

**The City of Wolverhampton Council (45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield,  
Wolverhampton, WV11 3AW)  
Compulsory Purchase Order 2019**

**The Housing Act 1985  
And the Acquisition of Land Act 1981**

**Statement of the Case of the Acquiring Authority**

Dated 1 December 2020

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This is the Statement of Case of City of Wolverhampton Council ('the Council') in its capacity as acquiring authority for the making of the City of Wolverhampton Council (45 Springhill Road) Compulsory Purchase Order 2 April 2019 ('the Order') pursuant to the Council's resolution for the compulsory acquisition (Appendix 1) of the property situated 45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton WV11 3AW ('the Order Property').
- 1.2 The Order was submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government ('the Secretary of State') for confirmation and the Order was sealed on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020, with receipt of objections requested by 2 March 2020 (Appendix 2). One objection to the Order was received. The Planning Inspectorate has by way of an e-mail dated 26 November 2020 (Appendix 3) confirmed the intention to hold a public Inquiry into the objection.
- 1.3 This Statement sets out the Council's case for the making of the Order as will be put before the Inquiry. Reference should also be made to the Council's Statement of Reasons for making the Order (Appendix 4).

## **2. Description of the Order Land**

- 2.1 The Order land comprises of 45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield, 'Wolverhampton, WV11 3AW, which has been empty Since 2015.
- 2.2 On 2 April 2019, the Resources Panel of City of Wolverhampton Council ("the Council") resolved to acquire the Order land for housing purposes under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985. It was resolved to make a Compulsory Purchase Order to acquire the Order land and authorised its acquisition by agreement in advance of the confirmation of the Order where possible.
- 2.3 The Order land is in the Wednesfield North Ward, in the North West Parliamentary constituency, approximately 3 miles from Wolverhampton City Centre. It is in an area of predominantly residential property.

2.4 The Order land is a 3-bedroom semi-detached house built around the 1960's. To the front of the property it has a medium sized block paved driveway and a medium sized rear garden, which is very overgrown and unable to gain access due to the large amount of vegetation.

2.5 The property is in a very popular residential area and its deteriorating condition has had a negative impact on the neighbourhood over the years it has remained vacant. It also presents a visual detriment to the local amenities.

### **3. Special Considerations**

3.1 Our Council Plan 2019 – 2024 has a strategic outcome to deliver Better Homes for All (Appendix 5). In order to deliver this, we need to maximise the availability of homes within the City and bring empty homes back into use.

3.2 The Better Homes for All 2019 - 2024, the Housing Strategy for Wolverhampton underpins this commitment and the acquisition of empty properties assists the Council in meeting its objectives as set out in the three key themes:

- Deliver more and better homes
- Ensure Safe and Health Homes
- Provide access to secure homes

3.3 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment sets out the growing overall requirement for housing in Wolverhampton. The Council's Empty Homes Policy and Strategy Action Plan 2019-2024, supports the Council objective to assist in bringing the City's long-term empty homes back into use (Appendix 6).

#### **4. The Case for Compulsory Purchase**

- 4.1 The Order land is situated within an area with little available and affordable social housing and there is proven demand for accommodation both in the neighbourhood and across the City. The Council considers that confirmation of the Order would ensure a qualitative and quantitative housing gain.
- 4.2 The Council asserts that the property will be a source of on-going complaint if it is allowed to remain empty; continue to be a drain on the public purse, is likely to attract nuisance, increase the fear of crime for local residents and have a detrimental effect on the surrounding properties until occupied.
- 4.3 The property is in the Wednesfield North Ward of Wolverhampton. 66% of stock in this ward are owner-occupied, 27% are rented from the council or other social housing providers with the remaining either privately rented, living rent free (for example, in a flat belonging to a relative) or shared ownership.

#### **5. The Need and Demand for Housing in Wolverhampton**

- 5.1 There are over 11400 currently on the waiting list for properties within Wolverhampton of these 1841 have a requirement for 3-bedroom properties. The City of Wolverhampton Council currently have 1163 properties within the Wednesfield North Ward, 280 are 2-bedroom properties, with 270 being 3-bedroom houses (Appendix 7).
- 5.2 During the period of January 2019 to December 2019 City of Wolverhampton Council received a total of 2167 bids from applicants for 3-bedroom properties in Wednesfield North ward. A total of 9 3-bedroom houses was advertised to let during this period receiving 2102 bids, averaging 234 bids per property.
- 5.3 The Council's view is that acquisition of this property will result in renovation and re-use of a property in a popular area of the City. Confirmation of the

Order will provide a valuable unit of accommodation and the removal of the blight will go some way to assisting the increasing general demand in the area. It will result in quantitative gain, as well as addressing the nuisance problems for the immediate neighbours.

## **6. Proposals for the Land and Planning Position**

6.1 Should the Order be confirmed, it is intended that the Order land will be sold on to a preferred developer or Housing Association to complete refurbishment. The disposal by the Council will contain a covenant or contractual clause to ensure the property is refurbished to the Decent Homes Standard within 6 months and brought back into use within a reasonable timescale. Therefore, we are confident in the event the CPO is confirmed the property would be refurbished and occupied within 1 year of the property vesting in the Council and would be made suitable for owner occupation, shared ownership or rental.

6.2 There have been no firm planning proposals for the Order land as it is a renovation rather than a redevelopment issue. Any planning or building regulation approvals will need to be sought by the acquiring developer at the time of purchase.

## **7. Enabling Powers**

7.1 This Compulsory Purchase should be considered on its own merits and is not included with any other property identified for acquisition.

7.2 The consent of the Secretary of State for the Environment required under Section 32 of the Housing Act 1985 is given for the onward disposal of the Order land by The General Consent for the Disposal of Part II Dwelling - Houses 1999.

- 7.3 There are no related matters which require a co-ordinated decision from the Secretary of State.

## **8. Consideration of other Powers**

- 8.1 The Council did use the Maintenance of Land/Building Notice under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 on the Order property, however, while written notification and the notice was served by the Council on the Owners in April 2018, the use of the power did not bring about the re-use of the property, which was and remains the Council's primary objective.

## **9. Background and Chronology of Events**

- 9.1 The Order Property (45 Springhill Road) was first brought to the attention of the Council's Empty Property Team in 2016 and there were a number of interactions made with the Owner by the Council. A visit was made to the property on 4 April 2016 (Appendix 8) and an initial letter was sent to the Owner on 5 April 2016 (Appendix 9).
- 9.2 The Owner responded on 6 April 2016, and confirmed she was residing at a separate address and arranged to meet the Empty Property Officer at the Order property on 7 April 2016. The meeting was cancelled by the Owner on the morning of 7 April 2016.
- 9.3 The Order Property was registered on Land Registry and confirmed the ownership to be MEHRUNNISA ALIKHAN AMED KHAN with the proprietor's address as 45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton (Appendix 10). Investigations with Council Tax confirmed the property has been empty since June 2015 and the liable person was the same as stated on Land Registry with a different correspondence address for the Owner than 45 Springhill Road (Appendix 11).

- 9.4 Further complaints were received on 13 and 22 April 2016, regarding the condition of both the property, land and overhanging trees which were impacting on the surrounding neighbours.
- 9.5 On 26 May 2016, a complaint was received from a neighbour reporting an issue with vermin, which they felt was being caused by the condition of the Order property. An attempt to contact the Owner by telephone on 27 May 2016 was made, but no reply. The Empty Property officer referred the enquiry to the Council's Public Protection team on 1 June 2016 to investigate further (Appendix 12).
- 9.6 A complaint was received 8 June 2016, regarding the condition of the property and land and that possible vermin had been heard within the Order property. An upstairs window on the front elevation was also open causing concern to the neighbours. The Officer contacted the Owner by telephone who advised that she hadn't been very well for 3 weeks and her son would be assisting her with issues regarding the property and would be in contact with the Council to discuss further. No contact was received
- 9.7 The Empty Property officer and an officer from the Council's Public Protection team jointly visited the property on 21 June 2016, and a neighbour provided access to view the rear garden from the 1<sup>st</sup> floor window (Appendix 13). The rear garden was very dense with trees and overgrowth and a build-up of items and post could be seen in the porch and hallway.
- 9.8 On 30 June 2016, a Public Health Act 1936, Section 83 Notice requiring cleansing of a filthy premises was served on the Owner and a Community Protection Warning Notice under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2015, Sections 43 to 58 for the condition and impact the Order property was causing to the Community (Appendix 14).
- 9.9 On 22 September 2016, the Council received a call from the Owner's son who confirmed his Mother did want to clear and sell the property ready for sale and asked the Council to arrange this process. The Council asked the

Owner's Son to make contact by Wednesday 28 September 2016, to arrange access into the Order property, but no call was received

- 9.10 The property was visited on 8 December 2016, and there was no change including any attempt to clear the poor overgrown condition of the rear garden (Appendix 15).
- 9.11 On 2 March 2017, a complaint was received regarding the condition of both the property and rear garden. A letter was sent to the Owner on 21 March 2017, requesting an update on their intentions for the property within 14 days (Appendix 16). A response was received from the Owner on 22 March 2017, and stated it was her intention to clear the property of its contents and sell within the next few months.
- 9.12 A visit was made on 4 August 2017, and it was observed that no progress had been made (Appendix 17). Despite further telephone conversations with the Owner on 11 and 18 August 2017, again assuring the Council of her intention to resolve the ongoing issues at the property no progress had again been made. Correspondence were sent on 23 August 2017, 23 November 2017 and 26 January 2018, requesting the Owners proposals, including external works to both the property and land to be completed prior to enforcement action (Appendix 18).
- 9.13 In light of the failure for the Owners to progress the refurbishment the Council served a Notice under s215 TCPA 1990 on the Owners on 19 April 2018 (Appendix 19) requiring:
- i. Clear rear garden of rubbish and vegetation and bring to a maintainable standard.
  - ii. Re-glaze any broken window panes and ensure property is secure.
  - iii. Remove all waste materials arising to a registered disposal facility.
- 9.14 The Order property was visited on 3 July 2018, and there had been no attempt to comply with the works within the Section 215 Notice, Town and Country Planning Act 1990. A letter was sent to the Owner on 4 July 2018,



confirming there had been non-compliance with the Notice and requesting further information in writing regarding their intention for the property within 28 days, prior to the Council considering a Compulsory Purchase a resolution (Appendix 20). This information was not received.

- 9.15 On 18 July 2018, the Council's Customer Engagement Manager sent a letter on behalf of the Council to Mrs Khan in response to allegations made about Council Officers and the use of inappropriate language towards them. The letter advised Mrs Khan of the process to make any future complaints or if she is dissatisfied with any aspect of the Council's service delivery (Appendix 21).
- 9.16 A visit to the property on 26 September 2018, found there had been no progress made and the front drive area was now becoming overgrown with weeds (Appendix 22).
- 9.17 As a final attempt to engage a letter was sent to the Owner on 25 February 2019, again requesting information regarding their intentions for the property in writing within 21 days (Appendix 23). The information was not received.
- 9.18 A report was presented to the Council's Cabinet Resources Panel to seek approval for the acquisition by agreement or CPO, as referred to in 1.1 Appendix 1.
- 9.19 The Council attempted to engage with the Owner with a view to acquiring the property by means of negotiation, prior to action under a CPO. Correspondence were sent on 15 April 2019 (Appendix 24) and the Owner responded on 30 April 2019, declining this option.
- 9.20 Further complaints were received on 18 April 2019 and 5 May 2019, regarding the poor condition of the property and land and possible vermin (Appendix 25).
- 9.21 The Owner called the Council on 26 June 2019, to advise that she had discussed the situation with her Son. It was her intention to sell the property, but no timescale for this to be progressed was provided.

- 9.22 The Council received a complaint from a neighbour on 12 August 2019, concerned about the drive which had become overgrown with weeds, the board on the ground floor window and the property was an eyesore in the area.
- 9.23 On 28 October 2019, a complaint was received from a neighbour concerned the rear door of the property was not secure and the rear garden was now very overgrown and impacting on adjoining properties (Appendix 26).
- 9.24 The sealed Order dated 28 January 2019, was served on the Order property 3 February 2020, and again there had been no progress made. (Appendix 27).
- 9.25 Following a further complaint regarding the condition of the property and land the Council contacted the neighbour to discuss the ongoing issues, which included damp issues and the overgrown garden. On 1 December 2020 photographs were sent to the Council showing the impact that of some of the issues were having on the neighbours (Appendix 28).
- 9.26 A further complaint was received on 4 August 2020 (Appendix 29). The property was visited 6 December 2020, but no progress had been made (Appendix 30).

## 10. Objections

- 10.1 An objection was received to the Order from Mrs Khan in the form of a letter sent to the Council and Government Office for the West Midlands dated 27 February 2020 (Appendix 31). The Objections are summarised and listed below with our observations:

**a) Objection** - *'At present I am not well and have not been well since my cataract operation. I do not have to go into details of my health issues. I have numerous health since 2015, I opted out to rent a one or two bedroom flat to help improve my health issues'*

**Response** - The Council accepts that there may have been extenuating circumstances in terms of Mrs Khan's health; however, it is the case of the Council that sufficient time has been allowed, 5 years in total for the situation to have been progressed in terms of a sale and the property brought back into use. The Owner admits to renting and residing at other properties since the Order property has remained empty and has not provided any evidence to support her intention to reoccupy 45 Springhill Road. The Owner also confirms that not living at the Order property improves her health and wellbeing.

- b) **Objection** – *“I have been struggling with my 5 medical major issues with no help from the Council”.*

**Response** – The Council acknowledges the undisclosed health issues. However, it is the case of the Council that it is the public interest to ensure that the property is used for residential accommodation and that the blight caused by the property is removed within a reasonable timescale.

- c) **Objection** - *‘A number of issues of the property mentioned above. This is not a small matter. This has not been caused by me but the neighbours the Police and the two people working in the Wolverhampton City Council. Joanne Thompson – the one who entered my property without prior notice and ransacked the full house and damaged it as well. One of my top windows was slightly open and she asked a neighbour to put a ladder up and see what was in the property. By Law no one has the right to do so. The property didn't have mice, rats or vermin for her to force into my property and ransack it. My neighbours told me she had brought four vans to remove my belongings. There was no official warning, bailiffs or Police. The court said there was no warrant issued. Goods worth over £70,000 was removed without my knowledge. This will eventually end up in a criminal court. Everything was brand new, not soiled, some still in boxes. The carpets and kitchen cabinets damaged plus she broke the lock on one bedroom.’*

**Response** - On 30 June 2016, being satisfied 45 Springhill Road (“the premises”) was in such a filthy or unwholesome condition to be prejudicial the Public Health Act 1936 (“the Notice”). The Notice required Mrs Khan by 30 July 2016 to namely cleanse the property and arrange the pest control treatment (“the works”).

On 18 July 2017, Sarah Campbell, Customer Engagement Manager, sent a letter to Mrs Khan referring to discussions Mrs had with Environmental Health Officers alleging acts of stealing. The letter confirmed the language used any Mrs Khan was inappropriate and had potential to cause serious offence. As pointed out in the letter the Council’s employees, agents and contractors have the right to carry out their duties without fear of being subjected to abusive or offensive and the Council reserves its right to take appropriate legal action for such inappropriate behaviour.

On 20 July 2017, as Mrs Khan failed to comply with the Notice, Wolverhampton Magistrates Court granted a Warrant under S287 of the 1936 Act for Joanne Thomson, Compliance Officer to enter the premises for the purpose of executing works to remedy the condition of the premises to comply with the Notice (Appendix 32). The Warrant remained in force until the purpose for which it had been granted were satisfied.

On 27 July 2017, Joanne Thomson executed the Warrant for the Council to carry out the necessary cleansing works which were completed on 8 August 2017 (Appendix 33).

On 9 August 2017, Mrs Khan attended the Civic Centre and signed to receive 4 keys to access the front and rear of 45 Springhill Road (Appendix 34). Joanne Thomson posted the remaining keys at the Property on 16 August 2017 (Appendix 34).

Joanne Thomson has provided a Statement of Facts regarding the Council’s process which was duly followed to apply for a Warrant to access the property (Appendix 35).

In Mrs Khan's letter of 27 February 2020, objecting the Compulsory Purchase Order, she again makes allegations against Council Officers. These have previously been considered by the Council and, in the letter 18 July 2017, responded to. The Council respectfully submits that they are not matters to be taken into consideration in the Compulsory Purchase Order process and reserves its right to take Libel proceedings.

- d) *Objection*** – *'The second one, Linda Eaton (Eyton), she started harassing and threatening me on the phone. I tried to negotiate and solve the issue but she refused and said she will put a Compulsory Purchase Order'*.

It is the case of the Council that no firm evidence of an intention to either refurbish the property for occupation or sell the property in order for the property to be refurbished and occupied has been provided.

- e) *Objection*** - *'I live on my own and no help has been provided by the Council or it's appropriate bodies. My question is why?'*.

The Empty Property Team of the Council has a range of advice for owners regarding appointing appropriate contractors and/or selling the property by auction or Private Treaty. The objector has repeatedly stated that it was her intention to progress matters with the help of family members. The Council has also offered to acquire the property by negotiation. A Compulsory Purchase Order is only considered by the Council as a last resort.

- f) *Objection*** – *'It is easy for the Council to exercise their laws through the lawyers without giving the right details to the Council lawyers. I am a lady who abides by the law of every country and people respect me for who I am throughout the world. I won't take any abuse or threats from anyone, the law is there if I need to proceed further with any issues. My main concern is my health and not the worldly goods or money'*.

It is the case of the Council that it is the public interest to ensure that the property is used for residential accommodation and that the blight caused by the property is removed within a reasonable timescale.

- 10.2 The objection fails to provide evidence of contractors, funding, timescales for implementation or proof of the Owners intention to sell the property. The Owner has not committed to any plans for dealing with the ongoing issues at the property or it's long term future use and does not in still confidence with the Council the property will be brought back into use in her ownership. An intention has been expressed to sell the property over the last 5 years, this has not been progressed. It is on account of the repeated failure of the Owner to take action that the Order has been made.
- 10.3 It is the case of the Council that without formal action the property is likely to remain empty. However; should there have been significant progress made in terms of selling the property or reoccupation at the time of the of the Public Inquiry the Council may consider either withdrawing from the Order or undertake not to vest the property in the Council for an agreed period. There needs to proof provided for the Council to consider such action.

## **11. Human Rights Act Considerations**

- 11.1 There are currently no occupiers of the Order Property nor are they the main residence of the Owners.
- 11.2 The Council has given consideration to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as incorporated into domestic law by the Human Rights Act 1998. It provides that every person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of their possessions and they shall only be deprived of them in the public interest and in accordance with any other conditions provided by law.

11.3 The Owners have been given ample opportunity to resolve the matter positively and in a voluntary manner the only progress which has been made is following enforcement action by the Council. The possible outcome is that the Order Property will remain empty in the long term, the Council considers that there is a strong public interest in realising the qualitative and quantitative housing gain, which can be secured through the Compulsory Purchase of the Order Property.

## **12. Conclusion**

12.1 It is the view of the Council that a Compulsory Purchase Order is fully justified and the only effective method to ensure the Order property is brought back into use within a reasonable timescale. The Owner, Mrs Khan has not provided any details on her intentions for the refurbishment of the property; it is by no means certain works will ever be completed and the property brought back into use. The Owner has continuously failed to meet any timescales and deadlines, which have been set by the Council since 2016 or commit her intentions for selling the property or reoccupation. The Council considers that confirmation of the Order would ensure a quantitative and qualitative housing gain and alleviate the environmental and nuisance that the Order property has presented for almost 6 years. We would respectfully ask that the Order is confirmed.

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL (45 SPRINGHILL ROAD,  
WEDNESFIELD, WOLVERHAMPTON)  
Compulsory Purchase Order 2019

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## Appendix 1

<b>Report title</b>	Acquisition of Privately Owned Empty Property by Agreement or Compulsory Purchase: 45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 3AW	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Peter Bilson City Assets and Housing	
<b>Key decision</b>	No	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	Wednesfield North	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Kate Martin (Service Director of City Housing)	
<b>Originating service</b>	Private Sector Housing	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Natalie Healy Tel Email	Housing Improvement Officer 01902 550554 natalie.healy@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Housing Leadership Team	19 March 2019

**Recommendations for decision:**

The Cabinet (Resources) is recommended to:

1. Authorise the Service Director of City Housing to negotiate terms for the acquisition of the property to negotiate terms for the acquisition of the property 45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 3AW, and, in default of that acquisition, give authority for a compulsory purchase order (CPO) to be made under Part II Section 17 Housing Act 1985 in respect of the property.
2. Approve expenditure for the potential acquisition of the property, with subsequent capital receipts being recycled within the Empty Property Strategy programme.
3. In the event that the property is improved and re-occupied to the satisfaction of the Service Director of City Housing, authorise withdrawal of the property from the CPO.

4. Following any acquisition, authorise the Service Director of City Housing to dispose of the property on the open market on condition that the property is refurbished and re-occupied within six or 12 months (as appropriate to the scale of the works).
5. Authorise the Director of Governance to:
  - a) Take all reasonable steps as soon as it is reasonably practical to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the CPO including the publication and service of all Notices and the presentation of the Council's case at any Public Inquiry.
  - b) Approve agreements with the owners of the property setting out the terms for the withdrawal of objections to the CPO, and/or making arrangements for re-housing or relocation of any occupiers.
  - c) Approve the making of a General Vesting Declaration (the property is brought into Council ownership via this process).
  - d) Approve the disposal of the whole and/ or parts of the property by auction, tender or private treaty.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request the Panel to authorise the acquisition of 45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 3AW, by negotiation or by the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order under Section 17 of Part II of the Housing Act 1985 (CPO). Should it be possible to reach agreement on a mutually acceptable undertaking, agree to the withdrawal of the property from the CPO.
- 1.2 This decision is in support of the Council's Empty Properties Strategy which aims to bring long term empty properties back into use.
- 1.3 The reoccupation of empty properties brings in additional income to the Council via the New Homes Bonus paid to Local Authorities as a result of increased housing supply.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The property, highlighted on the attached plan, is a semi-detached property that has been empty since June 2015. There have been a number of interactions with the owner, which to date have failed to resolve the situation and there has been no information received regarding their intentions for the property.
- 2.2 The Council's Public Protection team have served a Notice under the Public Health Act 1936, Section 83 (Prejudicial to Health or Verminous) on the owner, which resulted in works in default to clear the property internally and an outstanding charge is now owed to the Council due to the owner's failure to comply.
- 2.3 A Notice under section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 was served on the property in order to remove the detrimental effect the condition of the property/ land is having on the amenity of the area. The Notice has not been complied with and remains outstanding.
- 2.4 The principle of establishing a revolving fund to drive forward the Private Sector Empty Property Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 11 January 2006. The revolving fund provides for properties that are consistent with the strategy to be acquired, marketed for sale and brought back into residential occupation. The arrangements proposed for the property identified are consistent with that strategy. Should the Compulsory Purchase Order be confirmed in favour of the Council, the Council would seek to dispose of the property by tender, auction, or private treaty. The property would be sold with the condition that the property is brought back to a required standard of repair within a specified time limit.

## **3.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 3.1 There are three options that the Council could consider:
  - a) Do nothing – the property is likely to remain empty, continue to have a detrimental effect on the amenity of the area and continue to be a drain on the public purse.

- b) Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) – An EDMO is considered to be a less draconian option than a compulsory purchase. However, the cost of refurbishment of this property would place a strain on the Council's finances and it would be unlikely that the cost of initial refurbishment and subsequent management and maintenance would be recovered through rental income over seven years.
- c) Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) – The prospect of a CPO often prompts the owner to act leading to the property being refurbished and re-occupied. However, if it is necessary to acquire the property, the proposals for the onward disposal and refurbishment set out at 5.0 of this report ensure that the property is brought back into use at a minimum cost to the Public Purse.

#### **4.0 Reasons for decision(s)**

##### **4.1 The reasons for the decisions are:**

- a) To ensure that the property provides much needed housing by prompting the owner to either act voluntarily or via enforcement through a CPO.
- b) To ensure that the property does not continue to be visually detrimental to the area
- c) To ensure that the property has a positive financial impact on the public purse through additional New Homes Bonus funding.
- d) The proposal to pursue a CPO is the most cost effective in terms of financial and physical resources for the Council.

#### **5.0 Proposals**

- 5.1 Where it is necessary to make a Compulsory Purchase Order and this is subsequently confirmed in favour of the Council, the Council would seek to dispose of the property by tender, auction, or private treaty. The property would be sold with the condition that the property is brought back to a required standard of repair within a specified time limit. This will also apply to any negotiated acquisitions.

#### **6.0 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 In the event of an acquisition the costs can be met from the approved Housing General Fund capital budget of £626,000 capital budget for the Empty Property Strategy. The subsequent sale of the property would result in a capital receipt, ring-fenced to finance future purchases through the Empty Property Strategy. Any revenue costs incurred between purchase and sale, for example security measures, must be met from current private sector housing budgets.
- 6.2 The owner of the property has been served with a Section 215 Notice of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to tidy the land/ buildings. This has not been complied with and it will therefore not be necessary to pay the additional statutory 7.5% compensation payment.
- 6.3 Bringing empty properties back into use attracts New Homes Bonus to the City Council and could result in additional council tax revenue.

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## **7.0 Legal implications**

- 7.1 Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 empowers local housing authorities to compulsorily acquire land houses or other properties for the provision of housing accommodation. However, the acquisition must achieve a qualitative or quantitative housing gain. In order to make a Compulsory Purchase Order under this power and achieve successful confirmation, the Council will need to show compliance with the requirements of the relevant statutory provision and circular 06/2004 Compulsory Purchase and the Crichel Down Rules. Where there are objections to a Compulsory Purchase Order the matter may go forward to a public inquiry and specialist Counsel may need to be engaged to present the Council's case.
- 7.2 Article 1 of Protocol 1 of the Human Rights Act 1988 guarantees peaceful enjoyment of possessions and would be engaged by the making of a CPO. However, the contents of this report and the actions recommended are considered to be proportional and compatible with the Human Rights Act 1988, particularly bearing in mind the above checks and balances on the Local Authority's power.  
[TS/18032019/T]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

- 8.1 Equalities implications have been considered throughout the process and in assessing the outcome. An Equality Analysis has been completed and this does not indicate any adverse implications. Bringing an empty property back into use will improve the visual amenity of the area and can make the area more welcoming to some groups covered by the Equality Act 2010, in doing so this will promote participation in public life.

## **9.0 Environmental implications**

- 9.1 Long term empty properties can have a detrimental impact on neighbourhood sustainability and cause environmental blight. Bringing the property back into residential use will improve the appearance of the neighbourhood, enhance property conditions and contribute to the regeneration of the City, meeting the Council's strategic objectives.

## **10.0 Human resources implications**

- 10.1 There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

## **11.0 Corporate landlord implications**

- 11.1 Where applicable, Corporate Landlord Estates Team will be required to produce valuations and arrange for the appropriate disposal of the property by auction or private treaty.

## **12.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

- 12.1 Bringing an empty property back into use will improve the health and wellbeing of the new occupants by providing safe and secure housing.

12.2 Enabling occupation and removing the detrimental effect of the property will reduce the anxiety associated with crime and the fear of crime that living adjacent to an empty property can cause.

**13.0 Schedule of background papers**

13.1 An Action Plan to Deliver the Empty Property Strategy 11 January 2006.

13.2 Private Sector Empty Property Strategy 2010-2015.

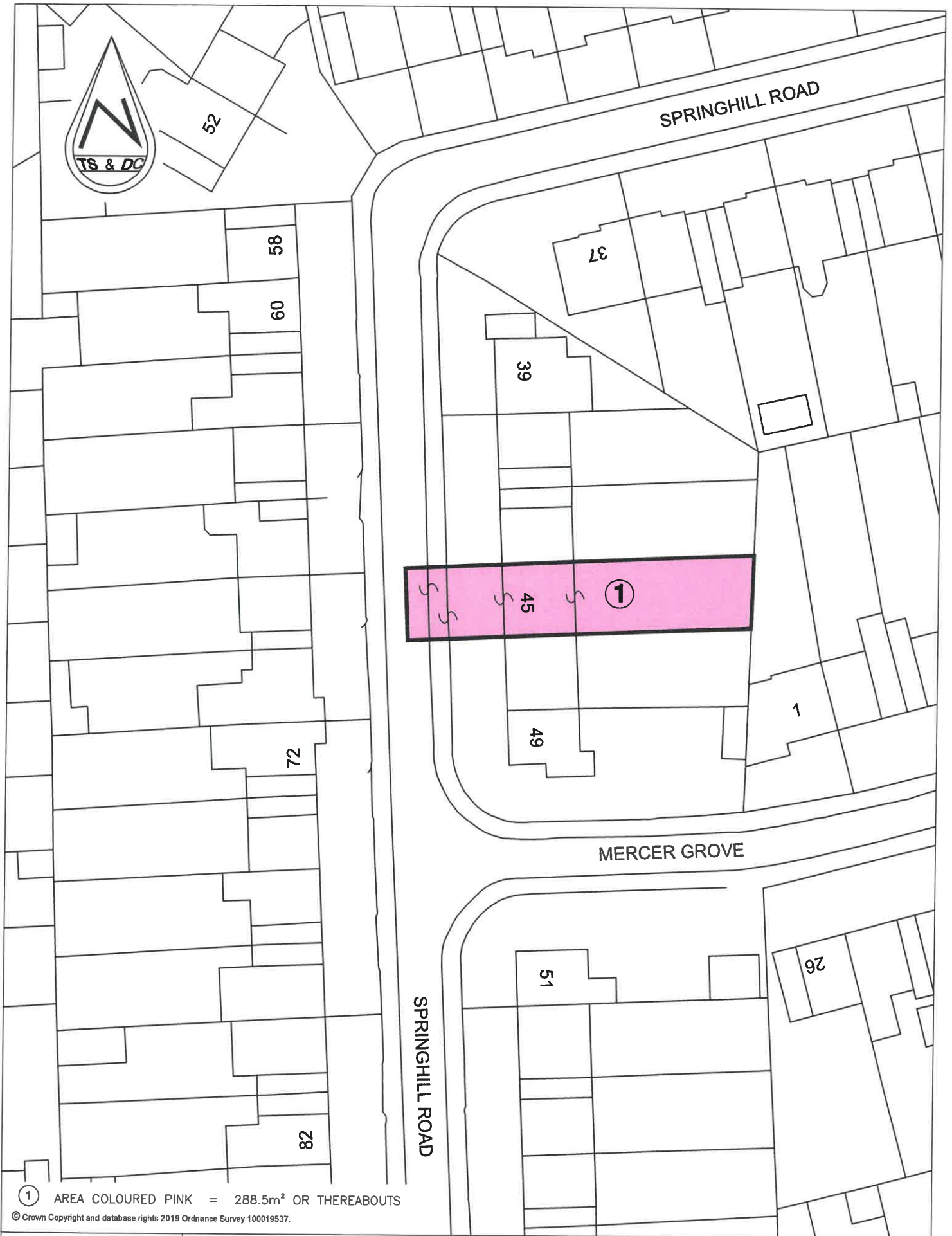
13.3 Wolverhampton Housing Needs Survey 2007.

**14.0 Appendices**

14.1 Appendix 1 – Site Plan

14.2 Appendix 2 & 3 – Photograph's





① AREA COLOURED PINK = 288.5m<sup>2</sup> OR THEREABOUTS

© Crown Copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 100019537.

date	March 2019
scale	1:500
drawn by	AJP
dwg. no.	...ICPO's Springhill Road 45.dwg

THE MAP REFERRED TO IN  
 THE WOLVERHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL  
 (45 Springhill Road)  
 COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2019

**City of Wolverhampton Council**  
 Strategic Director – Place  
 Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton  
 Tel. (01902) 556556

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## Appendix 2

**THE WOLVERHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL (45 SPRINGHILL ROAD)**  
**COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2019**

**The Acquisition of Land Act 1981 and The Housing Act 1985**

Wolverhampton City Council (in this Order called "the Acquiring Authority") hereby make the following Order:-

1. Subject to the provisions of this Order, the Acquiring Authority is under the Housing Act 1985 Section 17 hereby authorised to purchase compulsorily the land described in paragraph 2 for the purpose of the provision of housing accommodation
  
2. The land authorised to be purchased compulsorily under this Order is the land described in the Schedule and delineated and shown coloured pink on a map prepared in duplicate, sealed with the common seal of the acquiring authority and marked "Map referred to in The Wolverhampton City Council (45 Springhill Road) Compulsory Purchase Order 2019"

**SCHEDULE**

**Table 1**

Number on Map  (1)	Extent, description and situation of the land  (2)	Qualifying persons under Section 12(2)(a) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 – (3)			
		Owners or reputed owners	Lessees or reputed lessees	Tenants or reputed tenants (other than lessees)	Occupiers
1	288.5 square metres of land known as 45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 3AW and half width road	Mehrunnisa Alikhan Ahmed Khan of 45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 3AW	-	-	unoccupied

**Table 2**

Number on Map (4)	Other qualifying persons under Section 12(2A)(a) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 (5)		Other qualifying persons under Section 12(2A)(b) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 - not otherwise shown in Table 1 and 2 (6)	
	Name and Address	Description of interest to be acquired	Name and Address	Description of the land for which the person in adjoining column is likely to make a claim
	-	-	-	-

THE COMMON SEAL of Wolverhampton City Council was hereunto affixed in the presence of: }

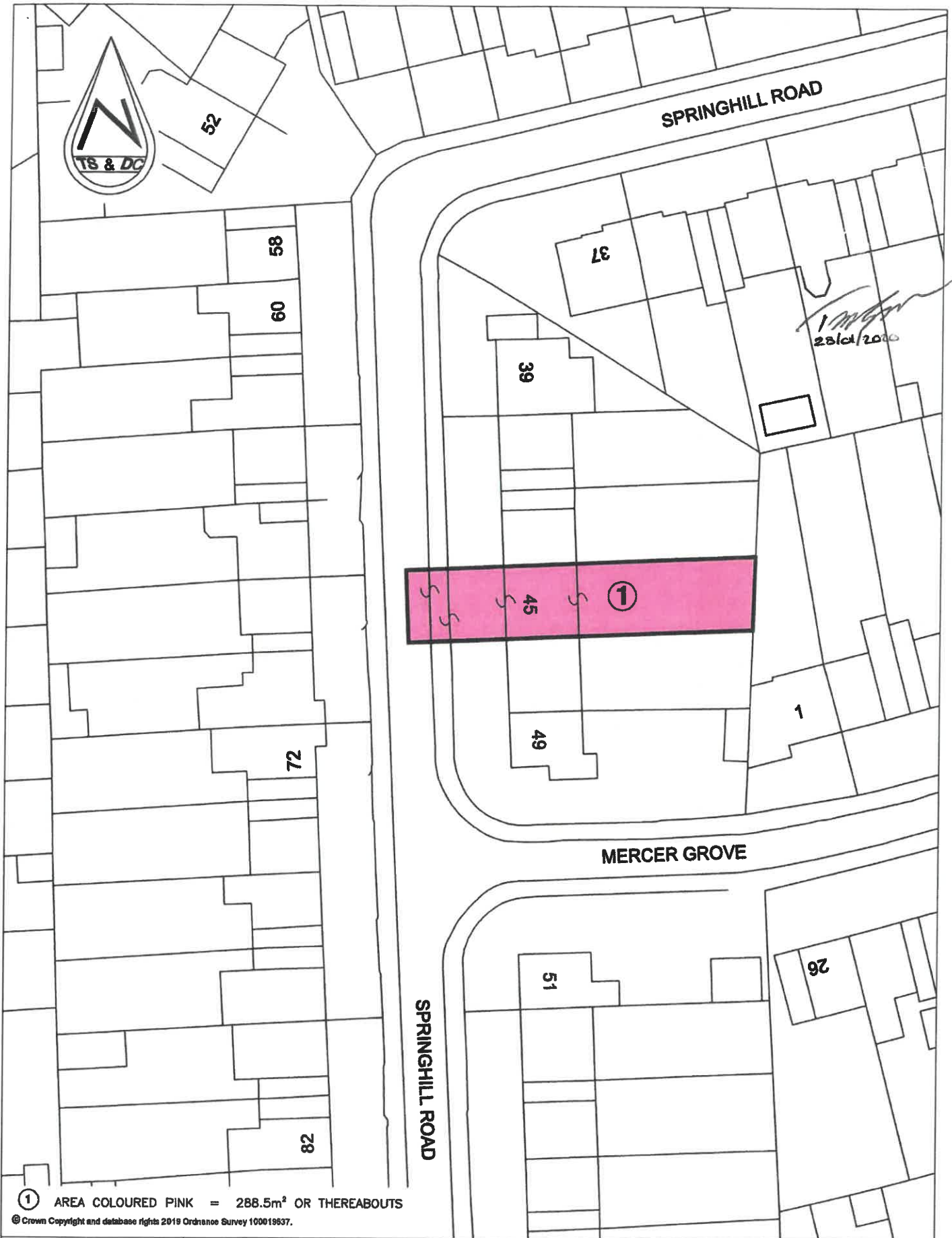


Authorised Officer



Dated: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020

9/2020



① AREA COLOURED PINK = 288.5m<sup>2</sup> OR THEREABOUTS  
 © Crown Copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 100019837.

date	March 2019
scale	1:500
drawn by	AJP
dwg. no.	...ICPO\Springhill Road 45.dwg

THE MAP REFERRED TO IN  
 THE WOLVERHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL  
 (45 Springhill Road)  
 COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2019

**City of Wolverhampton Council**  
 Strategic Director – Place  
 Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton  
 Tel. (01902) 556556

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## Appendix 3





# The Planning Inspectorate

3A Eagle Wing  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Bristol  
BS1 6PN

Customer Services: 0303 444 5000  
e-mail: [CPO@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:CPO@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

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Ms R Raulia

Your Ref: RR/CPO016616

By Email  
[ravika.raulia@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:ravika.raulia@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

Our Ref: APP/PCU/CPOH/D4635/3257185

Date: 26 November 2020

---

Dear Ravika

## **The Wolverhampton City Council (45 Springhill Road ) Compulsory Purchase Order 2019 ('the Order')**

### **Notice of Inquiry**

Notice is given under Rule 3(3) of the Compulsory Purchase (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 2007 (SI 2007 No 3617), amended by the Compulsory Purchase (Inquiries Procedure) (Miscellaneous Amendments and Electronic Communications) Rules 2018 (SI 2018 No 248) that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has decided to hold a public local inquiry into the above compulsory purchase order. For the purpose of Rule 3(3), the date of this letter is the 'relevant date'.

Advice is also contained in MHCLG publication 'Guidance on Compulsory purchase process and The Crichel Down Rules for the disposal of surplus land acquired by, or under the threat of, compulsion'

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/817392/CPO\\_guidance\\_-\\_with\\_2019\\_update.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817392/CPO_guidance_-_with_2019_update.pdf)

Your attention is drawn to the requirement of Rule 7 of the above rules. This states that where a public local inquiry is to be held, the acquiring authority shall send a Statement of Case to the Planning Inspectorate and to each remaining objector within 6 weeks of the relevant date. The Statement of Case must set out in full the case that the acquiring authority intend to put forward at the inquiry, including the acquiring authority's reasons for making the order. It must also contain copies of any documents referred to in the written statement, or the relevant extracts, and a list of any documents which the acquiring authority intend to refer or to put in evidence. Rather than copying the documents referred to in the written statement to each remaining objector, the acquiring authority may alternatively send each remaining objector a notice naming each place where a copy of these documents may be inspected free of charge.

It is important that those whose interest or rights are included in the order should be in a position to put their case at the inquiry without having to probe for further details. If they have to do this during the inquiry, they may not be in a position to deal with the additional information and this could lead to a request for an adjournment. Therefore, remaining objectors should be fully informed as the acquiring authority's Case well in advance of the inquiry.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate>

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The Secretary of State or the Inspector may require further details of the acquiring authority's Case or clarification of particular aspects of it under Rule 7(5). Failure by the acquiring authority to provide relevant details may, in an extreme case – for example, where the Inspector has to adjourn an inquiry – lead to a recommendation that the Secretary of State makes an award of costs against the acquiring authority.

Copies of any further objections will be forwarded to you.

### **Date for Inquiry**

Our chart room will be in contact shortly about the arrangements for the inquiry.

### **Costs for the Inspector**

Under Section 250 (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, we will be seeking to recover our costs from the Council of carrying out the Inquiry into the CPO. In accordance with The Fees for Inquiries (Standard Daily Amount) (England) Regulations 2000 SI 2000 No 2307, the daily charge is £630.

At this stage, taking account of the number of objections and the size of the Order Land it is anticipated that the inquiry may last for approximately 1 **day**. Please let me know if this isn't an accurate estimate so that we can proceed to find a suitable Inspector for the inquiry.

It is impossible to accurately predict the charge the Inspectorate will make to your Council however the charges are based upon a daily inspector fee of £630 for all work carried out in connection with the inquiry which would include travel time, preparation, reporting, attending the inquiry and site inspection together with all necessary travel and subsistence costs. When responding about the anticipated inquiry length please would you also confirm whom the Inspectorate should invoice and quote any purchase number you may have.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Gordon  
Case Officer

## Appendix 4

The City of Wolverhampton Council (45 Springhill Road)  
Compulsory Purchase Order 2019

Statement of the Council's Reasons for Making the Order

Housing Act 1985

The Acquisition of Land Act 1981

Dated 1 August 2019

## **1. Description of the Order Lands**

- 1.1 The Order land comprises 45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 3AW, which has been empty since June 2015.
- 1.2 On 2 April 2019, the Resources Panel of City of Wolverhampton Council (“the Council”) resolved to acquire the Order land for housing purposes under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985. It was resolved to make a Compulsory Purchase Order to acquire the Order land and authorised its acquisition by agreement in advance of the confirmation of the Order where possible.
- 1.2 The Order land is in the Wednesfield North Ward, in the North West Parliamentary constituency, approximately 1507m of Wolverhampton City Centre. It is in an area of predominantly residential property.
- 1.4 The Order land is a 3 bedroom, semi-detached house built around the 1960's. To the front of the property It has a medium sized block paved driveway and a medium sized rear garden which is very overgrown and unable to gain access due to the vegetation.
- 1.5 The property is in a very popular residential area and is detrimental to the local neighbourhood by way of its deteriorating condition.
- 1.6 The Order land is structurally stable, and is situated on land that is free from any known structural problems, and there are no contamination issues known.
- 1.7 The Order land presents a visual detriment to local amenities.

## **2. Special Considerations**

- 2.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2016 – 2019 has a stated aim to increase the availability of homes within the City by bringing empty properties back into use quickly.

- 2.2 The Strategic Housing Market assessment sets out the growing overall requirement for housing in Wolverhampton.

### **3. The Case for Compulsory Purchase**

- 3.1 It is the case of the Council that the refurbishment of the property would be beneficial in terms of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. The Order is also situated within an area with little available and affordable social housing. There is proven demand for accommodation for housing in Wolverhampton and residential properties can attract up to 350 bids when advertised on the Council's Choice Based Lettings system. The use of the property for residential accommodation will facilitate quantitative and qualitative housing gain.

- 3.2 In its current state, the property will contribute to the attraction of nuisance and will continue to have a detrimental effect on the surrounding properties and area and become a drain on the public purse until it is brought back into use.

### **4. Demand for Housing**

- 4.1 The Council's view is that acquisition of this property will result in renovation and re-use of a property in an area of the City where the housing market will benefit from the removal of the blight caused by the property. Confirmation of the Order will provide a valuable unit of accommodation in an extremely popular residential area.

### **5. Proposals for the Land and Planning Position**

- 5.1 Should the Order be confirmed; It is intended that the Order land will be sold on to a developer or Housing Association. Any disposal by the Council will contain a covenant or contractual clause to ensure the property is brought back into use within a reasonable timescale.

- 5.2 There have been no firm planning proposals for the Order land as it is a renovation and not a redevelopment issue, and any planning or building  
45 Springhill Road (SoR)

regulation approval will have to be sought by the acquiring developer at the time of purchase.

## **6. Enabling Powers**

- 6.1 This Compulsory Purchase should be considered on its own merits, and is not included with any other property identified for acquisition.
- 6.2 The consent of the Secretary of State for the Environment required under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985.
- 6.3 There are no related matters which require a co-ordinated decision from the Secretary of State.

## **7. Proposals for Re-housing Residents**

- 7.1 There are no re-housing implications surrounding for the Order land as the property is vacant.

## **8. Details of Negotiations with Owners**

- 8.1 The property (45 Springhill Road) was first brought to the attention of the Council's Empty Property Team in 2016 and there were a number of interactions made between the Owner and the Council. A visit was made to the property on 4 April 2016, and an initial letter sent 5 April 2016. The Owner responded on 6 April 2016, and confirmed she was residing at a separate address and arranged to meet the Empty Property Officer at the Order property on 7 April 2016. The meeting was cancelled by the Owner on the morning of 7 April 2016.
- 8.2 The property was registered on Land Registry and confirmed the ownership to be MEHRUNNISA ALIKHAN AMED KHAN with the proprietor's address as 45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton. Investigations with Council Tax confirmed the property has been empty since 2015 and the liable person was the same as stated on Land Registry with a different correspondence address for the Owner than 45 Springhill Road.  
45 Springhill Road (SoR)

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- 8.3 Further complaints were received from residents on 13 and 22 April 2016, regarding the condition of both the property, land and overhanging trees which were impacting on the surrounding neighbours.
- 8.4 On 26 May 2016, a complaint was received from a neighbour reporting an issue with vermin, which they felt was being caused by the condition of the Order property. The Empty Property officer referred the enquiry to the Council's Public Protection team to investigate further. An attempt to contact the Owner by telephone on 27 May 2019 was made, but no reply.
- 8.5 A complaint was received 8 June 2016, regarding the condition of the property and land and that possible vermin had been heard within the Order property. An upstairs window in the front elevation was also open causing concern to the neighbours. The Officer contacted the Owner by telephone who advised that she hadn't been very well for 3 weeks and her son would be assisting her with issues regarding the property and would be in contact with the Council to discuss further, but no contact was received.
- 8.5 The Empty Property officer and an officer from the Council's Public Protection team jointly visited the property on 21 June 2016, and a neighbour provided access to view the rear garden from the 1<sup>st</sup> floor window. The rear garden was very dense with trees and overgrowth and a build-up of items could be seen in the porch and hallway.
- 8.6 On 22 September 2016, the Council received a call from the Owner's son who confirmed his Mother did want to clear and sell the property ready for sale and asked the Council to arrange this process. The Council asked the Owner's Son to make contact by Wednesday 28 September 2016, to arrange access into the Order property, but no call was received.
- 8.7 The property was visited on 8 December 2016, and there was no change, including the poor condition of the rear garden.



- 8.8 On 2 March 2017, a complaint was received regarding the condition of both the property and rear garden. A letter was sent to the Owner on 21 March 2017, requesting an update on their intentions for the property within 14 days. A response was received from the Owner on 22 March 2017, and stated it was her intention to clear the property of its contents and sell within the next few months.
- 8.9 A visit on 4 August 2017, found no progress had been made as stated by the Owner. Despite further telephone conversations with the Owner on 11 and 18 August 2017, again assuring the Council of her intention to resolve the ongoing issues at the property no progress had again been made. Correspondence were sent on 23 August 2017, 23 November 2017 and 26 January 2018, requesting the Owners proposals, including external works to both the property and land be completed prior to enforcement action.
- 8.10 As matters had not progressed and In an attempt to bring forward a resolution and remedy the poor external condition of the Order property and land a Section 215 Notice, Town and Country Planning Act 1990, was served on the Owner on 19 April 2018, at the known addresses for the Owner according to Council Tax records and land registry.
- 8.11 The property was visited on 3 July 2018, and there had been no attempt to comply with the works within the Section 215 Notice, Town and Country Planning Act 1990. A letter was sent to the Owner on 4 July 2018, confirming there had been non-compliance with the Notice and requesting further information in writing regarding their intention for the property within 28 days, prior to the Council considering a Compulsory Purchase a resolution. This information was not received.
- 8.12 A visit to the property on 26 September 2018, found there had been no progress made and the front drive area was now becoming overgrown with weeds.
- 8.13 As a final attempt to engage a letter was sent to the Owner on 25 February 2019, again requesting information regarding their intentions for the property in writing within 21 days, but the information was not received.

- 8.14 On 2 April 2019, a report was presented to the Council's Cabinet Resources Panel to seek approval for the acquisition of the Order property by agreement or Compulsory Purchase. Councillors agreed this course of action based on the evidence presented.
- 8.15 The Council attempted to engage with the Owner with a view to acquiring the property by means of negotiation prior to any action under a Compulsory Purchase Order and correspondence was sent on 15 April 2019. To date the Owner has not agreed to this option or provided evidence confirming their intention for the property.
- 8.16 It is considered that as the property has been empty since 2015 and the Owner have not confirmed their intentions for the property; it is the Council's opinion that the property would continue to remain empty, deteriorate further and it is unlikely that this property would be brought back into use without proceeding to Compulsory Purchase action.

## **9. Public Interest and Human Rights Act 1998**

- 9.1 Consideration has been given to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as incorporated into domestic law by the Human Rights Act 1998. It provides that every person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of their possessions and they shall only be deprived of them in the public interest and in accordance with any other conditions provided by law.
- 9.2 The purchase of 45 Springhill Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 3AW will not displace any person or business, as at the present time the property remains un-occupied and is a source of nuisance for immediate neighbours and a focus for antisocial behaviour. Re-use of the site will alleviate this problem and provide residential housing. The Council therefore concludes that acquisition would be in the public interest.

## 10. Conclusion

- 10.1 It is the view of the Council that a Compulsory Purchase Order is the most appropriate course of action to ensure the Order Property/ land is brought back into effective use within a reasonable timescale.
- 10.2 A number of other agencies and Council departments have attempted to engage with the Owner and assist in resolving the ongoing situation, but to date this has proven unsuccessful.
- 10.3 It is the view of the Council that the Owner has had a reasonable opportunity to bring the property back into use.
- 10.4 Should the Order be confirmed; the Council will market the property with a covenant or contractual clause to ensure that the property/ land is brought back into use within a reasonable timescale.
- 10.5 The Council considers that confirmation of the Order would make a positive contribution in terms of the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of the area and respectfully requests that the Order is confirmed.

## Appendix 5

# Our Council Plan 2019 – 2024

Working together to be a city of opportunity

[wolverhampton.gov.uk](http://wolverhampton.gov.uk)

CITY of  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL



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## Our city

The City of Wolverhampton is a place which is proud of its history, celebrates its diversity and is ambitious for the future.

Our Vision for 2030 is that Wolverhampton will be a place where people come from far and wide to work, shop, study and enjoy our vibrant city. It will be transformed while still retaining all of those attributes that give our city its unique identity. A healthy, thriving and sustainable international 'smart city' - renowned for its booming economy and skilled workforce, rich diversity and a commitment to fairness and equality that ensures everyone has the chance to benefit from success.



## Proud of our history

Our city has a long and proud history which reflects its strategic importance over the past millennium. It was founded in 985 by a Saxon noblewoman named Lady Wulfruna and the rest, as they say, is history.

Over 1,000 years later there are now nearly 260,000 Wolvernians living in Wolverhampton, making us one of the top 20 largest cities in the United Kingdom. During this period, we've always been at the forefront of manufacturing, innovation and industry. We were one of the birthplaces of the Industrial Revolution and were home to the world's fastest land vehicle in the 1920s. That automotive manufacturing history continues to this day with the state-of-the-art £1 billion Jaguar Land Rover engine plant based at the i54 Business Park, spearheading our city's advanced manufacturing sector. The sector also includes a world-class aerospace hub, accommodating UTC Aerospace and Moog. i54 is also home to multi-national companies iSP, Eurofins, ERA and Tentec.



Image: Statue of Lady Wulfruna in St Peter's Square (Charles Wheeler, 1974)  
wolverhampton.gov.uk

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## Proud of our people

Our city is diverse and cohesive. One third of our population is from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and 19% of our residents were born outside the UK. There are around 90 languages spoken within the city. Wolverhampton's diversity is the fabric which holds our city together and our people are proud of our friendly and supportive communities. Already home to over a quarter of a million people, we expect our population to rise as more people and new communities choose to live in the City of Wolverhampton.

Our city is home to a thriving voluntary and community sector with individuals and groups dedicating their time to improve their communities. We value the contribution of the sector and recognise the critical role it plays in delivering the city's priorities. The sector generates over £140 million with over 12,000 volunteers.

Moving forward, the council and our residents will work closer together to ensure that all forms of discrimination are eliminated, that none of our communities are left behind or unable to access the opportunities that our city has to offer. We aspire that everyone has the same life chances irrespective of their diversity. Our targeted approach will enable us to support communities to thrive and improve our understanding of the needs of our diverse and culturally rich city.



260,000  
WULFRUNIANS

90+  
Languages  
spoken

19%  
Born  
outside  
the UK



## Proud of our place

The City of Wolverhampton is one of the top ten growing economies in the UK and is currently experiencing record levels of private and public investment, with £4.3 billion being injected into regeneration projects citywide.

The city has seen strong economic growth over the past few years and was named the top city in Western Europe for job creation in manufacturing. This builds on our already strong automotive and aerospace sectors. Whilst the city continues to build on these existing strengths, it is also developing clusters in other key sectors whilst retaining a strong focus on investing in skills and matching local people to local jobs.

We are ideally placed at the centre of the UK's rail and road network offering unrivalled connectivity to national and international markets. The investment of £150 million to redevelop our Interchange transport hub, incorporating a brand-new railway station, will further cement the City of Wolverhampton as a place open and connected for business.

We also have a thriving digital sector, with creative industries, offering huge opportunities for our businesses. Our work with the university and schools will ensure that local people are

provided with the support, skills and opportunities that our growing economy offers.

The University of Wolverhampton's £100 million investment in a new Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment, alongside the National Brownfield Institute, will create an international centre of excellence for urban innovation and advanced methods of construction.

Wolverhampton is also home to a great cultural offer including a Premier League football team in Wolverhampton Wanderers, a unique live music and comedy venue in the Civic Halls, an excellent art gallery and our beautiful, Victorian Grand Theatre. Green and open spaces make up just under one fifth of the city; with attractions including two large Victorian parks, Smestow Valley Local Nature Reserve and two prime National Trust properties; Wightwick Manor and Moseley Old Hall.

## Proud of our role in the region

The City of Wolverhampton played a pivotal role in setting up the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), which was established through a Parliamentary Order in June 2016. Following the first devolution deal agreed between the Government and the region, the creation of a mayoral combined authority was a key requirement, and the City of Wolverhampton Council played a leading role within the region to move powers from central government to locally elected politicians in the West Midlands, who know the region best. Through devolution we are now able to decide how best to spend that money for the overall benefit of the region.

The WMCA is made up of 18 local authorities and four Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). It was formed in response to the context of international, national and regional challenges including; skills deficits, unemployment, austerity, increasing demand for public services and the need to improve connectivity in the West Midlands. Its purpose is to drive inclusive economic growth and support healthier, happier, better connected and more prosperous communities in the West Midlands, by working together in partnership.

The City of Wolverhampton Council is one of the seven constituent members of the WMCA and plays a fundamental role alongside our regional partners in driving forward shared interests and priorities. The council works collaboratively with the WMCA working on major,

regional strategic projects to drive economic growth and prosperity in the City of Wolverhampton and across the region. These projects include transport, housing, land and regeneration.

Devolution offers significant opportunities for our city and we share the ambition of the WMCA to unlock this potential to deliver faster and better change for the region.

The WMCA's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) sets out a vision for improving the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in the West Midlands. The SEP's ambition, which informed our Council Plan 2019-2024, recognises that the West Midlands' economy can be strengthened to benefit not only local residents and businesses, but also the UK.

To propel economic growth in the region, the WMCA is focused on the following key areas:

- economic growth
- health and wellbeing
- productivity and skills
- environment
- housing and land
- public service reform
- transport

In the City of Wolverhampton, we are working closely with our regional partners to maximise those opportunities so they deliver our own vision to be a thriving city of opportunity.

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## West Midlands Combined Authority by Local Enterprise Partnership Area

### MAP KEY

#### Black Country LEP

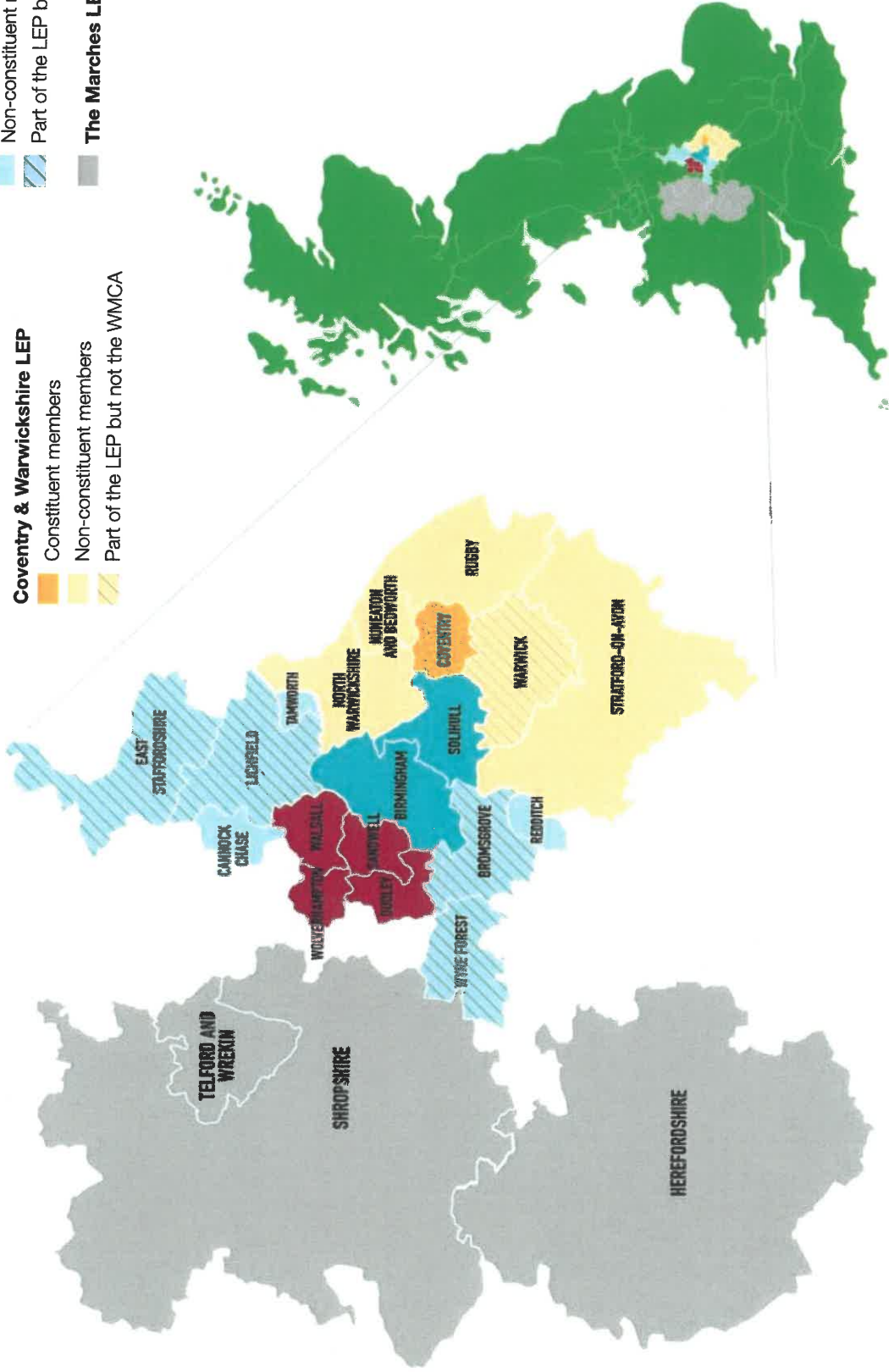
- Constituent members

#### Coventry & Warwickshire LEP

- Constituent members
- Non-constituent members
- Part of the LEP but not the WMCA

#### Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP

- Constituent members
- Non-constituent members
- Part of the LEP but not the WMCA
- The Marches LEP



# Working together to be a city of opportunity

**The City of Wolverhampton is changing. This ambitious plan sets out how, by working together, we will deliver on the priorities of the people of our city over the next five years.**

It is not a top-down document detailing how we think things should be done. Rather, it is a collaboration between the council and more than 3,000 local people who have contributed to its development. This approach reflects the way we want to work with our inclusive communities going forward.

We are realistic and know that continuing financial pressures on local authorities means that we can't keep on delivering services in the same way as we have before. Realising our ambitions for this great city means working much more collaboratively than in the past and developing new relationships with residents, businesses, the voluntary and community sector and other partners to pool the resources and creativity of everyone with a stake in the City of Wolverhampton.

Our six new strategic priorities are your priorities. You told us you want children and young people to get the best start in life, that we need to attract more good jobs and investment, people must have the skills they need for work, that everyone should live in secure, quality housing in communities that are resilient and healthy and in a city, which is vibrant, green and of which we are all proud.

The council has transformed itself internally in recent years and now truly operates as 'one council' to serve local people – something that was recognised when we won Council of the Year at the Municipal Journal Awards in 2017. The challenge for us now, which we will realise through this new Council Plan, is to harness our collective energy to continue to deliver the best possible outcomes for local people.



Councillor  
Roger Lawrence  
Leader of the Council



Tim Johnson  
Managing Director

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## Our Plan

Our Council Plan 2019-2024 sets out how we will work with our communities to deliver improved outcomes for the people of our city, over the next five years. The council is now beginning the next phase of its journey, building upon years of internal transformation.

We have made many great strides to improve our services and outcomes for local people, whilst at the same time managing continued financial pressures. Since 2010 we have reduced our spend by £220 million as a result of funding reductions from Government, whilst balancing increased demand on our services. These challenges will continue. Moving forward, we must review how we operate and work more closely with our communities to ensure we are sustainable financially and still able to provide the services our local people most need.

Our services have seen rapid transformation resulting in a more efficient and confident council, a 'Good' Ofsted rating for our children's services, improving educational attainment across the city and over £4.3 billion of investment already taking place or planned. However, we recognise that not all of our communities have benefitted equally from this transformation.

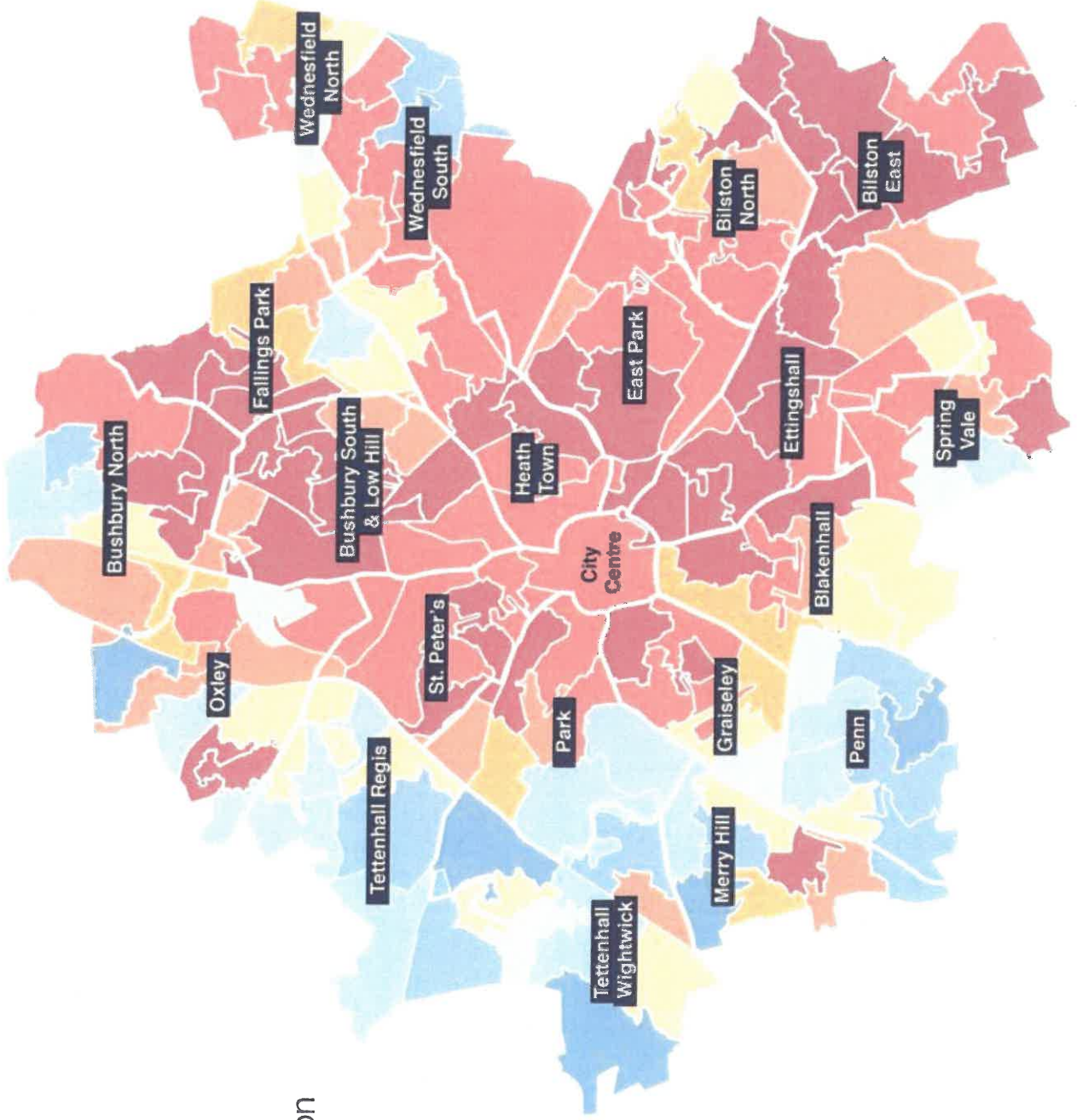
The City of Wolverhampton still faces significant challenges, with higher levels of unemployment (7.6% in 2017) than the national average (4.4%) and 17.8% lower wages. To deliver better outcomes for our people, we must sustain the progress we are making whilst ensuring that additional focus is applied to particular areas which negatively impact on the potential of communities. This includes tackling poverty and inequality, improving health and wellbeing, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce and enhancing the resilience and prosperity of our communities. The map over the page shows where some of these challenges are felt the keenest and where the city needs to work together to make a difference to people's lives.

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### Ward-level deprivation in our city

**KEY**

1 = most deprived  
10 = least deprived



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To make progress against these entrenched challenges, we must work together to maximise resources and ensure that people are provided with opportunities to reach their potential and support their community. We can only do this by working together with residents and partner organisations to understand their priorities and embed those outcomes in all that we do.

The community brings its passion, knowledge, networks, understanding and skills, through the individuality and diversity of its people. We recognise that communities are best placed to understand the issues that they face, the priorities for their area and to lead the development of solutions to these issues, but at times may require support from the council and other agencies.

The City of Wolverhampton Council is proud to be one of 11 local authorities to be accredited at 'Excellence Status' by the Local Government Association for our equality and diversity outcomes. We want to ensure that everyone in the city has the same life chances, irrespective of their diversity, with the aim to create a city where everyone can make a positive contribution.

**Wolverhampton for Everyone** is a way of working in partnership, which supports local people to unlock potential within their communities and create positive change within

the city. The approach was developed by Wolverhampton's voluntary and community sector and key partners in the city, including the council. Its core belief is that **'our city will be more vibrant and inclusive if it is powered by people who live and work here, working together inclusively'**.

The approach will provide opportunities to co-design and co-produce, developing the long-term resilience and capacity of our communities. This signifies how our council will operate moving forward as we develop a new community relationship, helping to eliminate barriers and develop networks between local people and key partner organisations in the city. Wolverhampton for Everyone is a partnership approach and its core beliefs are embedded throughout this Council Plan. They are key to delivering many of the outcomes set out here.

Our Council Plan 2019-2024 was developed with the people of the City of Wolverhampton at its heart. We have engaged to understand their key priorities and the outcomes they want to see. Over 3,000 people have contributed to the creation of the plan, as part of ongoing conversations, including residents, the voluntary and community sector and other partners, employees, councillors and businesses across the city.

Our plan reflects their views and is the blueprint by which your council will operate. We will focus on delivering what matters most to local people and businesses.



The result of this is that our plan is very much your plan and by working together we will achieve the six strategic outcomes that you have decided our city most needs:

- **Children and young people get the best possible start in life**
- **Well skilled people working in an inclusive economy**
- **More good jobs and investment in our city**
- **Better homes for all**
- **Strong, resilient and healthy communities**
- **A vibrant, green city we can all be proud of**

All that we do as an organisation will support these strategic outcomes. Whilst they are presented as six separate priorities they are interlinked and support one another. We cannot do this in isolation, as such it is vital to continue to act as one council and one city to ensure that these strategic outcomes are met. We will focus on strengthening and developing the council's links with the people of our city and developing their capacity to self-serve, with the council acting as a conduit to enable communities to develop greater resilience and self-sufficiency.

Our Council Plan sets out how we intend to target these key areas and the ongoing challenge which many of our people face. It is outcome led, and all activity we engage in will be to achieve the outcomes that matter most to them. Improvement against these will be our organisation's priority and form the basis for our performance framework which all of our services will work towards. Only through focusing on our performance in these areas will we be able to deliver the outcomes agreed by the people of our city and deliver the inclusive economy we need so that our communities thrive and prosper.

We will ensure that no community is left behind, and that positive outcomes are shared by all as we transform our city together. It is vital, in such a diverse and culturally rich city, that we engage with residents and enable them to shape our priorities. Our 'Excellent' rated equalities framework underpins all of our transformational plans to ensure that they reflect the communities we serve.

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All of this will be supported by the **‘Our Council’ programme**. This is our internal change programme which will help us drive organisational improvement and development. It provides the foundation on which we will deliver our services, in partnership with our communities and stakeholders, to achieve the city’s ambitious Vision 2030. The ‘Our Council’ programme aligns our internal activity and operating model to our strategic outcomes, by delivering:



**Our Assets**

We will rationalise our buildings, vehicles and equipment to provide better use for ourselves, our communities and our partners. Our assets will be used to unlock investment in the city, by providing space for new homes and developments that bring wider economic benefits.



**Our Data**

We will use data and insight to lead policy development and decision making. Data will be open and available, enabling people to engage with us more freely and to ensure decision making is closely aligned with communities’ needs. We use data confidentially to be effective and efficient.



**Our Technology**

We will embrace digital technology throughout our organisation to enhance customer access and will continue to improve the efficiency and joined-up nature of our services. Our communities and partners will be able to self-serve and access information when they want it, how they want it.



**Our Money**

We will have a sustainable, agile organisation able to work with partners and communities to unlock the potential of our city. We will operate as efficiently as possible whilst embedding a commercial culture throughout the organisation to meet our financial challenge.



**Our People**

We will continue to develop a highly talented and empowered workforce with the skills, drive and innovation to meet ever changing demands, and to work collaboratively and confidently to tackle our city’s priorities.

We will deliver this plan in line with our **PRIDE values**. These values define what is important to us and how we will work to deliver the city's priorities. We will:



Image: The Takeover Challenge 2018

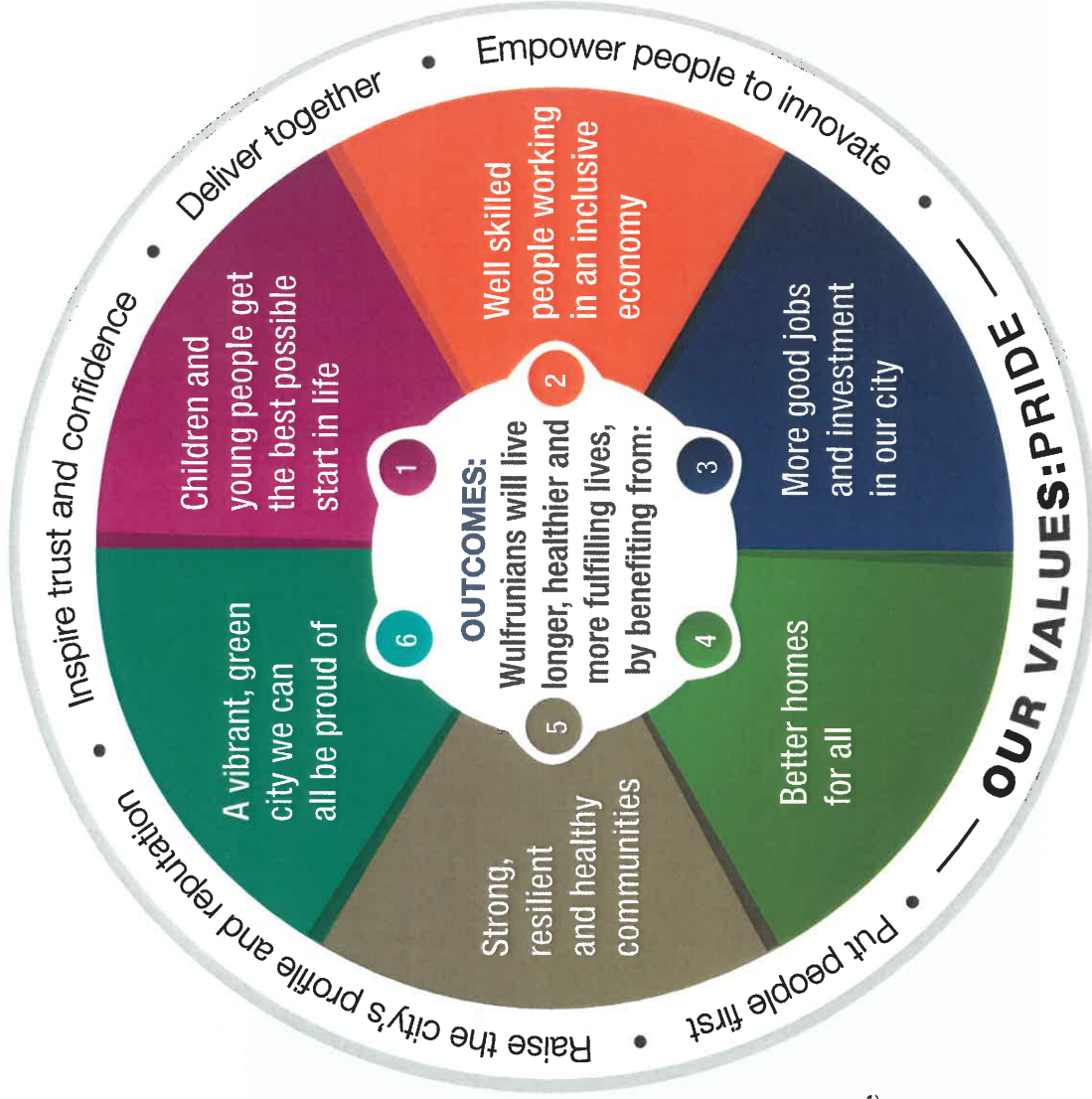
# Council Plan

Working together to be a city of opportunity and to deliver our contribution to Vision 2030



**Wolverhampton for Everyone**  
a people-powered city  
*'Connecting people, places and communities to unlock potential and create change'*

**CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL**



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## Delivery We will deliver our vision and better outcomes through:

### Our City's Priorities

- 1 Children and young people get the best possible start in life**
- Opportunity for a great start in life
  - Education that fulfils potential
  - Strengthening families where children and young people are at risk

- 2 Well skilled people working in an inclusive economy**
- Improve skills to access work now and in the future
  - Lifelong opportunities to learn

- 3 More good jobs and investment in our city**
- Grow the number of jobs and businesses
  - Support local businesses to thrive and grow
  - Attract new investment and quality jobs
  - Improve employment and participation

- 4 Better homes for all**
- Safe and healthy homes
  - More and better homes
  - Access to a secure home

- 5 Strong, resilient and healthy communities**
- Communities that support each other
  - Active healthy life
  - A safer, more cohesive city community
  - Maintain independence for adults with care and support needs
  - Protecting the most vulnerable with the right care and support

- 6 A vibrant, green city we can all be proud of**
- Great culture, entertainment and pride in the city
  - Continually strengthen our relationships with our residents
  - A clean, welcoming and confident city
  - A great transport system and sustainable, digitally inclusive city

### Our Council Programme



Our Assets



Our Data



Our Technology



Our Money



Our People

Measuring Success

Our Corporate Performance Framework

SS

## Children and young people get the best possible start in life

**As a city we must ensure that our children and young people get the best possible start in life, so that they have the opportunities to fulfil their potential.** Developing a strong foundation by which children and young people can succeed, is fundamental to us delivering our Council Plan 2019-2024. Our plan seeks to build this aspiration and resilience early, by supporting families, children and young people to be ready for school and to grow up in a safe and secure home in a thriving community. We will work with all partners, including education providers across the city, to ensure children and young people have the opportunity to learn and realise their ambitions as well as supporting disadvantaged or vulnerable learners to grow their skills and aspirations.

As a council we will lead work across the city to develop and embed a 'culture of belonging' where all children and young people feel a part of their school and local community. We see belonging as the link that runs through and across our support for disadvantaged and vulnerable children and which places child centred educational and social inclusion at the heart of all our strategies.

At different times in their lives, children, young people and their families may need additional support and help. We will strive to help families as early as possible and provide targeted and/or specialist support at the right time to reduce the likelihood of problems escalating, to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and improve long term outcomes.

**Image:** Rocket Pool Strengthening Families Hub



## Children and young people get the best possible start in life

### City priorities

#### How we will measure

#### Opportunity for a great start in life

A resilient family, together with high quality education, is vital to improving outcomes for children and young people, to reduce the number of children growing up in poverty by reducing the number of low-income families. We will engage parents through universal, targeted and specialist support to develop good parenting skills and to help their children reach their full potential. It is also essential we promote outstanding early years standards to ensure all children arrive at school ready and prepared to learn. This is crucial for development and determines a child's future outcomes. Promoting these skills as early as possible is the best way to ensure every child gets the support they need to succeed.

% of children who attain a 'Good' level of development at foundation stage  
% of children in low-income families

#### Education that fulfils potential

Wolverhampton has made fantastic progress on improving school performance, with 80% being rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. We will continue to work closely with our schools and other partners to prioritise investment in our children and young people, particularly those who may be vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. We will support the emotional wellbeing of all learners, to ensure they have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and that no child in the city is left behind. We also want to develop greater collaboration between our schools and businesses to improve the transition from education to work.

Key stage 2 attainment gap for reading, writing, and maths between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils  
Key stage 4 attainment gap at 'attainment 8' between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils  
Key stage 4 average 'attainment 8' score per pupil

Gatsby benchmark of 8 indicators about school/business liaison

## Children and young people get the best possible start in life

### City priorities

### How we will measure

#### Strengthen families where children and young people are at risk

We will continue to work closely with families to ensure that children live in safe and supportive homes. Targeting effective early help and support will strengthen families, keep children and young people safe and improve their life chances. Moving forward, our relationship-based approach to all children's services will empower families to remain together and achieve positive and sustained change.

Children and young people rate per 10,000 population

- Early help
- Children in need
- Child protection
- Children in care

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## Well skilled people working in an inclusive economy

**Our ambition is to develop inclusive growth across the city to enable all people and places to realise their full potential in contributing to the successes of our city.** The people of Wolverhampton will be at the heart of this. We want everyone to be able to benefit from the opportunities we create and to enable in-work progression through new skills and learning. We will work closely with further education providers, as well as businesses, to upskill our workforce and enable our people to access new opportunities as our economy continues to grow. Developing our city's skills is vital in attracting new businesses, increasing productivity and enabling all communities to benefit from economic growth. We must also encourage greater collaboration across business and education partners to ensure our workforce receives the investment and support required to fulfil their potential. Whilst our unemployment rate has decreased since the height of the 2008 recession, we know certain communities and people have not benefited fully from the growth in our city and we need to do more with partners to ensure no-one is left behind.

**Image:** Apprentice Chanelle Vernon joined Jessup Brothers in 2018 via the Black Country Impact project

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## Well skilled people working in an inclusive economy

### City priorities

#### How we will measure

#### Improve skills to access work now and in the future

Having the right skills and experience is vital to being able to fully participate in the economy. Too many of our residents have poor levels of qualifications which limits their ability to participate in our growing economy. We need to improve the skills of our working age population to ensure that they benefit from the new jobs and investment coming into our city. We will build on our relationship with voluntary sector partners to implement the learning communities initiatives to upskill residents and provide learning opportunities for all.

Alongside this we will improve digital inclusion to empower local people to access further opportunities through digital means, whilst also developing their digital skills to be able to meet the needs of businesses expanding in our city. Working closely with businesses and partners is key to unlocking this potential and ensuring people are in the right place, with the right skills, to benefit from growth now and in the future.

#### Lifelong opportunities to learn

We aspire to be a city of learning where an ethos of quality underpins the provision of continuous learning opportunities for all. We will support our young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) through Black Country Impact project and Connexions. We must build on our already strong relationships with our partners, including businesses and education providers, to develop our approach to apprenticeships to ensure that the City of Wolverhampton is able to provide local people with the opportunities to thrive in the labour market. We will identify the key skill areas the city needs to develop and maximise productivity and competitiveness in the future, ensuring that residents are able to access these opportunities to progress their careers.

% of working-age adults with no qualifications

% of working-age adults with level 4+ qualifications

% of businesses reporting they have skills-shortage vacancies

Key stage 5 attainment

Apprenticeship starts

Number of residents accessing adult education courses and services

% of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) (16-17s)



## More good jobs and investment in our city

**To develop and strengthen our city's economy in the longer-term, the City of Wolverhampton needs to continue to attract good-quality jobs and investment.** We have strong foundations to build on, with £4.3 billion of investment already underway or planned in our city. Our ambition is to enable our local businesses to flourish and grow whilst continuing to attract new companies to the city. Historically, the City of Wolverhampton has been a centre of excellence for manufacturing. We need to build on these strengths whilst ensuring that we diversify our economy further by attracting high-skilled, value-added industries including advanced manufacturing, information and communications technologies and digital industries.

Attracting a greater breadth of businesses, particularly in high-growth industries, is vital to enhance the economy of the city and provide greater employment opportunities for our people. We are committed to local purchasing and work with our suppliers and partners to create employment and training opportunities for local people to secure the 'Wolverhampton pound'. We will continue to encourage businesses in the city to demonstrate corporate social responsibility and maximise social value opportunities to deliver benefits for our people, our market and our city environment. We are committed to supporting businesses to develop local resilience in energy generation and distribution, to maximise the economic opportunities offered by the growth of a low carbon economy. We must also ensure that the city plays an active role in the West Midlands Industrial Strategy and benefits from the wider economic growth of the region.

Image: i54 - a billion pound investment bringing thousands of jobs

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## More good jobs and investment in our city

### City priorities

#### How we will measure

#### Grow the number of jobs and businesses

The City of Wolverhampton is already home to 113,000 jobs and we have seen a significant expansion of Jaguar Land Rover and the arrival of Wiggles to our city. Wolverhampton is the fourth best place to start a business and we are determined to build on this and continue to attract major new investment to our city including growing our knowledge economy. We will continue to shape our city centre and make it an attractive place for investment and jobs, whilst ensuring our residents benefit from the new opportunities being created. With over £1 billion investment happening, we will see business growth and more opportunities.

Number of jobs

#### Support local businesses to thrive and grow

The council will continue to support our local businesses to expand and ensure that the city is open and ready for business. We will continue to provide the support needed to enable independent businesses to thrive and will work strategically with partners to maximise opportunities in the city, through the delivery of digital infrastructure to unlock further growth.

Active business enterprises per 1,000 population

Our Wolverhampton Independent Retail Excellence (WIRE) awards recognise the fantastic contribution our independent businesses make to the city, while our city's Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) continue to work closely with local businesses. Developing our strategic growth corridors will help connect businesses with people and enable them to grow.

## More good jobs and investment in our city

### City priorities

#### How we will measure

#### Attract new investment and quality jobs

We need to continue to diversify our economy and attract good-quality jobs to our city. We have internationally recognised strengths within the manufacturing and aerospace sectors but need to ensure our city welcomes a wide array of other sectors to ensure continued economic growth. The council has supported the £35 million investment in the Mander Centre and will continue to develop the city-centre to make it a destination of choice. Already we have around 1 million square feet of office space planned in a new Commercial District, supported by Invest Wolverhampton. Our Business Programme has developed a sense of confidence in our city amongst business leaders nationally and we will continue to promote Wolverhampton as the 'Premier City' to invest in.

Proportion of jobs in professional and technical occupations

Gross Value Added (GVA) per head

New office floor space in strategic centres

Resident earnings

#### Improve employment and participation

Although we have been successful in bringing jobs to the city, we recognise we need to do more to support our residents to access them. Unemployment remains a challenge and we need to reduce the number of children growing up in poverty by reducing the number of low-income families. We will improve access to information, advice and jobs through Workbox as the virtual front door to skills support in the city. We will build on our success with the Wolves@Work programme which has provided jobs for 3,800 people, as at February 2019, and work with businesses across the city to ensure opportunities are promoted for local people, and that new companies invest in Wulfrunians.

Employment rate

63

## Better homes for all

**Home to more than 110,400 households, our city's housing market is rapidly changing and forecast to grow in the future.** It is vital we continue to provide enough good quality homes, including affordable homes, in our city whilst ensuring we provide greater housing choice and encourage high-quality housing design and property management standards. We will continue to invest in our existing homes to ensure they are safe, secure and well managed for the future.

We have secured Housing Growth funding to accelerate the development of new homes and our local housing company, WV Living, is building over 1,000 new homes over the next five years. We have ambitious plans already delivering and shaping a new housing offer for our city.

We will continue to work with our communities, partners and investors to bring forward new housing opportunities to enable better homes and housing choices for all.

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## Better homes for all

### City priorities

#### How we will measure

#### Safe and healthy homes

A safe home is essential for everyone living in our city. Our work to challenge poor practice by residential landlords will continue to protect our residents from unacceptable living conditions and overcrowding. We will continue to ensure that all our housing management agents looking after council-owned homes continue to deliver high quality and safe landlord services that meet the needs of our tenants and leaseholders. We will continue to make best use of our housing assets and improve the thermal efficiency of our homes by continuing to work in partnership to ensure healthy homes and reduce fuel poverty across our city.

Number of properties managed by approved 'Rent with Confidence' private landlords in our city  
Fuel poverty rate

#### More and better homes

Our housing offer must meet the needs of our communities and the growing number of households looking to work, study and settle in our city. We will continue to enable greater housing choice to meet our current and future needs, using new technology to enable lower carbon homes. This will include accommodation to promote independent living, new private renting options and home ownership opportunities. Our aspiration is to increase city centre living to improve the vibrancy of our city centre and reduce the number of empty properties, in partnership with investors, developers and residential landlords.

Net additional homes  
Net additional affordable homes  
Number of empty properties across the city

65

## Better homes for all

### City priorities

### How we will measure

#### Access to a secure home

We continue to tackle rough sleeping in partnership in the city. We will continue work to prevent homelessness and provide support and advice to people who need sustainable accommodation options to meet their housing needs. We will do this through our Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 - 2022 and supporting action plan. We will continue to work closely with our partners to provide the necessary support for some of our most vulnerable people and new communities settling in our city.

Households in priority need per 1,000 households  
Number of households in temporary accommodation  
Average number of people rough sleeping in our city



## Strong, resilient and healthy communities

**Building community and family resilience is a key priority for the City of Wolverhampton to enable the people of our city to live independent, prosperous and fulfilling lives.**

Our communities are vibrant, with hugely diverse cultures and beliefs living alongside each other in a truly multi-cultural and cohesive city. The City of Wolverhampton proudly celebrates its rich history as a welcoming place for all people and we need to build on these strengths to maximise the potential of our residents and city.

The council will work collaboratively with local community leadership in communities to grow the resilience and capacity areas and enable local people to make the changes they feel would be most suitable to their local area. Rather than prescribing solutions, the council will act as the conduit by which need and resource are brought together to allow greater independence. We will also enable our residents to thrive through the use of adaptive technology to enable independence and improve connectivity for people across our city. By allowing our communities to determine their own solutions through collaborative partnership, City of Wolverhampton residents will benefit from improved health, social and financial outcomes.

Image: Outdoor and active at Bantock Park

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## Strong, resilient and healthy communities

### City priorities

### How we will measure

#### Communities that support each other

We will engage and collaborate much more closely with our communities to meet their needs and empower them to thrive. Local leadership will be key in shaping our approach moving forward and developing links across communities is vital in developing community resilience to reduce dependency on public services. Central to our strategy in this area is developing a place-based delivery model which maximises the potential of communities through their assets and people.

% of residents who agree 'people in this local area pull together to improve the local area'

#### Active healthy life

Through our public health vision, we will integrate health outcomes across all services as these are strongly linked to people's inclusion in their local economy and community, in doing so, tackling inequality - which is a top priority for the council. We will improve our infrastructure and how we plan our city, to encourage active travel, promote the use of our city's world-class sporting facilities, as well as our beautiful parks and open spaces. We will continue to ensure these facilities are accessible for residents and cater for the needs of our diverse communities, to enable residents to live longer, healthier and more active lives.

Healthy life expectancy for residents

Strong, resilient and healthy communities

City priorities

How we will measure

A safer, more cohesive city community

We want everyone in the City of Wolverhampton to feel safe in the city and in their own community. We are working closely with our partners to tackle gang activity and actively promoting our early intervention through schools and community groups to support young people and direct them to appropriate provision. Through our strength-based transformation programme, we will work with communities and partners to re-connect people with their communities and foster better relations and improved outcomes for Wulfrunians. In line with this approach, a Serious Violence and Exploitation Strategy will run from April 2019-2022, bringing together workstreams to tackle violence, gangs, modern slavery, child sexual exploitation and organised crime. This will forge a strengthened partnership response, focused on early interventions and preventative measures alongside enforcement action to address root causes of violence and keep the city safe.

Total recorded crime rate per 1,000 population

Maintain independence for adults with care and support needs

Enabling people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health conditions and age related frailty to live healthy and fulfilling lives is key to developing an inclusive, understanding society. Supporting residents to develop, regain or retain independence skills brings the best outcomes for our people and communities. Through digital inclusion, adaptive technology and a focus on the strengths of individuals, we will support residents to live independently and realise their full potential.

% of people receiving care and support in their own home

Number of adults over the age of 65 living in residential or nursing care

% of people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental health conditions living in their own homes

% of people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental health conditions in employment

69

## Strong, resilient and healthy communities

### City priorities

### How we will measure

#### Protecting the most vulnerable with the right care and support

The city's performance on 'care-related quality of life' is higher than the England average and most importantly the people we support feel safe and secure due to the care they receive. We will continue to work with our partners to improve challenges around 'delayed transfers of care' and innovate to help people live independently in their homes. We will also continue to provide information and advice to help ensure that financially vulnerable people are supported to maximise their income.

Care-related quality of life score  
Delayed transfers of care per  
100,000 adult population

## A vibrant, green city we can all be proud of

**Wolverhampton is the city of the Black Country and we want to grow our already vibrant cultural offer to reflect being one of the 20 largest cities in the UK.** We're home to a Premier League football team and are regarded as a thriving centre for arts and live entertainment, with the Civic Halls a key venue on the touring schedules of major bands and comedy acts. We want to work more closely with our communities to ensure the people of our city have access to these fantastic opportunities, whilst also empowering them to host their own events and develop pride in their city. We are investing heavily in improving sustainability and connectivity within our city through transport and digital infrastructure, whilst promoting the use of our natural open spaces, to better engage with our local people and ensure all our communities feel at home in their city. Our infrastructure investment will embed smart technology to bring added value including the provision of electric vehicle charging points, LED lighting and smart parking.

**Image:** Wolverhampton Festival of Food and Drink, Wulfruna Street, July 2018

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## A vibrant, green city we can all be proud of

### City priorities

### How we will measure

#### Great culture, entertainment and pride in the city

The City of Wolverhampton is already home to the nationally renowned Civic Halls and also boasts an impressive theatre, museum and art gallery in the city centre. The Wolverhampton Wanderers promotion parade in 2018 saw over 80,000 people celebrate our football team's success. We will continue to promote new outdoor events, and our green open spaces, to attract more visitors and tourists to the city. We want to develop a real sense of pride in the City of Wolverhampton, with local people proud of their city's successes.

Number of tourists visiting the city

#### Continually strengthen our relationships with our residents

As a council we have successfully transformed many of our internal services over the previous few years to become a confident, capable council. Moving forward we will work much more closely with our communities and partners in the city to foster relationships and ensure that we design services with Wulfrunians so that together we deliver the outcomes our city needs. Developing our links with our residents is key to this and our ambition is to maintain constant engagement with them to lead to continuous service improvement.

% of residents satisfied with council services

72

## A vibrant, green city we can all be proud of

### City priorities

#### How we will measure

#### A clean, welcoming and confident city

Like many growing cities, Wolverhampton recognises the need to improve its air quality and reduce its carbon consumption. The City of Wolverhampton is a member of the UK100 network of local government leaders who have pledged to shift their towns and cities to 100% clean energy by 2050. This will be delivered by working with partners to develop low carbon measures, including encouraging more sustainable modes of transport and the use of renewable low carbon energy.

We will continue to take a zero tolerance policy on fly-tipping and littering and will enable our communities to report any issues through digital means. The rollout of smart infrastructure will enhance the sustainability of our city whilst enabling us to tackle fly-tipping more effectively.

% of people who agree the city is clean and tidy

Kilotons of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted per head of population

#### A great transport system and sustainable, digitally inclusive city

Our central location, at the heart of the UK's rail and motorway network, provides us with excellent connectivity to key cities and industries. The £150 million investment in our Interchange programme, incorporating a new bus, tram and rail hub, will provide a fantastic gateway into the heart of the city and will improve access for residents and businesses via sustainable modes of travel. We will also use the rollout of 5G and improvements to our fibre network to improve digital connectivity for local people and businesses. Our connected places strategy will deliver smart technology into our city to improve connectivity and accessibility for all, supporting electric vehicle growth, improved digital infrastructure and promote more sustainable transport options, through our active travel strategy.

% of journeys to work made using sustainable transport

73

## Our Council Programme

**To realise our ambition of being a city of opportunity the council must continue its transformational journey to become even more efficient, enterprising and collaborative.** Our success being named Local Authority of the Year 2017 and excellent Corporate Peer Review feedback during a review from the Local Government Association has reaffirmed that we are 'One Council'. Our Council Programme is the ongoing driver by which we reshape our organisation and culture to ensure the organisation is best placed to deliver the outcomes sought by our residents. It will help us to influence and foster relations with our partners and to champion the City of Wolverhampton at a regional and national level. We have responded to the continued financial challenge by making savings in excess of £220 million since 2010, whilst becoming more commercial and efficient in the way we operate. These challenges will continue. Moving forward, we must review how we operate to ensure we are sustainable financially and still able to provide those services people most need.

Our Council Programme will be the enabler, by which we have the right culture and skills, to achieve our city's priorities.

**Image:** i9 bringing quality office space and jobs



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## Our Council Programme

### Priorities

### Deliverables



#### Our Assets

The programme will change how the council uses its assets (including vehicles, highways and street furniture) to enable transformation in our communities. It will oversee the review of our estate, to improve effectiveness and efficiency. Co-location of public sector service delivery will be encouraged and we will reduce ongoing running and maintenance costs by working more closely with the people of our city.

The vision of the programme is to:

- Run an efficient and cost-effective asset portfolio
- Use our assets to leverage regeneration and investment in our city together with our public sector partners
- Empower communities and businesses by managing our asset potential across partners
- Use our assets to enable connectivity and digitally inclusive communities
- Reduce energy consumption and identify renewable and low carbon energy opportunities.

- Efficiencies in service delivery
- Improved regeneration and investment in the city
- Improved broadband speed and 4G/5G coverage
- Generation of income
- Reduced depot and vehicle maintenance costs
- Reduced running costs through shared services
- Increase in capital receipts
- Improved cost of estate
- Improved size of estate
- Maximise land freed up for housing
- Maximise land freed up for investment

FS



## Our Council Programme

### Priorities



#### Our Data

This programme will embed the importance of using data and insight to shape our organisation through evidence-based decision making, intelligence-led policy and robust performance management. A crucial part of this is the development of a council-wide planning and performance framework and a data and insight strategy focusing on:

- Data collection, management and quality
- Data analytics and insight - to drive strategic decision making, predict demand and shape preventative services and improve outcomes
- Performance management - to support service improvement and delivery of outcomes
- Management information - to support day-to-day service delivery through performance dashboards and reporting
- Open data: making data available on the WV Insight website for all to use

### Deliverables

- Enabling financial savings
- Demand management
- Improve customer insight and service planning
- More effective decision making
- Better outcomes
- More data available on WV Insight

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## Our Council Programme

### Priorities

### Deliverables



### Our Technology

This programme seeks to digitise customer access to be more efficient and to provide better service to our customers when and how they want it. We will also improve digital inclusion through the provision of internet facilities at libraries and other buildings. The overarching framework will:

- Promote opportunities to access online digital services
- Promote the introduction and wider adoption of emerging 'bot' technology to improve the quality and speed of repetitive administrative activities
- Promote the introduction of 'chatbot' technology to manage and respond to simple telephone enquiries from the public, where the information is readily available for self-service on the council's website
- Promote opportunities for the introduction of emerging artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies to ease the burden and automate more complex administrative council activities
- Promote opportunities to further develop a single 'My Account' for members of the public
- Promote the use of smart infrastructure to generate efficiencies, savings and income in delivery of wider council services

- Savings to be generated from channel-shift and management review
- Stabilisation of contact centre technology platforms
- Effectiveness and managing demand through business processes
- Financial benefit

FF

## Our Council Programme

### Priorities

### Deliverables



#### Our Money

We will shape how we operate to ensure a financially sustainable organisation. Since 2010 we have reduced our spend by £220 million as a result of a reduction in government funding but with increased demand for services. Moving forward, we will need to operate differently to ensure we can deliver the outcomes our local people most need. To ensure the council operates efficiently as an organisation, we will work to these core principles:

#### **Focusing on core business**

- Focus on those activities that deliver the outcomes local people need. We will target and tailor services to meet needs, working in collaboration with our public sector partners

#### **Promoting independence and well-being**

- We will enable local people to live independently by unlocking capacity within communities to provide an effective and supportive environment

#### **Delivering inclusive economic growth**

- We will continue to drive investment in the city to create future economic and employment opportunities for people and businesses in our city

- Improved access to digital services to empower local people to self-serve at a time and place that suits them whilst reducing traditional operating costs
- Reduced demand through early intervention and closer collaboration with local people to support greater independence and resilience
- Targeted service delivery by focusing on the areas and places that need us the most and where we can deliver the best possible outcomes within the resources available
- Sustainable business models that deliver the most efficient and effective services possible within the significant financial constraints we face, to meet the needs of local people
- Prioritised capital investment focused on the priorities that deliver the best possible returns and outcomes for local people

## Our Council Programme

### Priorities

### Deliverables

#### Balancing risk

- We will ensure decisions are based on evidence, data and customer insight
- We will embed a robust risk assessment process throughout programme activity based on clear evidence as to why activity should continue or stop

#### Commercialising our approach

- We will boost social value in our city by maximising local procurement spend with people and businesses
- We will consider an even more commercial approach, seizing all appropriate opportunities including:
  - Exploring creative and alternative service models
  - Consider options to share services and collaborative procurement
  - Ensuring services are sustainable, efficient, effective and based on evidence
  - Robust contract management
  - Making a return on our investments
  - Looking for opportunities to reduce budgets and cut costs
  - Generating a surplus through trading services

- Income generated by developing new and innovative opportunities with partners where appropriate
- Efficiencies delivered by reviewing our resources, business processes and better using technology, will deliver services which meet local people's needs efficiently and cost effectively
- Maximised partnerships and external income through identifying opportunities to collaborate, share resources, reduce costs and seize funding opportunities

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## Our Council Programme

### Priorities

### Deliverables



#### Our People

Our employees sit at the heart of our organisation. The aim of this programme is to support employee development, to ensure that employees are effective, productive, happy and healthy in their roles, so that together we will achieve the outcomes set out in this Council Plan. Our People programme has been developed by our employees, for our employees, through extensive engagement and employee working groups.

The programme covers the entire lifecycle of employment – from an employee's first encounter with the recruitment process, to when they leave the organisation. The programme supports our workforce to have the right skills whilst embedding a consistent organisational culture, where people feel **empowered to:**

- Think creatively
- Support communities
- Manage demand
- Champion change
- Develop new skills to improve service delivery

- Empowered, productive workforce
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Improved efficiency and effectiveness
- Improved employee satisfaction
- Improve employee volunteering

## Our Council Programme

### Priorities

#### **Adaptable by:**

- Taking personal responsibility
- Having the right skills at the right time
- Applying skills flexibly
- Working together with partners
- Embracing smarter working practices

#### **Valued through:**

- Ongoing development
- Career opportunities
- Celebration of successes
- Support for health and wellbeing
- Effective communication
- Equality and diversity

Key to the delivery of this will be our adoption of a restorative approach, which is a relationship-based way of working together with people rather than doing things to them. This will generate a high challenge, high support environment where employees come together to work in a supportive and collaborative way, and in line with our PRIDE values.

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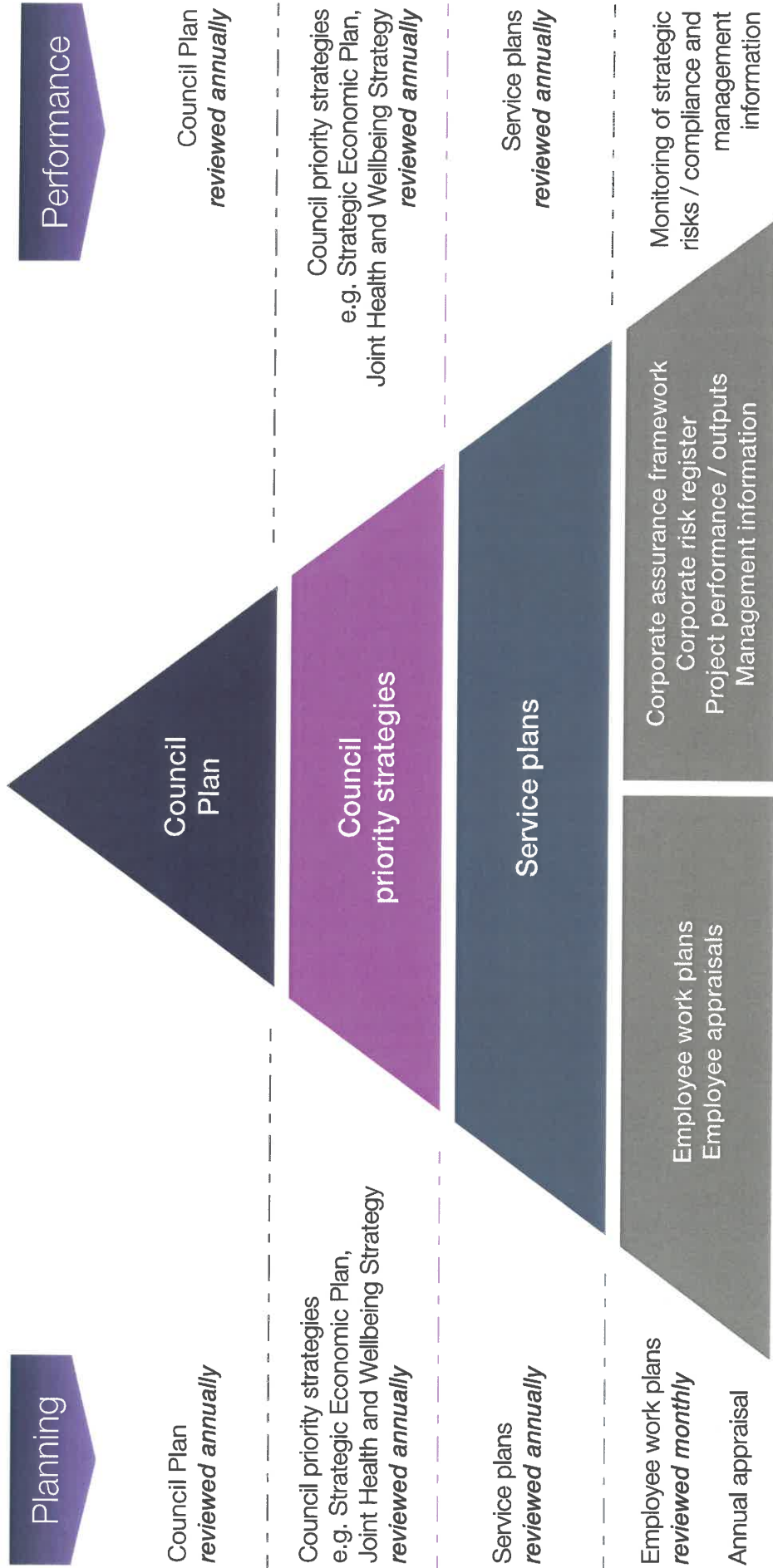
## A City Conversation: Continuous engagement and monitoring

The Council Plan 2019 - 2024 has been developed in partnership with the people of our city, including residents and local businesses. We consulted with around 3,000 people through surveys and at over 20 events across the city to shape our activity for the next five years. It was clear that people in the city are passionate about Wolverhampton and about the things that need to be done to continue the city's ambitious transformation. However, this is only the start. We want to ensure that people are informed and engaged throughout the process of making this plan live and breathe, to provide challenge and to advise us should priorities change. We will embrace feedback on how we're doing as part of an ongoing 'City Conversation'.

Our corporate performance framework sets out the strategic indicators we will use to monitor progress, informed through data and strategies from national and regional sources, local insight as well as feedback from the people of our city. A lead director has been identified for each of the six council plan priorities. This framework will be reported to Cabinet (Performance Management) Panel on a quarterly basis.

All council services will produce service plans detailing the activity that will be undertaken to deliver this Council Plan and how their performance will be measured as part of a new corporate performance framework. These plans will be reviewed and updated throughout the five-year duration of the Council Plan, enabling progress against our five outcomes to be monitored effectively.

## Our Corporate Performance Framework



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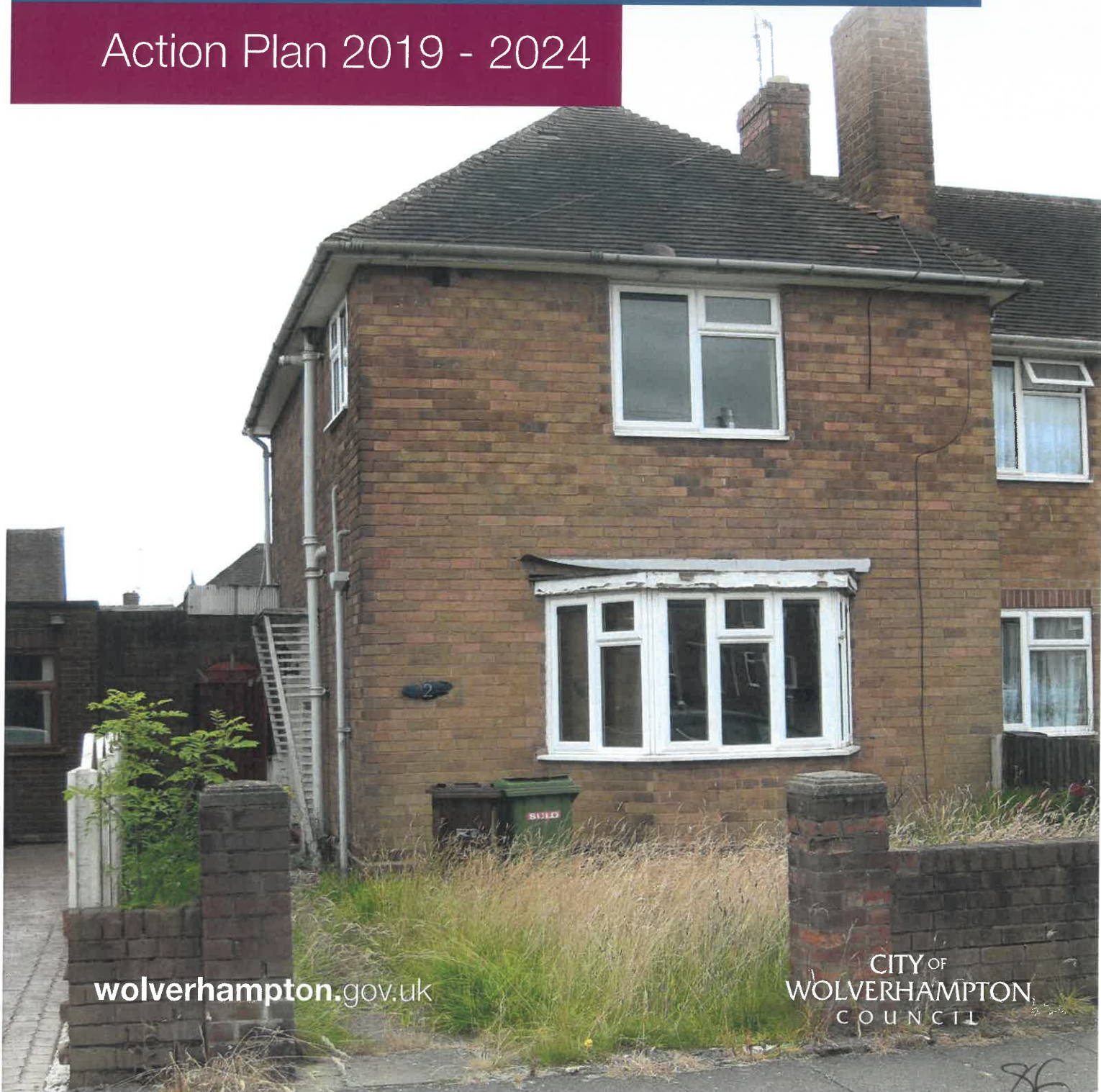


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## Appendix 6

# Empty Homes Policy and Strategy

Action Plan 2019 - 2024



[wolverhampton.gov.uk](http://wolverhampton.gov.uk)

CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL

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# Introduction



- 1.1 There is a national shortage of housing, and particularly of good quality homes affordable for people on low incomes.**  
Empty homes are a wasted resource, and homes which are empty for long periods can deteriorate and attract anti-social behaviour. If properties are neglected, they can devalue nearby homes and cause nuisance to neighbourhoods.
- 1.2 It is normal for there to be a turnover of empty homes.**  
People buy, sell, inherit and rent homes, and need to move for reasons related to housing costs, size, family and work needs. A healthy housing market needs a regular turnover of homes for sale and for rent. The City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) only needs to focus on preventing homes from remaining empty for long periods, or advising and encouraging the owners of long-term empty homes to use or sell them. Homes are defined as long-term empty if they have been unoccupied for 6 months or more.
- 1.3 CWC has a higher number of long-term empty homes (1.2%) than the regional average of 0.84%.**  
There is no one area where long-term empty homes are concentrated; empty homes are found throughout the City and in all price brackets.
- 1.4 In line with our new Housing Strategy, we want the new Empty Homes Policy and Strategy Action Plan to make a real difference in Wolverhampton.**  
By the end of the strategy period, we aim to have brought at least 1,100 long-term empty homes back into use, with a stretch target of 1,250. This will help residents to find a home to rent or buy and will contribute to raising the quality of our neighbourhoods. We will explore new partnerships and will continue to learn from and implement best practice in minimising wasted homes.

# 2

## Previous Strategy

### 2.1 Our previous strategy covered the period 2010-2015 and has continued until now.

Since 2010 CWC has taken action to bring over 1,650 empty homes back into use. This action has included advice and assistance to owners, offering a £500 payment to contribute to the costs of sellers' fees, and taking enforcement action such as serving a Notice under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. As a last resort, where owners are unwilling to co-operate with the Council and use or sell their home, the Council may use compulsory purchase powers. Homes bought through compulsory purchase are then sold at auction.

### 2.2 Wherever possible CWC works in partnership with the owners of empty homes, and offering advice and assistance is always the first option.

Only if an owner cannot be traced, or the owner is unwilling to take action to sell or use a home which is causing problems for its neighbours, is enforcement action taken. In more than half of cases where CWC starts compulsory purchase proceedings, which is an action of last resort where all other efforts have failed, the owner of the empty home takes action themselves to sell or let their home and avoid compulsory purchase.



# 3

## Supporting Corporate Priorities

### 3.1 Housing contributes to CWC's corporate priorities identified in Our Council Plan 2019-2024, in particular:

- Better homes for all;
- A vibrant, green city we can be proud of;
- Strong, resilient and healthy communities

Bringing empty homes back into use nearly always involves improving the homes to a standard for their new owners or renters. Using empty homes contributes to reinvigorating neighbourhoods and improving the quality of housing has a positive effect on residents' health.

### 3.2 The City's Housing Strategy, Better Homes for all, continues the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan and identifies three key objectives:

- More and better homes;
- Safe and healthy homes;
- Access to a secure home.

Work to reduce empty homes contributes positively to all three of these objectives; it increases options for residents to find a



secure home, increases the supply of available homes, and increases the quality of homes as landlords bring them up to letting standard or new owners make improvements to their home.

### 3.3 We intend to explore partnerships to increase the range of options for bringing long-term empty homes up to standard where work is required.

This will increase investment in our city and support more jobs, especially in skilled building trades. Poor quality housing impacts on residents' health and improving conditions in privately rented and owner-occupied homes is a key priority for CWC. Improving the supply of good quality homes for rent and for sale will offer residents increased opportunities to move from unsatisfactory housing, offering a stable and healthy environment for our residents.



# 4

## Developing our Empty Homes Strategy

**4.1 While much good work has been achieved since 2010, Wolverhampton continues to have more long-term empty homes than our neighbouring local authorities.**

CWC therefore wishes to move from a predominately reactive approach to a more proactive strategy. CWC will continue to work co-operatively with the owners of empty homes wherever possible. However, when owners of empty homes which are causing nuisance either cannot be identified or refuse to engage with CWC, we will take action to ensure that empty homes are brought back into use.

**4.2 There are four main elements to CWC's new Empty Homes Strategy. These are:**

- Improving the accuracy of data/records to ensure the reported number of empty properties is a true reflection of the position;

- Continuing to learn from other Local Authorities' empty homes work, identifying successful initiatives which might be effective in Wolverhampton;

- Introducing new options to encourage and help the owners of empty homes to let or sell them, and exploring partnerships to bring empty homes back into use;

- Taking a more proactive approach to step up performance in tackling empty homes;

- Supporting ongoing publicity to raise public awareness and promote a range of options to minimise long-term empty homes in Wolverhampton.

These elements are covered in more detail on the following pages.

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# 5

## Identifying Empty Homes and Their Owners



**5.1 The main sources of information about the owners of residential properties are Council Tax records and the Land Registry.**

From April 2019 CWC introduced increased charges for Council Tax on empty dwellings. Those which have been empty for two years or more will pay 100% Council Tax, rising to 200% if a home has been empty for five years and 300% for those empty for ten years or more.

Members of the public can report empty homes via the Council's website, and staff may also identify empty homes when out in the community.

**5.2 It is now compulsory in almost all circumstances to register ownership of homes at the Land Registry when a property is bought or sold and these records are publicly available.**

However, a few homes cannot be traced to a current owner, either because they have never been registered or because they are owned via a complex system of companies and/or trusts, obscuring the identity of their owners.

**5.3 In the great majority of cases, identifying the owner of an empty home is straightforward.**

Finding the owner's current address and contact details may be more difficult.

**5.4 Council Tax records are often very useful for finding out who owns a particular home, and large Council Tax arrears may indicate that a property is empty.**

However, these records are not always up to date. People may believe that if a property is unoccupied it does not attract Council Tax liability, or they may be busy with other personal and administrative issues and forget to advise Council Tax staff when they buy or move into a new home. The Empty Homes staff work with Council Tax colleagues to share information and update Council Tax records, which benefits the Council by maximising Council Tax income as well as by tackling empty homes.

# 6

## Researching and Implementing Best Practice

**6.1 CWC staff attend the West Midlands Empty Property Officers Group and are members of the national practitioners' forum, the Empty Homes Network.**  
CWC will continue to be an active member of these groups and work to identify effective initiatives to bring empty homes back into use which are not currently in place in Wolverhampton and consider whether they would be successful in our City.

**6.2 Housing Services will seek to work with regional neighbours and partners to ensure that there is a consistent, relevant and effective suite of options to help owners of empty homes to let or sell them, and to progress enforcement where this is necessary.**  
Partners may include Wolverhampton Homes, local Housing Associations, community groups and private companies. Work with Council Tax colleagues will be key to update their systems and ensure that we have an accurate record of empty homes in Wolverhampton.



# 7

## A More Proactive Approach

**7.1 In order to reduce the number of long-term empty homes in Wolverhampton, a more proactive approach will be required.**

Housing Services already works with Council Tax to contact owners of properties empty for three months, to prevent them becoming long-term empty homes. Sometimes Council Tax records do not show the full picture, as owners may have other priorities than updating the Council. By proactively contacting those on our records, we can discover that the home has been sold or used. We hope to work with Council Tax colleagues to undertake a thorough review of their records. While updating these records is likely to result in a more accurate, and lower, figure for long-term empty homes in the City, new initiatives will also be explored to minimise the number of wasted homes in Wolverhampton.

**7.2 As part of our more proactive response, empty homes staff are now contacting the owners of empty homes when Council Tax records indicate that they have been unoccupied for three months, rather than waiting until they have been empty for six months and trigger the long-term empty definition.**

This is proving effective in two ways: in some cases, we learn that the property is no longer empty, and records can be amended, and in others owners are more open to advice and assistance in the early stages of a home lying empty, rather than when it has become the normal situation.

**7.3 For the previous Empty Homes Strategy, the target was to bring 200 long-term empty homes back into use each year.**

In line with our more ambitious and proactive new Strategy, the target will be

increased to 220 homes each year, with a stretch target of 250.

**7.4 In some other areas, private companies are working in partnership with local authorities, with the company buying homes which are then leased to the Council.**

These schemes may include Council grants or loans to refurbish long-term empty homes. There are companies interested in such a partnership in Wolverhampton, and Housing Services will explore opportunities for innovative partnerships which will increase the supply of good quality, affordable homes for rent.

**7.5 There are a number of companies which offer Property Guardian services.**

This is the use of empty properties, which may be commercial or residential, for temporary shared accommodation for licensees. The licensees provide security against squatting and vandalism, in return for a lower than market rent. This is a legally grey area. Some property guardians live in comfortable conditions, with a responsible company as their landlord. Others are put at risk by dangerous and illegal conditions. CWC will monitor the use of property guardians in the City, and if appropriate will work with reputable companies where this would be mutually beneficial.

**7.6 Wolverhampton Homes has suggested exploring a new initiative to offer training to local people to learn building skills by improving homes which can then be used in their leasing scheme.**

They have had interest from potential landlords whose properties need improvement before they meet the leasing criteria. We will work with Wolverhampton Homes to see whether this would be a viable option. There are obvious attractions

# 7

in combining skills training to improve employment prospects with a project to refurbish homes which will then be brought back into use.

**7.7 Similarly, we wish to encourage community groups to become involved in bringing empty homes back into use.**

This might include identifying empty homes, talking to their owners, and practical work to refurbish dilapidated homes. This could be done in partnership with Wolverhampton Homes, or as an independent community initiative; we will support any viable, safe and effective methods of tackling empty homes and improving neighbourhoods.

**7.8 At present, CWC has no scheme to support key workers to buy a home in Wolverhampton.**

We will work with colleagues and partner agencies to establish if it would be useful to develop such a scheme, what model of support and assistance would be most effective and how we could focus this to bring empty homes back into use.

**7.9 In a small number of cases, the Council has purchased empty homes where these would be useful as social housing stock.**

We will continue to consider individual and strategic purchases of empty properties, to meet needs for social housing, temporary accommodation for homeless households or other local housing needs. These purchases may through willing sale, or through Compulsory Purchase Order (see 8.5 below).

**7.10 In all cases, Housing Services' preference is to work positively with the owners of empty homes and advise and support them to let or sell an unused home.**

However, when either the owner of an empty home cannot be identified, or when the owner of a property refuses to engage with the Council, enforcement will be used.

This may involve a Section 215 notice, requiring the owner to remedy disrepair, an Empty Dwelling Management Order or compulsory purchase. Enforcement will primarily be used where properties are in poor repair and/or causing nuisance in their neighbourhood.

**7.11 To date, while much work has been done to encourage the re-use of empty homes, this has not been consistently and thoroughly recorded.**

We will set up a procedure to record actions on each empty home, as well as the outcome. This will highlight the work of the Empty Homes officers, enable detailed and accurate reporting and provide evidence to inform decisions about which interventions are most effective.

# 8

## Enforcement

**8.1 Local authorities have a range of enforcement options to take action where empty homes are causing a nuisance, or where owners either cannot be traced or are unwilling to engage with advice and assistance to use a wasted property.**

While CWC always prefers to work co-operatively with owners of empty homes, if it is not possible to trace the owner of an abandoned empty home, or if the owner refuses to engage with offers of advice and assistance, then enforcement will be pursued. Often when staff start enforcement action, owners act themselves to avoid this, which Housing Services regards as a positive result.

**8.2 Legislation which can be used to tackle empty and/or abandoned homes includes: the Law of Property Act 1925; Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949; Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1982; Building Act 1984; Housing Act 1985; Town and Country Planning Act 1990; Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Housing Act 2004.**

The Council will use whatever legal powers are available to help bring empty homes back into use, and to stop neglected and abandoned properties from blighting neighbourhoods, if owners of empty homes can either not be traced or are unwilling to co-operate with advice and assistance to tackle long-term empty homes.

**8.3 Local authorities have powers to enter and inspect properties where there is a risk that poor housing conditions are affecting either the occupants or neighbouring properties.**

Empty homes which are dilapidated, infested with vermin or with badly overgrown gardens can negatively affect neighbours, and local authorities can require owners to repair defective

premises and remove rubbish. Local authorities can also carry out works in default if owners refuse to do so, and recharge the costs.

**8.4 The Housing Act 2004 introduced Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs).**

These allow local authorities to apply to a Property Tribunal to take over management of a long-term empty home, refurbishing it if necessary and letting and managing it for up to seven years. Rent from the letting is used to pay any refurbishment and management costs, and any monies over this are paid to the owner.

**8.5 If an abandoned property has charging order debts to the Council, the local authority can apply for a forced sale to repay these debts.**

The procedure varies, with one for Council Tax debts and another for other liabilities.

**8.6 Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) are another form of forced sale.**

They may be used either if an owner of an abandoned property cannot be traced, or if the owner of a property causing nuisance to neighbours has persistently refused to engage with the Council to remedy the problems. In most cases the Council will sell the property at auction, but as indicated above at 7.8 a property which could be particularly useful in the social housing stock may be retained.

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# 9

## Finance

**9.1 Currently there is a capital budget for work to bring empty homes back into use.**

This has been mostly used to fund compulsory purchases of long-term empty homes, which are then sold at auction. In addition, there is revenue funding of a £500 incentive to contribute to the administrative costs of selling an empty home and/or apply for probate.

**9.2 With our more ambitious new strategy, additional funding to support incentives, enforcement and partnerships will be required.**

A business case for this will be prepared. We propose to extend the £500 incentive to first-time buyers who purchase a long-term empty home, and to explore whether we can also introduce assistance for key workers.

**9.3 Successful re-use of long-term empty homes attracts New Homes Bonus funding.**

This results in the Government match-funding the Council Tax income for new homes and for homes brought back

into use, for six years. This benefits the Council, providing funds to improve community facilities or to re-invest in work to minimise long-term empty homes.

**9.4 Wherever possible, work on empty homes will be co-ordinated with other initiatives to maximise value for money and contribute to strategic and corporate targets and priorities.**

For example, repairs and improvements to an empty home are likely to include increased to home energy efficiency, contributing to improvement in residents' health. Grants for home energy efficiency are available, if homes are occupied by people who meet the criteria for them. We will work to co-ordinate different opportunities for bringing empty homes back into use and improving the quality of homes in Wolverhampton.



# 10

## Publicity



**10.1 There are national and regional Empty Homes Week opportunities to highlight the issue of long-term empty homes and publicise what the Council can do to help.**

The Council's website has a page on empty homes providing information and links to resources such as WH's leasing scheme and Rent with Confidence. Empty Homes staff are working with the Communications team to further develop the Council's website and to promote an ongoing campaign to highlight the assistance available to bring empty homes back into use, examples of successful collaboration with owners of empty homes, enforcement action where owners have refused to engage and encouragement for the public to engage with our work to minimise the number of long-term empty homes in the City.

**10.2 When it is possible to identify the owner of an empty home, staff write to them offering information and support to let or sell their disused property.**

In addition to emphasising the financial benefits of letting or selling an empty home, these letters will also highlight the benefit to

the local community of bringing it back into use, and the additional Council Tax and other costs of long-term empty homes.

**10.3 CWC will continue to work with local communities to raise awareness of empty homes and to promote action to encourage their re-use.**

Housing Services will work with the Communications team to develop a rolling programme of publicity about empty homes. This will include raising awareness with partner agencies, such as health and social care, so that colleagues can refer patients or clients for advice and information about letting or selling an empty home. Where appropriate, Housing Services will attend community events to gather information about local empty homes and advise residents about how CWC can help to prevent homes from remaining empty for long periods.

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# 11

## Action Plan

### 11.1 Below is the action plan which will cover the next five years.

This plan will be reviewed and revised at least annually and will be amended as required to ensure that it remains up to date and effective.

	Action	Lead Officer(s)
1	Increase our target for bringing empty homes back into use, to 220 a year with a stretch target of 250	Empty Homes Officer
2	Continue to proactively review and update Council Tax records	Empty Homes Officer, Council Tax staff
3	Contact owners of empty homes when they have been unoccupied for three months, to prevent as many as possible from becoming long-term empty homes	Empty Homes Officer
4	Continue to offer £500 to owners who need to apply for Probate and/or meet our criteria and sell their long-term empty home or lease it to tenants nominated by the Council and/or Wolverhampton Homes	Empty Homes Officer
5	Prepare a specification to tender for one or more partners to purchase empty homes and make them available for letting to Council nominees	Service Manager
6	Work with Wolverhampton Homes to develop a repair and refurbish service to enhance their Leasing Scheme	Empty Homes Officer, Wolverhampton Homes
7	Work with Wolverhampton Homes and/or community groups to involve local communities in identifying empty homes and bringing them back into use. This will include offering apprenticeships/work experience for local people to learn building, decorating and gardening skills by supervised work on empty homes	Empty Homes Officer, Wolverhampton Homes
8	Develop a business case for increased funding to support new initiatives to bring empty homes back into use	Service Manager
9	Develop criteria for grants/loans to improve empty homes for sale or letting	Empty Homes Officer

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	Action	Lead Officer(s)
<b>10</b>	Develop a communications and publicity programme to raise public awareness of empty homes and how CWC can help owners to sell or use them	Empty Homes Officer, Communications Team
<b>11</b>	Identify any long-term empty homes which would meet strategic and/or specific needs and purchase them for use or development	Empty Homes Officer, Development Team
<b>12</b>	Identify opportunities to work with particular neighbourhoods to target work to tackle empty homes as part of other community initiatives	Empty Homes Officer
<b>13</b>	Explore options to assist first time buyers and/or key workers to purchase and occupy long-term empty homes	Empty Homes Officer
<b>14</b>	Explore the option of a Real Estate Investment Trust to own properties bought through willing sale or compulsory purchase	Service Manager
<b>15</b>	Monitor the use of Property Guardians in Wolverhampton and develop a protocol for working with any responsible companies	Empty Homes Officer
<b>16</b>	Set up a recording procedure to capture actions on empty homes and provide performance monitoring information	Service Manager

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