Once again it’s been a pleasure to look back over another incredible year at Wychavon. A year ago we set our new strategy with our ambitions leading us into 2020, and in one short year we’ve started to achieve many of those promises. More will be delivered in the coming years.

Our entrepreneurial nature was recognised when we were shortlisted for the annual Local Government Chronicle and Municipal Journal awards. And we celebrated winning silver at the Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise (iESE) Awards.

Wychavon was named the third best place to live in the UK and the second best rural place to live in the Halifax Quality of Life Survey 2016, reinforcing what we already know – that our district offers a fantastic and well-rounded life to our residents. This success inspired one resident to write a poem encapsulating what makes Wychavon such a special place – you can read it later on.

That said, we still recognise that some areas can be improved and we were concerned to discover that the district has shown up at a national level for problems with social mobility. Therefore, 2017/18 sees the start of what we hope will be one of our most ambitious projects to date – delivering better outcomes for those living in the Droitwich West ward. We’re certain we’ll have some exciting outcomes to share in next year’s annual report.

Like many councils across the country, we’ve risen to the challenge of running yet more elections. We felt that given the scale of the work undertaken it was only right to have our dedicated elections team on the front cover this year. Although running elections sometimes feels like rather thankless and very time-consuming work, it is nonetheless a vital part of our democracy. We are certainly grateful to the team and everyone else who gets involved in delivering such a well-run process.

Here’s to 2017/18 – we’re sure it’ll be a fantastic year.

Linda Robinson  
Leader of the Council

Jack Hegarty  
Managing Director
Who we are

Our wonderful district has nearly 122,000 residents living in the three towns of Droitwich Spa, Evesham and Pershore and nearly 100 hamlets and villages including Broadway, the gateway to the Cotswolds.

We spend around £11 million a year providing a wide range of services to residents, businesses and visitors - ranging from emptying bins and dealing with planning applications, to business support and organising popular festivals, including the British Asparagus Festival, Pershore Plum Festival and Salt Fest in Droitwich Spa.

Some of our services are delivered directly by around 250 staff and others through partnerships with other councils or companies, such as Civica, which provides our revenues and benefits service. We share a senior leadership team with neighbouring Malvern Hills District Council, as well as several services including housing, human resources, legal services and some planning services.

Our 45 elected councillors represent 32 wards. Our Leader and Executive Board make decisions on key issues and services, while the full council decides on our budget and strategy.

Our three strategic priorities, People, Place and Prosperity, guide our work and this report looks back at what we’ve achieved under each of these over the last year. Running a strong council is also important. Ensuring our staff and councillors are motivated and supported, and that we manage our money effectively, are both vital elements to the delivery of our strategy.

We have a long history of using our finances in an innovative way - investing in projects, working with others and making capital investments that not only generate a financial return but support the economy, local facilities and green initiatives. From hospitals to Waitrose stores, canals to commercial land, solar panels to art deco cinemas, we have invested, loaned and supported. We welcome new ideas and calculated risk taking and ensure that our staff are involved and engaged in everything we do.
Wychavon is a great place to live, so it’s no surprise that three quarters of residents describe their health as good or very good. Life expectancy is above the national average and Wychavon residents are the happiest in the county. There are challenges too, as two thirds of adults and more than a quarter of reception year children are overweight. People living in the most deprived areas can expect to live around eight years less than those in the least deprived areas.

We’ve made it our business to help people be healthy and active as well as supporting those in need, such as older people living alone and families in some of the less affluent parts of Wychavon. Here’s a flavour of what we did last year.

Helping people to be healthy, active and supported

- Launched a campaign to promote physical activity, cycling and walking opportunities to get people active. You can read more about this on page five.
- Completed a major refurbishment of the gym at Droitwich Leisure Centre, which now hosts over 90 stations and includes a cardio room, strength area, resistance room and functional training zone. There’s also a brand new studio for pilates, yoga and virtual classes.
- Approved planning applications for new sports facility investments at Evesham and Pershore sports hubs.
- Brought together over 50 representatives from a wide range of organisations to look at how we can encourage residents to make healthier lifestyle choices.

Supporting people most in need

- Prevented 223 households from becoming homeless.
- Piloted taking services and support out to families and younger people in parts of Pershore and Droitwich Spa.
- With partners, visited older people in eight rural areas, offering them a range of services to help with issues including loneliness, isolation, energy, fire safety, health and independent living.
- Made 269 referrals for support to a range of organisations including Act on Energy, the Fire and Rescue Service, Worcestershire Carers and our own Community Safety Team.
In November, we launched a campaign promoting ideas to help residents get moving. The campaign doesn’t focus on going to the gym to pump iron or running a marathon, it’s about simple things people can do every day to help them move more and stay flexible.

These can be things like walking, housework, finding a safe bike trail or gradually building up to a jog. Most of these things are free. We know that finding a bit of time to move more every day helps overcome many health and wellbeing issues.

We created web pages to help residents find out more information – whether it’s going on a health walk in a group or finding out what support is available at leisure centres. We ran a successful Facebook advertising campaign, which reached 38,683 people giving them access to information about how to get active.

We teamed up with Wychavon Leisure to offer a free health check and one day leisure pass for any of our three leisure centres. Some residents who took advantage of these offers are now using our leisure centres on a regular basis.

We also received the great news that our Get Active programme to encourage people to exercise and develop a sporting habit for life has been extended until March 2018. The programme has been so successful over the past four years that more than 19,000 people have taken part in a variety of sporting activities ranging from bhangra dancing and dragon boating, to sailing and indoor bowls.

There have also been 38 Couch to 5K courses that have encouraged over 800 previously inactive people to take up running. As well as offering free community roadshow activities at village fêtes and town events, the scheme has also provided discounted swimming, gym and fitness sessions.

Sport England has awarded us an extra £50,000 of lottery funding to provide more sports and physical activity projects across the district.
Wychavon is one of the best places to live in the country and the second best rural place to live. That’s not surprising given the district’s wonderful open spaces, historic heritage and low crime levels. 83% of residents are satisfied with the area as a place to live, 93% feel safe in the district during the day and three quarters feel safe after dark. We know just how important a clean, green and safe environment is to our residents and on these pages you can see how we have been working to keep it that way.

For many people having a decent, affordable home is also a priority, but with average house prices around 11 times the average salary, there is a shortage of affordable housing to buy and rent. So we’re delighted that we exceeded our target to deliver 150 affordable homes last year.

Keeping the district clean, green and safe

• Tackled ten fly-tipping hotspots and took 75 enforcement actions against fly-tippers.

• Reused, recycled or composted 44.2% of household waste and collected just under 472kg of residual waste per household.

• Adopted a new play area in Droitwich Spa, ran community activities at Stoulton Woods and secured Countryside Stewardship funding for Avon Meadows wetland.

• Delivered 262 solid wall installations under the Green Deal Communities project helping reduce fuel bills and improve energy efficiency.

• Led a ground-breaking study into heat use across Worcestershire. A key part of the study focused on geothermal heat in the south of the county, and in particular how this might support growers in the Vale of Evesham.

• Ran the 2016 Wychavon Intelligently Green Awards, attracting 26 entries and generating publicity for intelligently green projects across the district. There’s more about the awards on the next page.

• Visited 355 people and gave out 202 security items through the South Worcestershire rural and business crime programme.

• Completed a scrutiny review of our planning enforcement service and started to implement 12 recommendations which will improve the service our residents receive.

Delivering quality, affordable homes

• Delivered 231 new affordable homes, including 103 in rural locations.

• Helped improve the standards of 51 private sector homes and brought 42 long-term empty homes back into use.

• Brought a wide range of partners together to discuss housing issues facing the district and ways to collectively tackle them.

• Organised our first two referendums on neighbourhood plans in North Claines, and Drakes Broughton and Wadborough with Pirton.
A project to transform unattractive space using recycled material, a man dedicated to championing the environment, a hydropower scheme on the River Avon and a business upcycling unwanted items were all among the winners of the 2016 Wychavon Intelligently Green Awards.

The awards are a way of promoting the work done by businesses, individuals, community groups and schools to make Wychavon a greener place to live.

In order to be intelligently green, projects needed to have made a positive impact on the environment as well as benefiting the community or saving money.

In 2016 we received 26 entries for the awards in five categories. The winners were unveiled at a special ceremony in June at Pershore College’s new environmentally sustainable building and hosted by special guest, Evesham born impressionist Alistair McGowan.

He said: “I’m delighted to be part of Wychavon’s Intelligently Green Awards and to be part of a scheme that celebrates all that is innovative and community driven when it comes to being environmentally-friendly, especially as it’s all happening in a place that is very close to my heart.”

The overall winner was SeSaME, which stands for Sedgeberrow Sustainable and Manageable Energy. The group has been pivotal in helping households in the village to obtain grants for external insulation. It has coordinated the installation of solar panels for both the village hall and the primary school and its members resurrected the village newsletter to ensure good communication with the village. The group is a great example of a whole community working together to reduce the carbon footprint of their village.

The awards were sponsored by Rooftop Housing Group, Fortis Living, imaGine, JellyPickleJam, The Evesham Greengrocer, Areca Design, Hayloft Plants and the University of Worcester.
Our district is home to over 6,000 businesses, the majority are small and medium-sized. Unemployment levels are low at around 3.1% and 8.2% of 16-64 year olds are claiming out of work benefits. A shortage of skilled workers is one of the biggest challenges facing local businesses. As our achievements below show, promoting economic growth and improving skills continue to be a focus for us.

With more than 60 parish councils and hundreds of community groups, clubs and societies in Wychavon there are plenty of active individuals and organisations seeking our support and working with us in a variety of ways. So we were surprised to see a fall in the proportion of residents who say they volunteer regularly.

Attracting businesses and quality jobs
- Supported the creation of 50 jobs with more to follow as developments at Evesham’s Vale Park and Worcester Six are completed.
- Used our funds to match business growth and support programmes.
- Supported the Droitwich High Street improvement scheme. Helped to secure the major expansion of Doncasters in the town and maintained positive links with the developers of two key sites.
- In Evesham, we supported the delivery of new investments at Vale Park and The Valley, including plans for Boardman Bikes to develop a world class cycling centre.
- Attracted new investment to Keytec Business Park and Pershore Northern Link Road.

Supporting and engaging with communities
- Councillors met businesses and residents and listened to views in 14 wards as part of our Meet Your Council programme.
- Supported 68 community groups in a variety of ways, from providing funding, to giving advice to those working on neighbourhood and parish plans.
- Approved £500,000 of New Homes Bonus and 14 community grants for a wide range of projects.
- Delivered 93 Youth Bus sessions providing information and activities for over 850 young people.
- Ran the 2016 Community Recognition Awards giving those who have volunteered, coached or helped others in the district a chance to gain well deserved recognition for their efforts.

Improving people’s skills to succeed
- Offered 11 new work placements at the council and employed four apprentices.
- Provided financial support to eight businesses to enable them to offer brand new apprenticeships.
- Employed a new skills officer to work with businesses to help them attract people with the right skills, and to increase the number of apprenticeships on offer.
Since its introduction in 2011, we have set aside and invested over £3.5 million of New Homes Bonus for communities across Wychavon. The government pays New Homes Bonus to councils for every new home built and occupied. We remain one of the few councils in the country to give New Homes Bonus back to the communities where new development has taken place.

So far we’ve paid around £1.1 million to parish and town councils for nearly 200 projects. Here are just a few of the many community-led projects that have benefited from the bonus.

**Coffee@WRFive**

Norton-juxta-Kempsey parish hall has been transformed into a new coffee and lounge bar thanks to £37,000 of New Homes Bonus and £10,000 from the Big Lottery Fund.

Volunteer-run Coffee@WRFive opened in March having been created out of an under-used public room in the hall. The project was inspired by a survey of parishioners, which revealed an overwhelming demand for café-type facilities at the hall. As part of the revamp, new lighting and flooring were installed along with new ‘upcycled’ furniture. The kitchen has been extended and re-fitted to modern standards and coffee, ice-cream and doughnut making machines have been bought.

Kevin Fincher, Chairman of Norton-juxta-Kempsey Parish Hall Trustees, said: “Although the hall has been selling tea, coffee, cake and beer as part of its lifeblood since it opened in 1977, it is hoped that we are now going to be able do it in a more organised fashion, thereby enabling more extensive maintenance of a much-used and cherished hall.

“Our longer-term aspiration is to offer places to underprivileged or less able individuals to assist in running the coffee shop and to offer some training in catering and hospitality.”

**Uncovering history**

Behind the walls and the archways in Evesham’s Abbey Park lies the former site of the most important Abbeys in the country. Founded in 709 AD by St Egwin, the Abbey developed and grew alongside the town and played a vital part in the foundation and growth of the community. From early Anglo-Saxon times, through the Norman Conquest, the Battle of Evesham and right up until its dissolution by Henry VIII in 1540, the Abbey was at the centre of social, economic, cultural and political events, both locally and nationally.

Now £75,000 of New Homes Bonus is being put towards an ambitious scheme led by Evesham Abbey Trust. The project seeks to uncover the archeological secrets surrounding the historic walls adjacent to St Laurence Church and Abbey Park, restore elements of the Abbey walls, develop the Nave Garden and Cloisters Garden and tell the story of the important area to the public.

**A new lease of life in Cookhill**

In Cookhill, the parish council has developed the existing playing fields, which catered primarily for younger children, into a multi-purpose open space for all ages to enjoy. New Homes Bonus has been used to purchase adult exercise equipment, whilst Section 106 developer contributions have been spent on new play equipment including moveable goal posts, a timber framed basket swing and multi-play unit.

The range of equipment has been chosen to encourage wider use of the area – now there’s something for all ages from families with small children to teenagers and adults.

Kate Brazier, Clerk to Cookhill Parish Council, said: “I am pleased to say that the adult exercise equipment has been a great success since its installation with a great many parishioners using it as part of their walking routine around the parish.”
We’re really proud of our people and how hard they work for our residents. Running a motivated and well-managed organisation underpins everything we do and is the key to our success. Staff engagement rates and organisational achievements continue to be high on our agenda despite the challenging times we continue to experience.

Our residents are amongst the happiest in the county as well, with 73% of respondents to the 2016 Worcestershire Viewpoint residents’ survey saying they are satisfied with the way we run things and 58% agreeing we provide value for money.

Managing our finances effectively is vital to the successful delivery of our priorities and goals. Being shortlisted for the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Award in the ‘Entrepreneurial Council of the Year’ category and winning silver in the ‘Transformation through Support Services’ category of the Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise (iESE) Awards, is testament to the innovative way we use our finances.

Over the next few pages we take a look at some of the other things our staff achieved in 2016/17 and a summary of our finances.

**Customer demand and feedback**

- Following our annual review, re-awarded Customer Service Excellence Award for the ninth year running.
- Saw a reduction in face-to-face contact with 44,091 visits to our three Community Contact Centres, nearly 2,000 visits less than in 2015/16.
- Retained high levels of satisfaction with most of our services. However, we saw falls in satisfaction with keeping land free from litter and refuse and with sports and leisure facilities.
- Received 176 unsolicited compliments and 106 complaints, including seven from the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 277,044 visits to our website, 88% of these were unique visits, the rest were people who visited more than once.
- Issued 184 media releases and 1,083 articles were published about us in print or online.
- Launched a new GovDelivery email system and got 3,000 subscribers signing up to receive updates on a range of topics including consultations, planning news, festivals and events.

**Staff matters**

- Successfully planned and delivered the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and the EU referendum.
- Developed a new annual review process for staff with a greater emphasis on training and development and introduced a new suite of core HR policies, underpinned by training for all managers.
- Lost an average of 5.8 working days due to sickness absence per employee, significantly below 2015/16 levels and our best performance for several years.
- In our 2016 staff survey, 86% of staff told us they enjoy their job, 82% are proud to work for Wychavon and 88% rate us as a good or excellent employer. There were areas for improvement too and we’ve been working to address those.
- Implemented housing, heritage and planning policy shared services with Malvern Hills District Council.
- Our Staff Sounding Board organised the annual Wych Awards recognising team and individual performance in six categories – from the most innovative piece of work to the councillors’ choice award.
- Staff ate cake, dressed up, dressed down and ate more cake to raise a total of £2,581.57 for a range of charities including Cancer Research UK, St Richard’s Hospice, Save the Children and a local wildlife charity.
In May 2016, we launched a volunteering scheme to help staff do something different for the benefit of local charities.

The scheme means staff can be released for one day a year and offer their time to charities like St Richard’s Hospice, Acorns, Roundabout, Caring Hands, Vale Wildlife Hospital and the Cats Protection League.

Vic Allison, our Deputy Managing Director, said “While our staff work for the community every day it’s nice to give them the opportunity to do something different and to support local charities. We’d also encourage other local charities to get in touch and let us know if they have other opportunities available for our staff to take part in.”

Fred Davies, Policy Plans Manager, spent the day at Acorns helping in their garden. He said “Acorns Hospice is a fantastic facility. The manual work was a refreshing change of scene from the office and I got a real buzz from being able to help out such a lovely charity. It certainly helps puts things into perspective. I’m going to try to help out there on a regular basis in my own time as they are dependant on volunteers to help with the maintenance of the property.”

Fiona Narburgh, one of our senior managers, spent an afternoon helping in one of the St Richard’s Hospice charity shops. She said “It was great to help the shop sort some recent donations and to hear more about the work they do. It’s a wonderful charity helping people in really tough times and I’m so glad we’re supporting them and charities like them.”

Another avid volunteer was Tracy Perkins, who usually works as a localism and communities officer, and spent a day with the Cats Protection League in Wickhamford. She explained “I’m a huge cat lover and it was fantastic to see what the charity is doing locally. It was also great to see their new facilities and how they lovingly care for cats in need. It was quite hard not to come away with any though, especially the kittens they named after us!” Tracy has gone on to become a regular volunteer at the Cats Protection League in her own time.
A four year legal and planning enforcement saga finally came to a close, after we successfully appealed the Wadborough Park Farm case at the High Court in London and it was sent back to Worcester Magistrates’ Court for sentencing.

The sentencing, which took place in October, was against the owners of the farm at the time of the offences. The offences were for breaching several planning enforcement notices in relation to unauthorised buildings and other structures on land at the farm, which were not only erected without the proper consents, but that contributed to the infamous smell known locally as the ‘Stoulton stink’. Costs were awarded in the Magistrates’ Court and the defendants also had to pay our costs for the High Court legal proceedings in July 2016. The successful prosecution was down to the efforts of our planning and legal teams, two local councillors and a residents’ action group.

New jobs were on the horizon as Evesham’s Vale Park benefitted from a £800,000 investment meaning new sites for businesses to create hundreds of new jobs for the town.

We purchased additional land at Vale Park and built a new road to open the site up, enabling the land to be released for growing businesses. Prima Fruit have already bought land from us and are expanding operations to support their relationship with Waitrose. They supply all Waitrose’s exotic fruit and train Waitrose staff at the Vale Park HQ. Robert Welch, the dining, kitchen and living design company, intends to move into the neighbouring plot.

Phil Merrick, Head of Economies and Communities, said “Supporting and actively using capital investments continues to be very important to us and this is another example where we have invested money that will bring not only a return to the local economy, but in the long run will be a good investment of public money.”
A project to map heat use across the county and to carry out a pre-feasibility study of the geothermal potential under Offenham in the Vale of Evesham was completed. We led this project, which was funded by the then Heat Networks Delivery Unit and the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership. Although the study considers a range of heat sources in different county locations, it’s the potential for geothermal heat that generates most interest. One of the report’s recommendations is to carry out a seismic study to reprocess and interpret existing deep seismic data to confirm geological conditions. This work has already started and will confirm the geothermal potential across South Worcestershire. Further feasibility work in Offenham is likely to be the next step in the process.

Residents in two parts of Wychavon backed plans giving them more of a say in how their area is developed following historic votes. People living in Drakes Broughton and Wadborough with Pirton parish and North Claines went to the polls on 16 March 2017, to take part in a referendums on whether or not to approve their respective Neighbourhood Plans. They were the first two communities in Wychavon to put their plans to a public vote.

A total of 70 bags of rubbish were plucked from the streets of Wychavon as part of a campaign to clean up the nation. The Great British Spring Clean took place between 3 and 5 March, and challenged communities to get out and about litter picking their area. It followed on from the successful ‘Clean for the Queen’ campaign which took place last year to mark Her Majesty’s 90th birthday. We supported the event by donating litter picking equipment to parish councils, residents and community groups. Our street cleaning contractor, FCC Environment, also carried out additional litter picks along rural roads on top of its usual cleaning commitments. Communities in eight towns and villages were out ridding the streets of litter in their areas.

Droitwich Spa became the first town in Wychavon to be part of the ‘Safe Place’ scheme. The scheme provides locations within the town, such as shops and public buildings, where vulnerable people can go if they need reassurance and support for a problem or a worry whilst out and about.

All Safe Places display a special sign so they are easily recognisable. Staff members are trained to give reassurance and also help people to contact other appropriate support.

Our Community Safety Manager, said: “We’re pleased to be working in partnership with Our Way and the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner to support and develop the Safe Place scheme. Supporting vulnerable people and helping them to feel safe and more confident is important and we are looking forward to working together to launch the scheme in Evesham and Pershore in the future.”

Neighbourhood Plans were introduced as part of the Localism Act 2011. They allow communities to draw up their own development blueprint detailing where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built. It also gives them more of a say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided. In Drakes Broughton and Wadborough with Pirton, 93% of the 400 votes cast were in support of the plan. In North Claines, 85.2% of the 580 votes were in favour. We have subsequently adopted both Neighbourhood Plans.
Summary of our finances

Our income in 2016/17

Income from Council Tax, the portion of Business Rates we retain and government grants in 2016/17 was £8.104 million compared to £9.030 million in 2015/16. Government grants reduced year-on-year in line with government policy. Council Tax income increased mainly due to new properties in the district.

Our share of the Council Tax bill in 2016/17 was £117.73 for an average Band D household, an increase of 4.4% or £4.99 on 2015/16. Despite this increase, our Council Tax remains the lowest in Worcestershire and is still significantly less than the national average of £171.61 for shire district councils.

Our spend in 2016/17

Our revenue account shows what it costs to run our day to day services (net of fees and charges). In 2016/17 we spent a total of £9.016 million on delivering services under our three priorities compared to £10.135 million in 2015/16. This excludes capital charges for the use of our assets.

- **People** includes swimming pools and leisure centres, sports and arts development, youth initiatives, public conveniences, payment of housing benefits, environmental health.
- **Place** includes parks, recreation grounds and open spaces, sewerage and land drainage, refuse collection, street cleaning, planning, licensing, housing needs and renewal, community safety and CCTV.
- **Prosperity** includes car parking, economic development and promotion, Council Tax and Business Rates collection and central costs relating to running the council.
Looking forward

Net cost of services met by local and national taxes
£117.73

Our capital account sets out the money we spend on buying and improving our land, property and other assets along with those of others. In 2016/17, we spent £3.807 million on our land and property assets (compared to £4.439 million in 2015/16). We financed this through £1.541 million from the sale of other assets, £1.212 million of grants and contributions and £1.054 million of internal borrowing.

We have targeted £1.15 million of annual savings between 2016 and 2021. As a result of increased business rates income, efficiency savings, more joint working with Malvern Hills District Council and the re-procurement of our waste and street cleaning contract, we have already identified over £1.7 million of annual savings from 2018.

How we spent Council Tax in 2016/17

How an average Band D bill is spent

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<td>Housing services</td>
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<td>Environmental health and licensing</td>
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<td>Economic development, regeneration and tourism</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>Public toilets</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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More information
Search ‘Accounts Wychavon’ online.

We continue to be recognised for our sound financial management and for providing good value services, despite continued reductions in our government grant.

In response to the financial challenge we face, we adopted our Grow, Save, Charge Business Plan in December 2013. With a new Council elected in May 2015 and a new corporate strategy in April 2016, it was considered appropriate to refresh our Grow Save Charge Business Plan for the period 2016-21.
On these pages we take a brief look at the performance of two of our shared services – South Worcestershire Revenues and Benefits Service and Worcestershire Regulatory Services. This section also covers our three leisure centres, which Wychavon Leisure run for us, and our popular Partners Together events.

South Worcestershire Revenues and Benefits Services
- Took an average of 12.7 days to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support new claims and changes of circumstances. Although this was a couple of days more than last year, it was within our target of 13 days.
- Collected 45.9% of Housing Benefit overpayments, up from 42.1% in 2015/16.
- Collected 98.8% of Council Tax and 98.5% of Business Rates, both in line with last year’s performance.
- 74.4% of Council Tax and 54.2% of Business Rates were paid by direct debit, both slightly above last year’s figures, although the Business Rates measure fell just below the target of 55%.

Worcestershire Regulatory Services
- 98% of businesses that received a food hygiene inspection were broadly compliant, which means the food they produce is safe.
- Received 2.7 noise nuisance complaints per 1,000 of the population, well below the county average of 3.4.
- Across Worcestershire, nearly 79% of service requests were resolved to the residents’ satisfaction and 97% of business service requests were resolved satisfactorily.
- Received five complaints and 23 compliments.

Wychavon Leisure
- Almost 1.4 million visits to our three leisure centres during the year, an increase of around 4% compared to the previous year.
- Completed a major refurbishment at Droitwich leisure centre. The new facilities and the introduction of virtual classes have all helped to attract new customers.
- Offered free health checks and trials as part of our Get Moving campaign.
- Supported over 150 local fundraising events and put on Simply Run courses (couch to 5K).

Partners Together
- Our Partners Together event in April focused on the housing issues facing the district and ways to collectively tackle them with our partners. You can read more about this on the next page.
- November’s ‘Healthy, happy, active and supported’ Partners Together event was attended by nearly 60 people from wide range of organisations, all keen to look at how we can encourage residents and communities to make healthier lifestyle choices. As well as hearing about the national, regional and local health priorities from speakers, we looked at how partners were helping to address health at a very local level. Four workshops took a practical approach to what we might do together to address issues such as alcohol, physical activity, mental health and community health initiatives in the district.
Focus on...

Housing issues on the agenda

Soaring house prices could mean that by 2020 home ownership becomes an impossible dream for those not already on the housing ladder.

The warning was issued during our Partners Together event in April 2016, where representatives from a range of organisations gathered at the Civic Centre in Pershore to discuss housing issues facing the district and ways to collectively tackle them.

During the event a number of key speakers from organisations including the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), developer Bloor Homes, Rooftop Housing and Fortis Living warned housing supply was not keeping pace with demand and the gap between incomes and housing would prevent many potential homeowners from entering the market.

Councillor Richard Morris, Wychavon portfolio holder for economy and housing, said:

“IT’s unacceptable to us that housing should be inaccessible to anyone. We’ve already achieved a lot to help tackle the national housing shortage in this area by being creative and we’ll continue to do all we can to find suitable solutions to the housing issues people face.

“By working together we can ensure we are doing everything we can to help provide people with a roof over their head.”

A short video examining some of the housing issues facing Wychavon residents is available to view by visiting www.wychavon.gov.uk/partners-together-events.
The coming year looks set to be another busy one with the start of construction work on the Waitrose store we’re building in Evesham and the commencement of a new waste, recycling and street cleaning contract.

As part of our strategy, we’ve set 24 promises for 2017/18. A selection of these is listed below including the eight brand new ones for this year. For a full list of our promises search online for Wychavon promises.

**People**

**Healthy, happy, active and supported**

1. **Helping people to be healthy, active and supported**
   - **NEW!** Work with partners to put on a wellbeing week of activities across Wychavon focusing on the five steps to wellbeing.
   - Invest up to £5 million in sport and leisure facilities by 31 March 2020.

2. **Supporting people most in need**
   - **NEW!** Work with partners to help vulnerable residents on a low income to remain warm and healthy in their homes, through replacing inefficient broken boilers, putting in heating controls, and installing loft and cavity wall insulation.
   - **NEW!** Invest in and work with partners to pilot a three year programme to improve aspirations, health and life chances in the Droitwich West ward.
   - Visit older people in at least 14 rural areas and offer them a range of services and support to help with issues such as loneliness, energy, fire safety, health and independent living.

**Place**

**Green, clean and safe with quality, affordable homes**

1. **Keeping the district clean, green and safe**
   - Tackle major flytipping and take appropriate action in at least 20 hotspots by 31 March 2018.
   - Improve management of and public access to four Wychavon-owned wildlife sites.
   - **NEW!** Introduce household collection of small electrical items and batteries for recycling by 31 March 2018.

2. **Delivering quality, affordable homes**
   - **NEW** Set out a plan for our direct involvement in the provision of housing.
   - Improve the standards of at least 200 private sector homes.
Prosperity

Vibrant communities with quality jobs and skills

1. Attracting businesses and quality jobs
   • NEW! Work with the Droitwich Brine Heritage Group and businesses to investigate the feasibility of using brine water to create edible salt.
   • Use our investments to support the creation of 400 new jobs.
   • Assist at least 100 business start-ups and the growth of existing businesses.
   • Invest £25,000 a year for three years to help attract £8 million funding for business growth.

2. Improving people’s skills to succeed
   • NEW! Offer support and additional funding to encourage small and medium-sized businesses to take on up to 20 new apprenticeships during the next two years.
   • Create ten new work placements and four more apprenticeships at the council.
   • Help at least 30 more young people a year in Wychavon to gain engineering skills and qualifications.

3. Supporting and engaging with communities
   • NEW! Develop a New Homes Bonus Protocol setting out how we will use funding resulting from recent housing growth to benefit the district’s communities and economy.
   • Work with at least 14 parish councils and community groups to increase awareness of local needs through village health checks.
   • Promote our services and get councillors out to meet residents and businesses in every ward.

Alongside delivering our promises, we’ll be supporting improvements to road and rail infrastructure, progressing further joint working with Malvern Hills District Council across planning services and relocating Evesham Community Contract Centre. We want to do more to help develop the district as a sustainable tourism and leisure destination, so tourism is on the agenda for our next Partners Together event.

In September, we’re being reassessed under the new Investors in People standard and our annual Customer Service Excellence review takes place the following month. Looking further ahead, in March 2018 we’ll be inviting a small team of officers and councillors from other councils to give us some feedback and share learning as part of a peer challenge with Malvern Hills District Council.
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To request a copy of this Annual Report in large print, Braille, on CD or in other languages ring 01386 565508.

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