking scheme we introduced in Bewdley during the work to build flood defences in the town.



Securing Financial Sustainability for Services the Local Communities Value



As budgets have become even tighter, we have continued working hard to make sure we have enough money to keep things running smoothly. We have been innovative and found new ways to fund projects and involved the community in our spending plans. We are also being really careful with how we manage our money to make sure it goes on the important things that help everyone in our community.

We are going to need to make more savings. We set our budget in February 2024. It included proposals for income growth to reduce the funding gap and reduce the need to dip into our reserves.

We asked you, businesses, stakeholders, colleagues and councillors what you felt we should be focussing on over the next four years. This consultation helped us shape our Corporate Plan 2023-27 and resulted in our three main priorities for the district.

We recognise that councillors are well placed to know what initiatives, projects and activities are most beneficial to their local communities. Our Community Leadership Fund gave each of them £1,000 for schemes in their ward.

Through securing grant funding we have been able to help save energy. A Sport England grant allowed Wyre Forest Leisure Centre to buy a cover for the pool, reducing heating and cleaning costs and conserving water.

We are continuing to look to grow our commercial income including looking at how we can make money in the future by renting out more commercial spaces.

And we are providing more digital services. We rolled out a new cashless parking app across district council owned car parks. This provides an easy option for motorists and helps us work better, which saves money and makes it easier to collect money.



A Clean, Safe and Green Place to Live, Work, and Visit



We want you to be proud of where you live. We are committed to keeping the district clean, safe and providing a green environment. This is important for everyone's wellbeing and the sustainability of the local area.

We took part in the 'Great British Spring Clean'.

We held volunteer litter picks at our nature reserves to promote community involvement in maintaining our local green spaces. In the Autumn we launched our 'Adopt a Street' scheme. This is about supporting individuals and groups, who take pride in their area, to litter pick an area of public land three times a year. Almost 200 streets were adopted last year and the number continues to grow.

Work has been continuing on our Brinton Park Heritage Lottery Project. The project will restore the park for future generations and enhance our local cultural heritage. The bandstand in the park was renovated, refurbished, and painted and we are continuing to work on our Wyre Forest Wild project.

This unique project will seek to enhance one of our greatest assets which are the numerous nature reserves we managed across the district.

These ambitious plans will seek to create a network of pathways and cycle tracks throughout the local nature reserves to increase community interaction, raise awareness of the natural environment and local habitat, whilst increasing commercial opportunities and revenue generation.

Clear plans are in place to include our network of trees and we have already planted more than 600 this year.

The government plan to introduce weekly food waste collections from April 2025 for businesses and April 2026 for households. We have been working with partners to plan how this will be introduced and will publish any updates in due course.



A Clean, Safe and Green Place to Live, Work, and Visit



The Severn Valley has a lot to offer tourists. Thanks to external funding we launched a Visit Severn Valley website to promote the area and boost local businesses. Our parks and open spaces continue to be well used. They hosted more than 30 events thanks to our support to businesses, community organisations and charities. Our town councils were also given grant funding to hold events.

There is a need for housing in the district and we have been working with our communities and developers to make sure there is a good mix of affordable options available. Planning permission was approved for 712 homes and 152 of these were affordable. The largest site was for 329 dwellings at Pearl Lane, Stourport. Developers finished many new homes too. In total 369 were completed and 119 of these were affordable (either for rent or shared ownership).

We also have a shortage of homes for people needing short-term accommodation. Work began on our new residential building in Castle Road, Kidderminster which will help provide temporary homes.

Our Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan was launched in January. We are already working on some of the projects. We are installing LED lighting in car parks and exploring renewable energy projects including a potential solar farm. We are also installing almost

200 electric charging points in our car parks across the district. We have also been handing out grants to residents to make their home more energy efficient. More than £440,000 was given out for improvements like cavity wall insulation, loft insulation and solar panels. It was made possible through the Government's sustainable warmth funding.

Our community safety projects have been focussing on tackling anti-social behaviour. Thanks to funding grants totalling £100,000 we have been able to use tools like mobile CCTV.



Our achievements included:

Dealt with **1,127 applications for housing assistance** – 552 needed further ongoing support



Gave housing advice to **10,934 households**



26,900 followers across all social media platforms



Recycling collected: **9,309 tonnes**



Collected **97.23% council tax**



Dealt with **869 reports of flytipping**



131 homelessness cases prevented



Dealt with **46,526 customer enquiries**



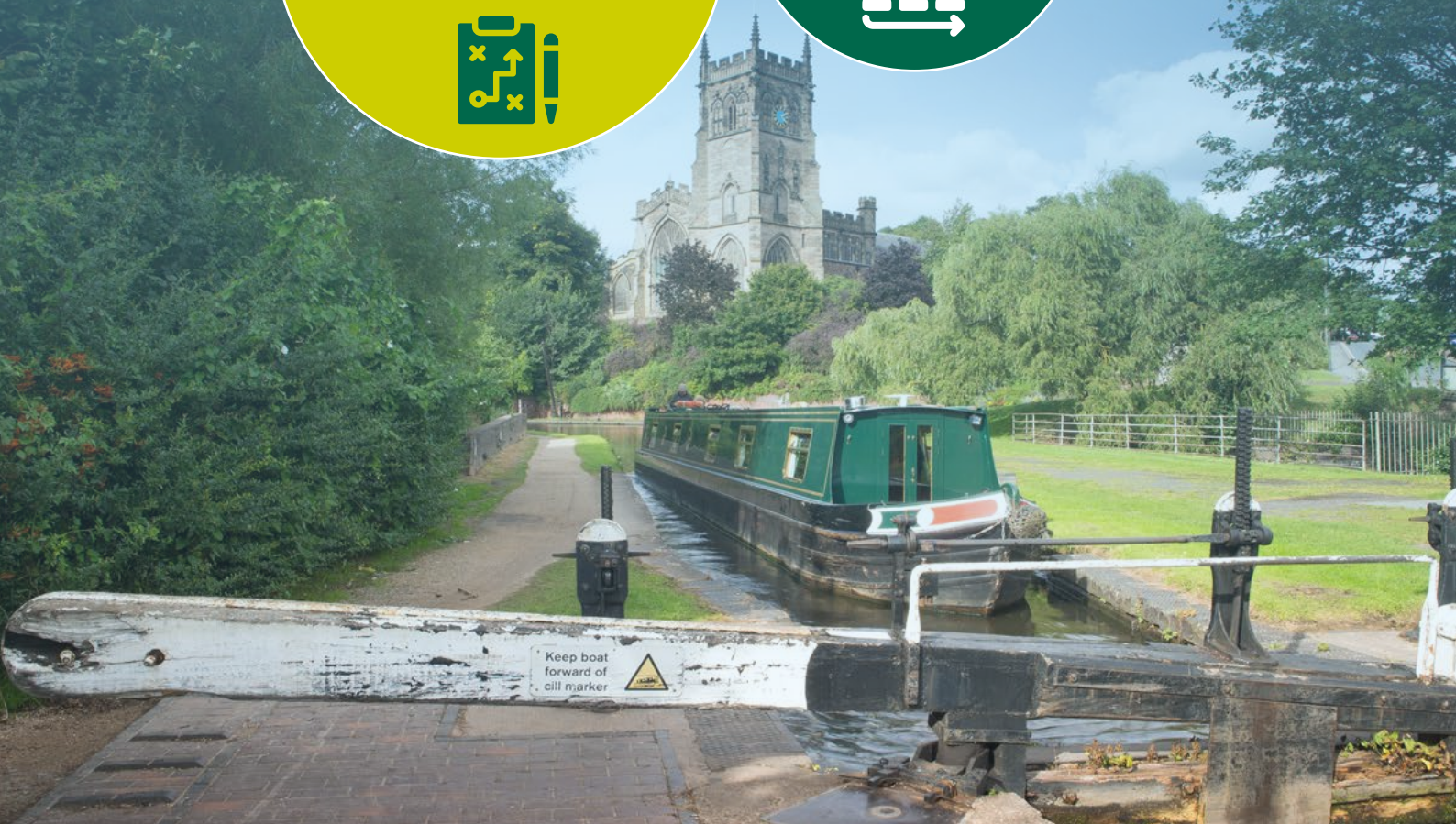
Garden waste collected: **3,043 tonnes**



Processed **712 planning applications** and investigated **192 complaints of planning breaches**



214,000 visitors to Bewdley Museum



Our achievements included:

Residual waste collected and taken to energy from waste plant not landfill (converted back into energy):



Supported 73 local good causes with fundraising through the Wyre Forest Community Lottery



Over 2500 volunteer hours were spent on our nature reserves working with the Rangers team.



Recycling rate: **35%**



Planted **661 trees**



Through projects funded by WFDC, **159 businesses received advice, support or grants.** (These were either through our joint county wide projects, the growth hub or directly with NWEDR).



Things to look out for in 2024/25

Completion of the
**Creative Hub in
Worcester Street**



**Electric Vehicle
Charging Points**
installed in council
owned car parks



**Start work on
Brinton Park** using
National Lottery
Heritage Funding



Completion of
**Castle Road temporary
accommodation
development**



**Completing the
Public Realm space**
on the former
Woolworths and
Mega Value sites



**Investing more
resources** in tackling
environmental crime
and illegal parking



Creating a
**new litter
blitz team**



Watch out for news
about **weekly food
waste collection**

