

Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Date: Wednesday, 13 September 2023

Committee: Council

Date: Thursday, 21 September 2023

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND

You are requested to attend the above meeting. The Agenda is attached

Members of the Council – a briefing note will be circulated by e-mail prior to the meeting with important housekeeping details and arrangements for the meeting.

Members of the Public – If you wish to attend the meeting, please e-mail democracy@shropshire.gov.uk to check whether a seat will be available for you.

Please click [here](#) to view the livestream of the meeting on the date and time stated on the agenda

The recording of the event will also be made available shortly after the meeting on the Shropshire Council Youtube Channel [Here](#)

Tim Collard
Assistant Director - Legal and Governance

Vince Hunt (Chairman)	Rachel Connolly	Kirstie Hurst-Knight
Brian Williams (Vice Chairman)	Gerald Dakin	Mike Isherwood
Lezley Picton (Leader)	Rosemary Dartnall	Mark Jones
Ian Nellins (Deputy Leader)	Steve Davenport	Simon Jones
Roy Aldcroft	Mary Davies	Duncan Kerr
Jeff Anderson	Julian Dean	Heather Kidd
Caroline Bagnall	Geoff Elner	Christian Lea
Nicholas Bardsley	David Evans	Hilary Luff
Joyce Barrow	Julia Evans	Nigel Lumby
Bernie Bentick	Roger Evans	Robert Macey
Thomas Biggins	Paul Gill	David Minnery
Ed Bird	Rob Gittins	Dan Morris
Andy Boddington	Nat Green	Pamela Moseley
Peter Broomhall	Kate Halliday	Alan Mosley
Julia Buckley	Simon Harris	Cecilia Motley
Garry Burchett	Nigel Hartin	Peggy Mullock
Gwilym Butler	Nick Hignett	Kevin Pardy
Dean Carroll	Ruth Houghton	Vivienne Parry
Steve Charmley	Richard Huffer	Tony Parsons
Ted Clarke	Tracey Huffer	John Price

Ed Potter
Chris Schofield
Andrew Sherrington
Dan Thomas
Robert Tindall

Edward Towers
Kevin Turley
David Vasmer
Alex Wagner
Claire Wild

Mark Williams
Rob Wilson
Paul Wynn

Your Committee Officer is:

Tim Ward Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 257713

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members are reminded that they must declare their disclosable pecuniary interests and other registrable or non-registrable interests in any matter being considered at the meeting as set out in Appendix B of the Members' Code of Conduct and consider if they should leave the room prior to the item being considered. Further advice can be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

3 Minutes (Pages 1 - 16)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 July 2023, attached.

4 Announcements

To receive such communications as the Chairman, Leader and Head of Paid Service may desire to lay before the Council.

5 Public Questions

To receive any questions from the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. Deadline for notification is 5.00 pm on Friday 15 September 2023

6 Report of Returning Officer - Worfield (Pages 17 - 18)

Report of Returning Officer attached

Contact: Andy Begley, 01743 258675

7 Annual Assurance Report of the Audit Committee to Council 2022/23 (Pages 19 - 34)

Report of the Executive Director, Resources is attached

Contact: James Walton. Tel. 01743 258915

8 Capital Strategy 2022/23 – 2027/28 Mid-Year Review (Pages 35 - 50)

Report of the Executive Director, Resources is attached

Contact: James Walton. Tel. 01743 258915

9 Pyrolysis Project (Pages 51 - 146)

Report of the Executive Director of Place is attached

Contact Mark Barrow Tel: 01743258919

10 Marches Forward Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (Pages 147 - 160)

Report of the Executive Director of Place is attached

Contact Mark Barrow Tel: 01743258919

11 Statutory Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations (Commencement) (Pages 161 - 166)

Report of Returning Officer is attached

Contact: Andy Begley, 01743 258675

12 Annual Report of the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education (Pages 167 - 186)

Annual Report of the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education is attached

13 Constitution of Committees and Allocation of Seats 2023 - 24 (Pages 187 - 192)

Report of the Assistant Director – Legal and Governance is attached

14 Appointment to Committees

Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Steve Charmley to replace Councillor Mark Jones as a member of the Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Julian Dean to replace Councillor Mike Isherwood as a member of the Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Roger Evans to replace Councillor Nigel Hartin as a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Julia Evans to replace Councillor Julian Dean as a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Jeff Anderson to replace Councillor Dan Morris as a member of the People Overview Committee

Councillor Joyce Barrow to be appointed as a substitute member of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Julian Dean to replace Councillor Mike Isherwood as a substitute member of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Strategic Licencing Committee

Councillor Duncan Kerr to replace Councillor Mike Isherwood as a member of the Strategic Licencing Committee

Councillor Julian Dean to replace Councillor Duncan Kerr as a substitute member of the Strategic Licencing Committee

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Nick Bardsley to replace Councillor Steve Charmley as a member of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Steve Charmley to replace Councillor Nick Bardsley as a substitute member of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Ed Towers to replace Councillor David Minnery as a member of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor David Minnery to be appointed as a substitute member of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Rob Gittins to replace Councillor Chris Schofield as a member of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15 Motions

The following motions have been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 16:

a Motion received from Councillor Geoff Elner and supported by Councillors Joyce Barrow, Peter Broomhall, David Evans and Dan Thomas

Current statistics clearly show that Brain Tumour research is underfunded and that not enough research is being carried out into finding effective treatments.

In 2018 the government pledged to invest £40 million pounds which has still not all been deployed.

The department for Science Innovation and Technology has stated that the scheme is still open to viable research applications, it has further been stated that more funding could be considered if the science is improved.

There are families all over Shropshire and within this council chamber, councillors and officers who have experienced the trauma of Brain Tumours.

All these people have witnessed the catastrophic effects of this condition on their loved ones and it is time that together we take appropriate steps to understand and conquer this condition and I therefore propose that this council write to the government minister asking that they immediately address the issue of the funding shortfall. Furthermore the urgent need to provide extra resource and to set in motion a programme of research to effectively diagnose much earlier and to accelerate the commencement and development of clinical trials in an endeavour to introduce treatments and to find a cure.

b Motion received from Councillor Julian Dean and supported by the Green Group Nutrient Neutrality

Council notes the statement from Secretary of State Michael Gove that the government plans to remove the 'Nutrient Neutrality' requirement for Natural England to advise councils not to approve housing schemes that will add to nutrient pollution in already

damaged rivers and waterways.

Council believes this would be a retrograde step which will further damage our already struggling waterways. The associated £280m 'offsetting' funding is an open acknowledgement that scrapping these rules will increase pollution. The amount is a drop in the ocean and, as Feargal Sharkey has pointed out, 'you can't offset a dead river'. Further, this plan transfers responsibility and costs of dealing with pollution from profitable developers to the public.

Council recognises the need for sustainable and affordable homes in the Clun catchment in particular, however we believe that instead of allowing housebuilders to pollute, Government should require water companies and housebuilders to invest in upgrading the infrastructure needed as a prerequisite to development whilst continuing to enforce mitigation schemes. We further believe that with the right investment and appropriate regulation of all sources of pollution to our waterways, from treatment works to agriculture, communities can have both high-quality affordable homes and healthy waterways.

We call on the Leader of the Council to write publicly to the Secretary of State and to our MPs to express the council's views.

c **Motion received from Councillor Julia Buckley and supported by the Labour Group Protect Shropshire's Public Buildings from Crumbling Concrete**

This Council notes:

The sudden Government announcement regarding the risk of collapse due to outdated Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in schools and other public buildings was made just days ahead of the start of the new academic year. Classrooms, gyms, corridors, toilets and WCs were closed and parents across the country were unsure whether their schools are safe. Although no Shropshire schools were closed, we also do not have any confirmation that none are affected.

This is because schools are invited to self-assess using a Government questionnaire circulated on social media.

There is no definitive list of public buildings and their assessment results to reassure residents as to which buildings are, and which are not, safe to enter.

Schools that were previously considered safe in 2018, are now considered to have deteriorated into a dangerous condition.

Ratings follow a scale from A-D, with D requiring immediate action. Those not rated "D" in 2018 may now be in need of repair, but again this information is not available, until an UpToDate assessment is completed, and results published.

This Council believes :

That the public need to know how safe are their schools, courts, prisons, hospitals and job centres.

An urgent, full audit is required to find out the extent of this dangerous concrete in the public sector estate, and for us as an authority to have confidence in our own estate, and that of our strategic partners in the county.

This Council resolves to :-

- Publish a list of all Council estate buildings and their RAAC assessments.
- Co-ordinate assessment responses across Shropshire Schools and publish the outcomes on the Shropshire Council website
- Co-ordinate assessment responses with partners across other public buildings such as courts, prisons, hospitals, nurseries and colleges and publish the outcomes on the Shropshire Council website.
- Identify any grade D buildings in Shropshire, as well as identify any grade Cs for preventative investment, as soon as possible.
- Confirm plans for mitigation and repairs.
- Include this issue on the Council's Strategic Risk & Issues Log, to acknowledge the scale of risk and to monitor progress and impact.

As a Council we need to be in a position to give a clear and unequivocal guarantee to parents in Shropshire that ALL schools – including academies, free schools, and nurseries – have been properly assessed and that no children are at risk.

d **Motion from Councillor Ian Nellins supported by Councillors Dean Carroll, Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Rob Macey, Dan Morris and Lezley Picton
Bathing Water Designation on the River Severn**

The River Severn and River Teme are key features of Shropshire, with public open space alongside the rivers that is enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. As a landowner, there is common law right that the natural water of a stream should flow past land substantially unaltered, in quality or quantity, and the Water Resources Act 1991 (WRA 1991) provide that consent is required under Section 88 (S88) WRA 1991 to discharge any trade effluent to any controlled waters. Any discharge consent issued may include conditions covering quality, rate and volume discharged.

The River Severn and River Teme are designated as main rivers and as such issues relating to them in respect of flooding and water quality fall within the statutory duties of the Environment Agency (EA), under the Water Framework Directive 2000 (WFD 2000/60/EC) and Flood & Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA 2010). However, as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Shropshire works in close partnership with the EA and Severn Trent Water (STW), through our Flood Programme Board, to manage flood risk within Shropshire and projects that we undertake do encompass wider environmental benefits where feasible.

We are currently undertaking a Defra funded pilot Natural Flood Management (NFM) projects on the Rivers Perry and Reabrook in Shropshire, which are both tributaries of the River Severn. Shropshire Council is developing plans to reduce flooding, enhance biodiversity and reduce nutrient pollution.

Bathing Water Designations on the Rivers Severn and Teme could support the overall aims of the Council, and other agencies, to progress water quality and environmental improvements on the rivers, while providing residents and visitors the opportunity to swim in clean water.

Council resolves to support the campaign for Bathing quality on the River Severn at Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth, and the River Teme at Ludlow, by writing to the Secretary of State for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs to confirm the support of Shropshire Council for bathing status.

16 Questions from Members (Pages 193 - 198)

To receive any questions from Members, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2.

17 Exclusion of Press and Public

To resolve that, in accordance with the provisions of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4 [3] of the Council's Access to Information Rules, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items

18 Exempt Minutes (Pages 199 - 200)

To approve as a correct record the exempt minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 July 2023, attached

19 Alveley Industrial Estate Update (Pages 201 - 210)

Exempt Report of the Executive Director of Place is attached

Contact Mark Barrow Tel: 01743 258919

20 Chief Officer Pay Award 23/24 (Pages 211 - 216)

Exempt report of the Executive Director Resources is attached

Contact: James Walton. Tel. 01743 258915



Committee and Date

Council

21 September 2023

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2023

In the Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND

10.00 am - 1.10 pm

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257713

Present

Councillors Vince Hunt (Chairman), Brian Williams (Vice Chairman), Ian Nellins (Deputy Leader), Roy Aldcroft, Jeff Anderson, Caroline Bagnall, Nicholas Bardsley, Joyce Barrow, Bernie Bentick, Thomas Biggins, Peter Broomhall, Julia Buckley, Garry Burchett, Gwilym Butler, Dean Carroll, Ted Clarke, Rachel Connolly, Rosemary Dartnall, Steve Davenport, Mary Davies, Geoff Elner, David Evans, Julia Evans, Roger Evans, Paul Gill, Rob Gittins, Kate Halliday, Simon Harris, Nigel Hartin, Nick Hignett, Ruth Houghton, Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Mike Isherwood, Mark Jones, Simon Jones, Duncan Kerr, Christian Lea, Hilary Luff, Nigel Lumby, Robert Macey, Richard Marshall, David Minnerly, Dan Morris, Alan Mosley, Cecilia Motley, Peggy Mullock, Kevin Pardy, Vivienne Parry, John Price, Ed Potter, Chris Schofield, Dan Thomas, Edward Towers, Kevin Turley, David Vasmer, Alex Wagner, Claire Wild, Mark Williams and Paul Wynn

17 Apologies for Absence

At the start of the meeting Councillor Alan Mosley paid tribute to the work of Ex Councillor Derek Woodvine who had been a longstanding Member of Shropshire County Council who had died recently. The meeting observed a short period of silence in his memory

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Ed Bird, Andy Boddington, Steve Charmley, Gerald Dakin, Julian Dean, Nat Green, Richard Huffer, Tracey Huffer, Heather Kidd, Pam Moseley, Tony Parsons, Lezley Picton, Robert Tindall and Rob Wilson

18 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

Councillor Vince Hunt declared an interest in agenda item 12b - Motion to stop the use of Glyphosates and oppose the use of Neonicotinoids in Shropshire. He stated that he would leave the room and take no part in the debate and vote.

Councillor Claire Wild declared an interest in agenda item 7 – Levelling Up Fund Award for Shrewsbury. She stated that he would leave the room and take no part in the debate and vote.

19 Minutes

Councillor Roger Evans commented that he felt that there was not enough detail in the minutes and that the comments made by Members during the debate should be summed up in the minutes. The Chair agreed to discuss this with the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer after the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2023, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved and signed as a correct record.

20 Announcements

Chairman's Engagements

The Chairman referred Members to the list of official engagements carried out by himself and the Vice Chairman since the last meeting of the Council on 11 May 2023, which had been circulated by email.

Kings Birthday Honours

The Chairman congratulated all those that had received honours in the recent Birthday Honours List and confirmed that he had written to them to congratulate them.

21 Public Questions

The Chairman advised that public questions had been received from Barry Greig, Frank Smallman, Christopher Forde, Paul Cawthorne, Jamie Russell and Mike Streetly. A copy of the questions and the responses provided are attached to the signed minutes and available from the web page for the meeting.

[Agenda for Council on Thursday, 6th July, 2023, 10.00 am — Shropshire Council](#)

22 Financial Outturn 2022/23

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Resources Councillor Gwilym Butler, and seconded by the Deputy Leader, Councillor Ian Nellins that the report of the Executive Director of Resources, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

By way of amendment Councillor Roger Evans proposed that the recommendation be changed to read: -

It is recommended that Members

In respect of the revenue budget:

- a) Note with dismay that again the budget agreed by council was overspent by £8.499m.
- b) Note that as a result of this overspend the level of the General Fund balance has now been reduced to a dangerous level of just £7.093m.
- c) Note that during the year our service-related Earmarked Reserves and Provisions were further reduced by £33.192m
- d) Note that yet again only 69% of the 2022/23 was delivered. £6.566m of savings were not achieved, and £1.965 of these have had to be carried forward into 2023/24.
- e) Council notes that the combination of earmarked and un-earmarked (General) reserves is below a level that would be regarded as safe, taking into account local circumstances.

Relating to ringfenced funding:

- f) Note the performance of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – £0.768m (4%) surplus outturn for 2022/23 on £19m turnover, and the resulting level of the HRA reserve of £12.359m. The level of the accumulated surpluses held as a reserve should be reviewed and an appropriate action plan brought forward.
- g) Note that the level of school balances has increased by £2.296m, from £8.191m in 2021/22 to £10.487m. The level of accumulated net surpluses in schools' balances is considerable, and schools should identify the rationale for holding balances at those levels.

In respect of the capital programme:

- h) Approve net budget variations of -£4.007m to the 2022/23 capital programme (in Appendix 11) and the re-profiled 2022/23 capital budget of £111.112m.
- i) Approve the re-profiled capital budgets of £26.575m for 2023/234, including slippage of £10.747m from 2022/23, £110.787m for 2024/25 and £56.264m for 2025/26 as detailed in Appendix 15.
- j) Accept the outturn expenditure set out in Appendices 12 and 13 of £100.365m, representing 90.3% of the revised capital budget for 2022/23.
- k) Approve retaining a balance of capital receipts set aside of £17.465m as at 31st March 2023 to generate a one-off Minimum Revenue Provision saving of £0.572m in 2023/24.

This was seconded by Councillor David Vasmer.

On being put to a recorded vote with 20 Members voting for, 39 against and no abstentions as follows:

FOR:

Councillors Bagnall, Bentick, Buckley, Clarke, Connolly, Dartnall, Davies, J Evans, R Evans, Halliday, Hartin, Houghton, Isherwood, Kerr, Mosley, Pardy, Parry, Vasmer, Wagner and M Williams.

AGAINST:

Councillors Aldcroft, Anderson, Bardsley, Barrow, Biggins, Broomhall, Burchett, Butler, Carroll, Davenport, Elner, D Evans, Gill, Gittins, Harris, Hignett, Hunt, Hurst-Knight, M Jones, S Jones, Lea, Luff, Lumby, Macey, Marshall, Minnery, Morris, Motley, Mullock, Nellins, Potter, Price, Schofield, Thomas, Towers, Turley, Wild, B Williams and Wynn.

The amendment fell.

RESOLVED:

That Members:

In respect of the revenue budget:

- a) Note that the outturn is an overspend of £8.499m.
- b) Note the consequent level of the General Fund balance is £7.093m.
- c) Note the service-related use of £33.192m of Earmarked Reserves & Provisions.
- d) Note that the combination of earmarked and un-earmarked (General) reserves is below a level that would be regarded as safe, taking into account local circumstances. The MTFS sets out an agreed plan to restore these balances to safer levels.

Relating to ringfenced funding:

- e) Note the performance of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – £0.768m (4%) surplus outturn for 2022/23 on £19m turnover, and the resulting level of the HRA reserve of £12.359m. The level of the accumulated surpluses held as a reserve should be reviewed and an appropriate action plan brought forward.
- f) Note that the level of school balances has increased by £2.296m, from £8.191m in 2021/22 to £10.487m. The level of accumulated net surpluses in schools' balances is considerable, and schools should identify the rationale for holding balances at those levels.

In respect of the capital programme:

- g) Approve net budget variations of -£4.007m to the 2022/23 capital programme (in Appendix 11) and the re-profiled 2022/23 capital budget of £111.112m.
- h) Approve the re-profiled capital budgets of £26.575m for 2023/234, including slippage of £10.747m from 2022/23, £110.787m for 2024/25 and £56.264m for 2025/26 as detailed in Appendix 15.
- i) Accept the outturn expenditure set out in Appendices 12 and 13 of £100.365m, representing 90.3% of the revised capital budget for 2022/23.

- j) Approve retaining a balance of capital receipts set aside of £17.465m as at 31st March 2023 to generate a one-off Minimum Revenue Provision saving of £0.572m in 2023/24.

23 Levelling Up Fund Award for Shrewsbury

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Regeneration and Housing, Councillor Dean Carroll, and seconded by Councillor Mark Jones that the report of the Executive Director of Place, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Council agree to:

1. Approve the acceptance of the Levelling Up Fund Grant award from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), and instruct officers to progress the associated projects.
2. Approve financing of the Council's cash match funding requirement of £3.793m from borrowing with an associated annual revenue impact of £0.269m
3. Approve the inclusion of enabling and infrastructure works associated to the Levelling Up Fund Award, within the planning application(s) for the demolition of the Riverside Shopping Centre and the former Riverside medical practice, as recommendation 3.2 approved in the Council report titled 'Shrewsbury Town Centre Redevelopment Phase One' 16 February 2022.
4. Delegate to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Section 151 officer and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration and Planning to:
 - 4.1. proceed with compiling the full financial details and business case for the two projects summarised in item 2.2 of the report, for inclusion in a further report for consideration by Council.
 - 4.2. progress a procurement and delivery strategy for the two projects summarised in items 2.2 of the report.

24 Local Authority Housing Fund Round 2

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Regeneration and Housing, Councillor Dean Carroll, and seconded by Councillor Mark Jones that the report of the Executive Director of Place, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

In response to a request from a Member the Portfolio Holder agreed that a report updating Members on progress with the Scheme would be brought to the Council meeting in December.

RESOLVED:

That Council

1. Agree to enter into the MoU with DLUHC, on the basis that the Council will use its best endeavours to acquire the full target of dwellings to which the allocation of grant funding relates and delegates authority to the Executive Director of Resources to agree, sign and return the MoU by the deadline of 14 July 2023.
2. Approve that capital investment of up to £0.45m of Section 106 commuted sums and prudential borrowing on rental income of up to £0.97m is used to match fund the DLUHC grant funding of £1.20m to acquire up to ten dwellings into the HRA.
3. Delegate to the Executive Director of Resources, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Homes and Communities and the Head of Property and Development the authority to approve a final business case and financial appraisals setting out the financial arrangements to support the acquisitions of dwellings into the HRA.
4. Delegate to the Head of Property and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Regeneration and Housing, the authority to agree and complete appropriate freehold acquisitions.

25 **Annual Report of the Portfolio Holder Finance and Corporate Resources**

It was proposed by Councillor Gwilym Butler, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Resources that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, and the recommendations therein be received and agreed.

Councillor Butler presented and amplified his report and responded to questions, concerns and comments.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

26 **Annual Report of the Portfolio Holder – Culture and Digital**

It was proposed by Councillor Robert Macey, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, and the recommendations therein be received and agreed.

Councillor Macey presented and amplified his report and responded to questions, concerns and comments.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

27 **Changes to Committee Membership**

It was proposed by the Chairman Councillor Vince Hunt, and seconded by the Vice Chairman Councillor Brian Williams that the following amendments to committee membership be agreed

Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Kevin Turley is appointed as a member of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Robert Tindall is appointed as a substitute member of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Peggy Mullock to replace Councillor Ed Bird as a substitute member of the Economy & Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Chris Schofield to replace Councillor Jeff Anderson as a substitute member of the Economy & Environment Scrutiny Committee

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Viv Parry to replace Councillor Mark Williams as a member of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Mark Williams to replace Councillor Viv Parry as a substitute member of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Roy Aldcroft is appointed as a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

RESOLVED:

That the following changes in committee membership be agreed

Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Kevin Turley is appointed as a member of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Robert Tindall is appointed as a substitute member of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Peggy Mullock to replace Councillor Ed Bird as a substitute member of the Economy & Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Chris Schofield to replace Councillor Jeff Anderson as a substitute member of the Economy & Environment Scrutiny Committee

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Viv Parry to replace Councillor Mark Williams as a member of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Mark Williams to replace Councillor Viv Parry as a substitute member of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Roy Aldcroft is appointed as a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

28 **Motions**

- a) **Motion received from Councillor Dan Thomas and supported by Councillors Simon Harris, Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Ian Nellins and Lezley Picton**

Shropshire Council believes that the use of disposable vapes by young people is concerning. The marketing of colourful, candy-flavoured vapes that are relatively cheap with easy access to them will create a new generation of nicotine addicts and the subsequent public health crisis. We've seen a seven-fold increase in 11 to 17-year-olds nationally choosing single-use vaping products since 2021. The overall message for adult smokers that they are 'better than smoking' means many think they are not harmful, yet there has been no specific research undertaken into the health impacts of vaping on young people's development, including their respiratory health, and impacts for adults in the long term are not yet clear.

We are particularly concerned about disposable vapes which contain lithium and copper. These elements are crucial for our efforts to tackle climate change through the green transition. Shropshire has a unique and beautiful countryside, and it's becoming more and more regular to see disposable vape pens littered there.

Shropshire Council, therefore, calls on the Government to legislate for a ban on the sale of disposable vapes. This will help to prevent a new public health catastrophe among children and tackle the vast and growing environmental impact of the devices, especially the single-use plastic and use of lithium batteries that are hard to recycle and pose a fire risk.

By way of amendment Councillor Kate Halliday proposed the following: -

Shropshire Council believes that the use of disposable vapes by young people is concerning. The marketing of colourful, candy-flavoured vapes that are relatively cheap and easy to access, could create a new generation addicted to nicotine. There has been no specific research undertaken into the health impacts of vaping on young people's development, including their respiratory health. There is also a growing environmental impact of these devices, especially the single-use plastic and use of lithium batteries and copper that are hard to recycle and pose a fire risk.

While it is the case that the long- term health outcomes for adults have also not been researched, the UK Government states ‘Vaping is an important tool to help the government achieve its ambition for England to be smokefree by 2030. This is because vaping is one of the most effective ways to help people quit smoking. A recent Cochrane systematic review found with ‘high certainty’ that vapes were more effective than nicotine replacement therapy. Ensuring vaping devices can continue to be made available to current smokers is vital to reducing smoking rates, and their use contributes to an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 additional fewer smokers per year.

One survey suggests that over half of all vapes used in the UK are disposable, with the majority being used by adults who are reducing/ceasing tobacco use 2.

While it may play a part, there is no guarantee that banning disposable vapes will solve the problem of young people vaping. As a measure alone, it could drive some young people to non-compliant devices which may comprise of more concerning and damaging substances. On June 15th '23 Shropshire's Task and Finish group on underage vaping report that:

‘Vapes can be purchased online often with relative ease and are more challenging to regulate. There has been a large rise in sales of non-compliant vapes (with risks around product safety requirements such as chargers and batteries). This is compounded by worrying implications that the supply of vapes may be linked to child exploitation and serious organised crime.’

There are a range of possible responses to tackling youth vaping including:

- It is illegal to sell vapes to under 18s, and this legislation could be better enforced.
- There have not been the same restrictions imposed on the marketing of vapes as there are on tobacco products. Marketing could be more strictly regulated.
- Trading standards also have a role to play and Shropshire Council has been recognised by the Local Government Association for its pro-active actions regarding identifying the illegal selling of vapes with 1244 illegal vape products seized following test purchase operations and including 3 sales of vapes to children. More can be done to reduce illegal sales
- A tax could be imposed on vaping products

In addition with regard to climate concerns, retailers selling vapes must by law provide an option for consumers to dispose of vapes on a one-for-one basis under the WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) regulations. The Office for Product Safety and Standards is responsible for compliance

In light of the above Shropshire Council calls on the Government to:

- Legislate to end the use of single use disposable vapes whilst ensuring that adults who are vaping as an alternative to tobacco use do not experience disrupted supply.
- Support the Local Government Association's call for action to central government for vapes to be in plain packaging, be kept out-of-sight, for mandatory age-of-sale signage on vaping products and a ban on free samples as tools that can help achieve this (this is a recommendation of the Shropshire Task and Finish Group)
- Support local authorities to improve prosecution rates for the sale of illegal vapes
- Support local authorities to boost smoking cessation services, including those for children who are vaping, and develop health promotion campaigns
- To reduce online sales of no-compliant vapes
- Enhance the ability of the Office for Product Safety and Standards to enforce retail compliance with the disposal of vapes

Shropshire Council will also continue to support the work of:

- the task and finish group including their work on an approach for communications aimed at children and young people.
- Link Youth vaping to the Shropshire Plan

The amendment was seconded by Councillor

Councillor Thomas indicated that he would accept the amendment.

On taking a vote the amendment was supported and it was **RESOLVED:**

Shropshire Council believes that the use of disposable vapes by young people is concerning. The marketing of colourful, candy-flavoured vapes that are relatively cheap and easy to access, could create a new generation addicted to nicotine. There has been no specific research undertaken into the health impacts of vaping on young people's development, including their respiratory health. There is also a growing environmental impact of these devices, especially the single-use plastic and use of lithium batteries and copper that are hard to recycle and pose a fire risk.

While it is the case that the long-term health outcomes for adults have also not been researched, the UK Government states 'Vaping is an important tool to help the government achieve its ambition for England to be smokefree by 2030. This is

because vaping is one of the most effective ways to help people quit smoking. A recent Cochrane systematic review found with 'high certainty' that vapes were more effective than nicotine replacement therapy. Ensuring vaping devices can continue to be made available to current smokers is vital to reducing smoking rates, and their use contributes to an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 additional fewer smokers per year.

One survey suggests that over half of all vapes used in the UK are disposable, with the majority being used by adults who are reducing/ceasing tobacco use 2.

While it may play a part, there is no guarantee that banning disposable vapes will solve the problem of young people vaping. As a measure alone, it could drive some young people to non-compliant devices which may comprise of more concerning and damaging substances. On June 15th '23 Shropshire's Task and Finish group on underage vaping report that:

'Vapes can be purchased online often with relative ease and are more challenging to regulate. There has been a large rise in sales of non-compliant vapes (with risks around product safety requirements such as chargers and batteries). This is compounded by worrying implications that the supply of vapes may be linked to child exploitation and serious organised crime.'

There are a range of possible responses to tackling youth vaping including:

- It is illegal to sell vapes to under 18s, and this legislation could be better enforced.
- There have not been the same restrictions imposed on the marketing of vapes as there are on tobacco products. Marketing could be more strictly regulated.
- Trading standards also have a role to play and Shropshire Council has been recognised by the Local Government Association for its pro-active actions regarding identifying the illegal selling of vapes with 1244 illegal vape products seized following test purchase operations and including 3 sales of vapes to children. More can be done to reduce illegal sales
- A tax could be imposed on vaping products

In addition with regard to climate concerns, retailers selling vapes must by law provide an option for consumers to dispose of vapes on a one-for-one basis under the WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) regulations. The Office for Product Safety and Standards is responsible for compliance

In light of the above Shropshire Council calls on the Government to:

- Legislate to end the use of single use disposable vapes whilst ensuring that adults who are vaping as an alternative to tobacco use do not experience disrupted supply.

- Support the Local Government Association's call for action to central government for vapes to be in plain packaging, be kept out-of-sight, for mandatory age-of-sale signage on vaping products and a ban on free samples as tools that can help achieve this (this is a recommendation of the Shropshire Task and Finish Group)
- Support local authorities to improve prosecution rates for the sale of illegal vapes
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- Enhance the ability of the Office for Product Safety and Standards to enforce retail compliance with the disposal of vapes

Shropshire Council will also continue to support the work of:

- the task and finish group including their work on an approach for communications aimed at children and young people.
- Link Youth vaping to the Shropshire Plan

b) Motion submitted by Cllr. Julia Evans and supported by the Green Group

Motion to stop the use of Glyphosates and oppose the use of Neonicotinoids in Shropshire by both Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Town Council when contracted to do works for the former.

This Council notes:

In 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer an agency for the World Health Organisation, published it's findings into the relationship between cancer and glyphosate – a herbicide – and classified it as possibly carcinogenic – it had scientific data that it definitely caused malignant tumours in animals. Glyphosate causes damage in human DNA and chromosomes and is associated with the blood cancer, Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. This is all before the damage it will inflict on our insect and mammal species. (1)

There has been a 60% increase in the use of pesticides such as glyphosate in the UK since 1990 [3]. Italy, Portugal and the Canadian city of Vancouver have all banned use of glyphosate [or glyphosate based weed killers] and France is working towards this. Mosanto and German owner Bayer face 9,000 lawsuits in the US from

those that believe their illnesses are caused by this product, a \$6.9 million settlement in June this year as Monsanto falsely continues to state that its product is safe [2 and 4]. That recent studies published in ScienceDirect show a 41% increased risk of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma caused by exposure from glyphosate-based weed killers and products [5]. In Shropshire Unitary Council – there is no Policy on Glyphosate use or guidance on how to use.

This Council believes:

- There is compelling evidence that glyphosate and a wide range of other herbicides and pesticides may be harmful to human health
- The use of pesticides and weed killers reduces biodiversity, impacting negatively on insects, birds and bees, in a time when the world is losing 2.5% of its insect population per-year [6].
- Harmful weed killer residues can creep into the food chain.
- Pets and children should not be playing in parks treated with such chemicals.

This Council resolves to:

- Phase out the use of all pesticides and weed killers on council land, upholding the ban on neonicotinoids.
- Cut out all use of glyphosate based treatments in all council operations in from December 2023.
- Trial pesticide-free alternatives during this period, to use biodegradable foam or hot steam treatments on weeds. To be decided by Executive.
- Grant an exception to the above ban regarding the control of Japanese knotweed, or other invasive species, where there are currently no effective mechanical techniques available. However, in this case chemicals such as glyphosate will only be stem-injected, rather than sprayed, to reduce its spread in the environment.
- Grant an exception on sprays only in relation to Giant Hogweed where it's not safe to be dug out or safely removed by other means.
- Formulate a Policy for pesticides inclusive of above and include Staff protective equipment when handling and using pesticides.
- Write to the prime minister to inform the government of this Council's opposition to glyphosate-based pesticides and to call for a UK-wide programme to phase out use

1. <https://www.iarc.who.int/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MonographVolume112-1.pdf>
2. <https://www.syracuse.com/state/2023/06/bayer-to-pay-69-million-in-ny-settlement-over-false-claims-about-weedkiller-roundup.html>
3. <http://www.pan-uk.org/pesticides-agriculture-uk/>
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/oct/07/monsanto-trial-cancer-appeal-glyphosate-chemical>
5. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1383574218300887>
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/10/plummeting-insect-numbers-threaten->

The motion was seconded by Councillor Duncan Kerr

On taking a vote the motion was not supported.

29 Questions from Members

The Speaker advised that the following questions had been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 15. A copy of the report containing the detailed questions and their formal response is attached to the signed minutes.

Received from Councillor Alex Wagner and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Communities in relation to mental health services in Shropshire. By way of supplementary question Councillor Wagner asked whether the increase in funding quoted in the response was just to cover rising costs or were there any new schemes proposed? The Portfolio Holder agreed to provide a response after the meeting

Received from Councillor Bernie Bentick and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Communities in relation to woman's health services. By way of supplementary question Councillor Bentick asked when there would be a commitment to the formation of a Woman's Health Hub? The Portfolio Holder advised Councillor Bentick that his question should be referred to the Integrated Care Board possibly via Joint HOSC

Received from Councillor Roger Evans and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Regulatory Services in relation to "Blue Badge" applications. By way of supplementary question Councillor Evans asked when the backlog would be cleared, and whether any of the backlog was due to the desire of the Council to become a "Digital Council"? The Portfolio Holder stated that the delay had nothing to do with the Council becoming a "Digital Council". He added that the number of officers processing the applications had increased and that there were further vacancies to be filled.

30 Report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority

It was proposed by Councillor David Minnery that the report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, be received and noted.

Councillor Pardy asked why in some cases the maximum number of occupants of a hotel was ignored when asylum seekers were being accommodated. Councillor Minnery agreed to get back to him with a response.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority be noted.

31 Exclusion of Press and Public

Councillor Alex Wagner commented that there was a lot of local public interest in the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme Update report and that he felt that it should be considered in public session.

The Portfolio Holder for Growth, Regeneration and Housing, Councillor Dean Carroll stated that report was exempt because it contained commercially sensitive information which could not be disclosed in public.

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with the provisions of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4 [3] of the Council's Access to Information Rules, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items

32 Exempt Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2023, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved, and signed as a correct record.

33 Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme Update

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Regeneration and Housing, Councillor Dean Carroll, and seconded by Councillor Mark Jones that the exempt report of the Executive Director of Place, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed

Signed (Chairman)

Date:

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<u>Committee and date</u>
Council
21 September 2023

<u>Item</u>
Public

RETURNING OFFICER'S REPORT

Responsible Officer Andy Begley

Email: andy.begley@shropshire.gov.uk

Telephone: (01743) 258675

I, Andy Begley, the Returning Officer for the Shropshire Council area, do hereby certify that the person named below was elected as Councillor for the Worfield Division of the Shropshire Council area:

<u>Electoral Division</u>	<u>Name and Address</u>	<u>Description</u>
Worfield	Andrew John Sherrington 4 Dingle View Bridgnorth WV16 4JL	Liberal Democrats

Dated this 7th day of September 2023

Andy Begley
Returning Officer
The Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
SHREWSBURY
SY2 6ND

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Committee and Date

Audit Committee
20th July 2023

Council
21st September 2023

Item

Public



Audit Committee Annual Assurance Report to Council 2022/23

Responsible Officer:	James Walton		
email:	James.Walton@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 255011
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Lezley Picton, Leader of the Council Brian Williams, Chairman of the Audit Committee Gwilym Butler, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Resources		

1. Synopsis

A key part of the Audit Committee's role is to report annually to Full Council on the Committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations. Audit Committee has some concerns but on balance can provide reasonable assurance.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Attached to this report is the Audit Committee's Annual Assurance Report to Council for 2022/23. This provides Council with independent reasonable assurance that it has in place adequate and effective governance, risk management and internal control frameworks; internal and external audit functions and financial reporting arrangements that can be relied upon and which contribute to the high corporate governance standards that this Council expects and maintains consistently

- 2.2 The Audit Committee recognises and is concerned about the limitations identified in the internal control framework as reported in the Chief Audit Executive's Opinion and the potential impact on value for money but on balance, can provide reasonable assurance, founded on those reports, explanations and assurances received, throughout the year.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Council is asked to consider and comment on the contents of the Annual Assurance report for 2022/23 before recommending accepting this report.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The Audit Committee's Annual Assurance Report is part of the overall internal control arrangements and risk management process. The Audit Committee objectively examines and evaluates the adequacy of the control environment through the reports it receives and in turn can provide assurances to Council on its governance, risk management and internal control frameworks; internal and external audit functions and financial reporting arrangements that inform the Annual Governance Statement
- 4.2. The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. There are no direct environmental, equalities, consultation or climate change requirements or consequences of this proposal.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications from this report. In assessing the internal control environment, risk management and governance aspects of the Council, the Audit Committee can provide a perspective on the overall value for money of these.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. This report does not directly make decisions on energy and fuel consumption; renewable energy generation; carbon offsetting or mitigation; or on climate change adaption. However, the work of the Committee will look at these aspects relevant to the governance, risk management and control environment.

7. Background

- 7.1. A key part of the Audit Committee's role is to report annually to Full Council on the Committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations; providing its opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk

management and internal control frameworks; internal and external audit functions and financial reporting arrangements. In addition, the Audit Committee should report to Council where they have added value, improved or promoted the control environment and performance in relation to its Terms of Reference and the effectiveness of the Committee in meeting its purpose and functions.

7.2. The Audit Committee has a well-established role within the Council, and it is important that an Annual Assurance report based on the work of the Committee is produced and recommended to Council. In compiling this assurance report, information provided at the Audit Committee meeting on 20th July 2023 has also been considered.

7.3. In addition, this report has been reviewed to ensure its continuing compliance with CIPFA 's Audit Committees, Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police, 2018 edition. This requires the Audit Committee to be held to account on a regular basis by the Council specifically in relation to whether the;

- committee has fulfilled its agreed terms of reference;
- committee has adopted recommended practice;
- development needs of committee members have been assessed and whether committee members are accessing briefing and training opportunities;
- committee has assessed its own effectiveness, or been the subject of a review, and the conclusions and actions from that review and,
- what impact the committee has on the improvement of governance, risk and control within the Council.

7.4. The annual assurance report to Council for 2022/23, attached to this report, is an aid to addressing the key areas where the Committee should be held to account.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

- CIPFA's Audit Committees, Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police, 2022 edition
- Audit Committee reports 2022/23

Local Member: N/A

Appendices

Appendix A - Draft Audit Committee Annual Assurance Report 2022/23

APPENDIX A

AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23

STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

1. Governance in and of the public sector continues to be high profile with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) supporting good practice in local government. In Shropshire we have a Code of Corporate Governance which is reviewed annually in line with the best practice issued by CIPFA and SOLACE; we have also produced an Annual Governance Statement, again in line with best practice and legislative requirements. Being well managed and well governed are important attributes in helping to improve performance and in reducing the risk of failing to achieve our objectives and providing good service to our community.
2. Shropshire Council has an Audit Committee that is long established in seeking to maintain and improve our governance procedures. The Committee is a key component of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and a major source of assurance of the Council's arrangements for managing risk, maintaining an effective control environment and reporting on internal and external audit functions and financial and non-financial performance.
3. This year the Committee has held seven planned meetings including the meeting held on 20th July 2023. We have received and considered a substantial number of reports across key areas of the Council's activity (see Annex A).
4. Membership of the Audit Committee for 2022/23 was made up of the following Councillors: Brian Williams (Chairman), Simon Harris (Vice Chairman), Rosemary Dartnall, Nigel Lumby and Roger Evans. Substitutes were invited to attend and contribute at all meetings and training.
5. In February of this year, in line with recommended good practice, we recruited our first external independent member Jim Arnold, a highly successful businessman living in Shrewsbury, and we shall look forward to the good advice and experienced contributions which he will bring to the committee.
6. The benefits to the Council of operating an effective Audit Committee are:
 - Maintaining public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting.
 - Reinforcing the importance and independence of internal and external audit and any other similar review process; for example, reviewing and approving the Annual Statement of Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement.
 - Providing a sharp focus on financial reporting both during the year and at year end, leading to increased confidence in the objectivity and fairness of the financial reporting process.
 - Assisting the co-ordination of sources of assurance and, in so doing, making management more accountable.

- Providing additional assurance through a process of independent and objective review.
 - Raising awareness within the Council of the need for governance, internal control and the implementation of audit recommendations.
 - Providing assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management arrangements and reducing the risk of illegal or improper acts.
7. The Committee continues to have a professional and arm's length relationship with Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors, who attend all meetings of the Committee to offer their advice where needed.
8. The Committee undertakes a substantial range of activities and works closely with both internal and external auditors and the Chief Finance Officer (Executive Director of Resources /Section 151 Officer) in achieving our aims and objectives. We have put together a work and development plan for the year to enable key tasks to be considered and completed.
9. As Chair of the Audit Committee, I see training as a key priority for members to undertake our roles effectively. The Committee continues to undertake a full and extensive programme of training and this year has been no exception. Training has been received in relation to:
- Audit Committee self-assessment and effectiveness of the Audit Committee
 - Strategic risk management
 - Public health governance update
 - Treasury Management
 - Climate change
 - Update on the Statement of accounts

Members also have access to CIPFA's Better Governance Forum network which provides specific information in the form of regular briefings, training events, and an informative web site.

Details of Reports/Information Received

10. **Annex A** provides a summary of the key reports and information received by the Audit Committee at its meetings. These appear categorised in the areas which, under the Terms of Reference, Audit Committee have a responsibility to consider and report upon. They are
- Governance;
 - Risk management framework;
 - Controls, including specific focus on:
 - Contracts and partnerships
 - Fraud, corruption and whistleblowing
 - Value for money
- A detailed audit work plan has been agreed for the current year.
11. Following receipt of the reports the Audit Committee:
- Resolved that there were reasonable arrangements for corporate governance and where improvements are required there is a clear

improvement plan with dedicated lead officers that will be monitored by Members.

- Resolved that the risk management and assurance framework was fit for purpose and operating as intended.
- Recognise the increased risks in the control environment and resolved that there is still a need with pressures on resources and following the Council's response to COVID and changes to major systems, to ensure continual monitoring by management and members alike on the internal control environment. Members focus will remain on areas critical to the Council, i.e. internal control environments in respect of the embedding of ERP software, IT management and cyber security, major contracts and commercial activities.
- Resolved that there were effective arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption, and for enabling whistleblowing (confidential reporting).
- Resolved that there was evidence of effective arrangements in place to support Value for Money but recognised the links to good financial management and sound internal controls in minimising opportunities for waste and fraud and maximising income and use of all assets, and the need to ensure continual monitoring by management and members alike given the reported direction of travel of the internal control environment.
- Resolved that Financial Statements reflected the Council's true position, were complete including all transactions, and were prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards.

12. The Chief Audit Executive has offered limited assurance for the 2022/23 year on the Council's framework for governance, risk management and internal control. There are a continuing and increased number of high and medium risk rated weaknesses identified in key individual assignments that are significant in aggregate but where discrete parts of the system of internal control remain unaffected. Management of Coronavirus has introduced unprecedented pressures and responses, and this inevitably has impacted upon her opinion. Managers' priorities have been diverted to business continuity pressures and this has removed capacity to plan and deliver improvements to known internal control processes, leading to maintained and increased risks in some areas that may impact on delivery of the Council's objectives. The year has continued to be challenging with the embedding of key fundamental line of business systems (financial and human resources), changes of key managerial posts, alongside a challenge to deliver savings, increase income and respond to changing Coronavirus pressures, at times on a daily and weekly basis.

Audit Service Staff

13. Following the retirement of Ceri Pilawski, the long serving Audit Manager in October 2022 and a restructuring under James Walton, the Executive Director of Resources (section 151 officer), the key Audit staff were Barry Hanson, Head of Policy and Governance and his deputy, Internal Audit Manager, Katie Williams.

14. Without the support of all Audit staff and, in particular, of the officers mentioned above, it would not be possible for the Audit Committee to be as highly effective as peer comparisons show us to be. My thanks and that of my fellow committee members are given to all our Audit Service officers.
15. I have been Chairman of the Audit Committee for most of the last eighteen years since its first formation in 2005 and I am pleased to say that the quality of my colleagues of whichever party, in terms of financial knowledge and subject interest, is the best I have experienced in that time and I am grateful to them for their contribution to the effectiveness of the Committee's work.

Annual Statement of Assurance

16. Based on:
- The work carried out by the Internal and External Auditors and their reports presented to this Committee;
 - Reports from service managers and;
 - The work carried out by the Section 151 Officer, Head of Policy and Governance and their reports presented to this Committee

The Audit Committee recognises and is concerned about the limitations identified in the internal control framework and the impact on value for money. However, on balance, the Audit Committee can provide reasonable assurance, founded on those reports, explanations and assurances received, that the Council has in place adequate and effective governance, risk management and internal control systems; internal, external audit functions and financial reporting arrangements that can be relied upon and which contribute to the high corporate governance standards that this Council expects.

RECOMMENDATION – Council is asked to accept this report

Signed *Brian B. Williams* Date 21st June 2023

On behalf of the Audit Committee

ANNEX A

Summary of assurance reports received by Audit Committee

Governance

- **Management report; Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and a review of the effectiveness of the Council's internal controls and Shropshire's Code of Corporate Governance**

Report of the Section 151 Officer on the effectiveness of the system of internal controls and the production of the Annual Governance Statement. In addition, he reported on compliance with the Corporate Governance Code as reasonable. It confirmed the Council's commitment to the principles of good corporate governance

and set out clear improvements targeted at managing known strategic risk areas for 2023/24.

➤ **Internal Audit – Annual review of Internal Audit, Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP) 2022/23**

Report of the Section 151 Officer which provided Members with the results of the 2022 self-assessment of the Internal Audit Service against the requirements of the Public Sector Audit Standards, compliance against which demonstrates an effective Internal Audit service. There are no areas where the Internal Audit function is not complying with the Code and, whilst there are areas of partial compliance, these are not considered significant and do not compromise compliance with the code. It was noted the report should be read in conjunction with the Internal Audit Annual Report.

➤ **Annual review of Audit Committee terms of reference**

Report of the S151 Officer which ensures that the Council continues to provide an effective Audit Committee. Terms of Reference are considered and approved by members annually. There were no significant changes proposed in 2022.

➤ **Annual Audit Committee self-assessment**

Report of the Section 151 Officer which requested members to review and comment on compliance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's guidance on the function and operation of audit committees. There is significant compliance with the code and an improvement plan to address a few areas of partial compliance.

➤ **Internal Audit Charter**

Report of the Chief Audit Executive which set out the requirement for an annual review of the Internal Audit Charter which had been completed. The Charter demonstrates how Internal Audit complies with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The Audit Committee approves the Charter which incorporates the mission, code of ethics, definition and core principles of Internal Audit. There were no significant changes.

➤ **Draft Audit Committee annual work plan and future learning and development requirements 2023/24**

Report of the Chief Audit Executive which provided a proposed Audit Committee work plan and sought discussion and agreement around a learning and development plan for members to ensure they were well informed and appropriately skilled to fulfil their role. Therefore ensuring the integrity of the financial reporting and governance of the Council.

➤ **Annual Assurance report of Audit Committee to Council 2022/23**

Report of the Section 151 Officer in respect of the Audit Committee's Annual Assurance report to Council.

The Audit Committee resolved that there were reasonable arrangements for corporate governance and where improvements are required there is a clear improvement plan with dedicated lead officers that will be monitored by Members.

Risk Management Framework

➤ **Management report: Risk Annual Report 2022/23 incorporating strategic risks update**

Report of the Risk and Business Continuity Manager who provided assurances on and an overview of the activity of the Risk, Insurance and Resilience Team during 2022/2023 with a synopsis of the current risk exposure of the Council in relation to strategic, operational and project risks. It also identified key activity for 2022/2023.

The report sets out the challenges and achievements accomplished by the Team during 2021/2022. During 2021/2022 the team included business continuity management and emergency planning and as a result we experienced an unprecedented workload due to significant weather events and the response to and recovery from Covid-19. Following a recent restructure, the team is now made up of Risk Management and Business Continuity, though continues to work closely and align undertakings with emergency planning and insurance. The team continues to strive to ensure that Shropshire Council embeds Opportunity Risk Management practices throughout all service areas.

A 'good' assurance level was achieved following a risk management audit and confirmed that robust policies and procedures were in place, including a shared site for all risk registers allowing for real time updating and reporting. The Opportunity Risk Management Strategy is reviewed annually and reported to the Executive Directors, Cabinet and Audit Committee and all operational risk registers have a named lead officer as the overall risk owner.

➤ **Management report: Strategic risks update**

The management of the strategic risks is a key process which underpins the successful achievement of our priorities and outcomes. Strategic risks are linked, where appropriate, with the Annual Governance Statement Targeted Outcomes.

Reports during the year from the Risk and Business Continuity Manager set out the existing strategic risk exposure. There were currently 15 strategic risks on the strategic risk register. The risk score for inability to deliver a balanced budget has increased. Failure to safeguard vulnerable children risk has reduced, as has ICT Infrastructure resilience. A recruitment, Retention and Succession Planning risk has been added, and the risk relating to the ability to fund children's services has been split into two risks; one for Children's Social Care & Safeguarding and one for Learning & Skills.

Strategic risks are monitored to enable achievement of Council priorities and outcomes and are linked, where appropriate, with the Annual Governance Statement Targeted Outcomes.

➤ **Internal Audit report of the review of Risk Management audit 2022/23**

Report of the Interim Audit Service Manager which summarised the detailed findings identified in the Internal Audit review of risk management of which the overall control environment had been assessed as Good, with minor control weaknesses identified. The focus of the review was on user compliance with processes around operational and project risks.

➤ **Draft Internal Audit Annual plan 2023/24**

Report of the Chief Audit Executive on the proposed risk based Internal Audit Plan for Audit Committee approval. Designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's risk management, internal control and governance processes across all Directorates and report this in the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24. Given the need to respond flexibly to both the Council's demands and the available resources in the team, at different times throughout the year, the plan is designed to ensure that all externally contracted work for the service is completed and for Shropshire Council, must do areas of work are delivered alongside an element of high-risk audits. This leaves an unplanned element to be allocated as resources become available. Allocations will be made on risk priority matched to auditor skill sets from high risk areas within the Council not covered in the planned element. Members were also referred to the appendix, which set out those low risk areas that would not be considered for review by Internal Audit on a rolling basis, to allow Members to consider first line assurances, if required, from managers on these areas.

The Audit Committee resolved that the risk management and assurance framework was fit for purpose and operating as intended.

Controls

➤ **Management Report: Highways Term Maintenance update (exempt)**

The Executive Director of Place provided an update on progress towards a resolution of the issues identified by Audit relating to the management of the Council's Term Maintenance Contract with its Highway's provider.

➤ **Management Report: IT Management update**

The Head of Automation and Technology provided an update which provided an update on the actions taken or planned to address the recommendations arising from various audit reports on the IT control environment.

➤ **Management Report: Information Governance Management update**

The Committee received the report of the Assistant Director Legal and Governance which outlined the Council's current position and progress made in responding to the Audits for Information Security Management and the IT Acceptable Usage Policy.

➤ **Management Report: Update on the Council's Cloud based services**

The Assistant Director Finance and Technology provided a report which identified the current use of cloud-based services by the Council and considered its use of these systems (including wider networks and data centres) to house its data and network systems. It focused on the approach to assurance for internal controls and risk management for these services. The report also considered the current position in terms of consistency of approach across different types of use of the cloud and the desirability of increased controls and risk management and consistency how these were being applied.

➤ **Management Report: Payroll update**

The Committee received the report of the Assistant Director, Workforce and Improvement at the November 2022 and February 2023 meetings which provided an update on the actions to address the recommendations arising out of the Payroll Audit for 2021/22.

➤ **Internal Audit performance report and revised annual audit plan 2022/23**

Report of the Chief Audit Executive provided Members with an update of the work undertaken by Internal Audit throughout the year. By September Members were informed that 26% of the revised plan had been completed. Performance was slightly lower than in previous years due to resourcing issues and delays in the commencement of the externally provided internal audit work.

By the year end the Chief Audit Executive informed members that 94% of the revised plan had been completed and Internal Audit continued to add value to the Council in supporting its business continuity processes and the delivery of bespoke pieces of work, including sharing best practice and providing advice on system developments.

Lower assurance levels and fundamental recommendations were separately identified throughout the year. Where appropriate, members requested management updates at subsequent meetings.

➤ **Internal Audit annual report 2022/23**

Report of the Chief Audit Executive on achievements against the revised internal audit plan for 2022/23 and the annual internal audit assurance. The Chief Audit Executive gave limited assurance for the year that the Council's framework for governance, risk management and internal control is sound and working effectively.

Revisions were made to the plan to reflect both changing resources and risks. There are a continuing and increased number of high and medium risk rated weaknesses identified in key individual assignments that are significant in aggregate but where discrete parts of the system of internal control remain unaffected. The year has continued to be challenging with the continued development of key fundamental line of business systems (financial and human resources), changes of key managerial posts, alongside a challenge to deliver savings, increase income and respond to delayed service impact from the pandemic.

The Audit Committee recognise the increased risks in the control environment and resolved that there is still a need to ensure continual monitoring by management and members alike on the internal control environment. Members focus will remain on areas critical to the Council, i.e. internal control environments in respect of the embedding of ERP software, IT management and cyber security, major contracts and commercial activities.

Controls: Fraud, Corruption and Whistleblowing

➤ **Fraud, special investigation and Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) update (Exempted by categories 2, 3 and 7)**

Members are provided with exempt reports of the Principal Auditor providing an update on the current fraud and special investigations undertaken by Internal Audit and current RIPA activity.

➤ **Annual review of Counter Fraud, Bribery and Anti-Corruption Strategy and activities, including an update on the National Fraud Initiative**

Report of the Chief Audit Executive outlined the measures undertaken in the last year to evaluate the potential for the occurrence of fraud, and how the Council managed these risks with the aim of prevention, detection and subsequent reporting of fraud, bribery and corruption. It also provided an update on the action plan to ensure continuous improvement and an update to members in response to national and local issues. It was confirmed that the Strategy had been reviewed and updated to reflect both best practice and to continue to be aligned with the updated Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy 2020. The Council can never be free from fraud activities, but continues to be focused on acknowledging, preventing and pursuing fraud, bribery and corruption and Audit Committee members reaffirmed the Council's Counter Fraud, Bribery and Anti-Corruption Strategy.

➤ **Annual Whistleblowing report**

Report of the Assistant Director of Workforce and Improvement which detailed the cases reported under the Whistleblowing arrangements. Assurance was provided as to the currency of the Whistleblowing Policy and its effectiveness.

The Audit Committee resolved that there were effective arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption, and for enabling whistleblowing (confidential reporting).

Controls: Value for Money

Sound internal controls lead to the effective, efficient and economic use of Council resources (VFM), assurances are taken from the robustness of the internal control environment, management of risks, soundness of governance and any additional reports add weight to these.

➤ **External Audit: Pension fund audit plan 2022/23**

Report of the Engagement Lead (Grant Thornton) setting out the Pension fund plan for the year ending 31 March 2023.

➤ **External Audit: Audit fee letter 2022/23**

Report of the Engagement Lead (Grant Thornton) setting out the audit fee for the year ending 31 March 2023.

The Audit Committee resolved that there was evidence of effective arrangements in place to support Value for Money but recognised the links to good financial management and sound internal controls in minimising opportunities for waste and fraud and maximising income and use of all assets, and the need to ensure continual monitoring by management and members alike given the reported direction of travel of the internal control environment.

Financial reporting

➤ **External Audit: Shropshire County Pension Fund Audit Findings (Information) 2021/22**

Report of the Engagement Lead (Grant Thornton) summarised the findings for the year ended 31 March 2022 on the audit of the Pension Fund financial statements. It confirmed that there were no issues around the Fund's ability to continue as a going concern and that it was intended to issue an unqualified opinion to the Pensions Committee.

➤ **External Audit: Audit progress report and sector update**

Report of the Engagement Lead (Grant Thornton) which highlighted progress and provided a summary of emerging national issues and developments of relevance to the Council. Including changes to arrangements for securing Value for Money to be included in the Auditor's Annual Report. The Engagement Manager explained that there was a slight delay in reporting on the Whole of Government Accounts, due to a delay with the workbook.

In February 2023 he confirmed that the audit of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial statements had been substantially completed with the main area outstanding related to national guidance on accounting for Infrastructure assets.

➤ **Financial outturn report 2021/22**

Report from the Section 151 Officer providing details of the revenue outturn position for the Council and the full year capital expenditure and financing of the Council's capital programme.

➤ **Appointment of External Auditors**

In September 2022, the Section 151 Officer provided a report which updated Audit Committee on the appointment of external auditors for Shropshire Council from 2023/24 for a period of five years. He informed the Committee that Grant Thornton had been appointed as the Auditor for Shropshire Council and Shropshire County Pension Fund.

➤ **Approval of the Council's Statement of Accounts 2021/22 including a review of accounting policies**

July 2022: The Committee received the report of the Section 151 Officer which provided an overview of the Accounts for the year 2021/22 and details of the reasons for the most significant changes between the 2020/21 Accounts and the 2021/22 Accounts. He explained that the accounts were draft at this point in time and had been produced in line with the timetable. He drew attention to the delay to the amendments to the code relating to infrastructure assets which had implications for last years' accounts which were unable to be signed off until the code was published. All the work relating to the change had been done but could not be acted upon.

November 2022: The External Audit Engagement Lead presented their draft audit findings report for 2021/22.

February 2023: The 2021/2022 accounts were presented and approved by the Audit Committee but had not been signed off by External Audit due to delays on their part relating to infrastructure assets.

Treasury Management

➤ **Annual treasury report 2021/22**

Report of the Section 151 Officer showed the borrowing and investment strategy for 2021/22, the outturn for the financial year and the investment performance of the Internal Minutes of Audit Committee held in September 2022 Treasury Team, confirming that activities align with the approved Treasury Management Strategy.

The Section 151 Officer reported that the internal Treasury team had outperformed their investment benchmark which had been the case for many years. He confirmed that the Council's Treasury activities during the year had been within the approved prudential and treasury indicators set and have complied with the Treasury Strategy

➤ **Treasury Strategy 2022/23 mid-year report**

Report of the Section 151 Officer which provided Members with an economic update for the first six months of 2022/23, along with reviews of the Treasury Strategy 2022/23 and Annual Investment Strategy, the Council's investment portfolio for 2022/23, the Council's borrowing strategy for 2022/23, any debt rescheduling taken and compliance with Treasury and Prudential limits for 2022/23.

➤ **Treasury Strategy 2023/24**

Report of the Section 151 Officer which proposed the Treasury Strategy for 2023/24. It set out the arrangements for how the council would appropriately manage its arrangements for banking, cash flow management, investments, and borrowing, supporting the delivery of the MTFs and The Shropshire Plan. He explained that the report set out the current market conditions that the Council were working within along with the prudential indicators which gave a measure of the financial viability from a capital point of view and a borrowing point of view for the organisation. He informed the Committee that going forward the treasury management function would sit with the Assistant Director of Finance and Technology (Deputy Section 151 Officer).

The Audit Committee resolved that Financial Statements reflected the Council's true position, were complete including all transactions, and were prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards

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Committee and Date

Council
21st September 2023

Item

Public



Capital Investment Programme and Mid-Year Review of the Capital Strategy (2022/23 - 2027/28)

Responsible Officer:	James Walton		
email:	james.walton@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258915
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cllr Gwilym Butler, Finance & Corporate Support		

1. Synopsis

The Council's capital investment programme is routinely reviewed. This report brings together an initial draft of future investment plans, taking account of new schemes proposed and changes to existing schemes.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Shropshire Plan outlines Shropshire Council's vision, priorities and Strategic Objectives. The Capital Strategy is an essential element in delivering that vision, describing how and where the Council will direct significant strategic investment in the coming years. In many ways, therefore, the Capital Strategy defines the Council's vision, setting a direction of travel for the next decade, enabling the creation of a strategic plan for the next five years and subsequently a detailed capital programme each year. The Council's capital investment programme looks

at how the Council can secure long term advantage for local residents and businesses, delivering benefits for the communities of Shropshire over many years.

- 2.2. The capital strategy that was agreed by Council on 2nd March 2023 provided the latest information on capital schemes and priorities based on the detailed capital strategy review that had been undertaken 18 months earlier. It was noted that planning decisions for several high-profile schemes were due to be progressed in the early part of 2023/24 and so it was agreed that a detailed mid-year review of the capital strategy would be undertaken in 2023/24.
- 2.3. A green paper outlining the proposed work around the Capital Strategy was presented to Transformation and Improvement Overview Scrutiny Committee on 12th July 2023. Following this, work has progressed to review the priority schemes previously identified, updating them for known changes to capital spending estimates, including new schemes that will help the Council to deliver The Shropshire Plan priorities and reviewing the potential funding of these schemes, and any implications that this may have on the revenue budget into the future.
- 2.4. The Capital Strategy approved by Council in March 2023 originally identified proposed capital schemes of £301.823m. Following the initial review of proposed schemes and including additional schemes, the priority scheme list has decreased to £266.247m.
- 2.5. The review of the capital strategy also includes a review of the funding of the schemes and it was proposed in the medium term financial strategy that transformational costs would be funded from capital receipts in line with accounting regulations. As the transformation programme within the Council now starts to roll-out, work has been ongoing to identify the potential costs that may be classified as transformational under the Flexibility for the use of Capital Receipts. The potential cost, spread over several years, has been estimated at up to £9.5m. Further work will progress over the remainder of the year to confirm the likely costs to be funded from capital receipts in 2023/24 and future transformation costs over the next 2 years.
- 2.6. Considering the points summarised in the paragraphs above, and detailed in the following sections, the key elements of this report can be summarised as follows:

Total capital programme approved in March 2023	7.2	A	301.8
Revised (draft) capital programme in August 2023	7.6	B	266.2
Changes (due to inflation, scope change etc)	7.6	C	-35.6
New schemes brought forward, not yet fully reviewed, not yet approved, but which may represent a future commitment in the capital programme	7.1	D	159.2
<u>Initial calculation of the revised capital programme (excl changes to NWRR and OLR)</u>	7.11, 9.1ff		<u>425.4</u>

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Approve the updated priority and aspirational capital scheme schedules for inclusion in the draft Capital Strategy, ahead of wider Member engagement.

- 3.2. Approve progression of the schemes detailed in the priority capital scheme schedule to business case to develop and assure the associated costs and funding proposed.
- 3.3. Approve the additional funding of £2.228m in relation to the Multi Agency Hub and the Pride Hill capital schemes which form part of the Shrewsbury Town Centre Redevelopment Programme.
- 3.4. Approve the additional match funding of £0.647m in relation to the Council's LUF Round 2 grant award which requires total match funding of £5.043m, £4.396m of which has been previously secured / approved.
- 3.5. Note the considerations raised in respect of the future direction of the North West Relief Road (NWRR) and the Oxon Link Road (OLR) detailed at section 9.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1 The Council's revenue budget shows how in-year activities are undertaken and funded. The capital investment programme looks at how the Council can secure long term benefits for local residents and businesses – specifically, capital investment yields benefits over many years. This is an important part of how the Council is delivering on the ambitions set out in The Shropshire Plan.
- 4.2 The review of the Capital investment programme therefore provides an opportunity to ensure that the Council uses its ability to invest in the long term assets of the County in a way which supports delivery of The Shropshire Plan and the associated financial plans (set out in the MTFS).
- 4.3 Failure to determine updated prioritised capital schemes schedule could result in such benefits being lost or delayed - jeopardising the realisation of revenue savings from the reduction of costs and /or the generation of new / additional income and fail to appropriately target limited Council resources.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 This report sets out the capital and revenue implications of the updated aspirational capital schemes. Prioritisation of which capital schemes are considered important in delivering The Shropshire Plan objectives will be reviewed by management and members, with a view to formalising a revised Capital Strategy and funding profile in December 2023.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. Determination of the updated prioritised capital schemes schedules will include consideration of the climate impact of individual schemes and contribution to the Council's objective of net-zero corporate carbon performance by 2030.

7. Background

Development of the Council's Capital Strategy

- 7.1. A detailed review of the Capital Strategy was undertaken in 2022/23. Due to the significant revenue pressures addressed in budget planning for 2023-24, only a light touch review of future capital schemes was undertaken for the Capital Strategy 2023-24 to 2027-28 with the intention of undertaking a full review of the Capital Strategy during 2023-24. Consequently, the schedule of future schemes was updated primarily to reflect schemes that had progressed into the Council's approved capital programme and schemes for which revised cost estimates were available.
- 7.2. The latest schedule of priority capital schemes presented to Council in March 2023 had a total estimated cost of **£301.823m** and potential borrowing requirement of £87.610m, generating a maximum MRP budget requirement of £4.914m by 2027-28 (already incorporated in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy – 'MTFS'). Details of the schemes included are provided in Appendix A.

High-Level Prioritisation Principles for Future Capital Schemes

- 7.3 The Council's schedule of priority capital schemes detailed in the Capital Strategy 2023-24 to 2027-28, approved by Council on 2nd March 2023, has been reviewed by the Senior Leadership team and they have had the opportunity to incorporate additional schemes into the schedule that they require to assist in delivery of The Shropshire Plan.
- 7.4 The list of priority capital schemes have also been reviewed to consider whether the estimated capital costs that were originally anticipated for the schemes need to be updated for latest cost information.
- 7.5 This review has created a revised priority capital scheme schedule and refreshed the schedule of the Council's aspirational capital schemes for consideration.
- 7.6 The revised priority capital scheme schedule (shown at Appendix B) has a current total estimated capital cost of £266.247m with a potential borrowing requirement of £129.68834.315m. A breakdown of the amendments made to the priority scheme schedules is provided in Appendix C. It should be noted that it has not yet been possible to determine the estimated capital cost or the proposed funding sources for of all the schemes included in the priority schedule.
- 7.7 The potential borrowing requirement of £34.315m would generate a maximum MRP revenue budget requirement of £2.435m by financial year 2027-28, based on an interest rate of 5% and a term of 25 years.
- 7.8 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved in March 2023 provided for additional funding for capital investment over the 5 year period. Some of this balance was required for known projects already committed to within the Capital programme, however the balance provides scope to be able to fund any MRP revenue budget requirement arising from the prioritised capital schemes. Table 2 demonstrates the capacity within the MTFS to fund such capital investment,

however it should be noted that delivery timescales of the prioritised schemes would need to be managed in line with the profile of revenue funding being available.

Table 2: Revenue funding available within the MTFS to fund capital investment

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Additional funding for capital investment within approved MTFS	504,100	2,032,000	3,104,000	4,452,000	0	10,092,100
Funding required for approved capital programme	(961,000)	(1,204,940)	(1,079,980)	(219,710)	71,380	(3,394,350)
Capital investment/Transformation Fund within approved MTFS	0	0	0	15,000,000	6,000,000	21,000,000
Revenue funding available for prioritised capital schemes	(456,900)	827,060	2,024,020	19,232,290	6,071,380	27,697,750

7.9 The aspirational capital schemes schedule (shown at Appendix D) has a total estimated capital cost of **£159.247m**. However, some of the schemes included in the schedule do not yet have any estimated costs or, consequently, any identified funding sources.

7.11 The total cost of all identified capital schemes is **£425.494m** and these have been initially categorised into priority schemes and aspirational schemes given the level of resources and funding required to progress the total number of schemes identified.

7.12 The next stage of the mid-year capital strategy review is to consider the prioritised and aspirational list of capital schemes proposed and the timeframe for this is detailed below:

Table 3: next stages in the review and indicative timeline

Key Milestone	Timeline
Prioritisation of Capital Schemes Schedules by Cabinet Incorporating Member Presentation / Workshop	September 2023
Capital Strategy and Budget Task and Finish Group consider and comment on proposed prioritisation of capital schemes	September – October 2023
Mid-Year Capital Strategy Reviewed and Considered by Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee	29th November 2023
Timeline Mid-Year Capital Strategy Approved by Cabinet & Council	13th – 14th December

7.13 It is proposed that each scheme is now reviewed against the criteria set out below to evaluate which schemes should be pursued as a priority:

- Alignment with The Shropshire Plan (TSP).
- Linkage of schemes to specific TSP priorities.

- Alignment with the Council's key strategies such as the Climate Change Strategy: Towards Net-Zero Carbon, the Economic Growth Strategy, the Asset Management Strategy and the Commercial Strategy.
- Schemes already partially approved and so already incorporated in the Capital Programme.
- Maximisation of external funding.
- Affordable borrowing requirement.
- Impact on the revenue budget in terms of income generation and / or reduced expenditure.
- Generation of new capital receipts.
- Scheme ability to fund borrowing costs.
- Generation of longer-term financial benefits such as additional council tax or business rates income, although these benefits will not be included within revenue forecasts until the income is realised.

Significant Components of the Capital Strategy

8. Shrewsbury Town Centre Redevelopment (STCR) Programme

- 8.1 Since the capital strategy was approved in March, the Council has now secured Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Round 2 funding from the Government for two projects: the Shrewsbury Riverside Enabling Works and the Shrewsbury Town Centre Public Realm scheme, defined elements within the wider STCR Programme. Total funding of £18.701m has been awarded to the Council from LUF and this necessitates match funding totalling £5.043m. £1.250m of this match requirement has been achieved through an asset and land contribution and an additional £1.715m achieved as part of the £3.295m approved by Council in February 2022 to progress both the Multi Agency Hub and the Pride Hill schemes to detailed design (RIBA Stage 3: Spatial Coordination, or equivalent). £1.431 of the remaining match funding (£2.078m) is contained within the £2.228m identified in the paragraphs below and approval for the match funding balance of £0.647m is now sought from Cabinet and Council.
- 8.2 The Pride Hill Repurposing Scheme and the Multi Agency Hub (MAH) comprise Phase 1 of the ambitions of the STCR Programme. In February 2022 Council approved initial funding of £3.295m to progress these schemes to planning (RIBA Stage3).
- 8.2 Significant progress has been achieved on these schemes: a development manager was commissioned in November 2022; architectural services have recently been commissioned (July 2023) and multi-disciplinary engineering services are currently being procured.
- 8.3 In close consultation with Council officers, the development manager has now concluded initial work to establish a baseline development appraisal (financial model, detailed budget forecast and cash flow) for the schemes, enabling an initial scheme budget requirement to be determined. This development appraisal has facilitated re-appraisal of the financial resources required to progress these schemes to detailed design (RIBA Stage 3: Spatial Coordination, or equivalent). The refined financial model indicates that £5.523m will be required to achieve the

RIBA Stage 3 milestone: £3.146m in relation to the Multi Agency Hub and £2.377m in relation to Pride Hill.

- 8.4 In February 2022 the Council approved a budget of £3.295m to achieve the RIBA Stage 3 milestone. Therefore, formal approval for a further £2.228m is now sought from Cabinet and Council allow progress in line with previous decisions and the funding awards. PWLB borrowing is the default assumption, but it is anticipated that these schemes will be funded through a mix of options which will be considered and confirmed as the schemes progress.

9. North-West Relief Road (NWRR) and Oxon Link Road (OLR)

- 9.1. It is anticipated that the planning application for the NWRR and OLR will be considered later this year. As has been previously reported to members, the anticipated costs and benefits of these schemes will be updated further to the planning decision (as the detail of the planning decisions are likely to impact on the scope and profile of the scheme, and therefore the costs arising and the timing of these).
- 9.2. For the purpose of this strategy review, details of the costs and benefits of these schemes will be updated once there is greater clarity on the future shape of them, incorporating construction industry inflationary pressures, and funding arrangements. It is not anticipated that the progress of the scheme will create additional revenue costs within the current year, and the likely level of costs to be incurred would be outside the scope of capital receipts for funding, and so borrowing is most likely to be required.
- 9.3. In advance of the decision of the planning committee, the known costs incurred to date amount to c£24m. Of these, in the event of the proposal being rejected, the usual process would be to write off the abortive capital costs to revenue budgets. It is currently assumed that c£4m of costs to date are logically applicable to the OLR, and so, in the event that NWRR does not progress, the charge to revenue would be c£20m. This position remains largely unchanged from discussion in committee during 2022/23.

10. Staff Costs Capitalisation

- 10.1. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy approved in March 2023 included the requirement to deliver spending reductions of £51.390m as part of the detailed budget for 2023-24. A review of staff engaged on specific capital schemes is anticipated to deliver a saving to revenue by funding these posts from approved capital scheme budgets. Additionally, staff engaged on transformation activities can be capitalised under statutory guidance, which allows the revenue costs of projects that deliver ongoing savings or improved efficiency to be funded through capital receipts.
- 10.2. Initial work has progressed to identify the potential costs that may be classified as transformational under the Flexibility for the use of Capital Receipts. Current, initial proposals have identified options to capitalise of £3.5m, with potential for further capitalisation in later years. The process to confirm this treatment is complex, and

requires that options are identified prospectively, but also verified retrospectively, to ensure that all staff costs are accounted for appropriately.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2027/28 and Setting the Council Tax Resolution 2023/24 – Council, 2nd March 2023

Capital Strategy – Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 12th July 2023

Local Member:

Appendices

Appendix A: Priority Schemes as approved in March 2023 Capital Strategy

Appendix B: Updated Priority Capital Schemes Schedule

Appendix C: Amendments made to Priority Scheme Schedules

Appendix D: Aspirational Capital Schemes Schedule

APPENDIX A – PRIORITY SCHEMES AS APPROVED IN MARCH 2023 CAPITAL STRATEGY

Proposed Scheme	Scheme Description	Estimated Capital Cost (£m)	Proposed Funding	Proposed Sources of Finance (£m)									
				External Grants	Section 106 Developer Contributions	CIL Developer Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Alternative Funding Option	HRA	Borrowing	Capital Receipts	Total	
Swimming in Shrewsbury	Replacement of existing swimming provision at the Quarry with new provision within Shrewsbury.	25.000	£10m funded from PWLB Borrowing			0.500					24.500		25.000
Whitchurch Swimming Pool	Replacement of existing swimming provision in Whitchurch.	13.100	PWLB								13.100		13.100
Libraries Self Service Machines	Programme to install self-service machines .	0.152	£0.152m PWLB								0.152		0.152
Shrewsbury Museum - British Museum Gallery	Development of new British Museum Partnership Gallery at Shrewsbury Museum, to develop a major new visitor attraction (only 7 other Partnership Galleries in the UK) and thus drive income generation.	1.350	£1.000m Grant, £0.350m PWLB Borrowing	1.000							0.350		1.350
Bridgnorth town centre traffic and public realm works	To deliver improvements to Town Centre and associated public realm works.	4.500	£4.5m funded from CIL			4.500							4.500
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES, LEISURE & TOURISM & TRANSPORT		44.102		1.000	0.000	5.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	38.102	0.000	44.102
Whittington CE Primary - 2 class base expansion	Delivery of classroom expansion to meet Place Planning requirements.	1.126		0.326		0.800							1.126
West Felton CE Primary School	Development of new school hall.	0.928		0.328		0.300		0.300					0.928
Buildwas Primary	New Primary School requirement on former power station site subject to planning approvals.	5.100	£5.1m Developer Contributions		5.100								5.100
William Brookes School	Expansion linked to Secondary pupils from power station site.	4.400	£4.4m Developer Contributions		4.400								4.400
St Andrew's CE Primary, Shifnal	2 class bases to support complete rebuild as part of School Rebuilding Programme.	0.400	£0.6m Developer Contributions, £0.2m Grant		0.400								0.400
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN & EDUCATION		11.954		0.654	9.900	1.100	0.000	0.300	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	11.954
Target Operating Model	Shirehall Refurbishment	1.085	Revenue Contribution				1.085						1.085
ICT Services	Equipment Replacement Fund.	3.200	£3.2m funded from PWLB Borrowing							3.200			3.200
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR RESOURCES		4.285		0.000	0.000	0.000	1.085	0.000	0.000	3.200	0.000	0.000	4.285
Temporary Accommodation A	Acquisition of suitable accommodation to provide temporary shelter and support for homeless individuals and families.	5.000	S106/ HRA Borrowing		1.500				3.500				5.000
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH & ASSETS		5.000		0.000	1.500	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.500	0.000	0.000	0.000	5.000
UKSPF	Improvements to town centres & high streets	1.100	UKSPF	1.100									1.100
UKSPF	Enhancing existing cultural historic and heritage institutions offer	1.000	UKSPF	1.000									1.000
UKSPF	Capacity building and infrastructure support local groups	0.100	UKSPF	0.100									0.100
Shrewsbury Riverside Development - Demolition	Demolition of the current Riverside Shopping Centre to enable future development.	4.287	£4.287m PWLB Borrowing							4.287			4.287
Shrewsbury Riverside Enabling Works - LUF Round 2 Bid	Physical infrastructure works critical to unlocking the vital, transformational Smithfield Riverside Development Programme.	13.154	LUF 2	11.904				1.250					13.154
Shrewsbury Town Centre Public Realm - LUF Round 2 Bid	A number of projects identified within the Big Town Plan, primarily around Public Realm improvements and town centre movement.	4.280	LUF 2	3.852						0.428			4.280
Pride Hill - Repurposing	Future development of the Pride Hill Shopping Centre.	42.433						42.433					42.433
Shrewsbury Riverside Development	Following on from the demolition, investment in development of the site for end use - part if the Big Town Plan.	53.619						53.619					53.619
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGENERATION & PLANNING		119.973		17.956	0.000	0.000	0.000	97.302	0.000	4.715	0.000	0.000	119.973

Proposed Scheme	Scheme Description	Estimated Capital Cost (£m)	Proposed Funding
North West Relief Road	Linked to Phase 1 Pre Commencement Programme within the capital programme to deliver the North West Relief Road (including Oxon Link Road). This represents the Council Investment requirement that has not yet been secured at OBC Stage.	28.111	£8.265m Developer Contributions and £19.846m Capital Receipts
Highways Investment	Council investment requirement above normal Highway Maintenance funding to bring the Shropshire Highways to a suitable managed condition.	31.565	PWLB
Oswestry Innovation Park (Infrastructure)	Linked to Phase 1 Enabling Project within the capital programme - development of employment land to support local growth and provision of new skateboard park.	10.028	PWLB
Oteley Road, Shrewsbury Traffic Management Improvements	Traffic Flow Improvements and Road Safety on Oteley Road, Shrewsbury	4.500	Developer Contributions
Shropshire Safety Road Fund	A5191 Shrewsbury Northern Corridor between Railway Station and Heathgates Island	0.650	Grant
Multi Agency Hub	Future development of a new Civic Centre.	41.655	
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, HIGHWAYS & BUILT HOUSING		116.509	
TOTAL		301.823	

Proposed Sources of Finance (£m)								
External Grants	Section 106 Developer Contributions	CIL Developer Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Alternative Funding Option	HRA	Borrowing	Capital Receipts	Total
	8.265						19.846	28.111
						31.565		31.565
						10.028		10.028
	4.500							4.500
0.650								0.650
2.946				38.709				41.655
3.596	12.765	0.000	0.000	38.709	0.000	41.593	19.846	116.509
23.206	24.165	6.100	1.085	136.311	3.500	87.610	19.846	301.823

APPENDIX B – UPDATED PRIORITY CAPITAL SCHEMES SCHEDULE

Proposed Scheme	Scheme Description	Estimated Capital Cost (£m)	Proposed Funding	Proposed Sources of Finance (£m)								
				External Grants	Section 106 Developer Contributions	CIL Developer Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Alternative Funding Option	External Contributions	Borrowing	Capital Receipts	Total
Swimming in Shrewsbury	Replacement of existing swimming provision at the Quarry with new provision within Shrewsbury.	27.543	£22.043m PWLB Borrowing / £0.500m CIL Contribution/ £5m from Capital receipts			0.500				22.043	5.000	27.543
Libraries Self Service Machines	Programme to install self-service machines .	0.152	Arts Council Bid	0.152								0.152
Shrewsbury Museum - British Museum Gallery	Development of new British Museum Partnership Gallery at Shrewsbury Museum, to develop a major new visitor attraction (only 7 other Partnership Galleries in the UK) and thus drive income generation.	1.750	£1.500m Grant, £0.250m Capital/PWLB, £0.045m Arts Council	1.500							0.250	1.750
Bridgnorth town centre traffic and public realm works	To deliver improvements to Town Centre and associated public realm works.	4.500	Section 106 Developer Contributions		4.500							4.500
Shrewsbury Castle: Restoration Proposals and Improvement Scheme	Renovation and Reconfiguration of the Town Centre Heritage Asset to increase visitor numbers and usage - part of the Big Town Plan. Also addresses improvements of the fabric of the buildings to address Health and Safety issues and safeguard the heritage.	11.286	Capital receipts/ PWLB/ Lottery	TBC					TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Nils Yard Redevelopment	The replacement of existing buildings and reconfiguration of the Outdoor Partnerships depot and offices at Nils Yard, Pontesbury to address health and safety and operational requirements	0.500	Capital receipts								0.500	0.500
Old Market Hall & Square	Restoration and redevelopment of the outdoor area beneath and around the Old Market Hall Shrewsbury to facilitate greater use of the area in order to further animate the streetscape and deter antisocial behaviour. Health and Safety issue with needles and rough sleeper possessions left on fire escape.	0.100	Capital receipts								0.100	0.100
Coleham Pumping Station	Restoration of chimney needed as at risk of collapse. Health and Safety issue	0.400	Capital Receipts								0.400	0.400
SpArC Leisure Centre Bishop's Castle	Reproffing of swimming pool, with new pool liner and new filtration system. Health and Safety issue. Requirement for major investment for De-carbonising building	4.750	Sport England PSDS and local fund raising (£0.45) and Capital Receipts	4.000				0.450			0.300	4.750
Church Stretton Leisure	Refurbishment and Upgrade to leisure centre. DDA works required - need to be able to demonstrate reasonable adjustments.	TBC	TBC									
Bayston Hill Library Refurbish	Originally anticipated to be funded through CIL contribution as a result of Cornwall purchase of former school. £300k to include converting attached garage for either commercial or town council use £170k for library work in isolation. Works required as Health & Safety issues.	0.300							0.300			0.300
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES, LEISURE & TOURISM & TRANSPORT		51.281		5.652	4.500	0.500	0.000	0.000	0.450	22.343	6.550	39.995
Buildwas Primary	New Primary School requirement on former power station site subject to planning approvals.	5.100	S106		5.100							5.100
William Brookes School	Expansion linked to Secondary pupils from power station site.	4.400	S106		4.400							4.400
St Andrew's CE Primary, Shifnal	2 class bases to support complete rebuild as part of School Rebuilding Programme.	0.400	CIL			0.400						0.400
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN & EDUCATION		9.900		0.000	9.500	0.400	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	9.900
Greenacres Development	Inflation pressure on development	1.000	PWLB						1.000			1.000
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH & ASSETS		1.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.000
UKSPF	Improvements to town centres & high streets	1.100	UKSPF	1.100								1.100
UKSPF	Enhancing existing cultural historic and heritage institutions offer	1.000	UKSPF	1.000								1.000
UKSPF	Capacity building and infrastructure support local groups	0.100	UKSPF	0.100								0.100
Shrewsbury Riverside Development - Demolition	Demolition of the current Riverside Shopping Centre to enable future development.	4.287	PWLB						4.287			4.287
Shrewsbury Riverside Enabling Works - LUF Round 2 Project 1	Physical infrastructure works critical to unlocking the vital, transformational Smithfield Riverside Development Programme.	19.464	£14.849m LUF Round 2 Grant / £4.615 Public Match Funding (including £1.250m Land and Asset Contribution)	14.849			1.250		3.365			19.464
Shrewsbury Town Centre Public Realm - LUF Round 2 Project 2	A number of projects identified within the Big Town Plan, primarily around Public Realm improvements and town centre movement.	4.280	£3.852m LUF Round 2 Grant / £0.428m Public Match Funding (Capital Receipts)	3.852						0.428		4.280
Pride Hill - Repurposing	Future development of the former Pride Hill shopping centre and adjacent gap site	42.433	Alternative Funding Options / PWLB / LEP-GBF £5.020m					42.433				42.433
Shrewsbury Riverside Development	Following on from the demolition, investment in development of the site for end use - part of the Big Town Plan.	53.619	Alternative Funding Options / PWLB / WMCA					53.619				53.619
Conservation Management Plan - Rowleys House, Shrewsbury	First Phase Stabilisation requirement before future use investment	2.000	Capital Receipts							2.000		2.000
Oswestry - Cambrian Railway Building	Renovation of Cambrian Railway Building, Oswestry and reconfiguration for future use	1.470	PWLB						1.470			1.470
Oswestry Innovation Park	Mains Water Supply connection to aid development growth	1.047	CIL			1.047						1.047
White Horse, Wern	Repurpose and restoration following Auction Bid. Aiming to attract external funding - English Heritage potentially.	0.850	PWLB but possible HE (HAZ) Budget /Match requirement						0.850			0.850
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGENERATION & PLANNING		131.650		20.901	0.000	1.047	0.000	97.302	0.000	9.972	2.428	131.650

Proposed Scheme	Scheme Description	Estimated Capital Cost (£m)
North West Relief Road	Linked to Phase 1 Pre Commencement Programme within the capital programme to deliver the North West Relief Road (including Oxon Link Road). This represents the Council Investment requirement that has not yet been secured at OBC Stage.	28.111
Oteley Road, Shrewsbury Traffic Management Improvements	Traffic Flow Improvements and Road Safety on Oteley Road, Shrewsbury	1.000
Shropshire Safety Road	A5191 Shrewsbury Northern Corridor between Railway Station and Heathgates Island	0.650
REFOCUS - Shirehall Relocation (Civic Centre)	Future development of a new Civic Centre/Multi-agency Hub?.	41.655
NWRR	Budget uplift requirement for funding gap	95.373
Car Park Maintenance Investment Backlog	To bring forward an investment in Car Park maintenance to facilitate an improved strategy. Maintenance for car parks cannot be funded from Highways Maintenance Capital Grant and Local Authorities are expected to maintain sites from income generated. A back log of works requires the Council to put in an initial investment whilst a plan is drawn up to tackle future maintenance need	1.000
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, HIGHWAYS & BUILT HOUSING		167.789
		361.620

Proposed Funding
£8.265m S106, £19.846m Capital Receipts, £54m DfT funding (already in capital programme), LEP funding is S106 Contributions of £1m
External Grant
Alternative Funding Options / PWLB
PWLB
PWLB

Proposed Sources of Finance (£m)									
External Grants	Section 106 Developer Contributions	CIL Developer Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Alternative Funding Option	External Contributions	Borrowing	Capital Receipts	Total	
	8.265						19.846	28.111	
	1.000							1.000	
0.650								0.650	
2.946				38.709				41.655	
						95.373		95.373	
						1.000		1.000	
3.596	9.265	0.000	0.000	38.709	0.000	96.373	19.846	167.789	
30.149	23.265	1.947	0.000	136.011	0.450	129.688	28.824	350.334	

APPENDIX C – AMENDMENTS MADE TO PRIORITY SCHEME SCHEDULES

Proposed Scheme	Scheme Description	Revised Cost Feb 23	Update	Revised Cost Sept 23	Movement
Shrewsbury Castle: Restoration Proposals and Improvement Scheme	Renovation and Reconfiguration of the Town Centre Heritage Asset to increase visitor numbers and usage - part of the Big Town Plan. Also addresses improvements of the fabric of the buildings to address Health and Safety issues and safeguard the heritage.		Transferred from aspirational schemes schedule	11.286	11.286
SpArC Leisure Centre Bishop's Castle	Reprofiling of swimming pool, with new pool liner and new filtration system. Health and Safety issue. Requirement for major investment for De-carbonising building		New priority scheme	4.750	4.750
Swimming in Shrewsbury	Replacement of existing swimming provision at the Quarry with new provision within Shrewsbury.	25.000		27.543	2.543
Nils Yard Redevelopment	The replacement of existing buildings and reconfiguration of the Outdoor Partnerships depot and offices at Nils Yard, Pontesbury to address health and safety and operational requirements		Transferred from aspirational schemes schedule	0.500	0.500
Shrewsbury Museum - British Museum Gallery	Development of new British Museum Partnership Gallery at Shrewsbury Museum, to develop a major new visitor attraction (only 7 other Partnership Galleries in the UK) and thus drive income generation.	1.350		1.750	0.400
Coleham Pumping Station	Restoration of chimney needed as at risk of collapse. Health and Safety issue		Transferred from aspirational schemes schedule	0.400	0.400
Bayston Hill Library Refurbishment	Originally anticipated to be funded through CIL contribution as a result of Cornovii purchase of former school. £300k to include converting attached garage for either commercial or town council use £170k for library work in isolation. Works required as Health & Safety issues. PSG refreshed condition survey done last year		New priority scheme	0.300	0.300
Old Market Hall & Square	Restoration and redevelopment of the outdoor area beneath and around the Old Market Hall Shrewsbury to facilitate greater use of the area in order to further animate the streetscape and deter antisocial behaviour. Health and Safety issue with needles and rough sleeper possessions left on fire escape.		Transferred from aspirational schemes schedule	0.100	0.100
Libraries Self Service Machines	Programme to install self-service machines .	0.152		0.152	0.000
Bridgnorth town centre traffic and public realm works	To deliver improvements to Town Centre parking by possible construction of multi-storey Car Park and associated public realm works.	4.500		4.500	0.000
Church Stretton Leisure	Refurbishment and Upgrade to leisure centre. DDA works required - need to be able to demonstrate reasonable adjustments.		New priority scheme	TBC	0.000
Whitchurch Leisure Centre	Replacement of existing swimming provision in Whitchurch.	13.100	Now in capital Programme		-13.100
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES, LEISURE & TOURISM & TRANSPORT		31.002		51.281	20.279
Buildwas Primary	New Primary School requirement on former power station site subject to planning approvals.	5.100		5.100	0.000
William Brookes School	Expansion linked to Secondary pupils from power station site.	4.400		4.400	0.000
St Andrew's CE Primary, Shifnal	2 class bases to support complete rebuild as part of School Rebuilding Programme.	0.400		0.400	0.000
West Felton Primary School	Development of new school hall.	0.928	Now in capital Programme		-0.928
Whittington Primary School	Delivery of classroom expansion to meet Place Planning requirements.	1.126	Now in capital Programme		-1.126
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN & EDUCATION		11.954		9.900	-2.054
Greenacres Development	Inflation pressure on development	0.000		1.000	1.000
Temporary Accommodation Programme	Acquisition of suitable accommodation to provide temporary shelter and support for homeless individuals and families.	5.000	Now in capital Programme		-5.000
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH & ASSETS		5.000		1.000	-4.000
Target Operating Model	Shirehall Refurbishment	1.085	Now in capital Programme		-1.085
ICT Services	Equipment Replacement Fund.	3.200	Progressing with Lease Option		-3.200
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR RESOURCES		4.285		0.000	-4.285

Proposed Scheme	Scheme Description	Revised Cost Feb 23	Update	Revised Cost Sept 23	Movement
Shrewsbury Riverside Enabling Works - LUF Round 2 Project 1	Physical infrastructure works critical to unlocking the vital, transformational Smithfield Riverside Development Programme.	13.154		19.464	6.310
Conservation Management Plan - Rowleys House, Shrewsbury	Conservation Management Plan - Rowleys House, Shrewsbury	0	New priority scheme	2.000	2.000
Oswestry - Cambrian Railway Building	Renovation of Cambrian Railway Building, Oswestry and reconfiguration for future use		Transferred from aspirational schemes schedule	1.470	1.470
Oswestry Innovation Park	Mains Water Supply connection to aid development growth		Additional funding requirement for approved scheme	1.047	1.047
White Horse, Wem	Repurpose and restoration following Auction Bid. Aiming to attract external funding - English Heritage potentially.		New priority scheme	0.850	0.850
UKSPF	Improvements to town centres & high streets	1.100		1.100	0.000
UKSPF	Enhancing existing cultural historic and heritage institutions offer	1.000		1.000	0.000
UKSPF	Capacity building and infrastructure support local groups	0.100		0.100	0.000
Shrewsbury Riverside Development - Demolition	Demolition of the current Riverside Shopping Centre to enable future development.	4.287		4.287	0.000
Shrewsbury Town Centre Public Realm - LUF Round 2 Project 2	A number of projects identified within the Big Town Plan, primarily around Public Realm improvements and town centre movement.	4.280		4.280	0.000
Pride Hill - Repurposing	Future development of the Pride Hill Shopping Centre.	42.433		42.433	0.000
Shrewsbury Riverside Development	Following on from the demolition, investment in development of the site for end use - part if the Big Town Plan.	53.619		53.619	0.000
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGENERATION & PLANNING		119.973		131.650	11.677
NWRR	Budget uplift requirement for funding gap		Additional funding requirement for approved scheme	95.373	95.373
Car Park Maintenance Investment Backlog	To bring forward an investment in Car Park maintenance to facilitate an improved strategy. Maintenance for car parks cannot be funded from Highways Maintenance Capital Grant and Local Authorities are expected to maintain sites from income generated. A back log of works requires the Council to put in an initial investment whilst a plan is drawn up to tackle future maintenance need		Transferred from aspirational schemes schedule	1.000	1.000
North West Relief Road	Linked to Phase 1 Pre Commencement Programme within the capital programme to deliver the North West Relief Road (including Oxon Link Road). This represents the Council Investment requirement that has not yet been secured.	28.111		28.111	0.000
Shropshire Safety Road Fund	A5191 Shrewsbury Northern Corridor between Railway Station and Heathgates Island	0.650		0.650	0.000
REFOCUS - Shirehall Relocation (Civic Centre)	Future development of a new Civic Centre/Multi-agency Hub?.	41.655		41.655	0.000
Corporate Landlord Suitability Budget	An annual budget to deliver suitability, compliance and DDA requirements to Corporate Landlord Assets.	0.000	Now in capital Programme		0.000
Oteley Road, Shrewsbury Traffic Management Improvements	Traffic Flow Improvements and Road Safety on Oteley Road, Shrewsbury	4.500		1.000	-3.500
Oswestry Innovation Park	Linked to Phase 1 Enabling Project within the capital programme - development of employment land to support local growth and provision of new skateboard park.	10.028	Now in capital Programme		-10.028
Highways Maintenance Budget	Council investment requirement above normal Highway Maintenance funding to bring the Shropshire Highways to a suitable managed condition.	31.565	Now in capital Programme		-31.565
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, HIGHWAYS & BUILT HOUSING		116.509		167.789	51.280
TOTAL	TOTAL	288.723		361.620	72.897

APPENDIX D – ASPIRATIONAL CAPITAL SCHEMES SCHEDULE

Proposed Scheme	Scheme Description	Estimated Capital Cost (£m)	Proposed Funding
Market Drayton Leisure Centre Extension and Splash Park	Improvement to Leisure Facilities in Market Drayton	2.200	CIL
The Mere at Ellesmere	Redevelopment of Swan Hill Depot to visitor centre. Support / facilitate income generation.	0.250	Lottery/ ACE (£0.200m), match from PWLB (0.050m)
Theatre Severn	Reconfiguration of parts of the building to increase capacity and address changes in priority that have evolved during 13 years of successful operation. Eg increase dressing room provision for community groups. Repurpose space to increase commercial viability.	2.500	Lottery/ ACE (£2.000m), match from PWLB (0.500m)
Theatre Severn	Refurbishment of Café - operating lease due for renewal ~£200k	0.200	PWLB
Oxon Park and Ride	Relocation of existing Park & Ride at Oxon to site in Bowbrook	TBC	Capital Receipts
Market Drayton town centre traffic and public realm works	To deliver improvements to Town Centre and associated public realm works.	TBC	CIL
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES, LEISURE & TOURISM & TRANSPORT		5.150	
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN & EDUCATION		0.000	
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR RESOURCES		0.000	
Outreach Bus (Health, Wellbeing & Prevention)	Delivery of some public health functions and services directly in communities through the acquisition of an Outreach Bus with appropriate clinical spaces for delivery removing the need for residents to travel to existing services in Shrewsbury and so improve both current access and inequalities. This facility would enable healthchecks in the community and other mandated services including drugs and alcohol, sexual health and health visiting.	TBC	
Service Integration Facility (Health, Wellbeing & Prevention)	There is a large programme of work focused on Service Integration by establishing co-located multi-disciplinary teams across the County, linking into the One Public Estate programme, with conversations currently ongoing in relation to Highley, Ludlow and Bishops Castle. Funding is needed to facilitate this ambition.	TBC	
Oswestry Adult Day Services	Centre Refurbishment/relocation	TBC	
Supported Living Accommodation	Acquisition/Build a number of residential accommodation	TBC	
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH & ASSETS		0.000	
Phase 1 Business Park Programme (Revised phase 1A)	Continuation of the Phase 1 Business Park Programme which seeks to invest £16.174m in separate development areas - Bishops Castle having already been approved and included within the Capital Programme.	24.150	Capital Receipts
Conservation Management Plan (CS 2022)	Linked to Rowley's House and Shrewsbury Library (CS 2022)	7.000	PWLB
Future Use Investment (CS 2023)	Rowley's House - Investment in longer term future use of building (CS 2023)		
Oswestry LUF - Public Realm	To deliver a series of Town Centre Public Realm works linked to the Oswestry HAZ Programme - Levelling Up Fund Bid (Round	4.162	£3.829 LUF Bid/£0.125 Oswestry TC/
Highways Depot Rationalisation Plan	Hodnet - Investment requirement in North Area	TBC	
Highways Depot Rationalisation Plan	Longden Road - Central Depot Replacement	TBC	
Highways Depot Rationalisation Plan	Bridgnorth- Investment requirement in South Area	TBC	
LEP Energy Fund	AceOn Virtual Power Plant (VPP) Network	2.248	Grant £1.758m/Third Party Contributions
Battlefield Heat Network		TBC	
Pyrolysis Unit	Bridgnorth/Severn Country Park	2.000	PWLB
Green Hydrogen manufacture - Boars Den	Subject to successful grant application.	3.000	Grant
Solar Farm - Boars Den		3.000	PWLB
Lord Hill Column	Restoration of Heritage Asset. Only capital if replacing with a more durable structure.	TBC	
Old St Chad's Church	Restoration of Heritage Asset. Some restrictions on use to consider. Included on CAT Register and requires significant investment.	TBC	
Shrewsbury Registrars and Coroner Service	Decant from Shirehall - possible investment in alternative accommodation May be released in rather than new build so revenue expenditure.	TBC	
Morgan Library, Wem	Refurbishment. Possibility of disposal yet to be determined.	0.130	
Maesbury Metals	New build Oswestry assets review outcome to relocate to Avalon.	0.300	
Hortonwood	Relocation. Linked to Shirehall decant and MAH for provision of storage. Expansion of storage site.	TBC	
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGENERATION & PLANNING		45.990	
Shrewsbury Connect/Rural Connect Travel Bid - LUF	Improvement to Travel Connectivity in Shropshire	36.428	£32.024m LUF Bid/£4.404m Revenue
Craven Arms - LUF	A major infrastructure project to support the planned growth of Craven Arms - Levelling Up Fund Bid (Round 3?)	25.102	£20.000m LUF Bid/£2.102 CIL/£1.00m Network Rail/£2.000m WMCA
Highways Investment	Council investment requirement above normal Highway Maintenance funding to bring the Shropshire Highways to a suitable managed condition.	41.577	PWLB
Corporate Buildings LED Lighting Replacement Scheme	Conversion of all Corporate owned Buildings to LED Lighting to meet requirements of Climate Strategy by 2030	2.500	Capital receipts - £500k per annum over a five year period
Corporate Buildings Insulation and Energy Conservation	Insulation and Energy improvements on all Corporate owned Buildings to meet requirements of Climate Strategy by 2030	2.500	Capital receipts - £500k per annum over a five year period
SUBTOTAL: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, HIGHWAYS & BUILT HOUSING		108.107	
		TOTAL	159.247

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Committee and Date
Council
21st September 2023

Item



Biochar from Pyrolysis Project

Responsible Officer:	Mark Barrow		
email	mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel	01743 258919
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cllr Ian Nellins and Cllr Dean Carroll		

1. Synopsis

This report seeks approval for the procurement, installation, and operation of a pyrolysis demonstration unit which will process Council green waste and other residual biomass into biochar, renewable energy, and associated carbon credits.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Shropshire Plan's Healthy Environment priority highlights the importance of investment and joint working to tackle climate change and maintain, protect, and enhance our outstanding natural environment.
- 2.2. Our estate requires the removal of thousands of tonnes of biomass (renewable organic material from plants) each year which is currently a financial burden. In some cases, this results in some areas not being managed as effectively as they could be for the best biodiversity results. Unmanaged woodland being one example. This is exacerbated by ash die-back disease which is leading to thousands of ash trees alongside our roads or in public spaces needing to be felled for safety reasons. Low grade biomass is increasing in value as alternative uses are being found and aspects of the circular economy are being developed. (an economic system based on the reuse and regeneration of materials or products, especially as a means of continuing production in a sustainable or environmentally friendly way)
- 2.3. Our Climate Change Strategy has a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030. Without the 'negative emissions' provided by the Veolia waste contract, Shropshire Council's carbon emissions in 2021 to 2022 were around 33,565 tonnes of CO₂e.

Emission reduction alone is not sufficient. We also need to consider Greenhouse Gas Removal methods that actively remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

- 2.4. Greenhouse Gas Removal methods like tree planting can help reduce net emissions but trees are slow growing and are at risk from disease, fire, and extreme weather events. Alternative forms of carbon removal such as pyrolysis and Enhanced Rock Weathering diversify our portfolio of removal methods and have considerable economic and environmental co-benefits.
- 2.5. Pyrolysis is the thermal breakdown of materials (in our case plant matter) in the absence of oxygen. The heat drives off gasses and oil and what is left is mostly carbon in the form of char. If this char is burnt again as fuel, it's known as Charcoal. If it's kept as char and used in other ways, it is often called biochar; sometimes also activated charcoal. The primary difference from charcoal is the higher temperatures used and typically smaller particle size of the charred material.
- 2.6. The combustible gasses and oils driven off are burnt in a generator to produce clean renewable electricity, around 35% of which is used to power the unit. The rest can be sold to nearby businesses and residences, or to the grid. Residual heat could also be used in district heat networks where available.
- 2.7. Biochar can remain in soils or materials for hundreds, and even thousands of years without degrading. Charcoal in archaeological excavations of fire pits provide a good demonstration of this. Biochar is typically between 60% and 80% pure carbon. We measure carbon emissions in weight of 'Carbon Dioxide equivalent'. From pure carbon this requires multiplication by 3.67 to add the weight of the two oxygen atoms. This means that 1 tonne of biochar effectively stores between 2 to 3 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide. This is a Greenhouse Gas Removal method with the carbon almost permanently removed from the atmosphere.
- 2.8. Biochar has a fast developing and potentially profitable market with a multitude of uses in a wide range of sectors including, agriculture, horticulture, arboriculture, industrial production and construction. Biochar is increasing in use as a soil improver and a means of retaining nutrients on farmland. This is partly driven by increasing fertiliser costs and is being seen as a greener alternative. Sales for horticultural use are forecast to increase as a result of the upcoming ban on the sale of bagged peat compost coming into force in 2024. Biochar stores water in the soils as well as nutrients.
- 2.9. Other innovative 'non-carbon' uses of biochar include "preventing agricultural run-off of nutrients and pesticides that can degrade water quality, reducing nitrogen losses during composting, preventing ammonia release from poultry farm buildings and increasing methane yields during anaerobic digestion (AD)" (Ref: ongoing [Nottingham University research](#)).
- 2.10. The acquisition of a pyrolysis plant has been assessed and it has been determined that it will assist the Council in meeting its sustainability and carbon reduction targets as well as being commercially viable.
- 2.11. This project seeks to promote and research the benefits of utilising pyrolysis technology as a way of tackling climate change. Through the acquisition and operation of a demonstrator plant, valuable firsthand knowledge will be obtained which will help formulate the strategy for possible future expansion.
- 2.12. Three possible locations have been identified for the demonstrator project which are currently being considered by the project team.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

- 3.1. Approves an investment in pyrolysis technology for the purpose of producing and selling biochar, renewable and sustainable electricity, and Carbon Dioxide Removal Certificates (CORCs) issued as a result of physically removing CO₂ from the atmosphere.
- 3.2. Approves capital funding of £2.000m to be financed from the commercial investment fund to fund the acquisition, installation and commissioning of a fully operational plant capable of producing a minimum 500 tonnes biochar per annum.
- 3.3. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport and the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Assets, to determine which of the possible locations is best suited to host the demonstrator project and to make a final decision on the site after the site options analysis and consultation with the local members has been finalised.
- 3.4. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport and the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Assets, to negotiate and agree the terms of any and all agreements necessary for the implementation and ongoing operation of the project.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1. Risk Assessment

- i. **Feedstock Availability.** The project will process residual biomass targeting feedstock from Shropshire Council's own resources. However, in order to guarantee a consistent supply of feedstock all year round, the financial projections are initially assuming that all feedstock is obtained from Veolia.
- ii. **Technology and Equipment.** The risk associated with technology and equipment will be mitigated by ensuring that approved repair and maintenance contractors are available within less than half a day's travel time. Shropshire Council staff will be trained to operate the equipment by the manufacturer.
- iii. **Environmental Impact.** A specialist environmental consultant has been commissioned to advise on the project and is specifically engaged to advise on waste permitting and planning considerations. An initial environmental assessment has been completed which advises that a Part B waste permit is required to be applied for from the Council's Environmental Protection for the plant to be able to process green garden waste. If the feedstock is restricted to virgin whole tree residual biomass, no environmental permit is required, and the plant could still operate whilst a Part B permit is being applied for or if a Part B permit is refused. A fully operating pilot plant located in Wales has been inspected by members of the Council's planning and environmental teams and although initial views are favourable the full permitting process will be followed to ensure the proposed plant fully complies with all relevant regulations.

- iv. **Planning Permission.** The demonstrator plant will require planning permission to be obtained within the “Sui Generis” category which will attract public scrutiny. The site will be located in an industrial area which is considered to be the best location for a successful application, however obtaining planning permission is a risk to the project that needs to be taken into consideration.
- v. **Market Demand and Pricing.** At present market demand for biochar is growing and appears to be consistently higher than the supply available. Average pricing per tonne of biochar is currently in the region of £400 - £1000 per tonne, however this is likely to change and as a result the revenue projections from the sale of the biochar assume sales values considerably less than the current average. In order to de-risk the project as much as possible, offtake agreements for a significant percentage of the expected biochar production will be negotiated prior to commencing production.
- vi. **Carbon credit value.** There is considerable variation in the price of carbon credits. Some of the cheaper carbon offsetting schemes have been discredited recently in the press. These tend to involve tree planting schemes in developing countries where audit trails are difficult to maintain, and the health of planted trees can't be assured. Biochar is a sought-after Greenhouse Gas Removal method due to the ease with which the carbon sequestered can be measured and the length of time the carbon lasts in soils or materials. The global market for carbon credits was US\$978.56 billion in 2022. It is predicted to reach US\$1.16 trillion this year and US\$2.68 trillion by 2028. This is an 18.2% compound annual growth rate (CAGR). Source: <https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5774731/global-carbon-credit-market-analysis-traded>
- vii. **Electricity price fall.** This is the most likely risk due to the volatility of the energy market and as a result of cheaper renewable energy production. The advantage of pyrolysis is that it can generate renewable energy during dark and/or windless periods without the need for a battery.
- viii. The risk of **not taking a lead with pyrolysis** is that the process gets picked up by large scale operators who could grow crops specifically for pyrolysis. This can have detrimental impacts on the wider countryside as has been seen in some areas with biofuel crops. We believe smaller scale is better so that individual farms and estates could use pyrolysis to make use of crop and hedge or woodland residues to reduce their energy costs, lower their carbon footprint, and produce a product that improves their own soils or could be sold. This unit will provide that demonstrator.
- ix. Should the demonstrator plant prove to be unfeasible for some unexpected reason, the operation can be discontinued at any time and the plant and equipment could be sold off recovering the majority of the capital expended, which would be expected to recover capital sums in the region of £1.25m-£1.5m.

4.2. Opportunities Appraisal

- i. **Carbon Sequestration and Climate Change Mitigation.** Biochar sequesters carbon for hundreds if not thousands of years. Pyrolysis also generates renewable energy. This demonstrator pyrolysis unit will help assess:
 - A. the opportunities for carbon credit generation and participation in carbon offset programmes.
 - B. the various revenue streams generated using this climate change mitigation initiative.

- ii. **Soil Improvement and Agricultural Applications.** Join existing University led evaluations of biochar's ability to improve soil fertility, increase water retention, and nutrient availability. All key aspects for climate resilience.
- iii. **Horticulture and gardening.** The market demand for biochar as a soil amendment is significantly increasing with price per tonne of biochar / compost mix being around £3,500 per tonne or £3,800 per tonne as a raw soil additive (online research). Harper Adams has significant research interest in this area and there are potential partnerships with a range of agricultural stakeholders. The upcoming ban on peat will significantly increase the demand for biochar and biochar enhanced compost
- iv. **Waste Management and Circular Economy.** Biochar can provide a sustainable solution for organic waste management.
- v. **Biochar in materials.** Biochar is used as an additive in asphalt and plastic alternatives. Following our introduction to the potential of biochar, Miles Macadam, one of our own highways sub-contractors, has started trials of what might become a carbon neutral road surface dressing. Further work is being undertaken by Miles Macadam which will provide for the use of biochar in tarmac to be used on Shropshire's road network which will reduce Shropshire's overall carbon footprint.
- vi. **Research and Innovation.** Explore opportunities for research collaboration and innovation within the biochar field. Assess the potential for grants, funding and research-based incentives.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The project is targeting 8,500 tonnes of carbon removal through the medium term. To achieve this requires a budget of £2.000m. The intention is to set up the initial unit as a 'demonstrator'. Assuming this is successful (as all modelling is indicating) the scheme could then be scaled up (which would require a separate decision). A key element in the financial model is the benefit arising from the carbon off-set certificates, itself derived from the focus on carbon removal. The current proposal includes acquisition and installation of the pyrolysis unit, connection to a local energy off-taker, an energy generation unit (an Organic Rankine Cycle or ORC), building repairs and contingency (14.3%).

Capital expenditure (estimated)	
Pyrolysis Unit	£ 1,200m
Includes: Fuel Storage	
150m3 Hopper	
Eco T2 Woodchip Dryer	
Rotary Agitator	
Flue gas filtration	
Flue Stack	
Control Panel	
Plant commissioning	
H&S and PM	
Design & Schematics	
Installation	

energy generation unit (ORC)	£ 1,200m
CEM's Pack	£ 0.165m
Ozone Gen: NOX reduction	£ 0.065m
TOTAL	£ 1,430m
Building Refurb	£ 0.170m
Forklift/Telehandler	£ 0.050m
Shredder	£ 0.100m
Estimated Total Costs	£ 1,750m
Contingency	£ 0.250m
	£ 2,000m

- 5.2. This expenditure will utilise the unallocated investment fund which is already built into the capital programme. Current default funding is external borrowing, but this may change as the project develops and different funding sources potentially become available. This fund has £5.480m available that has not been allocated to other projects, and so there would still be £3.480m available for other projects after this.
- 5.3. Assuming external borrowing, the revenue cost of that financing is expected to be an interest rate of 5.0% over 25 years. This creates an annual repayment (principal and interest) of £0.142m.
- 5.4. Based on current project assumptions, the project is projected to deliver healthy annual returns. The core case has a projected first year yield of 18.07% and a 25 year average yield of 21.29%. The £2.000m capital expenditure is estimated to be repaid by the 6th year of operation (i.e. within the medium term horizon), with projected longer term annual returns in excess of £0.360m. These receipts will have a positive impact on the forward profile of the MTFs. It will, more importantly, deliver circa 8,500 tonnes of physical carbon removal over the MTFs period.

Cashflow	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Medium Term Outlook
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	
Expenditure							
Financing costs (assumes 100% borrowing)		-0.142m	-0.142m	-0.142m	-0.142m	-0.142m	-0.710m
Feedstock		0.150m	0.152m	0.153m	0.154m	0.156m	0.765m
Operating expenditure		-0.040m	-0.040m	-0.041m	-0.041m	-0.042m	-0.204m
Maintenance		-0.040m	-0.040m	-0.041m	-0.041m	-0.042m	-0.204m
Income							
Sales		0.193m	0.195m	0.197m	0.199m	0.201m	0.985m
Carbon Offset Certificates		0.254m	0.257m	0.259m	0.262m	0.264m	1,296m
Net Revenues	0	0.375m	0.382m	0.385m	0.391m	0.395m	1,928m

- 5.5. The greatest ongoing costs are for system maintenance and plant operation, projected between £0.080m and £0.102m.
- 5.6. The unit has four primary sources of income: sale of biochar, sale of carbon credits, electricity exports and the gate fee from Veolia for the supply of the green waste feedstock. The lead-in time for purchase of the electricity generator is longer than the

pyrolysis unit so the figures are based on the first few months not producing electricity. To claim carbon credits the biochar requires testing and a few months operation is recommended before tests are made. Credits can be back dated but the income would most likely be delayed by several months.

- 5.7. The current financial model does not include utilisation of residual heat, or any income derived from this source, the potential for a local heat network or direct heat off-taker will be investigated. The financial modelling for future years has assumed current rates for all variables such as biochar sale price, feedstock income, and electricity rate. However, there are greater uncertainties than usual with this project given the emerging nature of this market and the context of the climate emergency. But as per 5.4 and 4.1.4 the project has healthy expected returns and can reasonably be expected to make a positive contribution to the council's revenue position.
- 5.8. There could be a further indirect revenue benefit to the council in terms of using our own sources of feedstock. Dying ash trees that are being removed from roadside are a clear example of a source of biomass that is currently costing many tens of thousands of pounds to remove. Keir currently sub-contract tree removal work and add 10% costs for doing so. The arboricultural sub-contractors then sell on this biomass for between £25 and £40 per tonne without delivery. Three recent / current tree removal schemes on roadsides total around 350 trees which would provide 10% of the biomass needs of a pyrolysis system for 1 year. A detailed assessment of biomass availability has not yet been completed.
- 5.9. All components being purchased would have high a resale value – particularly given the long lead-in times for much of the equipment.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

Energy and fuel consumption

- 6.1. Net positive effect, since the 'embodied carbon' in the manufacture of the pyrolysis unit will take a little time to be compensated for. Initial estimates by consultancy Anthesis suggest it would take around 6 months of unit operation before the stored carbon compensates for the embodied carbon. A full 'Life Cycle Assessment' will be commissioned to examine the carbon performance of the unit over its lifetime. Such an assessment would, in any case, be a requirement of any carbon trading. Over time pyrolysis units have been found to be carbon net negative and allow carbon trading. Here are some examples: https://puro.earth/CORC-co2-removal-certificate/?carbon_removal_method%5B0%5D=7363

Renewable energy generation

- 6.2. Positive effect, since the pyrolysis of biomass releases oils and gasses which can be burnt in a generator to create heat and electricity. This renewable heat and electricity displaces grid energy that is still largely produced from fossil fuels. Around 80% of what is left is stable carbon in the form of biochar.

Carbon offsetting or mitigation

- 6.3. Significant positive effect since pyrolysis is a means of partially stopping the carbon cycle. Atmospheric carbon dioxide is temporarily stored in biomass; including plant tissues like wood and leaves. Typically, this carbon released over a relatively short time period when plants rot (sometimes via composting) or are burnt. Open burns or composting without good air supply can also produce methane which is a far more potent greenhouse gas.

- 6.4. Net carbon budgets will be dependent on what type of feedstock is used, how far it is transported, and how this is processed prior to being fed into the system.

Climate change adaptation

- 6.5. Positive effect, since the pyrolysis plant will be designed and operated in a way which takes into account the challenges which may arise from more extreme weather events associated with climate change.

7. Background

- 7.1. Shropshire Council is seeking to take a leading role in preventing climate change with our Climate Change Strategy which has a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030. The establishment of circular technologies which assists the local community in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way through the production of biochar from residual biomass (forestry residues and garden waste) using pyrolysis, can have several positive impacts on the local community and the environment including, waste management, carbon sequestration, sustainable and renewable energy production, soil health and agricultural productivity, local economic development, community engagement and education, and environmental stewardship.
- 7.2. By promoting circular technologies and sustainable practices, Shropshire Council demonstrates its commitment to environmental stewardship. The production of biochar from residual biomass and green waste aligns with the principles of a circular economy, where waste or low value materials are transformed into valuable resources, reducing dependence on finite resources and minimizing environmental impacts.
- 7.3. The establishment of a local biochar production facility in Shropshire will serve as a tangible demonstration of the benefits associated with biochar production. This will create awareness and understanding among the local community, businesses and farmers about the value and potential applications of biochar. Demonstrating the benefits of biochar can encourage its adoption and pave the way for further utilisation in different sectors.
- 7.4. As a result of increased energy costs, increasing demand for biochar and the obligation to be carbon net zero by 2030, biochar production is both environmentally and financially sustainable. Pyrolysis, the process used to produce biochar, generates surplus energy in the form of heat and gas which can be converted into electrical energy. This energy is used to power the biochar production process itself and the surplus energy can provide heat, light and power to the wider community.
- 7.5. With the increasing focus on sustainability and the environment, there is a growing demand for sustainable soil improvements like biochar. As awareness about its benefits spreads and its adoption increases, the demand for biochar is likely to continue to rise. By establishing a local biochar production facility, Shropshire Council can position itself to meet the growing demand and contribute to regional self-sufficiency in biochar production.
- 7.6. The obligation to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 necessitates the implementation of sustainable practices and the reduction of carbon emissions. Biochar production offers a means to contribute to this goal. The carbon sequestration of biochar production along with its use as a soil amendment and alternative to traditional fertilisers, can help Shropshire Council and the local community move towards carbon neutrality while improving agricultural practices and soil health in the region.
- 7.7. Biochar production can play a significant role in paving the way to a sustainable future for Shropshire. By efficiently utilising residual biomass, reducing waste, sequestering

carbon, improving agricultural practices, biochar production could play a significant role in supporting the transition to a low carbon economy.

- 7.8. The process of biochar production physically removes CO₂ from the atmosphere and stabilizes it in a form which can be stored for 100's or 1000's of years. Puro.earth (Nasdaq owned) certifies suppliers and issues CO₂ removal certificates (CORCs) through the Puro Registry. CORCs can either be retained by the Council to offset carbon emissions or sold to other climate conscious organisations who need to offset positive carbon emissions. The sale of CORC's will generate a steady income stream providing a financial return on capital invested.
- 7.9. A number of equipment suppliers have been identified who are capable of supplying pyrolysis equipment for the Council's demonstrator plant. UK procurement regulations will apply, and officers will ensure that proper procurement procedures are adhered to ensuring compliance and best practice.
- 7.10. Once a preferred supplier is selected, officers with the support of professional advisors will complete contract negotiations ensuring all the relevant terms and conditions, warranties and performance guarantees are adequately addressed. This will help protect the Council's interests and ensure that the procurement contract aligns with the desired outcomes and requirements of the project.
- 7.11. Throughout the procurement process, all relevant documentation, records, and reports will be appropriately maintained to demonstrate compliance with UK procurement regulations. This includes maintaining transparency, fairness, and accountability in the procurement process.
- 7.12. The proposed Pyrolysis plant will be a facility specifically designed to convert organic waste or biomass materials into biochar through the process of pyrolysis and will incorporate the following key components and functions:
- i. **Feedstock Handling.** The plant will be equipped with systems to handle and prepare (dry) the residual biomass. This includes shredders, conveyors and storage systems (hoppers) to ensure a consistent and automated supply of biomass to the pyrolysis process.
 - ii. **Pyrolysis Reactor.** The heart of the plant is the pyrolysis reactor where the conversion of biomass to biochar takes place. The reactor operates under controlled temperature and oxygen conditions heating the biomass in absence of oxygen causing it to undergo thermal decomposition, or pyrolysis, resulting in the production of biochar, gases, and bio-oil.
 - iii. **Heating System.** The pyrolysis reactor requires a heating system to reach and maintain the desired temperature for the pyrolysis process. Common heating methods include biomass boilers, indirect heating through the use of heat transfer fluids or electric heating elements.
 - iv. **Gas and Vapour treatments.** The gases and vapours generated during the pyrolysis process, also known as syngas, contain combustible gases, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and other by-products. These need to be properly treated to remove impurities and harmful substances before being released into the atmosphere. Treatment systems may include condensers, scrubbers, filters, and other gas cleaning technologies.
 - v. **Biochar Collection and Cooling.** automated collection, cooling and bagging of biochar for sale and distribution.
 - vi. **Emissions Control.** The plant must comply with environmental regulations and maintain low emissions. It may need to be fitted with emission control

devices such as baghouses, electrostatic precipitators, or activated carbon filters to capture and remove particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, and other pollutants from the process exhaust gases.

- vii. **Energy Recovery.** Systems must be incorporated to capture and utilise the heat generated during the pyrolysis process. This heat will be used for drying the biomass feedstock as well as for the generation of electricity.
- viii. **Monitoring and Control Systems.** To ensure safe and efficient operation the plant will be equipped with monitoring and control systems including remote monitoring systems. These systems will continuously monitor process parameters, such as temperature, pressure and flow rates enabling operators to make adjustments to optimise the process and ensure consistent production of high-quality biochar.

7.13. **Proposed Locations – to be determined** as per recommendation 3.3 after conducting further options analysis of the possible locations and having completed consultations with the local members.

7.14. **1) The Bridgnorth ex Highways salt depot**, on Old Worcester Rd has been identified as a potentially suitable location for the demonstrator project for the following reasons:

- i. The existing Long Leasehold building, although in need of repair, is capable of housing the equipment and the size of the site and external areas are large enough to house the feedstock to be processed and the stocks of biochar that will be produced.
- ii. The site is in an industrial area, has direct access from a major road and sits within Employment land allocation W039 within the adopted local plan which includes a provision for recycling and environmental industries.
- iii. Feedstock can be obtained from Veolia, Stanmore Country Park, and from nearby Severn Valley Country Park.
- iv. Proximity to nearby businesses as a potential off-taker for the electricity produced.
- v. The building is in need of major repairs due to corrosion caused by its previous use as a salt store. The repairs are required under the terms of the head lease whether the building is used for the pyrolysis project or not and this project provides the ability to absorb the cost of the repairs, estimated to be £0.170m, as part of the project establishment/capital costs.
- vi. Under the terms of the headlease, the tenant is obliged to seek the landlord's permission for a change of use which is not B1 or B8. As the use class for pyrolysis is *sue generis*, permission for a change of use will be required from the landlord. This is not considered to be a major risk as the landlord has already verbally agreed to provide the change of use required.

7.15. **2) The Ludlow ex Biodigester plant, Coder Rd Ludlow.**

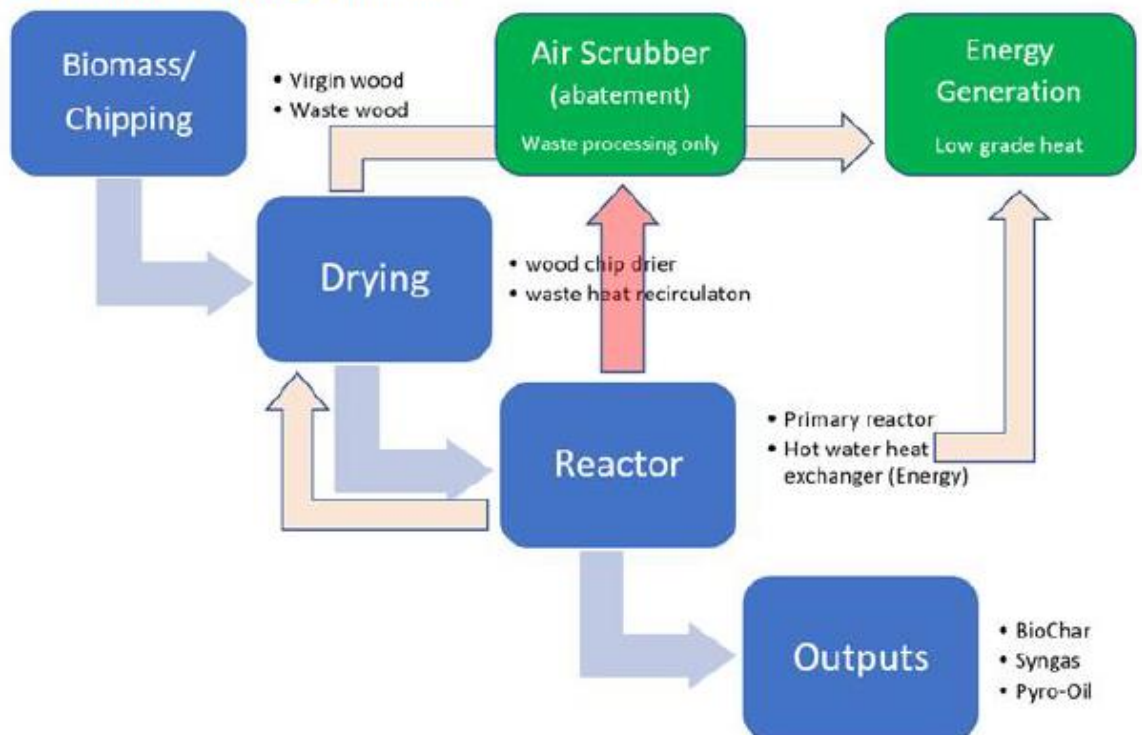
- i. The existing freehold building is currently vacant and was previously used as an anaerobic digester.
- ii. The building and yard area is of a sufficient size to accommodate the pyrolysis operation and store supplies of feedstock and biochar on site. The site already has an existing connection to the grid which was in use when the site was previously in operation.

iii. The site previously held a Part B environmental permit.

7.16. **3) Land adjacent the ERF in Battlefield, Shrewsbury**

- i. Council owned freehold plot of undeveloped land
- ii. Conveniently located next to Veolia providing easy access to the feedstock supply.
- iii. Some site constraints from flooding, Great Crested Newts and access issues that need to be agreed with neighbouring land owners.
- iv. Located in an industrial location and should be relatively straightforward for planning purposes.

Fig.2 Simple pyrolysis schematic



8. Additional Information

- 8.1. Pyrolysis units are available at a wide range of scales. We have already invested £3,500 in a small flame kiln (AKA Kon Tiki Kiln) at Severn Valley Country Park. This kiln processes relatively small amounts of biomass and doesn't make use of the energy produced by the process. It is proving a popular means of dealing with brash collected by volunteers helping the site managers and should help sequester around 8 tonnes of CO2 per year.
- 8.2. Other pyrolysis systems of interest are medium to small, enclosed kilns that can be moved around on a tractor towed trailer. In Ireland they have systems that use cut rushes (very common in damp pastures there and in upland Shropshire) as the feedstock and as well as producing biochar they capture the gasses produced for use on the farm for heating and cooking. We hope our medium sized operation can serve to inspire a wider range of systems and establish Shropshire even further as a lead producer of carbon negative biochar.

- 8.3. Expert external Legal advice has been obtained which confirms that the Council has the statutory power to undertake this project under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. The overall purpose of this investment is to help reduce Shropshire’s carbon emissions and to positively reduce the effects of climate change with a view to reaching net zero by 2030. Notwithstanding the fact that the project is hoped to generate a commercial return, in line with current guidance from the Courts, the project is not being undertaken for a commercial purpose such that the Council would need to form a company to pursue it.
- 8.4. The primary purpose for investing and operating a demonstrator pyrolysis plant to process biomass waste is to further reduce and improve the council’s carbon reduction performance in accordance with objectives stated in our climate change policy and in accordance with our healthy environment priority in the Shropshire Plan. The first strategic objective under the healthy environment priority states “We will deliver the council’s Corporate Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, promoting the means to tackle climate change and reduce our carbon footprint, including the adoption of low-carbon energy for our assets and for communities.”
- 8.5. This project is entirely consistent with the above strategic objective. Furthermore, KPI HEn8 states “Key to the corporate climate change strategy. Reducing CO2 emissions will improve air quality and help mitigate the impact of global warming”. This project assists with the delivery of this KPI given its effectiveness as a carbon capture process as stated in the report.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. Approval for officers to procure the best fit pyrolysis technology for our area will enable Shropshire to become the first Local Authority to fully lead on a pyrolysis system. Several Local Authorities are working on pyrolysis initiatives with others, like Veolia, who have a large stake in, or will entirely run their systems. Full ownership would provide greater financial returns and provide greater flexibility when it comes to feedstock supply and sale of biochar and energy. This will add resilience and lower risks.
- 9.2. Learning from this unit will help inform further installations by Shropshire Council and other land managers.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Members:

Kirsty Hurst-Knight, Christian Lee (Bridgnorth East and Astley Abbotts)

Vivienne Parry (Ludlow South)

Jeff Anderson (Harlescott)

Appendices

Appendix 1 UK Biochar Market Analysis Report (Fortune Business Insights).

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F **FORTUNE**
BUSINESS INSIGHTS

REPORT

Biochar

UK Market Analysis, Insights and Forecast, 2023-2030

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**Similar data will be provided for the below listed companies*

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Introduction

Section 1



Research Scope

Section 1.1

Research Scope

- ✓ Profiles of key companies operating in the market
- ✓ Competitive analysis

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Technological and market developments shaping the market

- ✓ Key insights



- ✓ Market size and growth rate by various segments at the country level for the 2019-2030 period, with 2019-2021 as historical data, 2022 as base year and 2023-2030 as forecast period
- ✓ Market dynamics – Market drivers, restraints, and opportunities
- ✓ Overall market size and growth rate for key countries for the 2019-2030 period

Research Scope – Key Insights

- Key Emerging Trends
- Latest Technological Advancement
- Regulatory Landscape
- Porter's Five Forces Analysis
- Impact of COVID-19 on the Biochar Market

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Market Segmentation

Section 1.2

Segmentation

By Geography

- UK

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UK Biochar Market



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graph TD; A[UK Biochar Market] --> B[By Technology]; A --> C[By Application]; B --- B1[Pyrolysis]; B --- B2[Gasification]; C --- C1[Farming]; C --- C2[Livestock]; C --- C3[Energy Production]; C --- C4[Others];
```

By Technology

- Pyrolysis
- Gasification

By Application

- Farming
- Livestock
- Energy Production
- Others

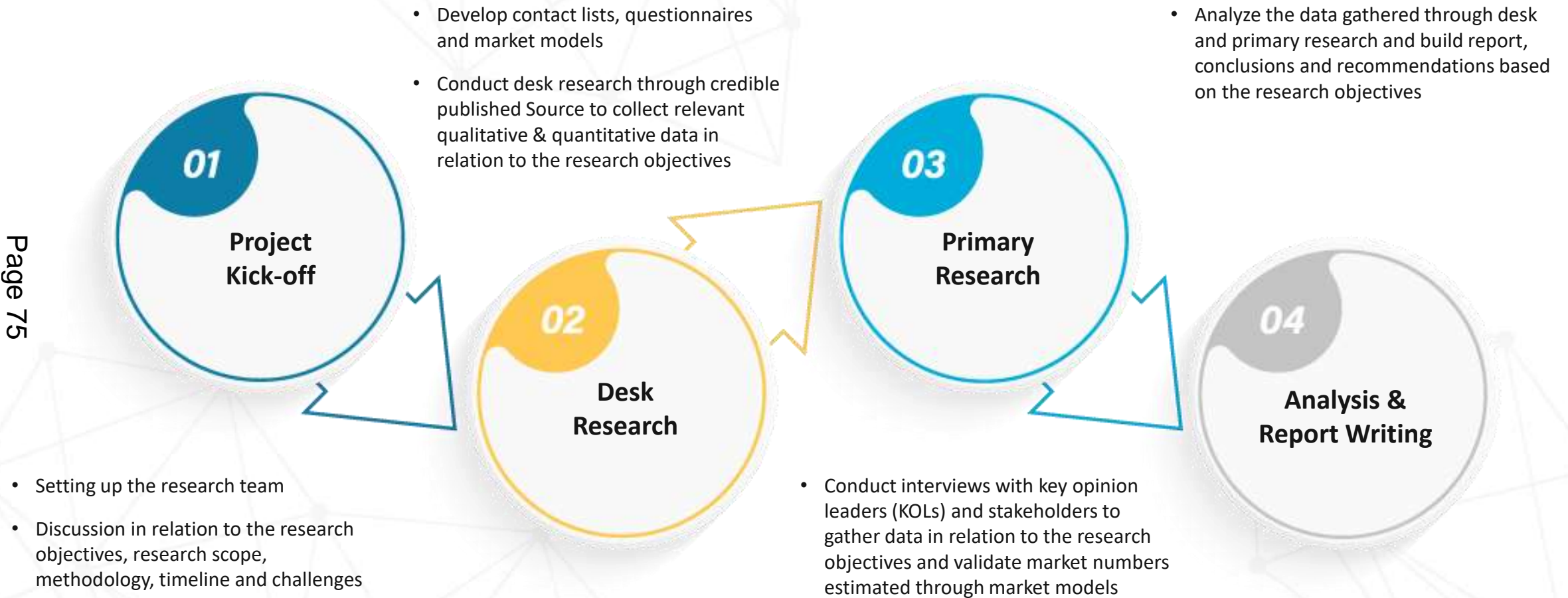


Research Methodology

Section 1.3

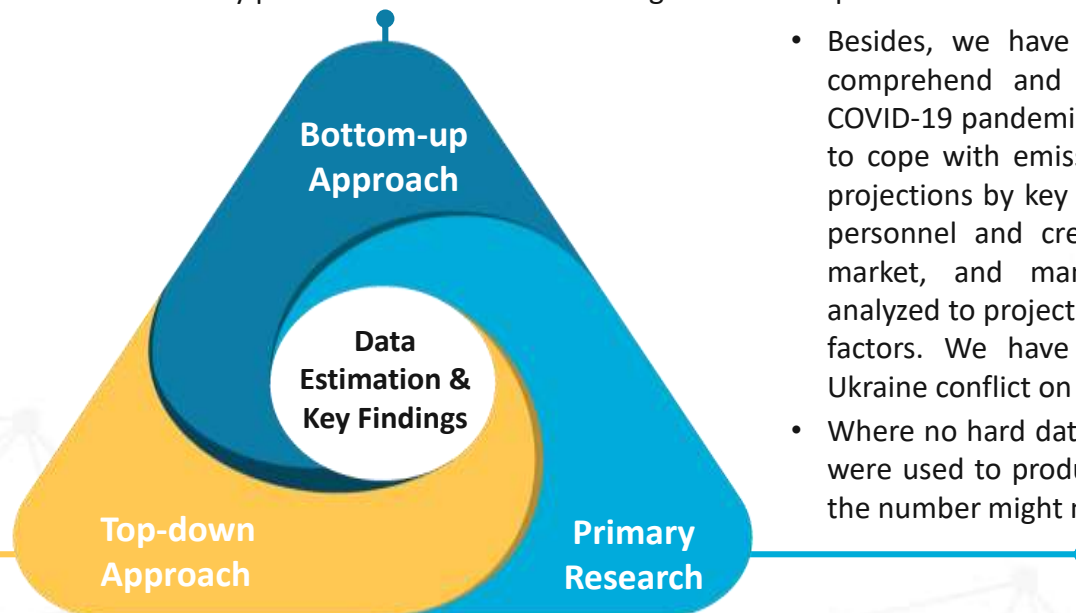
Research Methodology – Research Process

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Research Methodology – Data Triangulation

- As per the customization requested, the market sizes in Revenue and Production are included in the sheet. Wherein ‘Production’ represents biochar produced (Tons) in the UK while ‘Revenue’ represents the value generated in USD after the sales of produced biochar at certain prices.
- We have followed the top-down and bottom-up approaches to arrive at the market size and cross-verify our findings with the methods.
- Under the bottom-up approach, we assessed the number of biochar projects nationwide to quantify the total market. As per our analysis, the growth of biochar is increasing significantly owing to a boost across the UK.
- Furthermore, the trend is likely to be followed in the upcoming years owing to encouraging government initiatives and huge targets for the installation of biochar plants.
- Subsequently, we have undertaken the top-down analytical method to calculate the market size and validate our initial results during the first approach.
- During the calculation, we gathered data regarding the operative biochar projects across the Europe. We simultaneously estimated the production capacities, actual production data, and CAPEX data to precisely understand the segment and sub-segments.
- Under this approach, we have also estimated the average prices at which locally produced biochar is sold during certain time period.
- Similarly, the top-down approach, we have studied the country market and their key growth drivers and market trends. Furthermore, the trend is likely to be followed in the upcoming years owing to encouraging government initiatives and huge targets for the installation of biochar plants.
- Subsequently, we have undertaken the top-down analytical method to calculate the market size and validate our initial results during the first approach. During the calculation, we gathered data regarding the operative biochar projects across the Europe. We simultaneously estimated the production capacities, actual production data, and CAPEX data to precisely understand the segment and sub-segments.



- Besides, we have also undertaken various insights to comprehend and exhibit the tangible impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry. Government policies to cope with emission targets in the post-COVID world, projections by key industry participants, views of leading personnel and credible organizations operating in the market, and many other parameters were deeply analyzed to project the implications caused by the various factors. We have also considered impact on Russia-Ukraine conflict on the market.
- Where no hard data was available, models and estimates were used to produce comprehensive data sets. Besides, the number might not add up due to rounding off.



The resume for Samantha Black includes the following sections:

- EXPERIENCE:** Four job entries with titles like "POSITION TITLE" and descriptions.
- EDUCATION:** A section for "HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE" and "UNIVERSITY" with details on degrees and dates.
- SKILLS:** A list of skills including "PROGRAMMING", "MANAGEMENT", "ANALYSIS", and "RESEARCH".
- REFERENCES:** Three entries for "JESSICA BROWN" and "DAVID GREEN".
- CONTACT:** A section for "CONTACT LETTER" with a placeholder for text.

Definition

Section 1.4

Definitions

Biochar

- **Biochar** - Biochar is a charcoal-like material that is produced from plant materials such as grass, agricultural and forest residues that are decomposed at high temperatures, often during renewable energy production. During the process, the physical and chemical properties of the plant material change into a highly porous, stable, carbon-rich material known as biochar.
- **Pyrolysis** - Pyrolysis is widely known as the manufacturing process by which charcoal is produced from wood. However, this is a narrow application and ~~pyrolysis~~ sees the transformation of any low-energy-dense biomass into bio-oils, syngas and biochar. Pyrolysis conditions can be optimized to favor the production of a specific product, with slow pyrolysis at lower temperature favoring higher biochar yields and fast pyrolysis at higher temperatures favoring syngas production.
- **Gasification** - Gasification is a process that converts organic or fossil-based carbonaceous materials at high temperatures (>700°C), without combustion, with a controlled amount of oxygen and/or steam into carbon monoxide, hydrogen, and carbon dioxide. The carbon monoxide then reacts with water to form carbon dioxide and more hydrogen via a water-gas shift reaction. Adsorbers or special membranes can separate the hydrogen from this gas stream.

Definitions

Biochar

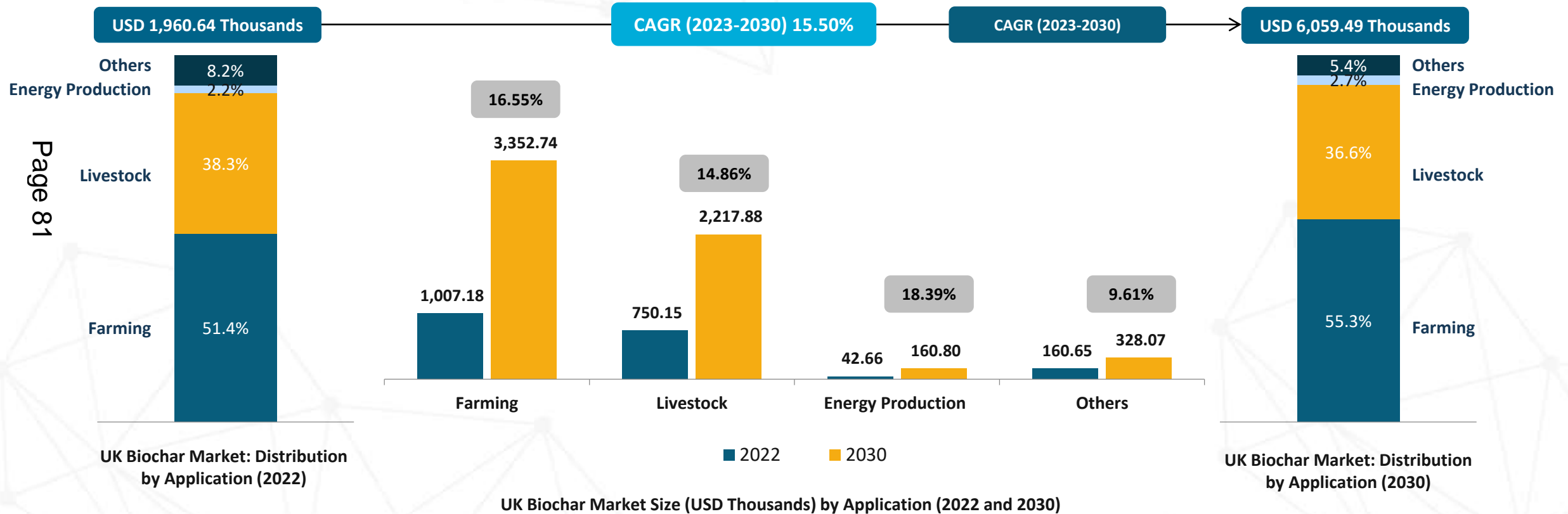
- **Farming:** Farming is the act or process of working the ground, planting seeds, and growing edible plants and also describes raising animals for milk or meat as farming. Biochar is mainly used in farming to enhance soil fertility, improve plant growth, and provide crop nutrition.
- **Livestock:** Livestock are domesticated terrestrial animals that are raised to provide a diverse array of goods and services such as traction, meat, milk, and eggs. The use of biochar in livestock farming as a feed supplement has been increased to improve animal health and increase nutrient intake efficiency.
- **Energy Production:** Biochar production involves the partial burning of plant material that transforms carbon-rich substances like biomass into a synthesis gas (syngas) primarily comprised of hydrogen and carbon monoxide. This syngas can be used for heat generation or as a fuel in combustion engines or gas turbines to create electricity.
- **Others:** The other segment includes applications such as water filtration, construction & roadways, and cosmetics, among others.

Executive Summary

Section 02

Executive Summary

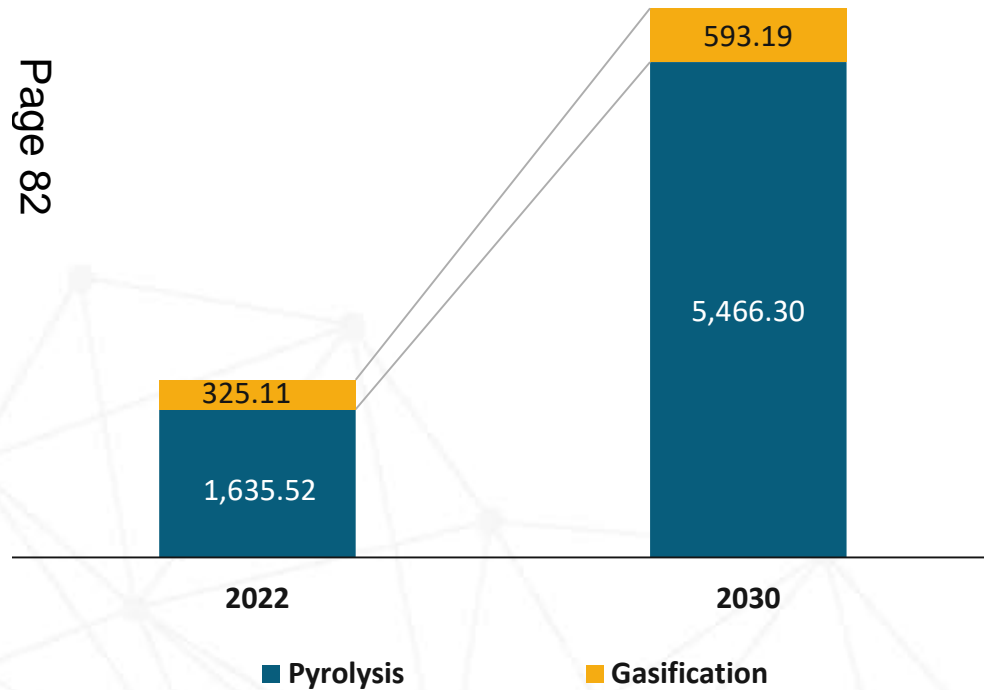
Figure 01: UK Biochar Market Revenue Breakdown (USD Thousands, %) by Application , 2022 & 2030



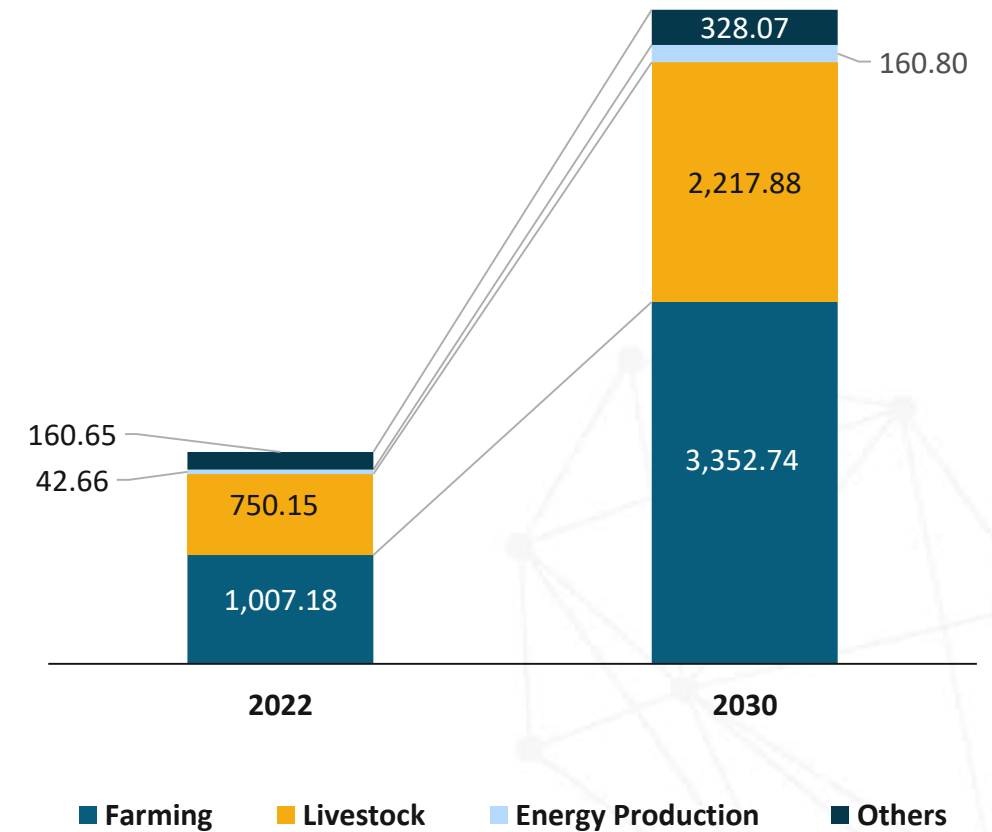
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Executive Summary

UK Biochar Market By Technology, 2022 and 2030 (in USD Thousands)



UK Biochar Market By Application, 2022 and 2030 (in USD Thousands)



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Market Dynamics

Section 03

Market Dynamics

Market Dynamics

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Market Drivers

Growing Demand from Agriculture Industry is Positively Impacting the Growth of the Biochar Market

Burgeoning Use of Biochar in Animal Feed to Stimulate the Demand for Biochar

Market Restraint

High Cost and Lack Knowledge of Manufacturing Process is Restraining the Market Growth

Market Drivers

Section 3.1

Market Drivers

Growing Demand from Agriculture Industry is Positively Impacting the Growth of the Biochar Market

- Farming in the UK underpins the nation's food security, generates economic benefits and shapes a rich and varied landscape. Food is still the primary purpose of farming, and always will be. Farming plays an important role in managing the environment of over 70% of the UK's land area.
- The UK produces 7.8 million tons of wheat for bread making each year, with the average household buying 43 loaves per. It is clear that as an industry farming is vital to the UK economy. The growing farming will increase the use of biochar for crop development both directly and indirectly depending on its natural nutritional content and capability for nutrient.
- Agriculture accounts for 72% of land use in the UK and provides employment for close to half a million people. Most of the arable cropland is situated in the lowlands of southeast Great Britain, which have relatively warm temperatures and lower rainfall. The remaining quarter is made up of urban (14%), forest and woodland (12%) and inland water (1%).
- As soon as biochar is incorporated into the soil, it starts to interact with soil chemistry, In addition to increasing soil fertility, particularly over a long term, its ability to store carbon and nitrogen may lessen both immediate and long-term environmental deterioration and its harmful impacts on human and animal health, due to its vital property biochar is being used in the farming.
- Consequently, biochar improves the soil's ability to absorb and hold onto nutrients and agricultural chemicals while lowering their vaporization and leaching into surface and groundwater, enhancing nutrient retention in soil.
- Through its persistence, biochar enables a long-lasting impact on soil quality and carbon sequestration due to its greater half-life of carbon, potentially over thousands of years.
- UK investment in agricultural research and development has focused on technologies for industrial farming to the exclusion of small and medium-scale technology. Hence, growers are forced to rely on old, and sometimes unreliable, machinery or import equipment from mainland Europe, where the market has driven ongoing development of modern equipment that is of an appropriate scale and price for small farmers.

Market Drivers

Burgeoning use of Biochar in Animal Feed to Stimulate the Demand for Biochar

- Biochar-based fertilizers, which combine traditional fertilizers with biochar as a nutrient carrier, are promising in agronomy. Using biochar as a feed additive for animals shows benefits in terms of overall growth, gut microbiota, reduced enteric methane production, egg yield, and endo-toxicant mitigation.
- Biochar enhances anaerobic digestion operations, primarily for biogas generation and upgrading, performance and sustainability, and the mitigation of inhibitory impurities. In composts, biochar controls the release of greenhouse gases and enhances microbial activity. Co-composted biochar improves soil properties and enhances crop productivity.
- Livestock-manure-derived biochar is one of the major products obtained from the pyrolysis of livestock manure. Discharges of manure lead to environmental problems, such as odors resulting in the emission of toxic gases and pollution of waterways because of leaching and runoff of nutrients and heavy metals.
- In the UK for lowland grazing livestock farms, farm business income rose by 85 percent in 2021/22 to US\$ 41,923. Cattle output, a main source of revenue for this type of farm, rose by 22 percent, with prices for stored and finished cattle buoyed by a tight market. Output from sheep enterprises increased by 34 percent, reflecting higher average prices for fat and stored lambs annually.
- Biochar prepared by livestock manure is the solid carbonaceous residue from the pyrolysis of livestock manure. The conversion of livestock manure to biochar has a variety of potential economic effectiveness, including agricultural waste reduction, fuel production, and carbon sink.
- In May 2021, The Dorset Charcoal Company claimed that Australian farmer Doug Pow has had some astonishing results from feeding his cattle biochar mixed with molasses. The whole-farm biochar system boosted their farm's productivity, cutting input costs and reducing cattle emissions while storing carbon in the ground.
- Numerous treatment methods can mitigate most of the toxic gas emissions and water pollution due to the leaching of nutrients and heavy metals from livestock manure, such as composting, calcination, gasification, and pyrolysis.



Market Restraints

Section 3.2

Market Restraint

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MARKET RESTRAINTS

High Cost and Lack Knowledge of Manufacturing Process is Restraining the Market Growth

- The high cost of such products and underlying structural constraints, such as a shortage of finance for producers, an immature carbon market, and shorter timescales for mining land restoration bonds, continue to impede the market growth. While the commercialization of this product is still in its early stages, this hard-to-sell product's lack of consistency and standardization impedes market expansion.
- Biomass is used as the feedstock in the pyrolysis reactor, which has a set heating and gas flow rate, residence duration, and temperature. Following that, biochar can be created. During pyrolysis most of the Ca, K, P, Mg and plant micronutrients as well as half of the N and S in the feedstock are retained in biochar. There are certain byproducts of this process, such as gas and bio-oil. However, when biochar is applied to agricultural land, several prior research identified the following drawbacks: loss of land due to erosion, soil compaction during the application, risk of contamination, removal of crop residues, and reduction in worm life rates; these factors are creating a negative impact on the environment and could affect the market.
- Lack of knowledge of the sustainable biochar manufacturing process will continue to be one of the major constraints limiting this product's development and potential consumption. The lack of effective technology for low-emission char synthesis, particularly for distant or mobile production, has hampered the market value.

Market Opportunity

Section 3.3

Market Opportunity

Biochar Market

Rising Environmental Concern is Uplifting the Usage of Biochar

- Biochar is carbon-rich material made by heating organic matter in low oxygen conditions. It may reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels, thus helping the UK meet its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.
- During pyrolysis, around 50% of the carbon in the biomass is converted into biochar. Around two-thirds of the remaining 50% can be released as useful energy.
- They release CO₂ and methane back into the atmosphere. They can also contaminate local ground and surface water. Using these materials to produce biochar removes them from a pollutant cycle and can be extracted from this biomass as a by-product of energy production.
- During biochar production processes, two bioenergy products are also produced in the form of syngas and bio-oil. The relative fractions of each of these depend on the production methods (temperature, heating, etc.). In certain instances, the energy available from the syngas produced can act to self-sustain the biochar formation, reducing fossil fuel inputs, or it can be used in turbines to produce electricity directly.
- The University of Nottingham is leading the world's largest effort to evaluate the ability of a material called biochar to store carbon from the atmosphere to counteract the effects of climate change. The USD 5.5 million project is one of five UK research and innovation-funded demonstration projects investigating greenhouse gas removal (GGR) technologies to reduce CO₂ emissions at levels comparable to the could help the UK reach its net zero targets by 2050.
- Biochar can used on sites where the land is contaminated with heavy metals from prior industrial use. Biochar acts as an adsorbent, binding metal pollutants to its surface, immobilizing them, and reducing their toxicity over time.
- In addition, biochar and brown coal waste (BCW) have lower contaminants (e.g., heavy metals) and have been shown to provide additional sustainability and net cost benefits.



Key Insights

Section 04



Key Emerging Trends

Section 4.1

Key Emerging Trends

Description

- Government Policies and initiatives in the UK aim to promote sustainable agriculture and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This has increased demand for biochar as a soil amendment that helps improve soil fertility and reduce emissions from agricultural activities.
- Biochar has been shown to benefit agricultural ecosystems, including improved yields, improved water retention, and increased nutrient recycling and retention. A carbon-rich biochar could be produced through gasification at the cost of reduced syngas yield but caution should be taken to maintain smooth operation and consistent quality of syngas.
- In 2021, New Urban Biochar greenhouse gas reduction and Sustainable Materials Demonstrator now installed at horticultural nursery site on outskirts of Birmingham. The project is being delivered by the Energy and Bioproducts Research Institute (EBRI) based at Aston University after being granted Local Growth Fund (LGF) funding from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP).
- The project, called the Urban Biochar and Sustainable Materials Demonstrator is being led by the Energy and Bioproducts Research Institute (EBRI) based at Aston University and is being funded by Local Growth Fund (LGF) from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP), as well as the EU European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).
- In the UK, biochar can be produced using biomass from bio-waste (which includes biodegradable municipal and agricultural waste) or purpose-grown re-growing biomass plantations such as willow. When biochar is added to soil, a portion of it degrades, allowing carbon to escape back into the atmosphere. Scientists are currently studying the properties of carbon found in soils from hundreds of years ago to help shed light on the factors that are important for long-term stability.

Latest Technological Advancement

Section 4.2

Latest Technological Advancement

Description

- In July 2023, A green technology company in UK has set out its plans to build a number of hubs in the Wye Valley, aiming to convert the area's considerable supply of poultry litter into biochar a slow release fertilizer. The company, Onnu says it has already demonstrated the efficacy of the "pyrolysis" process on the ground in Namibia combusting organic matter in the absence of oxygen to produce biochar.
- In July 2023, European BeonNAT project has achieved promising results that demonstrate the potential of biomass cultivated to produce bioplastics for bioactive cosmetics, biochar, activated carbon and pet litter with essential oils.
- In August 2023 - Carbo Culture's first industrial pilot facility opens near Helsinki, Finland, demonstrating efficient and scalable biochar carbon removal. The facility, named R3, or Reactor 3, is funded by the European Innovation Council and it uses a method called biochar carbon removal (BCR) to permanently remove carbon dioxide (CO2) from the atmosphere.
- In Sept 2022, Danish cleantech company MASH Makes A/S has developed a new pyrolysis technology to produce carbon-negative biofuels and biochar from agricultural residues. The company has just secured USD 0.46 million in green financing from Nefco, the Nordic Green Bank, to accelerate the first commercial implementation of the solution.
- In June 2021, SUEZ Group and Airex Energy have formed a partnership in order to provide solutions to regions and industries on their path towards carbon neutrality. The expertise of the two Groups will enable them to industrialize the recovery of biomass residues into biochar (a stable form of organic carbon), which is essential to the resilience, vitality and fertility of urban and agricultural soils.

Regulatory Landscape

Section 4.3

Regulatory Landscape (1/2)

Description

- Initiatives such as European Biochar Certificate (EBC) [16] and the International Biochar Initiative (IBI) are trying to define production criteria and biochar properties and quality but are not recognized by any national legislation as official methods within the EU. In particular, the EBC represents some elemental limits, such as a total organic carbon content of > 50% and O/C and H/C ratios.
- Diverse biochar certificates currently have put forward a proposal for guidelines for the specification of biochar, intending to provide a product classification and description for quality requirements while also confirming consumer assurance. The International Biochar Initiative (IBI), European Biochar Certificate (EBC), Biochar Quality Mandate (BQM), and the European Community Biochar Criteria (ECBC) are ready guidelines for the sustainable usage of biochar in soil. These initiatives describe production criteria, biochar properties, and classes but are not familiar with national legislation as authorized methods within the EU. Biochar scientists have developed biochar certificates to ensure sustainable biochar production and low-hazard use in agronomic systems.
- Users of biochar and biochar-based products will benefit from transparent and verifiable monitoring and independent quality control. Biochar produced per the standards fulfills all the requirements of sustainable production and has a positive carbon footprint. However, there are essential differences between benchmarks. Biochar has implications in several EU policy areas, with environmental protection, waste management, and agricultural and climate change policy.
- The core objective is to incorporate benefits and impacts into a common agenda and discover the most appropriate and reasonable solutions. The waste-to-energy technologies have become a root and are increasingly attractive, as observed from both an energy supply perception and waste management.
- However, a new regulation on a range of fertilizing products (revision of EC Regulation 2003/2003) has been launched in 2016 by the European Commission (EC) as part of a package to stimulate the circular economy within the EU27.
- Due to this new legislative framework, biochar is expected to be included in the REACH regulation (EC Regulation 1907/2006). This regulation is a system set up for the Registration, Evaluation, Authorization, and Restriction of Chemicals. A REACH registration is required if a fertilizing product is sold in quantities of one tons or more per year.

Regulatory Landscape (2/2)

Description		
Parameter	Regulation/Standard	
Emission, inc. Particulates and PFAS	DIRECTIVE 2010/75/EU	
Page 99	Destruction of Pathogens	DIRECTIVE 86/278/EEC
	Heavy Metals: As, Cd & Hg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Biochar Certification • International Biochar Initiative Certification
	Heavy Metals: Cr, Cu, Pb, Ni & Zn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Biochar Certification • International Biochar Initiative Certification
	Organic Contaminants, inc. PCB and PFAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Biochar Certification • International Biochar Initiative Certification
	Destruction of Micro/Nano plastics	No comprehensive Law: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIRECTIVE 2010/75/EU • Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 – Fertilizing Products Regulation

Climate Change Analysis

Section 4.4

Climate Change Analysis

- Biochar is a solid material obtained from the carbonization of any biomass including weeds, crop residues and other wastes of plant origin. Currently, the use of biochar has got scientific attention in agriculture sector. Using renewable energy from noncompetitive waste residue is now a day becoming a commercial reality.
- The main benefit of biochar is that it utilizes biomass in a way where carbon is locked-in and stored compared to outright combustion (slash and burn), natural decomposition and other waste management options which involve the release of CO₂ and other greenhouse gasses (GHGs) into the atmosphere.
- Biochar has been indicated to retain up to 50% of its initial carbon content compared to 3% in traditional burning and 10 – 20 % via decomposition. Recently, it was noted that biochar production and use as a soil additive was predicted to act to reverse CO₂ emissions and that it could lead to maximum global net reductions of 1.67 tons of CO₂ equivalent emissions per tons of feedstock used, with this reduction being based on a combination of the direct and indirect beneficial effects.
- Other direct climate effects apparent with biochar soil addition includes the reduction of N₂O emissions from soils, with data suggesting 38% reductions are possible due to the promotion of soil bacterial breakdown of N to N₂ instead of N₂O(though these reductions are only seen for a year after application).
- As well as the atmospheric CO₂ removal levels needed to maintaining global warming below 1.5 °C, biochar production from forest and crop residues and its use in soils was noted to have the potential to account for 10% of these required CO₂ reductions via both direct and indirect benefits.
- Furthermore, if extra crops were grown specifically for biochar production as well as these residue biomass' being used, the produced biochar could increase CO₂ reductions to cover up to 15-35% of the 1.5°C CO₂ reductions needed. Biochar addition to the soil is a promising option for improving soil chemical property by improving cation exchange capacity (CEC) and soil pH and reducing exchangeable acidity of the soil.

Climate Change Analysis

- First, biochar neutralizes soil acidity through a direct liming effect, improves the structure of microbial communities, controls nutrient bioavailability, retention and leaching, and causes plant toxicity above or below certain.
- Second, biochar increases the pH buffering capacity of soils by increasing the cation exchange capacity (CEC) due to negative functional groups (COO⁻ and O⁻) that are bound to the biochar surfaces. Biochar increases the available reactive surface area of low-fertility soils, which in addition to increasing CEC and buffering capacity, increases porosity, water retention, and the ability of plant roots to more fully explore the soil volume. Increases in CEC after biochar application are particularly pronounced in coarse-grain or highly-weathered soils
- Also biochar was found to increase soil biota, through increasing nutrient availability, enhancing habitat suitability, increasing water retention and aeration and reducing toxic chemicals in the soil. Biochar has a significant role in climate change mitigation through sequestration of carbon in the soil and reduction of nitrous oxide (N₂O) and methane (CH₄) gas emissions to atmosphere by improving uptake of the soil.
- Biochar production and application could act positively towards mitigating GHG emissions globally through direct carbon sequestration and other indirect GHG emission reduction effects.
- Biochar holds the potential to positively influence climate change in the UK by aiding in carbon sequestration, enhancing soil quality, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. However, it's important to note that while biochar presents numerous potential advantages, its influence on climate change depends on several factors, such as the adoption rate, the types of materials used for producing biochar, and the precise agricultural and land management practices employed. The UK's efforts to address climate change would probably gain from a holistic approach incorporating biochar within a wider array of sustainable measures to curb emissions and amplify carbon sequestration.

Porters Five Forces

Section 4.5

Porter's Five Forces Analysis

Threat of New Entrants – Moderate

- Biochar companies trying to enter the market require advanced technologies to effectively produce biochar, which poses a barrier for new entrants. Furthermore, the market is captured by some of the renowned and leading companies in the world, which results in a moderate risk for new entrants. Therefore substantial investment in R&D, along with standing competition with already established industry players, makes it difficult for any new entrant to establish a footprint in the market.

FOCUS

Bargaining Power of Suppliers – Moderate

- The suppliers in the biochar market are waste suppliers and equipment providers. There is a large number of suppliers that operates in the market.
- Hence, suppliers' bargaining power in the market is projected to be low during the forecast period.

Degree of Competitiveness – High

- The market has the presence of comparatively fewer biochar providers & operators. Furthermore, a significant number of firms have already established their foothold in the market, and few small firms with similar product offerings.
- The degree of competition is expected to be High during the forecast period owing to the rising adoption of biochar in the market with fewer companies present in the market.

Threat of Substitutes – Moderate

- The threat of substitutes refers to the effect of a substitute product on the concerned product market. The easy availability of natural gas is the major substitute present in the market. Thus, the threat of substitutes in the biochar market is estimated to be medium during the forecast period.

Bargaining Power of Buyers – Moderate to Low

- There are large numbers of buyers available for the biochar market. The switching cost of buyers is low to moderate as many suppliers are present in the market. Thus, buyers' bargaining power in the market is projected to be medium to low during the forecast period.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Biochar Market

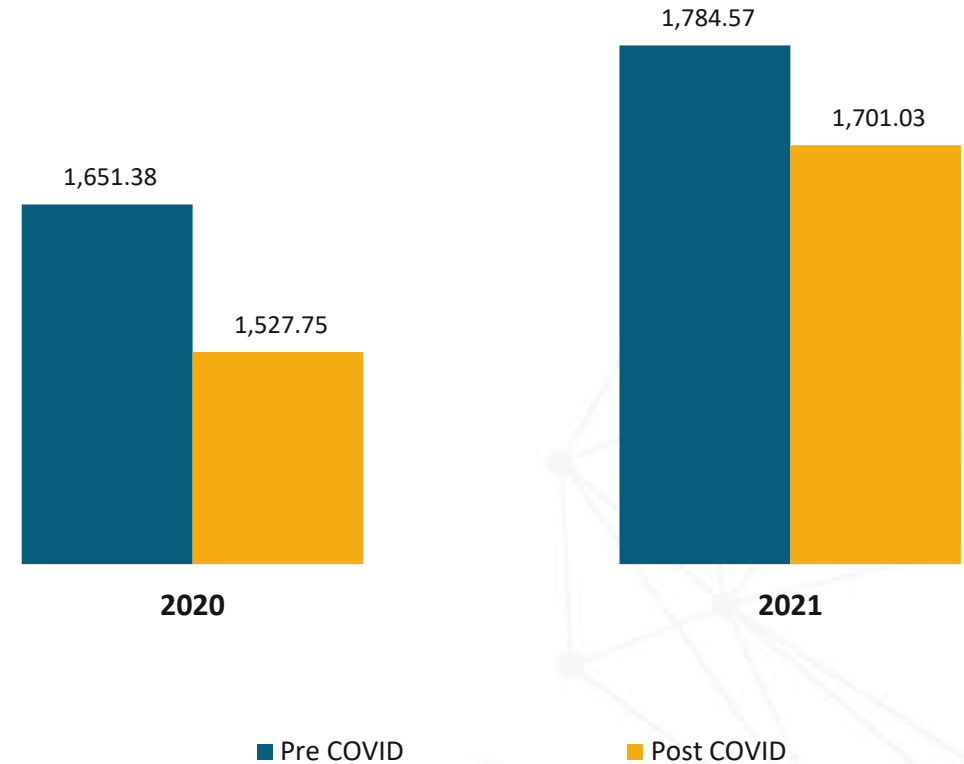
Section 4.6

Impact of COVID-19: Qualitative Analysis

Impact of COVID-19 on Biochar Market

- The sudden outbreak of the infectious disease recognized as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) triggered by the newly discovered coronavirus has caused chaos and panic across the globe, causing the termination of all normal daily activities like going to work, gathering, meetings, and commute between countries even stepping a foot outside the house.
- However, the suggestions of this pandemic crisis have affected many industries in diverse ways, such as the halt of domestic industrial procedures, decreased production, disruptions in value chains, raw material shortage, no international transactions, imports and export stopped, unreachability of new orders and clients, lack of operating staffs, and many others things.
- The blowout of COVID-19 has expressively impacted the biochar producing plant market due to supply chain disruption and a fall in investment in this Technology of upcoming plant in the European Union. The overall energy demand has broadly decreased in this region due to the pandemic as most of the industries and commercial sectors were closed.

COVID-19 Impact Analysis (in USD Thousands)



Advantage and Disadvantage of Biochar Technology

Section 4.7

Advantage and Disadvantage of Biochar Technology (1/2)

Advantage and Disadvantage of Pyrolysis Technology

Advantages of Pyrolysis Technology:

- Biochar is made by heating biomass in an oxygen-limited environment through a process called pyrolysis. The biomass, which has removed CO₂ from the atmosphere during plant growth, is broken down into a carbon-rich material that is then compressed into a solid form.
- Biochar pyrolysis equipment is a type of machinery that uses pyrolysis technology to convert biomass (such as agricultural and forestry waste) into biochar. Pyrolysis of biochar is a process of heating organic materials in the absence of oxygen, which causes them to break down into smaller molecules and release volatile gases.
- The resulting biochar is a stable form of carbon that can be used to improve soil fertility, store carbon, and produce energy.
- The biochar pyrolysis technology is considered to be an environmentally friendly technology because it converts waste biomass into a useful product while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Biochar pyrolysis equipment is emerging as a key technology for managing organic waste and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- This versatile tool can convert a wide range of biomass feedstocks into high-quality biochar, as well as other valuable products such as wood vinegar, tar as well as combustible gas.
- Increasing pyrolysis temperature could remarkably increase the pore volume and surface area of biochar due to the carbon phase change from amorphous to graphitic form and the driving off of pore-blocking substances.

Disadvantages of Pyrolysis Technology

- With insufficient gas treatment at the outlet, incomplete pyrolysis creates furans, hexanes, and dioxins even when using clean virgin wood. If this happens, because of poor quality control, the syngas must be burnt at high temperature before being ejected. This way, there are no toxic chemicals exiting the plant. However, the process had drawbacks of less yield percentages, less energy and excessive air pollution
- Pyrolysis temperature has an influence on the structure of biochar due to the release of volatiles and the formation and volatilization of intermediate melts. Increasing the temperature leads to a decreased content of volatile matter (VM).

Advantage and Disadvantage of Biochar Technology (2/2)

Advantage and Disadvantage of Gasification Technology

Advantages of Gasification Technology:

- Gasification is an effective thermochemical conversion process for biomass into energy fuel while producing biochar as a byproduct. Typically, carbonaceous materials derived from organic fossil fuels can be converted into hydrogen, carbon monoxide, and carbon dioxide employing gasification.
- The gasification process has several advantages over other thermal processes the ability to dissolve material at lower reactor volumes, the formation of low amounts of contaminants and more efficient utilization of the produced syngas.
- Compared to pyrolysis, it has the advantage of working auto thermally without the need for external energy. During the gasification process, heat transfer within a particle that increases the localized temperature of biomass leads to the removal of water and follows by the progressive release of pyrolytic volatiles.
- Municipal solid waste, agricultural and industrial waste, sewage sludge, etc. are also being used as a feedstock while performing gasification operation.
- Gasification produces around 85% gaseous products, 10% solid char, and 5% liquid products

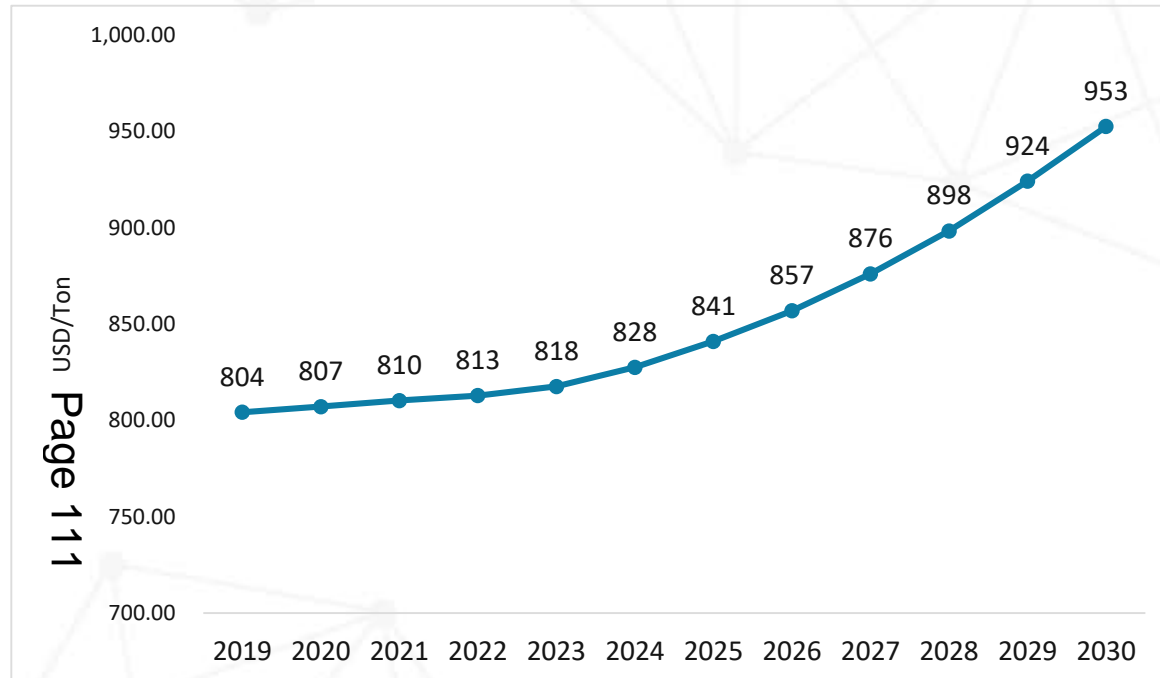
Disadvantages of Gasification Technology

- The gasification process is known to yield products that can cause various forms of environmental degradation.
- This includes greenhouse gases like methane and water vapor (steam), and toxic materials like particulate matter and carbon monoxide such effluents can have negative environmental impacts, especially if released in large quantity.
- By reducing air quality, and contaminating water and soil, the products of gasification, in the absence of proper handling, can pose a threat to environmental sustainability, economic growth and public health. The reason behind this is the chemical composition of biomass feedstock that are used as substrate in gasification. These materials are usually carbon sinks, and may function as carbon sources as they undergo thermal decomposition.
- The thermo-chemical reactions in gasification may produce toxic compounds from feedstock, alongside useful products like biofuel.
- Although gasification is not a totally sustainable process, it produces less hazardous effluents than other processes like open combustion and incineration, which are known to yield significant amounts of furans and dioxins.
- Gasification is a time-consuming process, especially in as a result of multiple treatment stages. Pretreatment and post-treatment all involve measures to remove unwanted constituents from feedstock or products of gasification. These measures make gasification more time-intensive, and add to the operational cost involved.

Price Trend Analysis of Biochar in UK

Section 4.8

Price Trend Analysis of Biochar (USD/Ton)



- Some current markets for biochar are soil amendments for gardens and landscaping where volumes are low and prices are high, so biochar's are often more expensive than farmers can afford.
 - Large scale utilization of non-merchantable forest biomass as a feedstock for biochar production will be made possible by transparent and consistent feedstock supply chains coupled with 1) high carbon market prices, 2) a subsidy or other price mechanism to lower feedstock costs, or 3) economies of scale.
 - There are emerging opportunities but overall the market is in its infancy with limited production and high cost.
 - For instance, low profit and high cost assumed 50% importance in market category and 50% importance in technical category
- The cost of feedstock acquisition can be computed as either the production cost, if a feedstock is produced explicitly for pyrolysis, or the opportunity cost of an existing feedstock diverted to pyrolysis.
 - However, biochar supports the retention of the soil and water, thus reducing irrigation costs and fertilizers and recovering depleted soils. Biochar, as an additive to the soil, lasts long and does not need to be added every year when compared to agricultural fertilizers thus, it is cost-effective.
 - Therefore, biochar production can be attractive if the proceeds of the economic costs of raising, harvesting, hauling, and storing the biomass feedstock, alongside those of employing pyrolysis, transportation, and application of biochar.

Timeline Required for Biochar Plant

Section 4.9

Timeline Required for Biochar Plant (1/4)

Timeline Required for Biochar Plant

- Biochar production involves the conversion of biomass into biochar through a process called pyrolysis and gasification. Building a biochar production facility involves a range of requirements to ensure its successful construction, operation, and compliance with regulations. These requirements span various aspects, including technical, environmental, regulatory, and safety considerations.
- Selection of a suitable location that considers factors such as access to feedstock sources, transportation infrastructure, proximity to markets, and compliance with zoning and land-use regulations. Conduct an assessment to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the facility. This may involve studies on air quality, water usage, waste management, and ecological impacts.
- Platform deployment within a biochar facility creates a structured and integrated system that streamlines various processes, data management, and operations. Such a platform can help optimize production, enhance efficiency, and facilitate decision-making. Platform development can be implemented within a biochar facility are:
Software development, trial software with farmers, iterate on software, testing of software with live biochar deliveries and usage, iterate on software with stakeholder feedback.
- Implement automation systems to control and monitor different stages of biochar production, including feedstock handling, pyrolysis, emissions control, and biochar processing. Automation helps reduce human error, improve consistency, and enhance overall production efficiency. Develop a remote monitoring system that allows operators and managers to access real-time data and control facility operations from a distance. This feature is particularly useful for overseeing operations, diagnosing issues, and making adjustments remotely.
- Emissions monitoring and reporting is the important aspect of BUILD a module for monitoring emissions in real-time and generating reports to meet regulatory compliance requirements. This ensures that emissions stay within acceptable limits and facilitates reporting to authorities.
- Developing a platform for a biochar facility requires collaboration between experts in platform development, machine installation, biochar demonstration hub, and monitoring and evaluation of biochar production. An effective platform can significantly enhance the facility's operational efficiency, data management, and overall performance.

Timeline Required for Biochar Plant (2/4)

Project Plan	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3	
	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2
Site Selection										
Raw Material/ Machinery suppliers Identification										
Platform Development										
Machinery Installment										
<i>Purchase Machinery</i>										
<i>Machine Manufacturing</i>										
<i>Supportive Machinery Procurement</i>										
<i>Site Preparation</i>										
<i>Machinery Installation</i>										
<i>Training of BSW Operational Staff</i>										
<i>Biochar Production</i>										

Timeline Required for Biochar Plant (3/4)

Project Plan	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Biochar Demonstrator Hub										
<i>Farmer Guidebook Preparation</i>										
<i>Farm Emission Reduction and Storage Potential Reports</i>										
<i>Planning of Climate Check Integration with Biochar Farmers</i>										
<i>Small Trial of Biochar / Compatibility Testing</i>										
<i>Training of Farmers for Biochar use</i>										
<i>Farmer Guidebook Iteration</i>										
<i>Focus Group with Farmers</i>										
<i>Categorisation of Biochar use in Systems</i>										
<i>Integration of Biochar into Climate Check</i>										

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Timeline Required for Biochar Plant (4/4)

Project Plan		Year 1				Year 2				Year 3	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Monitoring & Evaluation											
Page 116	<i>Field Trial Planning and Setup</i>										
	<i>Field Trial Sampling</i>										
	<i>Annual Treatment Application</i>										
	<i>Biochar Testing & Quality Control</i>										

UK Biochar Market

Section 05

Key Findings / Summary

Section 5.1

UK Biochar Market

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Key Findings

- Organizations such as the UK Biochar Research Centre (UKBRC) and the European Biochar Certificate (EBC) have developed and promoted some standards for defining biochar. The European biochar market is growing with increasing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly products. Biochar is charcoal produced from organic materials such as agricultural waste, forestry waste, and other biomass, which is then used as a soil amendment to improve soil fertility, increase water retention, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- In recent years, the biochar market in the UK has experienced significant growth due to increasing consumer awareness about the environmental benefits of biochar, as well as favorable regulations and policies aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture and reducing carbon emissions.
- The UK government is awarding US\$ 54 million to 15 projects to develop technologies that remove carbon emissions from the atmosphere. The money will help projects further develop their greenhouse gas removal technologies, which include a machine that can pull carbon dioxide out of the air, a plant to convert household waste into hydrogen for use in the transport industry, and a system to remove carbon dioxide from seawater.
- The market is expected to continue growing in the coming years, driven by rising demand for organic and sustainable agriculture products and increasing adoption of biochar in the energy and waste management sectors.
- The market is highly competitive, with companies focusing on expanding their product portfolios, investing in research and development activities, and promoting their products through various marketing strategies.
- Overall, the UK biochar market presents significant growth opportunities for companies operating in the industry and is expected to continue growing in the coming years as demand for sustainable and eco-friendly products increases.

Market Analysis, Insights and Forecast – By Technology

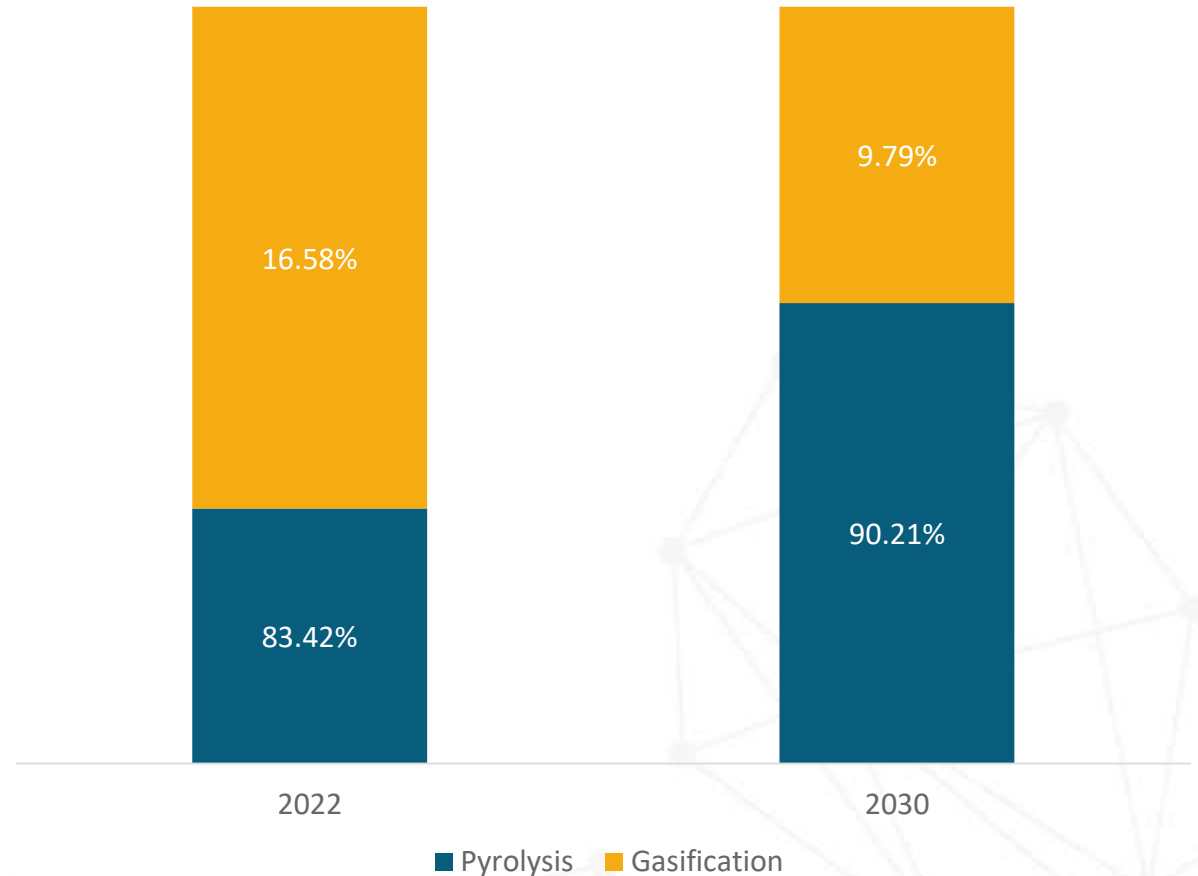
Section 5.2

UK Market Analysis and Insights, By Technology

Analysis

- Based on technology, the market has been divided into pyrolysis and gasification. The pyrolysis segment is anticipated for a significant share of the UK market, in 2022. The process is widely adopted in the biochar market owing to its huge benefits like cost efficiency, and it is more convenient than the others. Most plants are said to use the pyrolysis process in the country.
- Pyrolysis also has comprehensive capabilities of processing a wide variety of feedstock, making it preferable and contributing to greenhouse gas emission reduction in the environment. The above factors make pyrolysis preferable over others. Pyrolysis is an important method to convert bulky biomass into biochar of higher volumetric energy density, bio-oil of a mixture of organics and gases
- The gasification segment will hold an slight market share in 2022 compared to pyrolysis. The process is not quite much popular as pyrolysis. The demand for such char is estimated to increase in the market in the coming years.

Figure 02: UK Biochar Market Value Share (%), By Technology, 2022 & 2030



UK Market Forecast, By Technology

Table 01: UK Biochar Market Revenue (Tons) Forecast, By Technology, 2019–2030

By Technology	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	CAGR (2023-2030)
Pyrolysis	1,458.08	1,574.08	1,761.21	2,055.02	2,326.99	2,587.21	2,867.69	3,211.35	3,624.09	4,170.58	4,895.47	5,830.23	14.02%
Gasification	300.07	318.62	338.01	356.98	376.45	396.92	417.99	439.58	461.81	484.61	507.58	530.81	5.03%
TOTAL	1,758.15	1,892.70	2,099.23	2,412.00	2,703.44	2,984.13	3,285.68	3,650.93	4,085.90	4,655.20	5,403.05	6,361.04	13.00%

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UK Market Forecast, By Technology

Table 02: UK Biochar Market Revenue (USD Thousands) Forecast, By Technology, 2019–2030

By Technology	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	CAGR (2023-2030)
Pyrolysis	1,146.77	1,241.98	1,395.64	1,635.52	1,864.07	2,098.97	2,364.98	2,699.28	3,115.52	3,678.79	4,447.05	5,466.30	16.61%
Gasification	267.21	285.77	305.39	325.11	346.22	370.69	398.42	429.27	464.09	503.25	546.20	593.19	8.00%
TOTAL	1,413.97	1,527.75	1,701.03	1,960.64	2,210.29	2,469.66	2,763.40	3,128.55	3,579.61	4,182.03	4,993.25	6,059.49	15.50%

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UK Market Analysis and Insights, By Technology

Figure 03: UK Biochar Market Forecast (USD Thousands),By Pyrolysis , 2019-2030

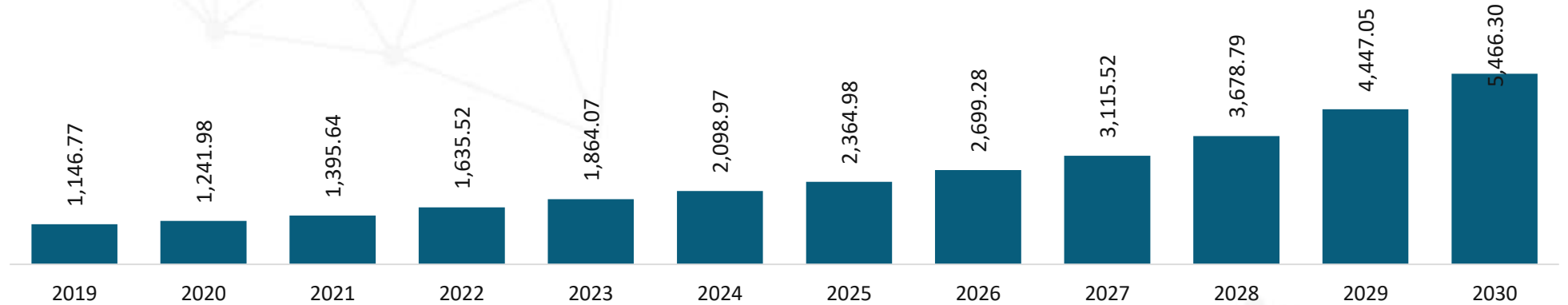
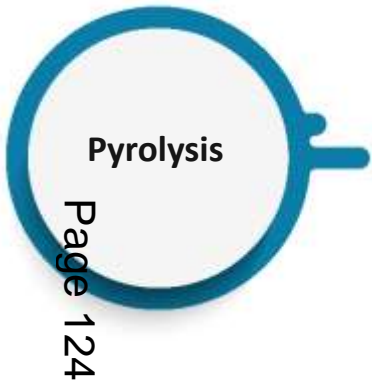
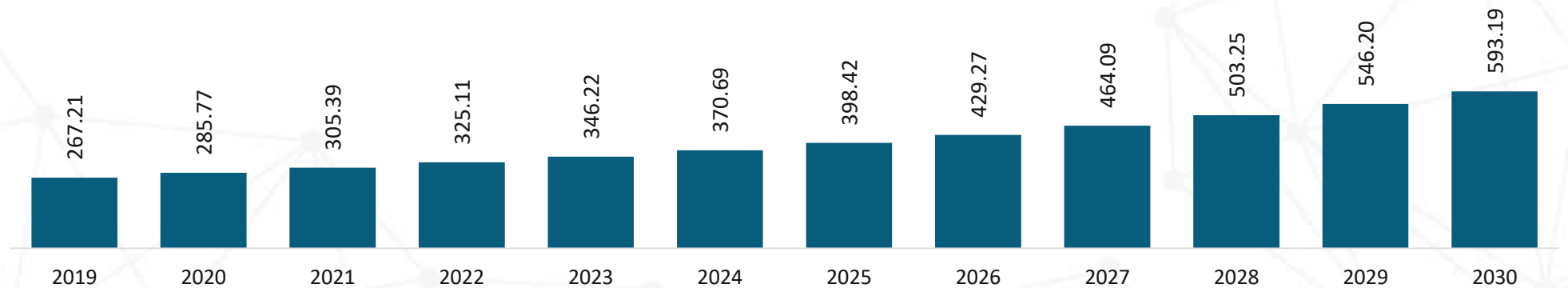


Figure 04: UK Biochar Market Forecast (USD Thousands),By Gasification, 2019-2030



Market Analysis, Insights and Forecast – By Application

Section 5.3

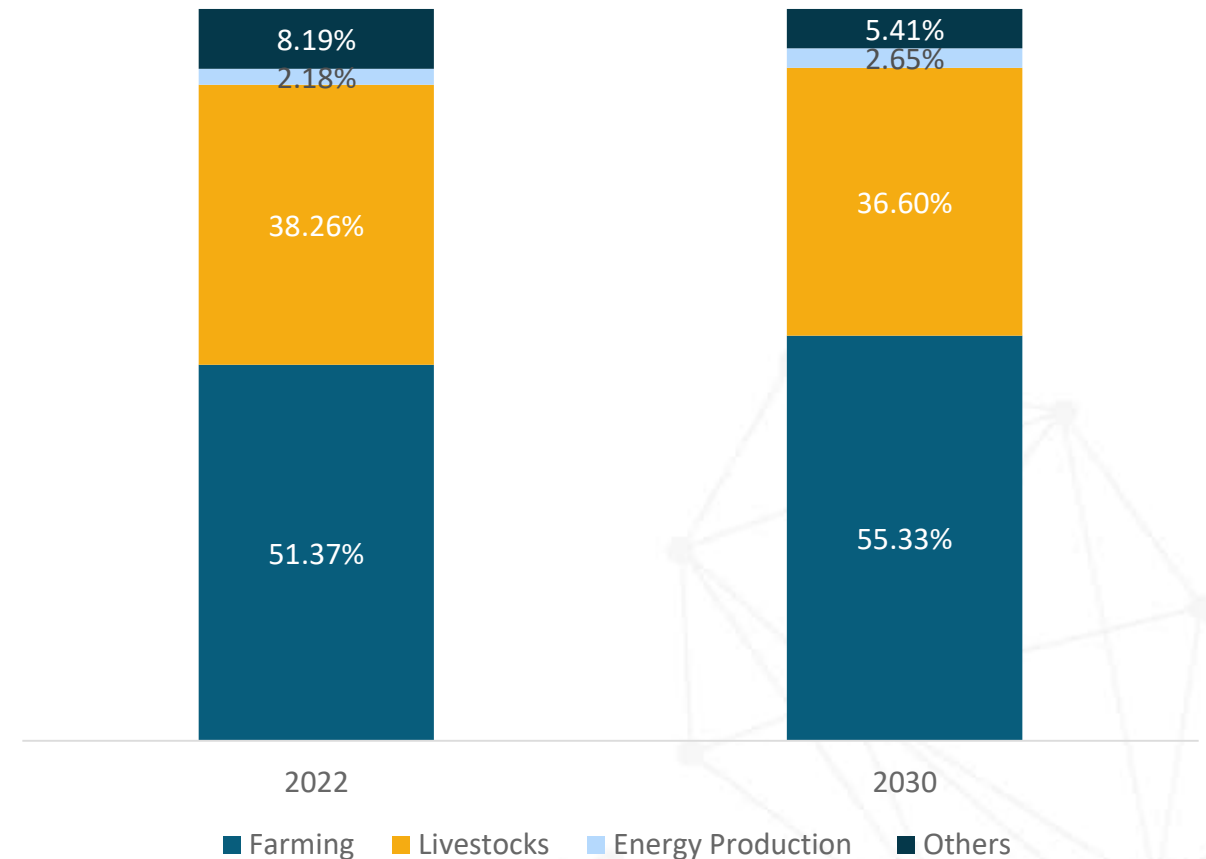
UK Market Analysis and Insights, By Application

Analysis

- The market has been segmented based on applications like farming, livestock, energy production and others. The farming segment is estimated to lead the market during the forecast period. Biochar is widely used in farming owing to the various benefits it offers to the farming segment.
- It is used as a fertilizer to enhance natural carbon sequestration rates in the soil. Biochar is also known to reduce farming waste and serves the betterment of the environment. In addition to being a stable store of carbon, when used as a soil amendment, biochar can provide numerous benefits to agricultural production, such as increasing soil quality as well as water and nutrient retention. It remains stable in the soil for thousands of years.
- The livestock segment is also booming in the country. Biochar is widely used to feed livestock as it helps reduce waste, and it can be turned out to be utilized as feed for various animals. The demand from the livestock segment is growing at a rapid pace.

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Figure 05: UK Biochar Market Value Share (%), By Application, 2022 & 2030



UK Market Forecast, By Application

Table 03: UK Biochar Market Revenue (Tons) Forecast, By Application, 2019–2030

By Application	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	CAGR (2023-2030)
Farming	885.58	962.82	1,078.37	1,251.11	1,415.80	1,577.71	1,753.57	1,966.76	2,221.51	2,554.32	2,991.69	3,553.93	14.05%
Livestock	689.37	737.40	812.62	927.67	1,033.00	1,132.80	1,239.06	1,367.68	1,520.42	1,720.64	1,983.56	2,319.36	0.12
Energy Production	25.84	28.79	33.02	39.21	45.41	51.77	60.92	72.05	85.51	102.98	125.97	155.90	0.19
Others	157.35	163.70	175.22	194.01	209.23	221.85	232.12	244.43	258.46	277.26	301.84	331.85	6.81%
Total	1,758.15	1,892.70	2,099.23	2,412.00	2,703.44	2,984.13	3,285.68	3,650.93	4,085.90	4,655.20	5,403.05	6,361.04	13.00%

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UK Market Forecast, By Application

Table 04: UK Biochar Market Revenue (USD Thousands) Forecast, By Application, 2019–2030

By Application	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	CAGR (2023-2030)
Farming	702.82	767.89	864.11	1,007.18	1,147.47	1,296.18	1,464.17	1,671.72	1,944.86	2,272.27	2,740.57	3,352.74	16.55%
Livestock	549.62	590.90	653.31	750.15	840.87	939.88	1,050.29	1,179.67	1,328.16	1,551.75	1,835.29	2,217.88	14.86%
Energy Production	27.09	30.81	35.21	42.66	49.32	52.78	60.98	68.08	86.44	101.00	126.56	160.80	18.39%
Others	134.45	138.15	148.41	160.65	172.62	180.82	187.96	209.07	220.14	257.02	290.83	328.07	9.61%
Total	1,413.97	1,527.75	1,701.03	1,960.64	2,210.29	2,469.66	2,763.40	3,128.55	3,579.61	4,182.03	4,993.25	6,059.49	15.50%

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UK Market Analysis and Insights, By Application

Figure 06: UK Biochar Market Forecast (USD Thousands),By Farming, 2019-2030

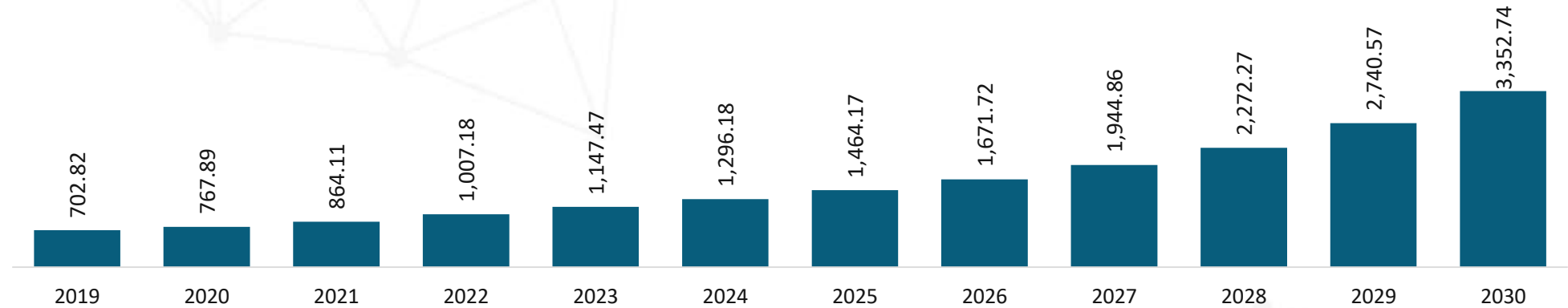
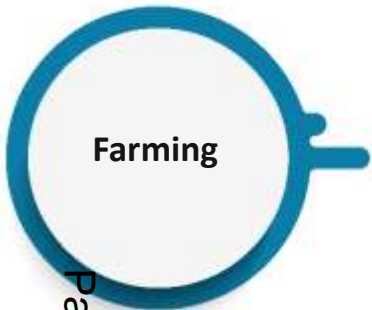
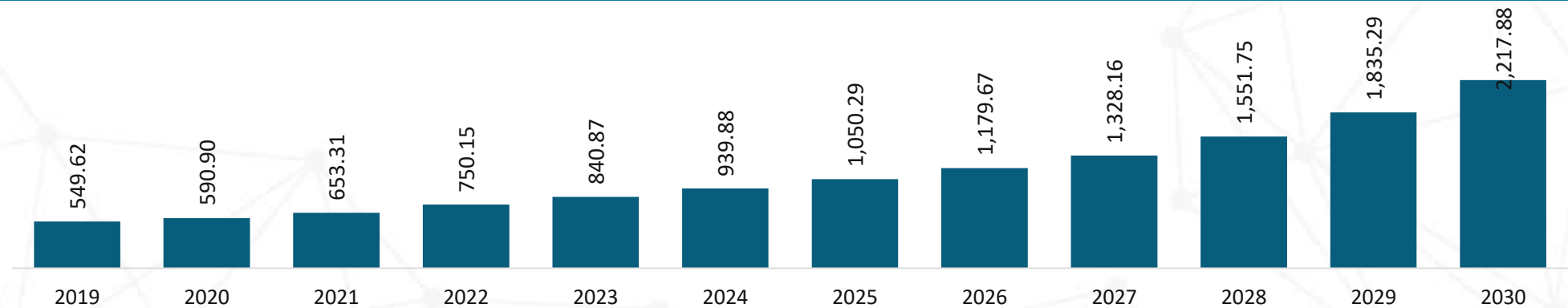


Figure 07: UK Biochar Market Forecast (USD Thousands),By Livestock, 2019-2030



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UK Market Analysis and Insights, By Application

Figure 08: UK Biochar Market Forecast (USD Thousands),By Energy Production , 2019-2030

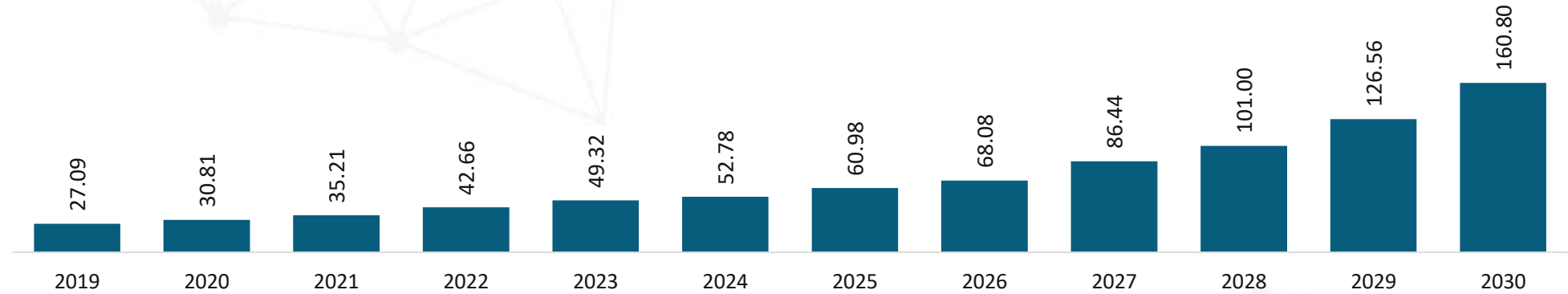
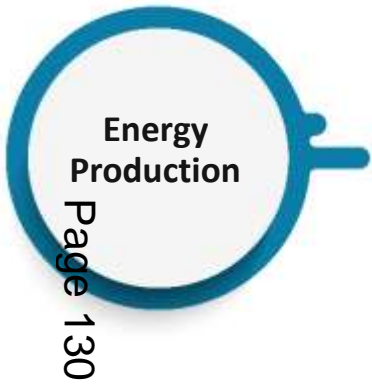
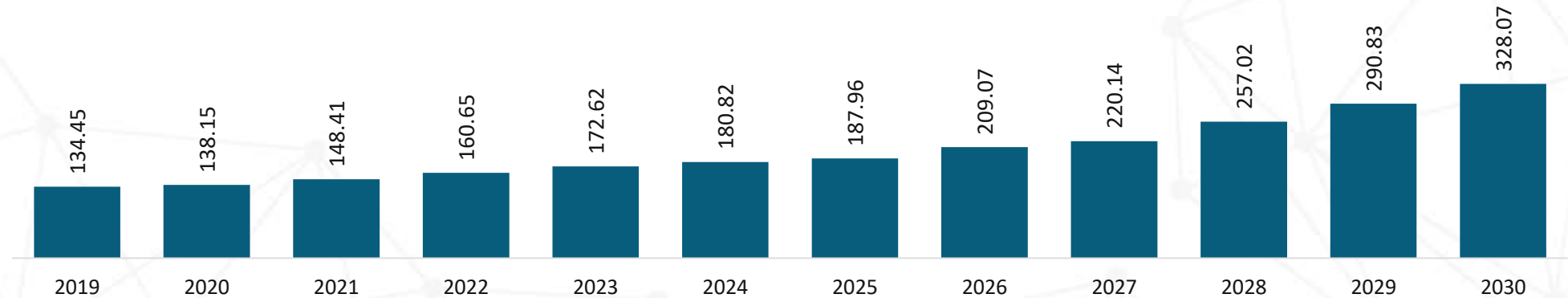


Figure 09: UK Biochar Market Forecast (USD Thousands),By Others, 2019-2030



Company Profiles

Section 06

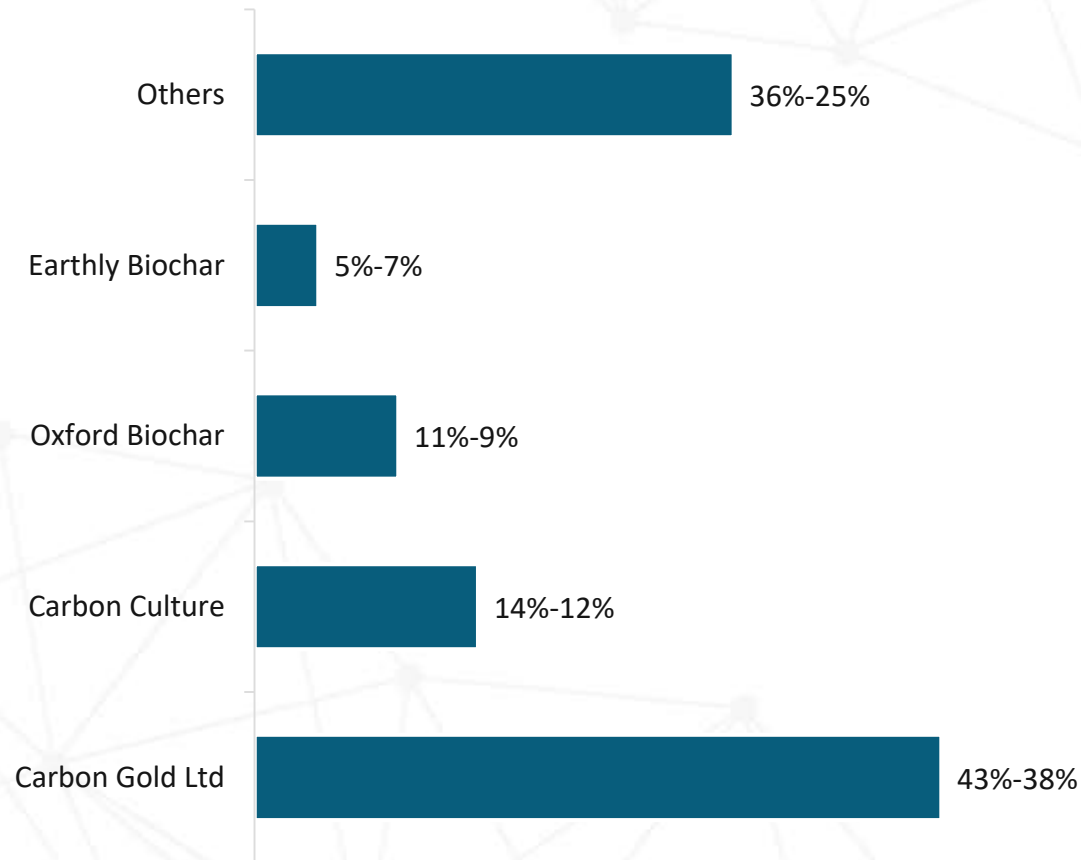
Company Market Share Analysis

Section 6.1

Company Market Share Analysis (2022)

Figure 10: Company Market Share Analysis (%), 2022

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Analysis

- UK biochar market is fragmented with a some medium-scale country players delivering a wide range of products across the value chain. Carbon Gold is expected to account for a significant market share owing to its extensive range of product portfolio along with the strong brand value. Furthermore, the company is also focused to enhance its sales, distribution, and marketing channels through partnerships with different local associates to fortify its product reach across the UK. Carbon Gold is the one of the leading biochar company. They produce and supply high-quality biochar products for use in agriculture, horticulture, and environmental applications.
- Additionally, other key participants operating in the industry include Circular Carbon GmbH, carbon culture, Oxford Biochar, Carbon Hill, among others, leading in providing various biochar across different verticals.
- Companies are also focusing on product development, technology and collaborating with industry players, including network providers, product improvement, and end-users, allows companies to access new market and enhance their market share. Strategic partnerships and alliances is providing companies with a broader customer base and improved market reach.

Company Profiles

Section 6.2

Carbon Gold Ltd



Company Name
Carbon Gold Ltd



Year of Establishment
2007



Headquarters
Clevedon, UK



Revenue
~ USD 0.95 Million (2022)



Director
Susan Ann Rawlings



Employee Strength
~25 (2022)



Website
www.carbongold.com

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Company Overview

- Carbon Gold is the world's leading biochar company. Manufacturers and supply high-quality biochar products for use in agriculture, horticulture, and environmental applications.
- Carbon Gold is a B-Corp certified company that is committed to making a positive impact on the world.
- The company have worked with Premier League football clubs, major race and golf courses, as well as the Royal Parks and Gardens in the UK.
- The products are 100% free from peat and synthetic chemicals, Soil Association approved for organic growing, and Made in Britain certified.

Business Overview

Business Segments	Products & Services
Biochar	Biochar Additives
	Fertiliser
	Peat-Free Compost
	Soil Improver

Circular Carbon GmbH



Company Name

Circular Carbon GmbH



Year of Establishment

2018



Headquarters

Straubing, Germany



Revenue

~ USD 2.67 Million (2022)



Managing Director

Peik Stenlund



Employee Strength

~30 (2022)



Website

www.circular-carbon.com

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Company Overview

- Circular Carbon produces biochar, which is extremely effective in many areas and can restore the natural balance of microbiological habitats.
- The company plan, develop and operate carbonization plants for the production of biochar. They enable the use of residues for the circular economy.
- When charring, the company also generate renewable energy. In Hamburg the company have installed the largest charring plant in Germany.
- Circular Carbon GmbH is a part of the econnext group, which, as a sustainability holding company, is the strong partner for implementing the common mission of promoting the circular economy.

Business Overview

Business Segments	Applications
Biochar	Floor application
	Biochar for animals
	Product development

Carbo Culture



Company Name
Carbo Culture



Year of Establishment
2018



Headquarters
Clevedon, UK



Revenue
~ USD 1.5 Million (2022)



CEO & Co-Founder
Henrietta Moon



Employee Strength
~35 (2022)



Website
www.circular-carbon.com

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Company Overview

- The company got started in 2018 with initial funding and the R1 reactor prototype assembly.
- Carbo Culture has developed a proprietary carbon removal technology called Carbolyis™. The technology is more efficient and carbolyis process uses a patented pyrolysis method to convert waste biomass into solid biochar through high temperatures and pressures with unique control methods.
- Most permanent methods of carbon removal are limited by their technological scalability.
- At Carbo Culture have leveraged natural processes with advanced engineering to create a rapidly scalable solution.

Business Overview

Business Segments	Applications
Biochar	Agriculture
	Urban landscaping
	Construction materials

Carbo Culture

Recent Developments

- **In August 2023** - Carbo Culture's first industrial pilot facility opens near Helsinki, Finland, demonstrating efficient and scalable biochar carbon removal. The facility, named 'R3, or Reactor 3,' is funded by the European Innovation Council and it uses a method called biochar carbon removal (BCR) to permanently remove carbon dioxide (CO2) from the atmosphere.
- **In March 2023** - Carbo Culture joins the NextGen CDR facility portfolio. NextGen's portfolio would establish the market best practice for project standard certification. All projects will be certified and verified under standards endorsed by the International Carbon Reduction and Offset Alliance (ICROA) to ensure an independent third-party assurance that the projects are of the highest environmental integrity and benefit local communities.

Oxford Biochar



Company Name
Oxford Biochar



Year of Establishment
2013



Headquarters
Faringdon, UK



Revenue
~ USD 0.29 Million (2022)



Director
Jonathan Chappell



Employee Strength
~30 (2022)



Website
www.oxfordbiochar.org

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Company Overview

- Oxford Biochar is the sister company to the world-renowned The Oxford Charcoal Company, who have been manufacturing Sustainable Charcoal since 2013.
- The Biochar is produced from pure biomass, and its source is certified by Grown In Britain (GiB) and the European Biochar Certification (EBC). It's not mixed or enhanced with foreign materials so you can be confident it's safe to use as animal feed and to grow food too.
- The Biochar is produced from green wood, not waste. Its made in the UK or EU and actively used in real project in the following verticals; Farming, Horticulture, Animal Feed, Water Filtration and Medical Applications.

Business Overview

Business Segments	Applications
Biochar	Soil Improver and Composting
	Farming, Animal Husbandry
	Biochar in Building Materials
	Water Filtration

Carbon Hill



Company Name

Carbon Hill



Year of Establishment

2021



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Headquarters

Welshpool, UK



Revenue

NA



Director

JONES, Frederick Michael



Employee Strength

NA



Website

NA








Company Overview

- Carbon Hill is a biochar company owned by the Jones family located in Caebardd farm, near Welshpool in mid-Wales, UK. The company has changed its name from Karbon Capture Limited to Carbon Hill on 25th January 2023.
- The company has developed a proprietary pyrolysis thermal combustion system that utilizes new and existing technologies to produce biochar with minimal emissions.
- Carbon Hill sources two types of waste woody biomass for their biochar production: hedgerow cuttings from farm fields and Green Waste Over Size (GWOS) from local parks and gardens. These feedstocks are largely underutilized in the UK and are typically either left to biodegrade or burn, leading to carbon loss

Business Overview

Business Segments	Applications
Biochar	Agriculture
	Retail
	Land remediation

Earthly Biochar

- 
Company Name
 Earthly Biochar
- 
Year of Establishment
 2018
- 
Headquarters
 Welshpool, UK
- 
Revenue
 ~ USD 0.25 Million (2022)
- 
Director
 Charlotte Hawkins
- 
Employee Strength
 ~22 (2022)
- 
Website
www.earthlybiochar.com

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Company Overview

- Earthly Biochar are UK biochar suppliers, committed to combating climate change through making high-performance, sustainable products accessible at affordable prices.
- The biochar kilns are handmade to order in the Welsh countryside supporting rural communities. Every part of kilns is made in the UK.
- The clean burning technology makes it easy and economical for domestic gardeners to make their own powerful soil amendments in just one hour, with the process optimized to create carbon neutral heat over harmful smoke.
- The company is becoming a driver for the movement in UK, with more carbon-conscious individuals wanting to explore alternatives, and discover its potential applications.

Business Overview

Business Segments	Product Segments
Biochar	Biochar Kiln
	Biochar with Inoculant Powder

List of Potential Equipment Supplier

Section 07

List of Potential Equipment Supplier (1/2)

Name	Headquarter	Website
SYNCRAFT	Schwaz, Austria	www.en.syncraft.at.com
Biomacon GmbH	Rehburg, Germany	www.biomacon.com
PYREG	Dörth, Germany	www.pyreg.com
Carbon Technik Schuster GmbH	Neresheim, Germany	www.ct-schuster.de
Vow ASA	Lysaker, NORWAY	www.vowasa.com
SOLER Group	Gyé-sur-Seine , France	www.carbon-centric.com
CARBOFEX	Kaarnakatu 1, Finland	www.carbofex.fi.com
Aquagreen	Roskilde, Denmark	www.aquagreen.dk.com
Next Generation Elements GmbH	Feldkirchen, Austria	www.nge.at.en.com
PyroCore	Bristol BS11 8AP, United Kingdom	www.pyrocore.com
PERPETUAL NEXT	Amsterdam, Netherlands	www.perpetualnext.com
XYLERGY	Belgium	www.xylergy-group.com
Carbonauten	Giengen, Germany	www.carbonauten.com

List of Potential Equipment Supplier (2/2)

Name	Headquarter	Website
Stiesdal	Aarhus, Denmark	www.stiesdal.com
CARBOFORCE	Preetz, Germany	www.carbo-force.de/en/home
Meva Energy	Hisings Backa, Sweden	www.mevaenergy.com
EQTEC	London, UK	www.eqtec.com
Haffner Energy	Rue Saint-Augustin, Paris	www.haffner-energy.com
Mash Makes	København, Denmark	www.mashmakes.com
Beston Group Co., Ltd.	CHINA	www.bestongroup.com
PyroPower GmbH	Germany	www.pyro-power.com
GUNTAMATIC HEIZTECHNIK GMBH	Peuerbach, Austria	www.guntamatic.com
Clayton Deutschland GmbH	UK	www.claytonsteam.com
BBS GmbH	Germany	www.bay-boiler.com
Alfa Laval	Sweden	www.alfalaval.com

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Thank You



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Committee and Date

Item

Public



Marches Forward Partnership Memorandum of Understanding

Responsible Officer:	Mark Barrow, Executive Director of Place		
email:	mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258919
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Lezley Picton		

1. Synopsis

This report seeks approval for the Council to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Shropshire Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire and Powys County Council's for collaboration as a Marches Forward Partnership.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Shropshire Plan's healthy organisation priority recognises the importance of putting the Council's resources in the right place to deliver the organisation's priorities and meet the needs of our residents. This includes maximising external funding opportunities and collaborating with neighbouring authorities to share best practice and support financial resilience of services through joint working initiatives.
- 2.2 Shropshire Council has been working collaboratively with Herefordshire Council and both Monmouthshire and Powys County Councils to develop a common understanding of each other's organisations. The aim has been to establish areas where there is mutual benefit and added value in working together, supporting each other's strategic aims and leveraging combined knowledge, resources and activities.
- 2.3 Geographically, the neighbouring local authorities cover a contiguous area which straddles over 80% of the English and Welsh border. Commuting patterns and access to retail, education, business support and healthcare services all reflect the functional profile of the area.

- 2.4 The local authorities are bound together by common purpose based on a high quality rural environment, but with consequent more expensive access to services, changing service demands from an ageing population and low levels of productivity and employment growth. Given this profile, the local authorities are keen to explore a shared ambition for rural based growth, identifying opportunities for strategic collaboration on agreed projects and initiatives. This approach is aimed at ensuring effective local joint working and provides a basis, using the power of the collective area, to develop investment propositions for Government and partners.
- 2.5 Whilst the local authorities have interacted with one another as neighbouring areas on many levels for a long time, these activities have not previously been fully coordinated. There is now an opportunity and willingness to align respective strategic visions, plans and resources for the maximum benefit on the Marches and cross border area.
- 2.6 This emphasis on greater cross border understanding has intensified for many local authorities over recent years, with a shared focus on partnership working. This is supported by greater flexibility and an emphasis on strategic collaboration from Government, recently illustrated by the Wales and Cornwall Celtic-Heritage Collaboration Agreement.
- 2.7 Covering the gateway between England and Wales, the Marches Forward Partnership could provide opportunity for the border local authorities to coordinate future joint working under a flexible umbrella framework. It is aimed at supporting a shared understanding of 'life on the borders' as a focus for strategic joint working and as a means to unlock additional investment into the area.
- 2.8 The Partnership will focus its collaboration only where it adds the greatest value. All participating councils will maintain independent decision making and local delivery within each local authority area, where this continues to be most appropriate, including involvement in other beneficial partnership arrangements.
- 2.9 This report was considered at Cabinet on 6 September and received cross party support and formal Cabinet agreement to seek Council approval for the recommendations.

3. Recommendations

Council agree to:

- 3.1. The establishment of a Marches Forward Partnership with neighbouring local authorities.
- 3.2. The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the local authorities to reflect the spirit of cooperation and joint working between them.
- 3.3. Support the development of the Marches Forward Partnership through representation on a joint local authority Leaders Group.
- 3.4. Delegate to the Chief Executive and Executive Director of Place to proceed with development of a work programme to meet the objectives within the Memorandum of Understanding, in consultation with relevant Portfolio Holders (depending on the service under consideration).

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. Significant opportunity is provided by the development of the Marches Forward Partnership. The Partnership provides a flexible umbrella framework for joint working which supports local service delivery based around how people and places function rather than being confined within organisational or geographical boundaries. It also enables the Council to harness the unique value of Shropshire's cross border location.
- 4.2. The Partnership is not intended to be a legal entity. There will be no formal governing structure and no elements of the MOU will be legally binding. As a result, there are no currently identified legal risks to the Council since the Partnership will operate on an informal basis, based around joint working on areas of common purpose.
- 4.3. Mapping has been undertaken to understand existing strategic partnership arrangements across the area. As a result, the development of the Partnership and its intended work programme do not pose a risk in terms of duplicating existing arrangements. Instead, the Partnership will only focus on areas of added value, addressing an existing gap in strategic cross border working between England and Wales.
- 4.4. As a flexible arrangement, each local authority within the Partnership has the freedom to either not undertake a particular activity or not participate further in the Partnership at any point in time. The Partnership does not therefore pose a risk in terms of prejudicing or constraining any of the constituent partners or groupings of partners in being involved in alternative partnership arrangements. The MOU does not restrict, in any way, other arrangements that a partner local authority may wish to develop independently.
- 4.5. The risks and opportunities relating to this report are predominately focused on Shropshire Council's role in developing an informal partnership and the associated working arrangements. Whilst this poses resource implications, the proposed management structure for the Partnership is focused on joint resourcing. Each local authority will share skills, data and learning as well as the provision of a portfolio lead for thematic working groups. There are significant opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness through joint working initiatives as well as the potential to use the Marches Forward Partnership as a platform to secure wider investment support.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The MOU makes clear that nothing in the agreement involves a commitment of funds from the partner local authorities. Work to date has used existing local authority resources, focused on shared staff time and skills. It has not involved any other financial implications.

- 5.2. The Partnership provides opportunity for continued sharing of staff resources to support development of cross border joint working. Through the development of the Partnership work programme, partners may decide to commission work on particular topics to progress key areas of activity. Future work by the Partnership may therefore involve an ask for partner investment. However, the Partnership framework provides a basis to prioritise, agree and divide such costs across the collective partners, thereby providing benefit and reducing the financial implications to each individual organisation.
- 5.3. Given the informal working relationship under the strategic collaboration, the MOU does make clear that each local authority will have individual responsibility for relevant Cabinet and Council briefings. This will include ensuring all the necessary financial agreements are in place within each partner local authority for any future key areas of work associated with the Partnership. Political leadership and oversight through a Leaders Group will ensure regular updates on progress and future work programmes.
- 5.4. As a strategic collaboration, the Partnership provides opportunity as a means of unlocking new funding into the area. Using the additional value of the unique cross border location and collective approach, the Partnership provides a platform to attract investment for effective service delivery and critical infrastructure across the area.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 The Partnership provides a significant opportunity for the partner local authorities to support one another on climate and net zero plans and local delivery.
- 6.2 Early scoping work for the Partnership identified key areas of service alignment and priority across the neighbouring authorities. As a grouping with a shared, high quality, rural environment, a key thematic focus has already emerged around nature, energy and climate adaptation. This is reflected in the MOU which highlights opportunity to work together on strategic scale projects to address current and future resilience challenges in relation to climate change and nature recovery. The Partnership could also support rural resilience through work around land management and exploring common local authority aspirations around net zero and renewable energy solutions.

7. Background

- 7.1 The Marches Forward Partnership brings together strategic joint working between Shropshire, Herefordshire, Powys and Monmouthshire local authorities. It covers a population of approximately 737,000 residents and covers an area of approximately 1,140,000 hectares.
- 7.2 For many people, the border between England and Wales is somewhat of an artificial boundary and can limit potential for collaboration. A strategic cross border partnership provides opportunity to support government ambitions around Union Connectivity, improving join up between England and Wales and helping to increase investment and accelerate delivery of key infrastructure projects.

- 7.3 Early scoping work by the neighbouring local authorities has highlighted the potential to innovate and look at creative solutions which are not bound by statutory delivery timescales or regulatory frameworks. The Partnership offers a flexible framework to explore how local services and corporate priorities can be delivered differently using shared skill sets and an unusual level of freedom. It provides a unique opportunity to focus on the added value of working as a collective whole whilst not seeking to duplicate or impact on individual partner relationships or partnerships explored in the future by constituent partners.
- 7.4 Whilst initially focused on short term opportunities for more efficient and effective service delivery, the Partnership also provides opportunity for constituent partners to seek and gain greater recognition of the need for joint working across borders with respective Governments. As such, it provides a platform to raise the profile of the area and seek greater investment for delivery.
- 7.5 Functionally the area is already united, with significant flows of people between the Mid Wales-English border in all areas including healthcare, education, skill development, jobs and service provision. This cross border movement is attributable to a number of interrelated factors including geographic convenience, specialities in sector and service provision and infrastructure availability.
- 7.6 Cross border partnership working has been a focal point for some time. Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and Herefordshire already operate as a collective economic geography under the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership and whilst there is not a similar LEP structure for Wales, cross border joint working is a focus of activity between Shropshire, Herefordshire, Powys and Monmouthshire on a local service delivery basis. The Marches has also been progressing conversations, for some time, on the potential for a cross border Growth Deal with Powys. This is based on recognition of the importance of the cross border relationship between Mid Wales and the Marches.
- 7.7 Between Summer 2022 and January 2023, Local Authority Leaders within the Marches discussed, with the Marches LEP, options for securing more freedoms to make decisions at a local level. Such discussions were also driven by consideration of the types of means available in the future to unlock greater investment into the area as an enabler of growth.
- 7.8 At the same time, local authority Leaders across Shropshire, Herefordshire, Powys and Monmouthshire started to explore areas of collective interest and ambitions to bring together both Welsh and English Governments to support, in principle, joint working across borders. It was agreed that joint scoping should take place across the local authorities to understand shared priorities and opportunities that are worthy of further investigation. This was aimed at identifying those key focal points where strategic thinking and joint work at the collective scale provides the most benefit.
- 7.9 Alongside this early scoping work, ongoing conversations are taking place with both Wrexham Council and Telford and Wrekin Council as the two other local authorities with a shared interest in this functional geography. An open invitation has been established for these partners to join the Partnership, as the development work progresses and more information is known and shared on priority areas and joint working opportunities.

7.10 From the early scoping work, key areas of shared interest have been identified around nature and climate adaptation, energy, transport and connectivity, housing, digital, economic regeneration, skills and innovation. In June 2023, a draft MOU was developed to reflect some of the outputs from the early scoping work. This is summarised within the following six objectives:

- **Objective 1: Data, Evidence and Research:** Leveraging joint intelligence and research expertise to improve the quality of life for our rural, cross border communities through sharing information and carrying out research.
- **Objective 2: Nature, Energy and Climate Adaptation:** Working together to identify and collaborate on strategic scale opportunities based around our high quality natural environment, addressing current and future resilience challenges in relation to climate change and nature recovery.
- **Objective 3: Transport and Digital Transformation:** Working together to improve rural connectivity, to level up access to jobs, education and opportunity and bring mutual benefits for our neighbouring areas.
- **Objective 4: Sustainable Communities:** Working together on the development of sustainable communities, creating a social infrastructure offer which realises the growth and sustainability of the rural economy and supports our residents, employers and users of our geography.
- **Objective 5: Food, Rural Development and Visitor Economy:** Working together to identify opportunities for closer collaboration which encourages the economic growth of our rural economy, developing and promoting our unique offer.
- **Objective 6: Government and Strategic Relations:** Working together on strategic communications to raise the regional, national and international profile of our area.

7.11 These objectives now provide a starting point, to be built on through the Marches Forward Partnership.

8. Additional Information

8.1. In supporting the MOU, Shropshire Council is asked to agree that:

- Appropriate support is prioritised to respond and progress work within the MoU, with each partner Local Authority in the Partnership taking individual responsibility for relevant Cabinet and Council briefings, as needed, to update on progress and ensure widespread support for this work.
- the MoU will run for an 18-month term before review;
- the broader activity of the Partnership may evolve and expand during implementation and will be reflected in subsequent reviews;
- nothing in the MoU will be interpreted as a commitment of funds from each local authority; and
- the MoU does not restrict, in any way, other arrangements that a local authority may wish to develop independently.

9. Conclusions

9.1. The Marches Forward Partnership offers opportunity to establish a collaboration framework for neighbouring local authority areas with shared needs and interests. It provides a flexible basis for joint working without the need for formal governing

structures and without impacting existing strategic partnerships or individual local authority working arrangements.

- 9.2. It offers the ability to consider where strategic joint working across borders between England and Wales provides the most significant value and can bring together shared resources and skill sets to maximise delivery and opportunity for the area.
- 9.3. Across the partner local authorities, the Marches Forward Partnership is seen as an opportunity to:
- Focus on the shared geography and maximising the potential of the area.
 - Provide the right tools for effective service delivery within each local authority.
 - Understand and work together to attract the right investment, for example for critical infrastructure.
 - Understand and innovate to address the needs of rural communities.
 - Harness the value of shared rural assets.
 - Align policy and investment drivers to obtain the best from cross border political ambitions.
 - Understand future trends and service demands across a functional area.
 - Focus on where collaboration adds the greatest value.
 - Share learning and best practice.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member: *All Members*

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

Draft MOU Marches Forward Partnership- August 2023

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Draft Memorandum of Understanding

For the

Marches Forward Partnership

Between

Herefordshire Council, Monmouthshire County Council,
Powys County Council and Shropshire Council

August 2023

Background:

Herefordshire Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Powys County Council, and Shropshire Council have been working collaboratively to develop a common understanding of each other's organisations. The aim has been to establish areas where there is mutual benefit and added value in working together, supporting each other's strategic aims and making the most of combined knowledge, resources and activities.

Geographically, the local authorities cover a contiguous area which straddles over 80% of the English and Welsh border. It is a wonderful area to live, work and visit and we have much to celebrate together. However, commuting patterns and access to retail, education, business support and healthcare services all reflect the functional profile of the area. The neighbouring local authorities are bound together by common purpose based on their rurality with longer and more expensive access to services, changing service demands from an ageing population and low levels of productivity and employment growth.

Whilst the local authorities have interacted as neighbouring areas on many levels for a long time, these activities had not previously been fully coordinated to align respective strategic visions, plans and resources for the maximum impact on the Marches and cross border area.

With an increased emphasis on the importance of place and local authorities in a system leadership role, and with the closure of the Marches LEP planned next year, this MOU formalises the strategic relationship between the Marches and cross border local authorities.

Purpose:

This MOU represents the spirit of co-operation and joint working between the local authorities. It is based on a shared set of principles around working together to raise the regional, national, and international profile of the Marches and cross border area with both Welsh and UK Government, businesses, and other key stakeholders.

The aim is to work together to maximise efficient service delivery, attract investment and positively impact the area and benefit local communities.

The local authorities do not intend this MoU to be legally binding. It is not intended that any formalised governing authority be created by this MoU.

Nothing in this MoU will seek to constrain the individual activities of each local authority or groupings of local authorities within the partnership. It is also not intended to duplicate existing partnership working by the constituent partners.

Objectives:

The MOU is set in the context of the climate emergency, economic uncertainty and drive for inclusive growth to level up communities and support Union Connectivity. It embodies the following agreed set of overarching principles:

- Providing a flexible umbrella framework for joint working
- Focusing on driving the best economic deal for the geography
- Delivering services that respond to how the area functions
- Unlocking additional value through harnessing the unique cross border location
- Developing a joint working approach to innovation
- Shaping and delivering outcomes for the best short, medium and long term future.
- Sharing learning and best practice with partners.

The focus of the collaboration is further defined by the following six objectives:

Objective 1: Data, Evidence and Research: Leveraging joint intelligence and research expertise to improve the quality of life for our rural, cross border communities through sharing information and carrying out research, with a particular focus on:

- Climate Change
- Transport and Connectivity
- Public health and inequalities
- Economic growth
- Data analysis and modelling to inform integrated policy-making and delivery between England and Wales based on a functional geography.

Objective 2: Nature, Energy and Climate Adaptation: Working together to identify and collaborate on strategic scale opportunities based around our high quality natural environment, addressing current and future resilience challenges in relation to climate change and nature recovery, with a particular focus on:

- Supporting rural resilience through bringing together thinking and work around land management
- Developing and unlocking climate and nature based investment opportunities
- Exploring common local authority aspirations around net zero and renewable energy solutions.

Objective 3: Transport and Digital Transformation: Working together to improve rural connectivity, to level up access to jobs, education and opportunity and bring mutual benefits for our neighbouring areas, with a particular focus on:

- Working together to establish a coherent, consistent and integrated bus network.
- Developing simplified cross border travel through integrated ticketing.
- Exploring opportunities with partners to increase frequency and speed of local rail provision.
- Developing cross area SMART collaboration opportunities to support shared social and economic outcomes.

Objective 4: Sustainable Communities: Working together on the development of sustainable communities, creating a social infrastructure offer which realises the growth and sustainability of the rural economy and supports our residents, employers and users of our geography, with a particular focus on:

- Understanding cross border movements to access health provision and the infrastructure needed to support this.
- Working collaboratively to provide cross border leadership for housing, including horizon scanning to identify future risks and opportunities and sharing information and good practice.
- Understanding and articulating the needs of existing and prospective employers to improve the ability for learning, skills and business support provision across borders to meet demands.

Objective 5: Food, Rural Development and Visitor Economy: Working together to identify opportunities for closer collaboration which encourages the economic growth of our rural economy, developing and promoting our unique offer, with a particular focus on:

- Supporting the development of key projects to attract investment, harnessing the power of shared assets, thematic propositions and strategic tourism routes.
- Working together to catalyse the realisation of key economic development sites, with strategic priority being to support market town regeneration.
- Establishing our value in food production supporting UK food sovereignty and agroecological practices, developing an enterprising and entrepreneurial culture which supports the development of sector based strategies and economic clusters.
- Working together to support a coherent cultural and visitor economy offer.

Objective 6: Government and Strategic Relations: Working together on strategic communications to raise the regional, national and international profile of our area, with a particular focus on:

- Joining up conversations with partners to support understanding and to work collaboratively on the promotion of activities and opportunities with key stakeholders.
- Where appropriate and in the interests of the area, agree key messages and a collective shared approach; noting that individual local authority positions will not always be aligned.
- Coordinating responses to jointly inform consultations, strategies and policies developed by others.

Management of MoU activity:

The Partnership will be coordinated through a Leaders Group bringing together the Leaders of each local authority on a quarterly basis.

An annual report will be prepared by the Leaders Group, setting out the progress made by the Marches Forward Partnership over the last year and identifying the priorities for the forthcoming 12 month.

The Leaders Group will be supported by officer groups comprising the Chief Executives and relevant Directors alongside working groups on particular focus areas.

Officer groups will operate on a monthly basis to support the Leaders in driving forward the programme of joint work.

Joint management and delivery structure



The local authorities also agree that:

- LA Leaders will respond to and progress work within this MoU, with each Local Authority taking individual responsibility for relevant Cabinet and Council briefings, as needed, to update on progress and ensure widespread support for this work.
- this MoU will run for an 18 month term before review;
- the broader activity of the Partnership may evolve and expand during implementation and will be reflected in subsequent reviews;
- nothing in this MoU will be interpreted as a commitment of funds from each local authority; and
- this MoU does not restrict, in any way, other arrangements that a local authority may wish to develop independently.

Signed by:

Date:

DRAFT

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Committee and Date

Council
21st September 2023

Item

Public



Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station Review 2023

Responsible Officer:	Andy Begley, Electoral Registration Officer		
email:	andy.begley@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258911
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Gwilym Butler		

1. Synopsis

The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the timetable for a statutory review of polling districts and polling places within the county, in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006).

2. Executive Summary

2.1. The main purpose of the review is to ensure all electors have reasonable facilities for voting, and that polling places are accessible to electors who are disabled.

2.2. The following definitions are aimed to provide an understanding of the terms used within the report.

- “Polling districts” are geographical electoral areas into which wards and constituencies may be sub-divided.
- “Polling places” are the buildings or areas designated by the council where electors in a polling district go to vote in person.
- “Polling stations” are the number of issuing desks in the building or area that is the designated polling place

- 2.3. Electoral Commission guidance states that every parish should be in its own polling district, and that, where possible, polling places should be in their own polling district. By having a polling place, and polling station, located within a polling district ensures there is a suitable venue for electors to access. However, it may be necessary to identify a polling place outside the polling district if no suitable venue can be identified.
- 2.4. Guidance issued by the Electoral Commission stipulates how reviews should be conducted.
- A. Stage 1 – the formal commencement of the review requires the local authority to give notice of the holding of a review.
 - B. Stage 2 - the consultation stage is for representations and comments to be made on the existing and proposed arrangements for polling districts and polling places. These include a compulsory submission from the (Acting) Returning Officer of the UK Parliamentary constituencies, and submissions from electors and other interested persons and bodies, including elected representatives and those with expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people.
 - C. Stage 3 – After considering all the representations, the Council must decide on the most appropriate polling districts and polling places.
 - D. Stage 4 - Once the Council has agreed the proposals, details of the new polling districts and polling places must be made available to the public.
- 2.5. Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983 does not allow the review to commence prior to 1 October 2023. The Electoral Registration Officer has taken account of the statutory commencement date, and to ensure the review is carried out in a timely manner, is intending to publish the Notice of Review, Council Proposals and commence the formal consultation period on 2 October 2023.
- 2.6. The proposed review timetable is set out as follows:

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2023	
Notice of review published	2 October 2023
Council proposals published	2 October 2023
Commencement of formal consultation	2 October 2023
Conclusion of formal consultation	30 October 2023
Council to consider final proposals	14 December 2023

- 2.7. It is planned that any changes resulting from the overall review would be considered by Council before being incorporated into the revised register when published.
- 2.8. The Boundary Commission for England has now concluded its own review and Orders for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries will be made by 1

November 2023. The Council will be required to make arrangements for changes to be made to UK Parliamentary constituency boundaries before the next UK Parliamentary Election. These changes would not take effect before the election date, and any other elections held before this time would take place under the current boundary arrangements.

- 2.9. The Electoral Returning Officer needs to ensure any changes coming out of the boundary review are reflected in the register for existing and new constituencies. Changes to parliamentary constituency boundaries will come into force at the next UK Parliamentary election, however, any changes to polling districts and polling places identified through the polling district review will come in to force when the revised register is published on 2 January 2024.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Council approves the timetable for the completion of the compulsory Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station review as set out at paragraph 2.6.
- 3.2 That the Electoral Registration Officer is authorised to take the necessary measures as soon as possible to give effect to parliamentary constituency changes, ensuring that the register reflects existing and new constituencies, until the boundaries are fully in force.
- 3.3 That the Electoral Registration Officer is authorised to take the necessary measures to give effect to any new or amended polling districts on completion of the polling district review, ensuring that the register reflects existing and new boundaries, until the boundaries are fully in force.
- 3.4 That power to designate polling places in accordance with section 18 and 18B of the Representation of the People Act 1983 is delegated to the Electoral Registration Officer. Such power to be exercised only where a decision is required at short notice, and it is not possible to await a decision of Council.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The Council is required to conduct a statutory review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations every 5 years.
- 4.2. There is no anticipated environmental impact associated with the recommendations of the report.
- 4.3. The recommendations are not at variance with the Human Rights Act 1998 and is unlikely to result in any adverse Human Rights Act implications. The recommendations are in line with relevant legal procedures prescribed by the Act and with guidance issued by the Home Office.

- 4.4. Any amendments to the current polling districts, polling places and polling stations will take into account the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006), Elections Act 2022, Equalities Act 2010, and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 4.5. The council must seek to ensure all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 4.6. The council must seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The financial implications associated with the current recommendations are limited to employee costs associated with undertaking the consultation exercise, and any costs involved in promoting the review. Any financial implications of any proposed changes as a result of the review will be considered when those changes are reported on.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. There are no anticipated effects on climate change matters from the recommendations within the report.

7. Background

- 7.1. Under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) the council has a duty to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district.
- 7.3. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every five years.
- 7.4. Under section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the next compulsory review must be undertaken within a 16-month window between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.
- 7.5. The intention of the legislation was that reviews would be completed by the January before a UK parliamentary general election. However, since the repeal of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011, there is no longer any certainty as to when the next general election will be.
- 7.6. The Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022 means:
 - the UK Parliament can be dissolved by the King on request of the Prime Minister, at any time within the 5 years of the life of the Parliament

- the next general election must take place before Tuesday 28 January 2025, but it could happen at any point before then
- there is no longer a link between the timing of the compulsory polling district and places review falling in a 16-month period ending 3 months before a scheduled general election.

7.8 In addition, the Boundary Commission for England is currently undertaking a review of parliamentary constituency boundaries. The Commission has now published its final recommendations, and Orders for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries will be made by 1 November 2023.

7.9 Once the Orders for new parliamentary constituencies have been made, the new boundaries will be used for the next general election. If a parliamentary by election is called in the meantime, it would be run on existing boundaries.

7.10 These issues mean it is important that the polling district and places review is carried out as early as possible, so that Shropshire Council has agreed polling districts and places to be used for the next parliamentary election, as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2024, and has a polling scheme in place which reflects the new constituencies.

7.11 The results of the review will be considered by Council on 14 December 2023, however, if any decisions are required on the use of an alternative venue as a polling place in the meantime, the power to approve polling districts and polling places has been delegated to the Electoral Registration Officer, in accordance with section 18 and 18B of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

8. Conclusions

8.1. Any arrangements proposed in the review should enable the Council to designate the most appropriate polling places and polling stations to enable electors, including disabled users, to access suitable facilities for voting which are practicable in the circumstances.

8.2. It is planned that any changes resulting from the review would be incorporated into the annual register when published.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Electoral Commission Guidance on Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

Local Member: All

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

None



Committee and Date
Council
21 September 2023

Item

Public



Annual Report of the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

Responsible Officer:	Tanya Miles		
email:	tanya.miles@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 255811
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Kirstie Hurst-Knight		

1. Synopsis

This report provides an update on key achievements and developments within Early Help, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding and Education & Achievement from April 2022 to March 2023. This includes updates following recent Ofsted inspections and some early indications of education achievement during the summer term 2023.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report provides an update on key achievements and developments within Early Help, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding and Education and Achievement from April 2022 to March 2023. This includes updates following recent Ofsted inspections and some early indications of education achievement during the summer term 2023.
- 2.2. Children's Social Care and Safeguarding was last inspected in November 2018 when a Joint Targeted Area Inspection was undertaken. The most recent Ofsted Inspection was undertaken in February 2022 when the Service was graded Good overall.

- 2.3. Ofsted and CQC completed the Area SEND revisit inspection in November 2022 identifying 3 out of 6 areas had improved to a sufficient level. The 3 remaining areas are subject to an Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) monitored by the DfE and NHS England.
- 2.4. In 2021 the Local Government Association (LGA) undertook a test of assurance following the formation of the People's Directorate. The outcome was positive. The LGA were invited back in November 2022 and gave feedback that they were assured in all areas and significant impact could be evidenced.
- 2.5. The Council's vision for every child in Shropshire is that *"by treating our children and young people with respect, love and trust and with the right amount of encouragement we can inspire them to dream big, build relationships and connections that matter and together with kindness and a sense of belonging we can do great things."*
- 2.6. This vision is at the heart of the Shropshire Plan, if we support families at the earliest opportunity, tackle inequalities, breaking generational cycles through changing historical patterns of behaviours should enable, where possible, children to:
 - a) Live safely within their birth families or with connected carers without intervention from Services.
 - b) Lead the best life they want to live.
 - c) Be part of a healthy, safe community where they have a sense of belonging.
- 2.7. The last Portfolio Holder's report was presented to Council in 2020 less than two months into the first national lockdown. No one could have imagined the impact of the pandemic on the Country at national and local levels. In Shropshire, Covid 19 placed significant pressure on children and families with many staff directly affected by the virus. Despite the impact, our social workers continued visiting children, following government PPE guidance and prioritising the most vulnerable children as well as those in need of immediate safeguarding.
- 2.8. As we have moved further away from those unprecedented times, we have seen what would appear to be a lasting impact nationally on the mental and emotional wellbeing of children and families, and in Shropshire we have not been exempt in experiencing those same issues. We have seen: -
 - a. An increasing in demand for statutory support particularly children experiencing physical harm.
 - b. An increase in request for assessment and support for our disabled children.
 - c. Experienced workforce challenges, some workers have left, but our rate of retention is improving. We have for the first time focussed on converting our long-term agency staff to permanent contracts.
 - d. Undertaken a review of our Early Help Service which has highlighted that the impact of reducing investment has led directly to the increase in demand on statutory services. An Early Help Transformation programme has been launched.

- e. Evidenced that CHAST (Compass Help and Support Team) launched in September 2022 has started to reduce the number of children requiring a Social Work Assessment and therefore a Statutory Service.
- f. Children looked after numbers have increased by 8% in year.
- g. Stepping Stones has achieved a total of 55 children avoiding becoming looked after and 20 children have stepped into a home setting, resulting in a saving to the Council £6.83 million and better outcomes for those children.
- h. More children ceased to be looked after than became looked after in year.
- i. With the foster carers fee uplift, we have seen a significant increase in enquiries & applications giving us the potential over time to be less reliant on external placements.
- j. Children placed for adoption and placements through early permanence has increased.
- k. All our Children's Homes in Shropshire are Ofsted rated Good or Outstanding.

2.9. The key highlights of services provided within Learning and Skills are identified below:

- a. High parental preferences for primary and secondary applications for school places, both above national average.
- b. High uptake of Free Early Education at 2, 3 and 4 for eligible families, all above the national average.
- c. Maintained strong provision across the Early Years providers with more than national averages being judged Good or Outstanding.
- d. Maintained strong school age provision (primary and secondary) with the percentage being judged Good or Outstanding in line with national averages.
- e. Emerging 2023 primary school outcomes data indicates that educational standards have risen in a number of areas, compared to 2022.
- f. Significant increases in attendance at primary and secondary, c.5% higher than 2021/22, and both above national average. Continuing to reduce persistent absence at primary and secondary with fewer children and young people persistently absent than national averages.
- g. Since September 2022 increased specialist provision in Shropshire by commissioning more than 100 additional places in pre-16 state-funded special schools. This is more than a 25% increase in places.
- h. Introduced 'Developing Inclusive Practice' days to bring together leaders from the education, health and social care system to share opportunities and challenges to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- i. Co-produced the Shropshire Ordinarily Available Provision (SOAP) framework to develop a clear and more consistent expectation of what support should be provided to all children and young people through high quality teaching and SEND Support. This will be implemented from the start of the 2/23/24 academic year.
- j. Educational Psychology capacity continues to grow as the impact of our recruitment and retention strategy strengthens our team. This is enabling further support to our education settings and children and young people.
- k. The percentage of 16 and 17 year olds in Shropshire who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is 2.3%, lower than the national average of 2.8%. More young people with an EHCP are accessing a Supported Internship in Shropshire than the West Midlands average.
- l. The Shropshire Virtual School continues to provide strong support to children looked after (CLA) by Shropshire. Attendance has improved for

children looked after and there have been no permanent exclusions for this group.

- m. The quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) continues to increase and support the development of children supported by the virtual school. Good quality PEPs are in place for all year groups now, from our youngest children through to our young people studying in Post 16.
- n. Shropshire Music Service is more inclusive, offering a range of free ensembles weekly at various locations around the county, resulting in attendance trebling and more new engagers in music.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the report is accepted in its entirety.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults, Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community and other Consultation)

- 4.1. Children's Services and Learning and Skills hold risk registers to identify the key risks, and mitigations, associated with the services provided.
- 4.2. Children's Services, Early Help and Learning and Skills are all actively engaged in service improvement and continuous improvement. This is being supported by the Office of the Chief Executive and wider teams.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Children's Services, Early Help and Learning and Skills are all featured within the MTFS programme. The progress towards the delivery of the MTFS are monitored and reported separately.
- 5.2. Updated demand forecasts are in development across Children's Services, Early Help and Learning and Skills to inform financial modelling and future MTFS work. The output of this activity will be reported separately.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. Energy and fuel consumption – as children's social work has a statutory requirement to see children in their own home, service delivery relies on social workers using their own cars. Similarly, Educational Psychologists, Education Welfare Officers and other front line services visit homes and schools.
- 6.2. Learning and Skills is actively working with the Passenger Transport Group to reduce and minimise the impact of travel across Shropshire. This is challenging given the increases in demand experienced by the service.

- 6.3. Renewable energy generation – no effect
- 6.4. Carbon offsetting or mitigation – no effect
- 6.5. Climate change adaptation – no effect

7. Background

7.1 Children's Social Care and Safeguarding

- 7.1.1. Leadership has been in the main stable throughout the year at both Senior and Team manager levels. Management capacity has increased to reflect growing demand in particular areas of the Service e.g. the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Transitions Team or as an invest to save through piloting new ways of working e.g. Compass Help and Support Team (CHAST).
- 7.1.2. Caseloads and complexity have increased with more children requiring a higher level of statutory intervention. There has been a significant rise in assessments for children aged 0–4. There are several causal factors including the ongoing economic crisis, parental neglect, and access to and availability of health services post pandemic, additionally, we are seeing a very worrying increase in harm, particularly physical injuries to our most vulnerable children.
- 7.1.3. We have seen an overall 78% increase in requests for assessments within our Disabled Children's Team, however, access to and availability of community resources for disabled children post pandemic have not fully recovered, resulting in a budgetary impact with Social Care funding the gap to support children to remain safely at home.
- 7.1.4. Despite the ongoing challenges of recruiting Social Workers nationally, our Social Workers tell us that Shropshire is a good place to work. Although our vacancy rate is 13%, we have a strong retention rate. In year our sickness rates have reduce from 4.2 to 3.8% and despite 17 leavers, we had 26 new starters including 14 agency Social Workers who converted to permanent contracts. We also continue to grow our own through our successful Trainee Social Worker Programme of which 6 successfully passed their Social Work Degrees in the last year.
- 7.1.5. With the closure of Mount McKinley, all Children's Services moved to the West Wing in Shirehall between February and March 2023.

Early Help.

- 7.1.6. For over 10 years there has been a national decline in investment in Early Help. An external Review of our Early Help service was commissioned in 2022 which highlighted the impact of how reducing the service had significantly increased demand within Children's Services. In the last 2 months it has become increasingly obvious that an opportunity had been missed to support families at the earliest opportunity to divert them away from statutory services. I am therefore pleased that there has been a renewed investment of £900K in Targeted Early Help increasing the budget to £3.1 million providing much needed additional capacity across Early Help.
- 7.1.7. Also, with the retirement of the Head of Early Help in March 2023 a decision was made to align Early Help with Children's Social Care and Safeguarding for a period. The purpose of aligning the two areas is to develop a whole systems approach to

working with the right children, at the right time and at the right level as well as a collaborative approach to ensuring that the new Supporting Families Criteria is known and embedded by all partner agencies. This work will continue throughout 2023 into 2024. [OBJ]

Children in Need of Help and Protection

7.1.8. In September 2022, the Compass Help and Support Team (CHAST) was launched as a single point of contact for professionals and the public to be able to access immediate support and help for families and ultimately signpost away from statutory services. In the first six months since launch the impact of CHAST has resulted in:

- Only 5% of the 448 families stepped back up for a Social Worker Assessment.
- A stabilisation in the number of repeat contacts to Children's Services, we have turned the curve there is no longer an upwards trajectory.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of contacts leading to no further action.
- There has been a reduction in the number of Social Work Assessments leading to no further action.
- An estimated cost avoidance to the Council of £850k having diverted families away from an assessment. Thereby the pilot paying for itself through cost avoidance.

7.1.9 TREES Team (Together Reducing and Ending Exploitation in Shropshire) has seen a steady increase of referrals in the last twelve months. In total 408 referrals were received of which only 19% had previously been known to the Team. The total referrals are a significant increase on the previous year. There has also been a significant increase in the number of children being assessed as high risk of child exploitation going from 7% in 2021 – 2022 to 17% in the last year, this is likely due to the number of vulnerable children now being tracked compared to previous years. Our main exploitation hotspot in Shropshire is Shrewsbury Centre which appears to be the focal point for criminal activity but there are other hotspots around the County including areas of Market Drayton, Whitchurch, Oswestry, and Ellesmere.

7.1.10. The most recent Ofsted Inspection took place between 7 and 11 February 2022 and followed the new inspection framework introduced in 2019, the inspection took place over 4 days and judged Shropshire Council Children's Services to be 'Good' overall. The previous inspection in 2018 had also judged the Service to children to be 'Good'.

The inspectors' key findings included:

- a. Children in Shropshire are benefiting from the high aspirations of senior leaders for their services to continue to improve children's lives.
- b. During the pandemic children's services continued to provide a high level of support to children, including ongoing face to face visits.
- c. When Social workers know that children are at risk of harm, they make decisions that are in children's best interest to make sure they are safe. Including when children may be experiencing exploitation.

- d. Social Workers are good at listening to children and parents to work out the best way to improve their lives. They make sure that children can live with their parents wherever possible.

The Inspection also found that some children in need of help and protection were not benefitting from robust application of the Public Law Outline (PLO) and that some children were waiting too long before a decision was made to enter a legal process. We responded quickly by:

- a. Creating a PLO toolkit providing clear guidance for practitioners through the process.
- b. Ensured that referrals for Family Group conferences are made at the earliest point to support the creation of a family-led plan.
- c. Firmed up management oversight at key points.
- d. Aligned Stepping Stones with PLO to provide intensive support to families to divert families away from court proceedings.

Corporate Parenting

7.1.11. Councillor Judith Blake (Chair, LGA Children and Young People Board) said: - ***Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils do and when a child, for whatever reason cannot stay safely at home. It is up to us as the local authority to step in and give them the care, support, and stability that they deserve. This responsibility is not only for the Lead Member, CEO or Director of People, it is all of our responsibility to look out for our most vulnerable children and young people and every councillor has a role to play in embedding the corporate parenting principles and doing all they can to support children in care to live meaningful and fulfilling lives.***

7.1.12. In Shropshire we use the secure base model to ensure children develop and maintain secure attachments in order to thrive and be enabled to have opportunities, life-long links and a network of support that will last into and throughout their adult lives.

7.1.13. We have seen an 8% increase in our Children Looked After numbers from 609 on 31st March 2022 to 659 on the same date in 2023. There are 3 reasons for the increase in our numbers:

- a. The rise in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people via the National Transfer Scheme, at the end of March 2022 there were 22 UASC and at end of March 2023 we had 45 young people.
- b. An increase in the number of children needing to be looked after due to significant harm.
- c. An increase in the number of children living with connected carers (extended family or friends).

However, in the same period we have seen our numbers starting lower and numbers ceasing increased.

In 2021 we had a total of 241 children come into care with 139 ceasing.

In 2022 we had a total of 205 children come into care with 159 ceasing.

- 7.1.14. The Stepping Stones Project was developed as an invest to save project going live in July 2021. The purpose of Stepping Stones is to provide intensive wrap around support to families with the purpose of avoiding the need for a child to become looked after. The Project is unique in that it not only works therapeutically with children but also their parents.
- 7.1.15. Within the first 8 months the team successfully avoided 26 children from becoming looked after by the Council and supported 6 young people to step down from residential or foster homes back to their birth families achieving an in year saving to the Council of £1.961million. In August 2022 Council fully supported the upscale of the Project from 2 to 6 teams, recruitment commenced in October 2022 with new recruits starting in employment between December 2022 and April 2023. In the 12 months to March 2023 the team exceeded the success of the previous year supporting 264 children, the Family Group Conferencing Chairs completed 174 FGC's supporting families to develop their own safety plans. Stepping Stones achieved 29 children avoiding becoming looked after by the Council and stepping down 14 young people into a family environment a saving to the Council of £4.87 million. Over the last two years Stepping Stones has achieved a total of 55 children avoiding becoming looked after and 20 children have stepped into a home setting saving to the Council £6.83 million.
- 7.1.16. Shropshire's Corporate Parenting Board brings together representation from elected members, senior leaders, and practitioners as well as our children looked after and care leavers. The purpose of the Board is to ensure that we as a local authority and our partners are discharging our responsibilities towards the children we look after and those who leave our care when they become adults.
- 7.1.17. The work of the Board has included working closely with health partners to address pathways for early identification of the emotional and mental health needs of children and young people leading to timely interventions put in place.
- 7.1.18. The Board has also continued to support the use of Mind of My Own a web-based App which allows children and young people to share their views and express themselves to professionals in over 100 different languages making sure their voices are heard and reflected in planning for their care. We have seen a 68% increase in children sharing their voice through the Mind of My Own App in 2022 from 57 in 2021 to 99 children in 2022, 15% of our looked after population making a total of 179 statements. There is more work to be done to increase the usage of this valuable tool to ensure our children's voices are heard.
- 7.1.19. In February 2022 Full Council accepted the proposals for the Council's Care Leavers' Covenant Offer and Councillors renewed their Corporate Parenting Pledge to uphold the Children Looked After and Care Leavers' Charter. The number of Care Leavers in education, employment or training has increased from 50% in 2020 – 2021 to 58%, the Leaving Care Team have maintained links with 95% of our Care leavers in the last year.
- 7.1.20. In terms of educational achievements in 2022–2023, despite the challenges of Covid we have seen real progress, from a Cohort of 34, 12 young people achieved

between 8 and 11 GCSE's. Additionally, 3 of our Care Leavers graduated University successfully achieving a degree.

Placement Sufficiency

- 7.1.21. Over the course of the pandemic there has been unprecedented increase in demand for placements for children becoming looked after nationally with not enough placements to meet the demand. In Shropshire we saw an increase in the use of external fostering agencies and residential homes because there was no fostering capacity.
- 7.1.22. We have focussed on increasing our internal pool of foster carers and in 2022 Council agreed a business case to uplift our fostering fees bringing them in line with neighbouring councils. We have targeted our marketing focussing on a variety of digital platforms and in January 2023 we saw a 200% increase in fostering enquiries more than tripling the total number of enquiries in 2022. The increase to our fostering fees went live in April 2023. Increasing our pool of internal foster carers will reduce the need for high-cost residential placements and additionally reduce the number of children placed out of Shropshire.
- 7.1.23. The highest approvals within the fostering Service are connected person carers (a person with whom the child has an established relationship with including grandparents, aunts, uncles, close family friends). 28% of our looked after children live with a connected carer and at year end this totalled 129 families and overall, 42% of our looked after children are living in a family environment (not including foster home), living with a connected carer, placed with adopters, or live with their parents.
- 7.1.24. Shropshire is part of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Together 4 Children along with our regional partners Stoke, Staffordshire and Telford. The Service launched in October 2020. We have seen a significant increase in the number of children adopted with 17% (27) in 2022 – 2023 in contrast to 8.7% (12) in the previous year. Of the children placed for adoption 50% were placed with foster to adopt carers as part of early permanence decisions. This reduces the need for children to have subsequent moves from foster carers to adopters so will have the benefit of a forever family from the day they are discharged from hospital.
- 7.1.25 All our Childrens Homes in Shropshire are rated Good or Outstanding. Ofsted say we are providing an excellent quality of care to our children. We have increased our internal residential capacity by almost 50% since 2020 we now own 6 homes. Our newest home Caer Bryn opened in March 2023 enabling 4 young people to transition to independence in a supported setting and includes a self-contained flat. Our 1 bed home is currently closed whilst we recruit staff and develop the model of intervention to care for a child in a solo home.
- 7.1.26. For the children living in our homes, their needs were such that no external residential placement options were forthcoming for them or the cost to care for them was significantly high. Placement stability in our homes is robust, children are making considerable progress and achieving positive outcomes, they move on as part of planned transitions. In the last year two children returned to the care of their

families and with support from Stepping Stones, there are plans for others to also be reunified.

- 7.1.27. Chelmaren is being repurposed to align with Stepping Stones as a short to medium term home where if a child cannot be supported to remain at home, there will be a planned period where they will become looked after for an intensive support package to both the young person and their parent / carers as part of an agreed plan of reunification within 3 – 6 months. It is hoped that this will lead to children becoming looked after for shorter periods and reduce the need for high-cost external residential placements.

Voices of our Children and Young People

- 7.1.28. Ending with an extract from the voice of a young person who lived in one of our homes as they left to move on to start life in their own home.

"... What a journey, I used to hate this place and look at me now, I don't want to leave. And that is because of the physical and emotional journey I have been through here. I have come so far. I used to hate all of you! And now I love you all. Ironically, thank you! Never thought I'd say it. This house has taught me everything I know. How to express. How to Cope, how to succeed. I came here a different person to the person that is leaving here. A better person, the best version of myself. This house feels like a home. Deep down every child knows that. You haven't done such a bad job after all. I will never forget this crazy house. Always, improve what can be improved! Speak out! Children and carers! You never know whose life you will change."

- 7.1.29. Key Priorities for the year

- Delivering on the MTFS savings plan and addressing in year budget pressures.
- Progressing the Early Health Transformation with a view to a new Early Help Front Door by September 2023 and a whole service transformation by April 2024.
- Reducing the number of families involved in statutory services.
- Increasing our internal pool of foster carers
- Stepping children down from residential homes into a family environment.

7.2 Education and Achievement

School admissions

- 7.2.1 Shropshire Council continues to meet a high number of parental preferences in applications for school places, performing strongly in both regional and national comparisons for primary and secondary applications.
- 7.2.2 Due to a high birth rate for the September 2023 Year 7 cohort, there was exceptional increased demand for secondary school places this year in Shropshire and across the West Midlands, with many secondary schools exceeding their PAN on National Offer Day to accommodate the bulge year. Parents were encouraged to submit three preferences of schools, although 52.51% only named one preference, with 16.67% naming three.

- 7.2.3. 89.72% of Shropshire parents were allocated a place at their first preference secondary school, giving a ranking of third highest of West Midlands local authorities and eighth highest for our statistical neighbours. This compares with 80.17% for the West Midlands, 91.37% for statistical neighbours and 82.58% for England. 96.5% of Shropshire parents were offered a place at one of their preferred secondary schools, in comparison to 95.0% in the West Midlands, 96.9% for statistical neighbours and 95.6% in England.
- 7.2.4 In terms of primary applications, Shropshire ranked second highest of all West Midlands local authorities and seventh highest for statistical neighbours. The DfE dataset shows that 95.68% first preference requests were met across Shropshire compared with 93.12% for the West Midlands, 95.43% for statistical neighbours and 92.5% for England. 99.04% of Shropshire parents were offered a place at one of their preferred primary schools, in comparison to 98.62% in the West Midlands, 98.94% for statistical neighbours and 98.61% in England.
- 7.2.5 To ensure that parental preferences for school places remain positive, and to improve our comparative position relative to our statistical neighbours in particular, we are launching the countywide School Place Planning Review, drawing on the data in the Local Plan Review, to ensure we continue to have a clear view on the number of school places required in line with planned housing development up to 2038. This work will inform the strategic School Place Plan across Shropshire to include early years, primary and secondary mainstream, with specialist provision included as a golden thread through all phases.

Early Years

- 7.2.6 Shropshire Council provides information support and guidance to Early Years providers in line with the statutory duties. The percentage of good and outstanding early year’s providers is above national and regional averages:

Area	% of providers rated Outstanding	% of providers rated Good	% of providers rated Requiring Improvement	% of providers rated Inadequate
National	16%	77%	6%	1%
West Midlands	19%	76%	4%	1%
Shropshire	20%	77%	2%	1%

- 7.2.7 2-year-olds from disadvantaged families can access 570 hours of free early learning each year to support their learning and development and readiness for school. Take up of the entitlement is above national averages:

Area	% of children accessing some element of their entitlement
National	79%
West Midlands	80%
Shropshire	83%

7.2.8 The integrated review for 2-year-olds was launched successfully in 2019 but was placed on hold as a result of the pandemic. Integrated reviews have now recommenced, and children and families are now benefitting from a joined-up review of their child's health and development with input from both Health Visitors and Early Years professionals. This has led to earlier identification of those children who may need some additional support.

7.2.9 From April 2024 free early years provision will extend to 2-year-olds from working families with the offer extending further to children from aged 9 months in September 2024. The Early Years team are working hard to ensure there is sufficient provision to meet demand as the entitlements roll out and that provision remains of a high quality.

7.2.10 Provisional data for the percentage of children having a Good Level of Development (GLD) in 2023 is above national average. Children are defined as having a good level of development if they are at the expected level for the 12 early learning goals within the 5 areas of learning relating to: communication and language; personal, social, and emotional development; physical development; literacy; and mathematics. The provisional data for 2023 is as follows:

Area	% of children achieving GLD
National	67.3%
West Midlands	66.0%
Shropshire	67.6%

7.2.11 It is positive to see that the percentage of children achieving the communication prime goal at the end of reception was 83.3% in Shropshire compared with the national average of 79.7%. Communication development was an area significantly impacted by the pandemic and this data reflects the recovery that has taken place in Shropshire.

Schools

7.2.12 There are 151 schools across the local authority (LA): 127 primary phase schools, 19 secondary schools, 1 All-through school, 3 special schools and 1 Pupil Referral Unit. Notable changes have been the opening of Keystone Academy (Special School) in 2022 on a temporary site and the opening of Bowbrook Primary in September 2023.

7.2.13 Approximately 1/3rd of Shropshire primary schools are small or very small. There are currently 3 schools with under 30 pupils. Forecasts suggest that the number of schools in Shropshire with less than 30 pupils will increase in some areas over the next 10-15 years.

7.2.14 In September 2023, 45 out of 127 primary schools and 18 out of 19 secondary schools are academies. All 3 of Shropshire's special schools are academies. Only 1 school academised during 2022/23.

7.2.15. Ofsted data published at 31 July 2023 indicates that the percentage of good and outstanding schools is:

	% of good or better (All schools)	% of good or better (Primary schools)	% of good or better (Secondary schools)
National	89%	90%	81%
West Midlands	87%	87%	82%
Shropshire	86%	89%	85%

(‘All school’ data also includes nursery schools of which there are 0 in Shropshire and state funded Special schools, which there are 3).

7.2.16. The emerging 2023 primary school outcomes data indicates that standards have risen in a number of areas:

- 89.5% of Shropshire pupils reach the expected phonics standard by the end of KS1 compared to a national average of 88.6%
- The percentile rankings of all LAs indicate improvements at KS1 for pupils achieving expected standards in each of reading, writing and maths with standards in reading being above the national average.
- Progress scores in reading and writing at KS2 show significant improvement with reading progress being above the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEN support perform less well than similar groups nationally.
- In most, but not all, measures pupils with an EHCP achieved better outcomes than similar pupils at KS1 and KS2.

7.2.17. However, there remain areas where we would like to see standards improve further. These include:

- The percentage of pupils reaching the phonics standard by the end of Y1.
- The percentage of pupils achieving greater depth or high scaled scores in reading, writing and maths at KS1 and writing and maths at KS2.
- The KS4 Progress 8 indicator.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those who receive SEN Support.

2023 GCSE and Post 16 data will be available for comparison in the autumn.

NEET (Not in education, employment, or training)

7.2.18. National and local NEET data is published on DfE scorecards and is an average measure taken across December, January, and February. 7.9% of 16- and 17-year-olds were NEET or not known at the end of 2022 compared to a national average of 5.2%. 2.3% of 16- and 17-year-olds in Shropshire were classed as NEET against a national average of 2.8%, which demonstrates lower NEETs than national figures.

7.2.19. The factor that affects Shropshire data the most is the percentage of ‘not knowns’. The percentage of 16–17-year-olds in Shropshire whose activity is not known is 5.6% compared to a national average of 2.4%. There are many reasons for a student’s activity to be ‘not known’ with one reason being missing data sharing when pupils attend institutions outside of Shropshire. This will include institutions in Wales.

7.2.20. Support for students who are NEET comes from a variety of sources. This will include the work of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) advisers employed through Early Help and Enable. Enable deliver The STEP UP programme, a collaboration between Telford and Wrekin Council and Shropshire Council in partnership with The Department for Work and Pensions. The programme is available for free to individuals aged 15-24 who are living in Shropshire or Telford and Wrekin currently not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) or are in significant risk of becoming NEET. This programme offers each individual the opportunity to access bespoke, person-centred and holistic support towards a wide range of outcomes and achievements within Skills, Training and Employment

Virtual School

7.2.21. There has been a +11% change in the numbers of looked after children from year-2 to 13. (Year -2 refers to two years before Reception). The most significant upwards trajectory has been in Key stage 5 with a +22% change, most of this increase being due to the rise in the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People (UASYP), increasing from 42 in July 2022 to 72 by July 2023. The year 2022/3 saw a +79% change in the numbers of Looked after Children in years -1 to 11 with an EHCP, this has resulted in a +70% change in pupils attending state-funded specialist or independent schools; 33% of our pupils with an EHCP attend a mainstream setting.

7.2.22. The Virtual School has undertaken a significant restructure which has increased the overall number of posts. The restructure provides more all year working rather than term time only and reduces the caseloads of staff. It also allows the service to meet its extended duties around Children with a Social Worker.

7.2.23. Attendance of Children who are looked after (CLA) remains strong with attendance of 93% which is slightly above the average of all children nationally for the year (92.5%). The Persistent Absence Figure for Shropshire CLA was 16.5% for the year compared to 22.5% for all learners nationally. There have been no permanent exclusions for CLA for two years running with a number being averted through partnership working.

7.2.24. The trajectory on PEP improvement is very positive, with summer term 2023 outcomes as follows: 100% PEP completion, 89% Good Quality (Year -1 to 11), Post 16 was 80% Completion and 83% Good Quality.

7.2.25. The Virtual School organised an extremely well attended celebration event at Shrewsbury School in the autumn 2022 with a similar event arranged for this autumn. A Celebration Festival event has also been delivered for Post 16 and Care Leavers in August 2023 in collaboration with the Care Leavers Team.

7.2.26. A detailed report on Virtual School performance is submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

SEND

7.2.27. The education offer for children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) across all types of education provision in Shropshire, including mainstream schools, continues to develop and evolve.

- 7.2.28. Additional specialist provision was introduced in Shropshire in September 2022, via the Free School, Keystone Academy, which opened in a temporary site with 40 pupils on roll initially.
- 7.2.29. Commissioning and development work with Woodlands Special School has also taken place leading to additional places at Woodlands School being available from Sept 2023.
- 7.2.30. The development of the mainstream SEND Hub/resource provision remains a strategic priority as the education Place Planning Review is underway to identify the school places, including specialist places, required to meet demand in Shropshire up to 2038. To support this work external reviews of each mainstream SEND Hub in Shropshire, with strengths and areas for development identified.
- 7.2.31. There has been a significant increase in demand of 187% over the last 12 months for Education, Health and Care Plan Needs Assessment (EHCNA) requests. This has resulted in significant increases in demand for places in special schools both specialist academies and specialist independent providers, particularly for those children and young people with a Social, Emotional and Mental Health profile of needs. This includes an increase in the number of children and young people with an EHCP presenting with Emotionally Based School Anxiety (EBSA) as well as anxiety linked to neurodiversity.
- 7.2.32. The proportion of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) completed within a 20-week period has fluctuated over the year due to the 187% increase in request for EHC Needs Assessment (487 requests received in 2022 compared to 261 in 2021). More requests for EHC Needs Assessment had been received by the end of June 2023 (over 487) than the entire 2022 calendar year.
- 7.2.33. Despite this level of demand the service continue to assess and issue more EHC plans within the 20-week timescale, close to the 2023 national average of 49.1%, and will continue to improve this further.
- January 2023 cumulative 20-week completion = 15%
- March 2023 cumulative 20-week completion = 41%
- July 2023 cumulative 20-week completion = 45%
- 7.2.34. The number of children and young people with an EHCP has increased, which is reflected in the increase in Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) requests. However, the number of appeals registered with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal Service (SENDIST) remains low.
- 7.2.35. The increase in the number of children and young people with an EHCP will also have a significant impact on the demand for assistance to travel to school. This is compounded by significant increases in inflationary cost pressures experienced during 2022/23.
- 7.2.36. The Area SEND revisit inspection by Ofsted and CQC that took place in November 2022 identified 3 out of 6 areas had made sufficient progress and improved. The report noted the many positive aspects of the work underway in Shropshire including that:

“The strong strategic leadership is successfully beginning to improve the provision, across education, health and social care, for children and young people with SEND in Shropshire.”

7.2.37. The remaining 3 areas which still required further improvement, are listed below:

- Significant wait times for large numbers of children and young people on the ASD and ADHD diagnostic pathways.
- Significant waiting times for those needing assessment and treatment from the speech and language therapy service.
- Inconsistency in the quality of input from education, health and care into EHC assessment and planning

7.2.38. An Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) to address the three remaining areas was developed by the SEND Partnership and approved by the DfE and NHS England in April 2023. The APP reinforces and strengthens the work already taking place to improve SEND services across Shropshire (0-25).

7.2.39. Shropshire fared well across the West Midlands in 2022 regarding the number of students accessing supported internships with 22 enrolments compared to the West Midlands average of 16.

7.2.40. Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust (SATH) and Shrewsbury College formed a partnership to deliver a new exciting, supported internship programme in September 2023 for approx. 12 students who will be based at the hospital for their 1-year programme. The aim is for the students to move into paid employment opportunities within the health sector post their supported internship.

7.2.41. Capacity in the Educational Psychology service has continued to increase during the 2022/23 academic year, with Shropshire becoming a destination of choice for Trainee Educational Psychologists.

7.2.42. The first Trainee Educational Psychologist to be employed through our new approach joins the team in September 2023, following a 3-year Doctoral training course. We also have several new Year 2 and a Year 3 Trainee Educational Psychologists joining the Shropshire team from September 2023. This and a range of other capacity building approaches has enabled the service to increase the proactive direct traded work with schools by a further 14% from September 2023.

7.2.43. This year the service has directly supported all secondary schools, over three quarters of primary schools and almost all of our state-funded special schools, plus delivered a range of specialist training around Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) and Emotional Based School Anxiety (EBSA).

Education Access and Inclusion

Pupil Attendance

7.2.44. Based on the national DfE Attendance Data portal (87% return from Shropshire schools), overall pupil attendance for the 2022/23 academic year is above national average at 92.8% (national 92.5%) Primary school attendance is also above

national average at 94.4% (national 90%) Secondary school attendance is also above national average at 90.9% (national 90.7%). Persistent absence (individual pupil attendance below 90%) is also lower than national rates at primary and secondary. Whilst not yet back to pre-pandemic levels there has been an encouraging increase

Elective Home Education (EHE)

- 7.2.45. Arrangements for monitoring EHE on an annual basis was brought back within Learning and Skills in May 2022. Robust processes and procedures are in place to ensure appropriate contact is made with EHE families, more frequently if requested or if there are concerns. A De-registration Panel has been implemented to make sure there is oversight and action from partners where schools have noted concerns. Capacity to manage the numbers coming through remains a challenge with options being explored to address this.
- 7.2.46. Following the removal of the 'Y11' cohort at the end of June 2023, the number of children on the EHE register is 535. However, the figure during the academic year 2022/23 was consistently over 600. Primary aged children account for 36.5% and secondary aged children 63.5%. The number of pupils being withdrawn from school for EHE in Key Stage 4 is a concern; in September 2023 they will account for 38% of home educated children.
- 7.2.47. Compared with September 2022, the number of children with an EHCP who are listed as EHE on 1 September 2023 has increased by 13% but are considered by a multi-agency decision making panel for oversight. The number of children with identified SEN but no EHCP has decreased by 27%.
- 7.2.48. Parents/carers do not have to give a reason for de-registering their child to be EHE but the second highest recorded reason is 'philosophy' followed by 'medical - physical and mental health' then 'dissatisfaction' (general and SEN).
- 7.2.49. The EAS team have worked with EHE families to ensure that they receive the support they need to succeed, or where parents/carers are unable to fulfil their duty to provide a suitable education, children are supported to return to school. 127 children have been enrolled or re-enrolled at a school.

Inclusion

- 7.2.50. Increasing inclusive practice across Shropshire schools and Early Years settings continues to be key priority, with both support and challenge provided to via the Education Access, Educational Psychology and Education Improvement teams.
- 7.2.51. A key component of developing inclusive practice is the development of the Shropshire Ordinarily Available Provision (SOAP) framework for mainstream schools. This is a co-produced framework outlining what Shropshire schools expect to provide to all children and young people as part of the universal offer of high-quality inclusive teaching and SEND Support level across the four broad areas of SEND.

- 7.2.52. Over 90% of primary schools and 15% of secondary schools have made no permanent exclusions during 2022/23, which is a wonderful achievement whilst retaining high standards of education. However, permanent exclusions remain too high, particularly for our most vulnerable groups. A small number of schools account for a high proportion of these exclusions, with 1 primary school responsible for 29% of the total primary exclusions and 5 secondary schools responsible for 61% of the total secondary exclusions in 2022/23.
- 7.2.53. The most common reason given by headteachers for their decision to permanently exclude a pupil is 'persistent disruptive behaviour'. Work is underway with schools, alternative provision providers and multi-agency teams to develop new approaches that promote early intervention to avoid exclusion.
- 7.2.54. All schools are profiled for pupil inclusion, using available data, and where concerns (and good practice) are identified, the senior leaders, including CEOs, are invited to attend an Inclusion Review meeting with the local authority and DfE representative. The meetings have provided an excellent platform for discussion, robust challenge where necessary and further collaboration.
- 7.2.55. During the 2022/23 academic year, plans have been developed to commission new models of delivery from the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) known as the Tuition Medical Support Service (TMBSS). Commencing in September 2023, with more robust procedures in place to ensure that excluded pupils are swiftly assessed in centre and are placed in a new school, in a timelier manner, through the Fair Access Protocol (FAP).
- 7.2.56. Work has also been taking place to shift the focus to early intervention and prevention models that include the provision of direct support in the mainstream school, at both primary and secondary phases. This is in addition to developments that will enable schools to directly commission registered alternative provision through TMBSS and other providers. This work has also involved the application for a secondary phase Alternative Provision Free School for the north of Shropshire.

Shropshire Music Service

- 7.2.57. Shropshire Music Service has developed significantly during the 2022/23 academic year. The service now engages with 88% of Shropshire schools, above the Arts Council England national average of 86%.
- 7.2.58. Philanthropic donations from private entities have ensured activities can be offered free of charge: this has included 15 more schools engaging with the service, plus over 300 children now regularly engaging with our ensemble and workshop activities. Around 45% of these children are new engagers i.e. they are not currently in receipt of instrumental tuition. The service has also increased engagement with Shropshire Virtual School through a range of workshop activities.
- 7.2.59. We have also seen increased audiences attending public events: over 600 in attendance at most events. This direct engagement with performing live music is an excellent way of building the confidence, communication and team working skills of the children and young people participating.

7.2.60. The service is now more inclusive, offering a range of free ensembles weekly at various locations around the county, resulting in attendance trebling and more new engagers in music. More children are now engaging in the South and East regions of the county as a result of weekly ensembles.

7.2.61. The service will continue to develop the provision across the county and will be increasing the range of different musical activities available, including the development of music technology.

8 Additional Information

8.2 Further relevant links are included in the list of background papers.

9 Conclusions

9.2 Children's Service have had a challenging year, where demand and complexity have continued to have an impact on service delivery. Within that context, a lot has been achieved and progress made with service development. Cabinet and Councils continued support for children and families needs to be met mean that we are seeing many children achieve positive outcomes despite the adversity they face. Focusing the service on supporting a child to return to a family that love them and where they have made the changes needed to be able to care for that child safely is the best possible outcome we all, as a corporate parent, can hope for and achieve for the people of Shropshire.

9.3 Learning and Skills services have provided effective and cost-efficient support to children and young people in Shropshire that has led to improved outcomes as outlined in the report. This demonstrates positive impact towards delivery of the Shropshire Plan. Further developments and improvements across a number of services within Learning and Skills are underway to manage the increases in demand whilst maintaining or improving the quality of services.

9.4 Further improvement work is also underway across the Area SEND system in Shropshire, driven by the SEND and Inclusion Partership Board, and includes all partner agencies across education, health and social care in partnership with children, young people and their families. We are committed to enabling Shropshire children, young people and their families to live their best life.



Council

21 September 2023

Item

Public



CONSTITUTION OF COMMITTEES AND THE ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO POLITICAL GROUPS

Responsible Officer:	Tim Collard		
email:	tim.collard@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	(01743) 252756
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Councillor Lezley Picton		

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report deals with the overall constitution of committees, the entitlement of seats for each of the political groups and the proportionate allocation of seats between the groups across all committees in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 require the Council to review the representation of each political group on committees, panels etc. at each annual meeting or as soon as practicable after that meeting. The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 require that all Scrutiny, Standing and Regulatory Committees are politically balanced across the total number of committee places. Subject to that overriding requirement, each committee must also be politically balanced, as far as it is reasonably practicable.
- 2.2 The Executive (Cabinet) is not subject to the political balance rules.
- 2.3 Advisory Committees and other ad hoc bodies and groups are not subject to the political balance rules either, but traditionally political proportionality has been applied to them outside the overall aggregate balance referred to in paragraph 2.1 above.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the Council confirms the constitution of committees and the allocation of seats to each of the political groups for the 2023/24 municipal year and the allocation of seats between the political groups, as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to this report.
- 3.2. That the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group confirm which of its members will be appointed to the Northern Planning Committee

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The Council is obliged to ensure that the membership of committees and related bodies is proportionate to individual group membership.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The allocation of seats on Committees will have no obvious financial implications.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. The allocation of seats on Committees will have no obvious impact in terms of climate change.

7. Background

- 7.1. The Council is requested to approve the overall constitution of committees.
- 7.2. This requires 108 seats to be allocated proportionately across all committees and the Council is requested to approve the overall constitution as set out below:

<u>Committee Name</u>	<u>Seats per Committee</u>
Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee	11
People Overview and Scrutiny Committee	11
Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	11
Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee	11
Pensions Committee	4
Audit Committee	5
Strategic Licensing Committee	15
Standards Committee	9
Southern Planning Committee	11
Northern Planning Committee	11
Housing Supervisory Board	9
Total	<u>108</u>

8. Allocation of Seats

- 8.1. The Council is required to approve the allocation of seats to the political groups for the coming year.

8.2 The maximum number of seats available to each group within the political balance rules will be:

<u>Group Name</u>	<u>Seats per Group</u>
Conservatives	60
Liberal Democrats	23
Labour	14
Independent	5
Green	6
Total	<u>108</u>

8.3 The proportionate allocation of seats to the political groups across all committees is set out in Appendix 1.

8.4 The Council is entitled to 10 seats on the Shropshire and Wrekin Combined Fire Authority. Under the present arrangements, the Conservative Group is entitled to 6 seats, the Liberal Democrat Group 2 seats, the Labour Group 1 seat and the Independent Group 1 seat.

8.5 The proposed allocation of seats meets the legal requirements, however, should the Council wish, it is possible to agree allocations which are not strictly politically balanced if no Member dissents.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Regulations made thereunder.

Local Member: All

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Constitution of Committees and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

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APPENDIX 1

ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO POLITICAL GROUPS

Composition of the Council	Cons	Lib Dem	Lab	Ind	Green	Total
	39	16	10	4	4	73

SCRUTINY

	Cons	Lib Dem	Lab	Ind	Green	Total
Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6	2	2	1	0	11
People Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6	3	1	0	1	11
Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6	3	1	1	0	11
Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6	2	2	0	1	11

STANDING AND REGULATORY

	Cons	Lib Dem	Lab	Ind	Green	Total
Pensions Committee	3	1	0	0	0	4
Audit Committee	3	1	1	0	0	5
Standards	5	1	1	1	1	9
Strategic Licensing Committee	8	3	2	1	1	15
Northern Planning Committee	6	3	1	0	1	11
Southern Planning Committee	6	2	2	1	0	11
Housing Supervisory Board	5	2	1	0	1	9
Aggregate No Seats Required	60	22	14	6	6	108

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MEMBER QUESTIONS COUNCIL 21 SEPTEMBER 2023

Question from Councillor Garry Burchett

Could the Cabinet Member for highways give me an estimate for the amount of traffic that would be removed from travelling through Shrewsbury town Centre when the North West Relief Road is built?

Could the Cabinet Member for highways give me an estimate for the amount of traffic that would be removed from travelling through Shrewsbury town Centre when the North West Relief Road is built?

Response from Councillor Dan Morris, Portfolio Holder for Highways

The following information is already in the public domain as part of the current NWRR Planning Application. The traffic model indicates the difference in flows at the three entry points into Shrewsbury Town Centre (i.e all vehicles for all routes at these 3 locations) for the AM and PM peak hours at opening year and 2038.

We see a marked traffic reduction along the key cross town entry points at Welsh Bridge and Castle Gates in particular as a result of the North West Relief Road. These reductions in Town centre traffic directly assist in reducing congestion and delays in the town centre and frees up capacity to facilitate other potential enhancements.

As part of our assessment we also reviewed a specific route that traffic takes through the Town centre via The Mount, Smithfield Road and Chester Street, which is the route that it is anticipated traffic would most likely reassign from and onto the North West Relief Road.

Looking therefore at traffic that takes this route through the Town Centre, the model indicates the traffic flow reduction for the opening forecast year at morning and afternoon peaks is an average of 52.75%, and in 2038 remains at an average of 43%. It's also to note that these figures do not currently build in the anticipated additional effects on reducing traffic movements of parallel initiatives such as the Big Town Plan and the proposed town centre redevelopment programme.

Question from Councillor Julian Dean

As we head towards another winter with many struggling due to energy costs, what progress can the administration report with regard to upgrading the council's housing stock with appropriate insulation to improve health and wellbeing and reduce bills whilst also enabling the conversion to non-fossil fuel heating systems as will be required by local and national commitments to achieve carbon net zero?

Response from Councillor Ian Nellins, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) – Gobowen EWI Phase 1 is now complete, the aim of the scheme was to improve the energy efficiency of 26 Cornish Style pre-fabricated properties in West Place / Hammonds Place Gobowen and enhance their external appearance.

The works comprised of:

- Installation of external wall insulation system by Permarock (EWI) with a 1.5mm Silicone Ultra render finish to the properties external walls.
- Full window & door replacement.
- Full replacement of roof coverings, battens and roofing membranes.
- Removal of the existing insulation materials.
- Installation of 450mm of insulation in the roof void and high-performance roof insulation to the mansard slopes.
- Full replacement of all rainwater goods.
- Replacement of existing soffits with ventilated plastic profiles.
- Replacement of existing mechanical vents to bathrooms and kitchens and installation of new Vent Axia units with humidistats.
- Installation of new canopies over entrance doors.

The works were undertaken by our main contractor Sustainable Building Services (UK) LTD a contractor which is experienced in this type of retro-fit energy efficiency project. The final project cost is £1.67million with DESNZ - Dept for Energy Security and Net Zero (formally BEIS – Dept for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) providing £280K of grant funding towards these costs.

The completed works have improved the properties EPC ratings from 'Band D' to 'Band C' in line with the current Government targets for all social housing to have a minimum EPC C by 2030. In addition the works have improved; internal comfort conditions (this has already been noticed by residents), reduce energy usage and heating costs for residents helping to decrease fuel poverty and help reduce the occurrence of damp and mould by increasing the internal surface temperatures of walls & ceilings. The works also benefit the wider environment by a reduction in carbon emissions by approximately 29 tonnes per year and enhance the properties appearance and the visual amenity of the area.

The works will also give a reduction of planned future maintenance works on such items as roof coverings, RW goods, external waste pipes, windows and doors, internal ventilation & external decoration.

Since 2021, STAR Housing have continued to invest in our existing homes to improve their efficiency, reduce heating costs and prepare for net zero. We have completed the following upgrade works to the Council's housing stock, and indicative figures for upgrades planned for this year have also been given:

Upgrade Works	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 - indicative	TOTAL (properties)	TOTAL (expenditure)
Loft Insulation top up's	5	103	42	150	£60,000
Window replacement	19	23	20	62	£348,000
Cavity Wall insulation	0	0	22	22	£16,000
Boiler replacements	375	183	145	703	£1,842,000
Air Source Heat Pump installations	49	10	10	69	£552,000
External Wall Insulation	0	0	26	26	£1,600,000
TOTALS				1,032	£4,418,000

All of the above works have improved the energy efficiency of the properties, providing greater thermal comfort and will have contributed to reducing the cost of energy bills for the residents. A number of properties have been fitted with renewable technologies, namely Air Source Heat Pumps, and STAR Housing continue to fit these systems wherever possible in off grid properties.

In Summer 2023, we completed our first external wall insulation (EWI) full retrofit project funded by the social housing decarbonisation fund which saw £1.6million invested in improving the energy efficiency of 26 properties in the Gobowen area. We have worked with the Government's social housing social housing accelerator initiative to undertake an assessment of our readiness and preparation for net zero investment, in advance of developing our next Asset Strategy in 2024 which will set out how we will achieve our long-term sustainability goals.

In STAR Housing's 30-year Property Investment Plan, a provision of £20 million has been made for energy efficiency improvement works to be completed over the next 5 years in order to achieve EPC Band C on all properties in the housing stock. 1,863 (47%) of our homes are currently below EPC band C.

Additionally, we continue to support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis through our Financial Inclusion Team and the delivery of front-line housing support.

Question from Councillor Ruth Houghton

Shropshire Council, through its Public Health duty, commissions services from, and contracts with, local NHS Providers. How does the Council ensure that there are robust HR processes in place within each NHS provider organisation and that the services delivered are fully supported by an Equality Impact Assessment?

Response from Councillor Cecilia Motley, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Communities

Public Health has mandated and statutory functions to improve the health of the population of Shropshire – some of the public health services provided to support our population, particularly Public Health Nursing, Drug and Alcohol treatment and recovery and NHS Health-checks, are commissioned and delivered by third parties, including, but not limited to the NHS.

In Shropshire, currently, the Public Health Nursing and Sexual Health services are contracts held by NHS Provider Trusts. The Council ensures that there are robust HR processes in place at several stages. Firstly, as part of the procurement evaluation, HR processes are assessed along with HR policies. A question in the evaluation process is asked to enable prospective providers to demonstrate their HR policies and procedures. An example of this is below:

Describe your staffing model for the delivery of the service: This should include:

- How staffing requirements are assessed, monitored and maintained.
- Retention of staff
- Maintaining services during periods of staff absence short and long term or emerging priorities.
- Ensuring staff professional registration is achieved, recorded and maintained
- Training of staff and CPD

- Staff appraisal
- Training of the wider workforce including partners
- Appropriate employment checks including DBS

On-going monitoring is undertaken through regular contract monitoring meetings including any HR issues arising. This will include any forecasted retirement or leavers as well as any recruitment, retention and sickness issues. Mandatory training, professional registration and appraisal compliance is also monitored. The NHS Trusts are expected to raise any service or workforce issues with the commissioner at the earliest opportunity and to have within their risk register for discussion. Business continuity plans are also assessed as part of the procurement evaluation process. Any significant changes in service provision would require a business case and/or discussion with commissioners and equality impact assessment be undertaken before changes are implemented.

When developing a specification for a public health service this will be developed in line with national guidance and national specifications where these exist. The needs of the local population will also be assessed linked to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and the service specification designed to address the identified needs and the population demographics and levels of inequalities. Services are expected to demonstrate both through the tender / procurement process responses and through their ongoing delivery that they respond to local needs including the rurality of Shropshire, and their delivery models and staffing / workforce structures continue to take this into account. Quarterly contract performance meetings are held with providers to review progress and ensure any issues in delivery have appropriate mitigation plans in place which are monitored. However, the vast majority of the services delivered through these contracts are mandated and offered universally with additional targeted support for individuals/families as required and follow the suggested national service specifications

Question from Councillor Vivienne Parry

AIR B&Bs and Holiday lets are businesses and are asked to pay for rubbish bins, they are not doing this ,asking people who stay on holiday to take rubbish with them home but in many cases this does not happen it is dumped in the waste small black bins on street, or in parks or in the street all over the floor. Councill waste bin collectors not the dustbin men tell me that they have been told not to collect and it stands on the ground for days not collected with vermin running over it.

I have then asked for a collection which I would think costs this Council more money and because it has been left on the floor spills everywhere needing to be swept time and money .The officer Zoe Mortimer came to look at this last week I hope we can do something about this as it makes Ludlow look bad and I am sure visitors wonder why our beautiful town is left in this state .Asking one of the pubs in town the landlady said she pays £150 a week for her waste to be removed why are other businesses able to get away with not paying . Please can something be done urgently

Response from Councillor Ian Nellins, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

The responsibility for waste disposal sits with the property owner. Normally domestic waste will be disposed of through normal collection services funded through the council tax. For traders it is their responsibility to arrange for trade waste collection for which the business is required to pay. If these properties are being let via AIR B&B, then it would be classified as trade waste. If specific properties can be identified that are causing issues, then these can be investigated and assessment made of what action the Council could take. If there is evidence which can be attributed to a business then ultimately the council can take enforcement action.

Question from Councillor Bernie Bentick

Regarding adoption of developments within Shropshire,

1. How does the Planning Dept decide that a development is ready for adoption and what is the time standard for adoption, after the development is ready for this?
2. How many and which specific developments are outstanding & what steps are being taken to clear this backlog?
3. How does the Planning Dept assess whether Section 106 agreements have been delivered, how many and which specific agreements have not been delivered & what enforcement action has been taken?

Response from Councillor Chris Schofield, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services

Clarification has been sought and we understand the breadth of the question is to include adoptions for open space and highways.

1. There is not a standard time period for adoption. We work with developers to ensure that the standard of roads or open space areas meet the required specification before they are adopted. In terms of housing estates, as an example, this can often be beyond the occupation of the dwellings on the site. Open space areas are often done in the latter stages of a development as you would expect.
2. We do have lists of developments that are outstanding. Of course, our enforcement team have complaints to respond to where developments have unadopted roads or open spaces. Officers in the enforcement team follow these up to ensure that the works are completed.
3. The planning service has a dedicated team that monitors all Section 106 agreements and can provide details on all clauses of agreements that have been delivered and those outstanding. Clauses within S106 agreements have different trigger dates for delivering the requirements, so although there may be contributions or works outstanding, this does not necessarily mean that there has been a breach of the S106 agreement.

We would welcome Cllr Bentick to spend some time with officers to go through the information we hold to see how controls and enforcement are applied.

Question from Councillor David Vasmer

Could officers provide a list of schools within Shropshire that have been found to contain buildings made from reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (Raac) given concerns about its safety ?

What arrangements are the Council putting in place to further identify schools which might be at risk

Are there any other Shropshire owned buildings that could contain Raac?

A response to this question will follow

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