



Worcestershire County Council

Chief Executive's Annual Report 2015

1. Introduction

2015 has been a challenging year within the Council and a time of significant change across Worcestershire. I have used the opportunity this report provides to reflect on achievements across both the Council and the County, some of the challenges we have faced and indicate how the Council is preparing itself for a successful 2016 and beyond.

I am extremely proud of all the individuals who work for Worcestershire County Council and the many more that work in schools or provide services on our behalf. Our staff deliver a huge amount across the county including:

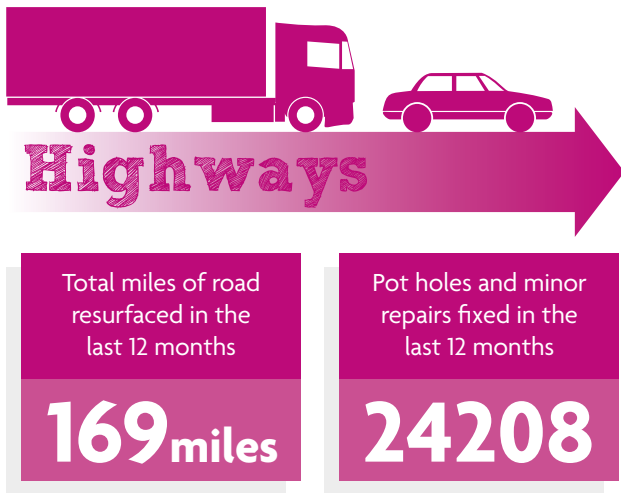
- Caring for the elderly.
- Supporting those with disabilities to become independent.
- Making decisions about how best children are safeguarded.
- Developing proposals about how to best improve the infrastructure around our county.
- Managing contracts to ensure we get maximum value.
- Working with partners around the county, regionally and nationally to ensure we are making best use of the Worcestershire pound; the over £3bn spent across the public sector in Worcestershire.

My thanks to all staff who have, during 2015, really embraced change and sought to do better for Worcestershire residents. Similarly my thanks to members who have welcomed me into their divisions and been honest and open in issues and opportunities for their residents – I hope you see a responsiveness from myself and officers in addressing these.

We live in changing times. It is easy to forget how much we have achieved as we press on with yet more change and important we remain absolutely engaged with those whom we serve; Worcestershire residents. This is at the heart of everything we do.



A few facts and figures

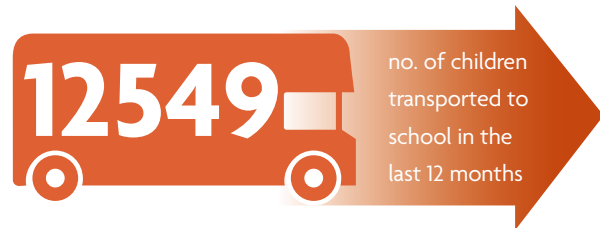


Adult and Children's services

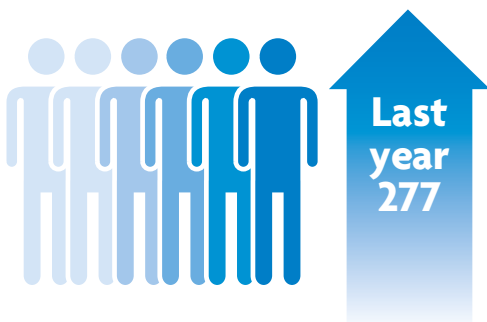
As at March 2015



As at Sept 2015



Staff Recruited



2. Listening to our residents

Talking to residents and businesses is, as always, absolutely critical as we move forward and this year we spoke to nearly 4,000 individuals and over 1,200 businesses bringing the total response since 2010 to 53,000 residents. Our residents' feedback includes:

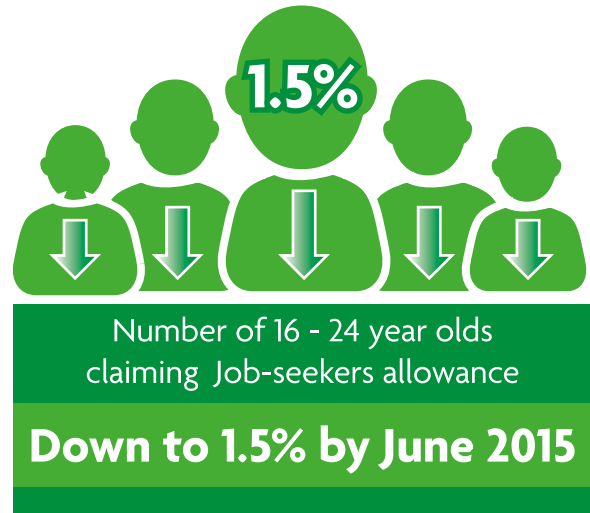
- Satisfaction levels in the County Council have increased compared to a year ago (56% vs 54%).
- More people in Worcestershire agree that the County Council provides value for money (44% from 38% in 2014).
- 82% of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.
- This is great and encouraging but we also need to listen to less positive feedback. Despite improvement in satisfaction with keeping the roads in a reasonable condition, 'road and pavement repairs' and 'the level of traffic congestion' remain the things that residents identify most need improving. Consequently we are endeavouring to ensure that new growth is met, at least, with commensurate infrastructure improvement.
- Only 33% of residents think they can influence decisions affecting the local area which we will seek to improve in the next year. We will compare last year's Viewpoint results, in detail, with this year's feedback and will agree a robust methodology to explore how we can increase residents' ability to influence decisions. We will report back with our findings in the New Year and will, in the meantime, improve the way residents can easily provide feedback too for instance through Social Media.
- We are also continuing to consult with and seek views from residents on specific initiatives such as a survey on early intervention and prevention services that we will be running later this year.
- These insights across Worcestershire residents and businesses continue to drive what we do and how we do it.



3. Performance

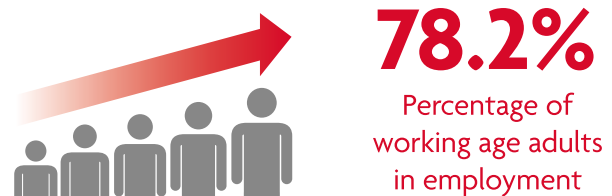
- We measure our performance in delivering better outcomes for Worcestershire residents via a balanced scorecard which is reviewed formally twice a year by Cabinet. The full balanced scorecard can be accessed at <http://e-services.worcestershire.gov.uk/balancedScorecard/wccReport.aspx>.

- We have made demonstrable progress in being Open for Business this year with a significant reduction in the number of 16-24 year olds claiming Jobseekers Allowance, down to 1.5% by June 2015. Our work to support employment hubs across Worcestershire, promotion of apprenticeships and support to the Graduate in Business Programme have all helped in this respect. The percentage of working age adults in employment has also improved with 78.2% in employment as of March 2015 and there has been a decrease in 16 – 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training to 3.8% by June 2015.

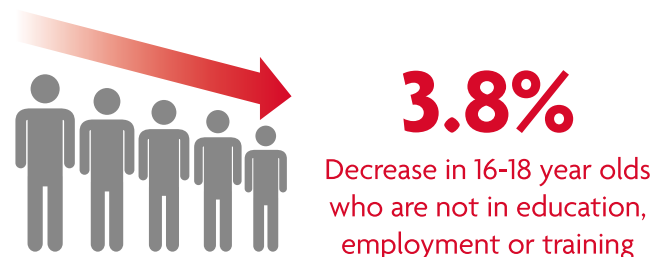


- Conversely there are some areas where we have not performed so well and have more work to do.
- We aim to have no more than 58 per 10,000 children in Worcestershire in the care of the Council and as of March 2015 we have just over 60 per 10,000. We have experienced significant increases in referrals to social care and requested a Local Government Association peer review to look at how we and partner organisations were best working to safeguard children during April 2015. This found that whilst our plans were the right ones we and our partners needed to move with greater pace in areas such as the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (our access point for safeguarding referrals across Worcestershire) and the refocusing of our Early Help Strategy. It also identified improvements required in social work practice, which led to the establishment of our own Improvement Board to drive through practice standards which since May 2015 has begun to make an impact with evidence of improvement, helped by our increased levels of permanent frontline social workers.

- We have a target to get above 40% of residents satisfied with road conditions. Although this rose from 30% in 2014 to 35.4% in 2015, and is above neighbouring authorities, it still has some way to go and I would expect the continuing programme of investment in highways and better communication to improve this further.



- Household waste per head is also predicted to rise to around 473 kg per head and we all need to play our part in recycling and reducing food waste as the economy recovers.



4. Ways of working

We are changing the way we work to better serve our residents and improve performance across a whole range of areas but commissioning, managing demand and our investment in people are worth highlighting.

Commissioning

Our definition of commissioning is to source the right service from the right provider at the right price for the taxpayer. Residents continue to expect us to seek best value for money in how we deliver services to achieve better outcomes. We have really moved on in ensuring we have the 'right service from the right provider at right price for the taxpayer' this year with an increasingly diverse mix of provision;

Our voluntary sector, volunteers and communities continue to engage in provision of a range of services.

- Libraries continue to be provided through a variety of models for example Catshill which is now provided within the school and Broadway which are managed by community groups.
- Volunteers are making a vital contribution to our Digital Inclusion Strategy, helping people to go online in a range of places across the county. We are also developing the role of volunteer health and well-being champions who can provide others with advice about how to stay healthy and independent and where they can find support in their communities. This year we have also placed contracts for a new drug and alcohol service and a new Living Well service. Volunteering will increasingly form part of how we engage better with our communities and I would therefore like to pay particular tribute to the thousands of volunteers who support better outcomes for residents across Worcestershire. Without their commitment, dedication and passion we would not be able to continue providing care to the most vulnerable or keep our roads and pathways as well maintained as they are.

Our partners have been key in how we provide services during 2015.

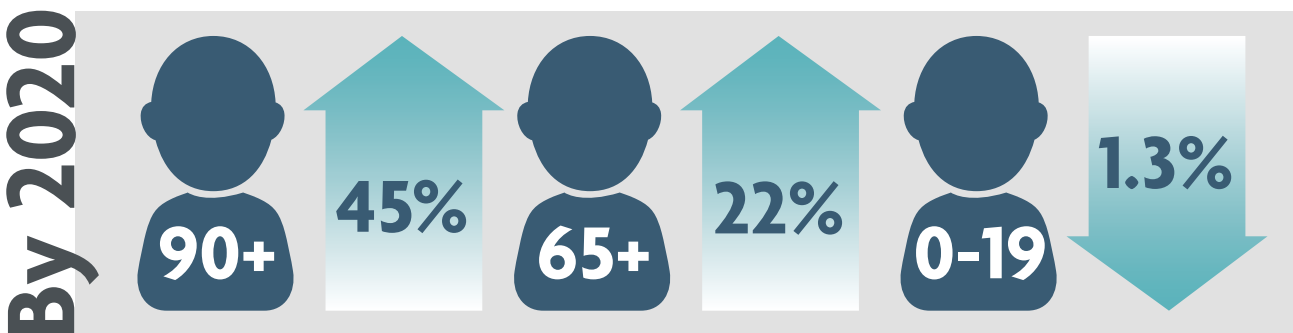
- Our joint property vehicle with other local authorities, police and fire has gone live as Place Partnership Ltd, Warwickshire County Council is now providing our Internal Audit service and Worcestershire Business Central (WBC) moved to a jointly resourced partnership model positioned with WLEP as the county's Growth Hub. The service is now hosted by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce.
- In taking forward the economy the County Council has worked in partnership with the surrounding counties, the Worcestershire LEP, the district councils, Worcester University, the Chamber of Commerce and the National Cyber Skills Training Centre in Malvern in delivering a number of business support programmes funded through the European Regional Development Fund. These programmes will create or safeguard 845 net jobs generating GVA impacts of some £38.8m.
- The County Council in partnership with the Worcestershire LEP and with support from the district councils has delivered the £2.5m Worcestershire Expansion Programme funded through the Regional Growth Fund. 21 companies have been supported, and the programme will create 225 jobs and safeguard 100, leveraging in £13.8m of private sector investment into the County. This programme has supported Amtek in moving to the site in Kidderminster, which will create significant investment and jobs in North Worcestershire.

The private sector have also played a key role in achieving best value with our school improvement services now being provided by Babcock and our architectural design function being provided by Jacobs.

- The Cabinet have just appointed Liberata as the preferred supplier for the delivery of the Council's and schools, transactional HR and Finance services, subject to successful contract close.
- We continue to commission a range of health and well-being services and are continually looking for ways to improve quality and value for money. We are working on recommissioning of sexual health services, carers' services, sensory impairment services, advocacy services as well as in house adult social care services.

Prevention

- However, we know that even with all our recent success in effectively commissioning, we will face challenges in 2016 and beyond. This is partly down to reducing central government grant but in large part to the pressures we face from more elderly and frail people requiring care and more children being referred into social care. We have spent a lot of time as a senior team during 2015 exploring how we can influence this demand more effectively. This is not just to ensure we can balance our budgets but because we know getting to the point of being in local government care is not the best outcome either for our frail and elderly or for our young people.
- As an example of demographic changes, by 2020 we will have 45% more people over 90 years old and 22% more over 65 years old. In contrast our 0-19 population will fall by 1.3% although the birth rate in our more deprived communities is projected to increase. We have an opportunity to support our older people in living healthy, happy, productive lives and at the same time work with them so they do not become dependent on multiple visits to their home to be able to live independently.



- Our strategy in influencing demand has three main areas of focus:
 - We need to better **understand** what causes Demand and where it comes from and then use this information consistently across the Council
 - We need to **prevent** and influence Demand through implementing our all-age prevention policy and working together with other partners (e.g. schools, health, police) and communities themselves.
 - When our services are required, we **process** this Demand effectively and efficiently delivering a high quality service that meets need.

Changing the way we work

Our People; as we become more mature about how we provide services we need to ensure we are investing in what will be a different workforce during 2016 and onwards to 2020. We launched Investing in the Future, our workforce development programme late in 2014 and plans are in place to fully launch the most recent component; our Talent Management programme by the end of this year. These initiatives have already started to impact on the organisation with our first two apprentices engaged within Finance and our first graduate from the Commercial team enrolled on the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP). In children's social care we have developed a career pathway supporting social workers as they progress which is linked to learning and development and opportunities to specialise and support students and colleagues at the beginning of their careers.

- We are going to change the way we approach appraisals (i.e. the SRD process) so performance is discussed regularly and managers provide ongoing feedback. Rather than a traditional annual appraisal process, performance will be assessed continually throughout the year. We will manage and support good performance as well as poor consistently throughout the organisation.
- We have tested and are now introducing recruitment selection centres to ensure we attract managers into the organisation with the right behaviours as well as necessary experience and skills. How we organise ourselves is also likely to evolve with our structures reflecting both an increased focus on delivering against our economic and supporting infrastructure ambitions and the need to view our children in the context of the families and communities within which they live.

Our Partners; as financial constraints start to bite more with some of our partners there is a tendency for all of us to retreat into our organisations. Our residents expect the opposite, with us needing to join up systems and organisations more to make it easier for both the young, old and 'in-between' to navigate. We have had some early examples of doing this effectively during 2015, including;

- The implementation of the Better Care Fund which has gone well with practical examples of all organisations working together.
- First year of delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan on behalf of the LEP.
- The inward investment brand World Class Worcestershire, developed with the LEP, has come on in huge strides with our event at Worcestershire Cricket Club in April attracting a large group of potential investors, headed up by Sir Mervyn King. This work and other inward investment work has started to reap some benefit with strong signs of potential investment in a number of Worcestershire businesses (e.g. Amtek in Kidderminster, Koito in Droitwich, Alamo Manufacturing Services in Evesham, Rockline in Redditch, VAX Ltd in Droitwich, Sea Fresh Industry Invest New Line in Redditch, Magna Interiors in Redditch (expanded into Droitwich), Motovario in Droitwich, AVL List GmbH - Expansion at Hartlebury and NTM in Kidderminster).
- The initial development of proposals for devolution to Worcestershire working with district councils, Worcestershire LEP and police and health colleagues.

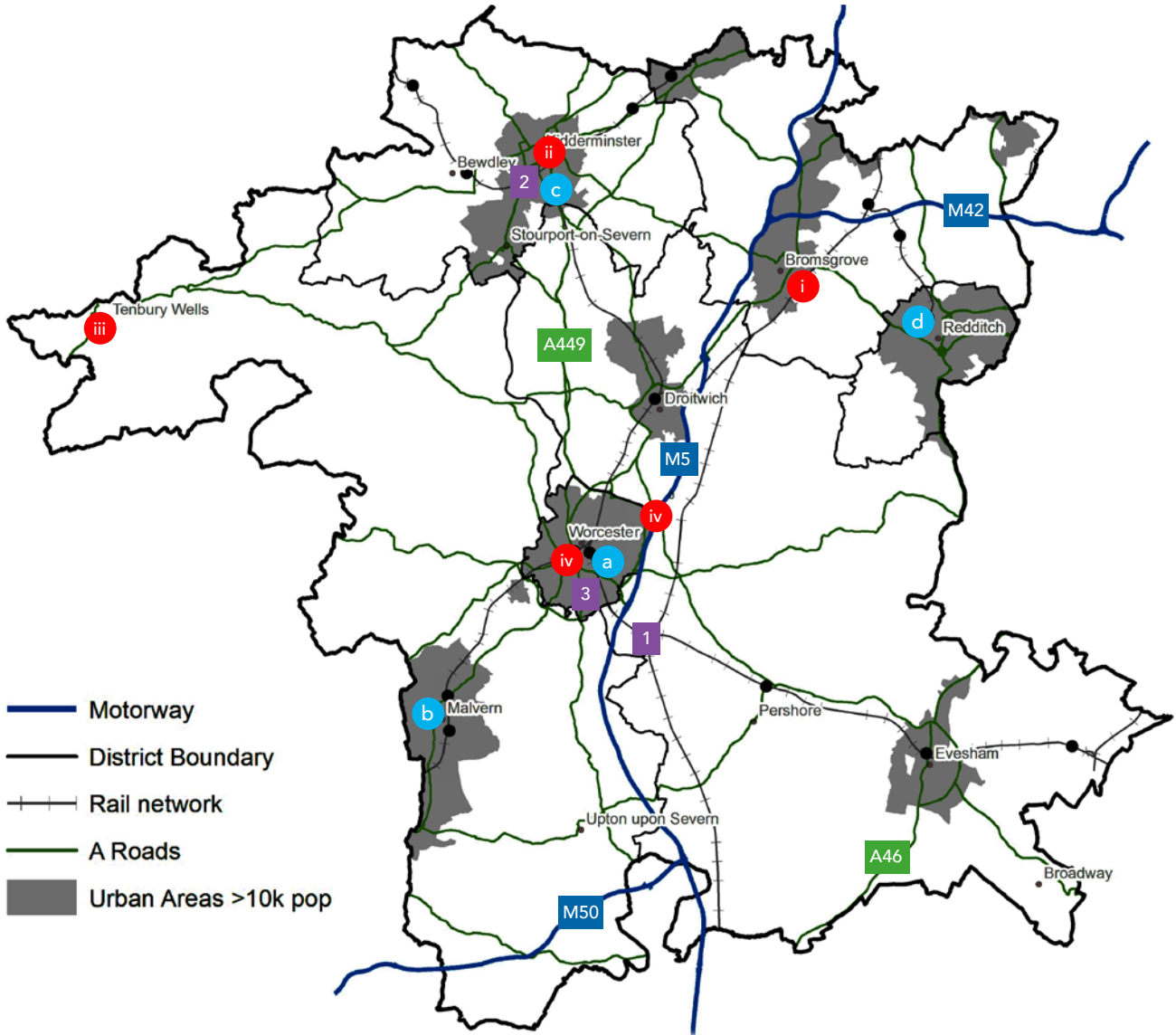
5. Delivering the Corporate Plan

So, how are we performing in light of this change against delivery of our FutureFit Corporate Plan?



- 2015 is the first year of delivering our Strategic Economic Plan and we are making incredible headway. This began with work starting on Worcester Six, Phase 3 of the Southern Link Road/A4440, planning permission being granted for Worcestershire Parkway, the redevelopment of Kidderminster Railway station and the commencement of work on the Hoobrook Link Road. Work has also nearly completed on Phase 4 of the Malvern Hills Science Park enabling expansion of current tenant UTC Aerospace Systems. Lessons learnt from the Ketch scheme on the Southern Link Road have demonstrated the need to have stronger client side functions to ensure that our private sector contractors deliver to time quality and cost.
- At the end of 2015 we will be launching our first dedicated Travel Twitter account to inform motorists quicker and more often about road conditions and about potential hot spots. Over the last year we have carried out six 'community makeovers' in conjunction with our Highways Contractor, CH2M and we will be doing more of these during 2016. We have also started to put up signs at all of our major road surfacing and surface dressing schemes to communicate our continuing investment into maintaining our highways infrastructure.
- We enabled and delivered a number of public realm works during 2015 including improvements at Cornmarket, Worcester, Tenbury and ongoing works at Cathedral Square and Kidderminster town centre. Our £4.5m surface dressing programme during the summer will help in extending road life and preventing potholes and covered over 150 miles of carriageway across some 300 plus roads.
- We have made a real impact working with partners on promoting World Class Worcestershire as a place with excellent sporting achievement and inclusion, including the European Wheelchair Basketball Championships and cycling specific promotion with the Aviva Tour Ride and Pearl Izumi Tour Series, which we are excited to be welcoming back in 2016.
- We have been working closely with partners during 2015 on developing a sustainable partnership for Worcestershire's growth hub (Worcestershire Business Central) - the service is now successfully co-located within Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce. The enhanced growth hub has now developed a proactive engagement strategy to ensure Worcestershire businesses are aware of the support available to them. We have also been working alongside partners within the county to ensure the continuation of key business support services such as business start-up, business growth, innovation, cyber security and resource efficiency and also support for our ongoing World Class Worcestershire campaign encouraging growth of indigenous business as well as attracting foreign direct investment. Partners include Prince's Trust, University of Worcester, Central Technology Belt, district councils, Chamber of Commerce. These projects aim to bring in approx £10m of European funding into the county over the next 3.5 years and creating over 1,000 jobs.

- Worcestershire Careers Central was launched in July 2015. The portal – the first of its kind in the UK – provides the information to young people, parents/guardians and carers to map out the careers pathways in Worcestershire and understand the educational expectations. It is focused on the Worcestershire's key growth sectors and highlights the qualifications, work experience and the skills required to enter a specific sector at a particular level. Since the launch the portal has been visited by over 8,500 unique visitors and numbers are growing.



Current Major Schemes	Wider Activity
1 Worcester Parkway Station	i Bromsgrove Rail Station
2 Hoobrook Link Road	ii Kidderminster Town Centre Public Realm
3 Southern Relief Road	iii Tenbury Public Realm
Gamechanger Sites	iv Worcester Transport Strategy
a Worcester Growth Corridor (which includes Worcester Six)	• Cathedral Square
b Malvern Hills Science Park	• Worcester Tech Park
c South Kidderminster Enterprise Park	• New Road Flood Alleviation
d Redditch Eastern Gateway	• Real Time Information
	• Public Transport Corridors

Promoting...

Health and Well-being

- We continue to work with partners to improve health and well-being. Overall we are making progress and we are now consulting on a the next Joint Health and Well-being Strategy for 2016-19.
- The launch of the new website Your Life Your Choice (ylc.worcestershire.gov.uk) and the associated work to make sure we were ready for the implications of the Care Act Phase 1 were a significant achievement during 2015. An average of 2,300 people per month access the site. There are currently 114 providers registered offering over 500 services with further development planned with service users in the New Year. With information and advice easier to find and a new self-assessment process we are making inroads to enabling residents to support themselves and become more digitally accessible. We have continued to seize practical opportunities to work more effectively with health organisations for the benefit of residents including integrated mental health teams within the Health and Care Trust and the joint review with Clinical Commissioning Groups of our care provision for people when recovering from hospital stays.
- We have shifted from conversations about integration between health and social care being the only panacea, to working with individual Clinical Commissioning Groups on their and our plans for reform. The reform within parts of the County will include looking at more effective, targeted prevention, greater use of joined up technology through a shared Digital Roadmap and more effective co-production with patients and users of care services, enabled by our work with Healthwatch.
- We continue to operate within budget in adult services and health, and given this is a significant area of spend and with rising demographics and falling funding this is a real achievement. We are reviewing our social work processes and teams to make them more streamlined and achieve further savings, and we hope to minimise redundancies through short term use of agency staff.
- We have had challenges this year, including continuing to support our acute hospitals, which are struggling to cope with demand. We also face in year reductions to our public health budget and have worked with partners to adjust initial proposals before making final decisions about recommissioning services.

Supporting...

Children and Families

- This has been a good year for educational attainment in Worcestershire with 60% of GCSE students achieving 5 or more A* to C grades. With 9 out of 10 schools good or outstanding we are doing really well but must not become complacent and work with schools to maintain and improve on achievements. However, funding for schools continues to come under pressure, particularly those with post 16 provision and we will seek to support maintained schools in lobbying for a fairer Worcestershire funding settlement from government and help them in being proactive around syllabus planning and workforce redesign.
- The Council is developing a different relationship with schools in the new policy and resource environment, and with the development of the role of the Regional Schools Commissioners. The contract with Babcock International for many school and pupil support services provides a more flexible vehicle to increasingly move these services onto a traded basis. Our key responsibilities are to ensure all children have access to a place at a good school, to challenge all schools when children do not make the progress they should, and to champion the needs of vulnerable children, including children with special educational needs.

- Despite a growing school population, 97% of parents obtained a place at a school which was one of their preferences, and 91% at their first choice school.
- Our major challenge in social care is that some Worcestershire children are remaining in the care system too long, and we are not, in all cases, working effectively early enough to stop children entering care in the first place. This inevitably means that our resources are disproportionately spent on the very small number of children in care.
- The peer review, facilitated by Local Government Association in April 2015, brought into sharp focus the need to get social work practice improved. We have seen improvements since then, partly assisted by our increase in permanent workforce, now 85% of frontline social workers. Caseloads are reducing steadily and this, together with a greater focus from partners on appropriate referrals, will help in ensuring we start to reduce numbers in care during 2016 and support families better to stay together in an environment where children are safe. Whilst we began implementing our Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) during 2015 it has a long way to go during 2016 to enable more joined up focus amongst ourselves and partners. We will continue to work in support of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board to ensure across all partners we can provide assurance during 2016.



- We have a superb environment in Worcestershire and indeed it is why many of us chose to live and work here. We must continue to drive forward in new initiatives to maintain and improve our green spaces.
- Our broadband programme helps hugely in reducing the need to travel and reducing our digitally excluded. It received further investment from BT recently based on our higher than average take up rates and we will continue to work with communities to increase this take up as we advance our plans to roll out to more than 95% (rather than 90%) of residents and businesses by 2017. With over 42,285 premises able to access faster fibre broadband we remain ahead of schedule to reach nearly 70,000 homes and businesses by autumn 2017.
- Our carbon management plan this year saw a number of successful projects take off through the implementation of the £1.7m Energy Efficient Spend to Save Fund. Whilst we have further to go in reducing CO² emissions we are making slow progress with emissions decreased by 14% by 2015 since 2011.
- We have continued to work in close partnership with the Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water Limited, the district council land drainage partnerships and local communities in order to reduce both the likelihood and impact of future flooding. We have produced the draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy which will be published in 2016, following the final stage of consultation, and guide our activities over the coming 6 years.
- Through our new role as a statutory consultee on planning applications with surface water implications we have worked with developers and the Local Planning Authorities to ensure that sustainable drainage systems are appropriately included in new development. These will ensure that new development is at minimal risk of flooding itself and that it will not cause additional flood risk elsewhere or even help to reduce it.

- We have also collaborated with the Environment Agency, the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and other key partners to improve Worcestershire's natural environment through the Local Nature Partnership (LNP). The LNP provides strategic environmental leadership for the county. Agreed priorities for 2015 are flooding risk management, green infrastructure and climate change. The Partnership has continued to strengthen its relationship with Worcestershire LEP, reflected in the environment being a cross cutting theme in the LEP Strategic Economic Plan, and ongoing support for the inclusion of green infrastructure in strategic housing and employment sites including Worcester Six and the emerging proposals for the urban extensions.
- The Partnership will be submitting a Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership application in May 2016 to enhance the unique landscape character and culture of the Vale of Evesham. This has been developed in partnership with the Worcestershire LEP and will be part of the wider focus in agri-tech.
- The LNP has also embraced the County Council priority for Worcestershire to become a pollinator friendly county, adopted at Council in July 2015. Initial actions include working on a trial scheme for pollinator friendly highway verge management, awareness raising and focussing activity into key actions and geographic areas.

6. Moving into 2016 and beyond

As a Council we spend £1m a day and despite the financial constraints this is still a significant amount of money that Worcestershire taxpayers have entrusted to us with an expectation we will achieve the best outcomes for residents and businesses.

Whilst it will be hugely challenging over coming years and none more so than now as we enter budget planning for 2016/17 we have started on what I believe are some ambitious ways of changing how we operate, how we work to influence demand on services, how we become more self-sufficient and most importantly how we work with residents and communities. It is not without hiccup, and sometimes mistake, but we are achieving real results.

I really want to thank all the staff who work either within or on behalf of the County Council and its residents – I know at times it feels tough and challenging but your commitment, endeavour and focus on results for residents are hugely appreciated by me and my team.

Clare Marchant
Chief Executive
November 2015

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Copies of this report can be obtained from the address above or can be viewed and downloaded from our website:

www.worcestershire.gov.uk

This document can be provided in alternative formats such as Large Print, an audio recording or Braille; it can also be emailed as a Microsoft Word attachment. Please contact the Equality and Diversity Team on telephone number 01905 766225 or by emailing equality@worcestershire.gov.uk.

To the best of our knowledge all information was correct at the time of printing: November 2015.