

# Community Facilities Audit, (2009) updated 2012



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# Community Facilities Audit (2009) Updated 2012

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This paper updates the policy context to the Wyre Forest District Community Facilities Audit (2009). The publication of the National Planning Policy Framework to replace the series of Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Planning Policy Statements at the national level together with the legislation within the Localism Act which will lead to the revocation of Regional Strategies meant that an update the policy context of this study became necessary. The data collection has not been updated and therefore, this update sits alongside the original 2009 report and should be read in conjunction with it. The original paper identifies the level of community facilities that exist within the Wyre Forest District and provides background information to inform the preparation of the District's Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 1.2 The audit of community facilities was undertaken during the summer of 2009. The audit concentrated on a range of facilities, which were as follows:
- Community Centres
  - Civic Halls
  - Community Schools
  - Places of Worship
  - Church Hall
  - Village Hall
  - 'Other Hall'
  - Scout Hut
  - Day Centre
  - Library
  - Social Club
  - Nursery / Crèche
  - Doctors
  - Dentists
  - Museums
  - Libraries
  - Cinemas
- 1.3 Other community facilities, such as sport and recreation facilities, have been audited in separate reports. The reports detailing these facilities can be viewed on the Council's website ([www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk))
- 1.4 The audit identified the number of facilities that exist within the District, and then split this by ward area, to give a greater appreciation of the spatial distribution throughout the District. All of the facilities have been located and

included on a database as well as being plotted onto the Council's GIS system.

- 1.5 This audit provides insight into the existing community facilities within the District and provides the baseline data for consideration within the LDF.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 Community facilities refer to a wide range of services and facilities that exist within the District. This includes the following:

- Social and Health Care: Hospitals, GPs, Dentists
- Sports and Leisure: Outdoor Pitches, Indoor Halls
- Education: Schools, Colleges
- Community Uses: Libraries, Community Centres, Halls, Museums, Cultural Facilities, Places of Worship
- Emergency Services: Fire, Police, Ambulance

- 2.2 Providing these kinds of facilities in our communities is essential as it enables people to meet, learn and socialise together, to develop skills and interests and to have a better quality of life.

### **National, Regional and Local Context**

- 2.3 The key planning documents which influenced the future development of community facilities within the District were:

- Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development
- Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres
- Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation
- West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, Phase 2 Revision
- Wyre Forest District, Adopted Local Plan (2004)
- Wyre Forest Matters, Sustainable Community Strategy (2008 – 2014)

- 2.4 However these have now been replaced by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). An overview of the relevant areas of the NPPF is set out below:

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

- 2.5 *Achieving Sustainable Development*

The presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the NPPF. Equal weight is given to the social, economic and environmental elements of sustainable development. The social role is particularly relevant to the Community Facilities Audit emphasises the importance of providing

accessible local services to reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.

## 2.6 *Building a Strong, Competitive Economy*

The NPPF emphasises the importance of economic growth and creating jobs and economic prosperity. The NPPF stresses that the environment is a key influencing factor in the growth of the economy. *“Planning policies should recognise and seek to address potential barriers to investment, including a poor environment or any lack of infrastructure, services or housing.”* (P.6) The NPPF also states that land allocations for employment uses should be reviewed on a regular basis. This is to allow land that has no reasonable prospect of being used, being allocated (depending on applications) for alternative uses, and being *“...treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.”* (P.7)

## 2.7 *Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres*

The NPPF recognises that policies should be set in order to manage and help the growth and vitality of town centres, and to promote strong and competitive centres. The NPPF also aims to *“promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer and which reflect the individuality of town centres.”* (p.7)

## 2.8 *Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy*

The NPPF states that planning needs to take *“...a positive approach to sustainable new development”* (P.9) in order to have a prosperous rural economy which creates jobs and support for the local community. This means that neighbourhood plans should look to support sustainable growth and sustainable rural tourism. It is also mentioned in the NPPF, that plans should *“promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.”* (P.9)

## 2.9 *Promoting Healthy Communities*

The NPPF recognises how important planning can be when promoting healthy communities. It also states that the Local Authority should aim to work in partnership with local communities when devising local plans, allowing the local community to have a say in how they visualise their environments.

The NPPF clearly states that, *“to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should: plan positively for use of shared space, community facilities and other local services to enhance sustainability of communities, guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, and ensure that established shops, services and facilities are able to develop and modernise in a sustainable way ...”* (P.17) It is also clearly protects open space and recreational facilities from development unless it is clearly surplus to requirements, will be replaced elsewhere or is being replaced by alternative sport and recreation provision which outweighs the loss. Local communities

can, through the Local Green Space designation, “identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them.” (P.18). This will allow local communities in some cases to safeguard land from development.

### ***Regional Planning Policy - West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, Phase Two Revision***

- 2.10 The former emerging West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy provided the regional planning framework for the West Midlands. Within the RSS there were a number of policies which outline the importance of community facilities. This includes:
- 2.11 Policy SR2: Creating Sustainable Communities – which identifies that “local authorities should make provision for the full range of spatial requirements needed to create sustainable communities”. This includes the requirement for “necessary services and social infrastructure to meet the needs of the population, including health, education and skills, spiritual, sport and recreation, and cultural facilities, and the requirements of the emergency services.”
- 2.12 The Localism Bill has given the Government the power to abolish Regional Strategies. Therefore, whilst they are technically still part of the development plan it is expected that they will be revoked in the near future.

### **Local Planning Policy - The Local Development Framework (LDF)**

- 2.13 The LDF should reflect the spatial activities of groups and organisations involved in the delivery of community facilities and service provision within the District. This will help to ensure that existing and future provision is considered through the planning policy framework. The aim of this policy framework is to help to deliver sustainable communities by safeguarding existing facilities.
- 2.14 The Policies contained within the LDF can also enable and support the provision of new, extended or refurbished community facilities. This will be an important element of policy into the future as services need to be fit for purpose and will need to meet any potential changing requirements into the future
- 2.15 The Adopted Core Strategy (December 2012) includes a number of policies which are relevant to the provision, protection and enhancement of community facilities:
- DS02: Kidderminster Regeneration Area
  - DS03: Market Towns
  - DS04: Rural Regeneration
  - CP07: Delivering Community Wellbeing
  - CP13: Providing a Green Infrastructure Network

## Wyre Forest Matters – Sustainable Community Strategy

2.16 The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out a number of key issues facing the District and actions to address them over the time period (2008 – 2014). The key issues and priorities relating to community facilities include:

- To have cleaner, greener and safer public spaces
- Support the implementation of Extended Services in Wyre Forest District
- Ensure that children, young people and their families have things to do and enjoy in their communities
- Improve access to learning, participation and cultural opportunities
- Increase participation in cultural, leisure and recreational activities
- Ensure the value of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and volunteers is recognised across the District

2.17 This summary of policy from the national through to the local scale highlights the importance of planning for community facilities. A key step in ensuring that community facilities are properly accounted for is to understand what currently exists within the District.

### 3. The Wyre Forest District in Context

3.1 Wyre Forest District is situated within North West Worcestershire and covers an area of 75 sq. miles (19.4 hectares). It is a mix of urban, rural and market towns, comprising the three towns of Kidderminster, Stourport on Severn and Bewdley, together with a rural hinterland of several villages including Upper Arley, Rock, Chaddesley Corbett and Wolverley. The three towns form a triangle of settlements at the centre of the District but despite their close proximity, each has its own particular character and community identity.

3.2 The population of Wyre Forest District is approximately 98,500, and when compared regionally and nationally the District has a high population of over 65s. This is projected to rise by at least 50% during the next 20 years compared with a total population increase of less than 5%.

#### **Kidderminster**

3.3 Kidderminster (56,000 popn) is the main centre for commerce, offering industrial, offices, shopping and leisure facilities. It is recognised as a local regeneration area and has recently undergone an extensive £60 million river and canal side redevelopment. Kidderminster is one of 25 strategic centres in the West Midlands and provides the main focus for the District's economic development.

#### **Stourport-on-Severn**

3.4 Stourport on Severn (20,000 popn) developed as an important industrial Georgian Canal Town and was once one of the busiest canal ports in the

Midlands. For over 100 years this attractive town with its riverside meadows has been a popular day trip destination.

### **Bewdley**

- 3.5 Bewdley (9,000 popn) is a Georgian riverside town which saw significant development during the 1960s. Today, Bewdley is an attractive historic market town, has an award winning museum and is a popular visitor destination.

### **Rural Hinterland**

- 3.6 The District is semi rural and its rural settlements offer a limited range of facilities. To the east, the larger villages include Chaddesley Corbett, Blakedown, Cookley and Wolverley, whilst to the west of the River Severn are the smaller settlements of Clows Top, Far Forest, Callow Hill, Bliss Gate and Rock.

### **Natural and built environment**

- 3.7 The District has a rich landscape character, and topography is significantly influenced by the Severn and Stour river valleys which flow through the town centres of Bewdley and Kidderminster respectively, before joining at Stourport-on-Severn.
- 3.8 Some 6% of the District is formally recognised as of national importance for nature conservation, including parts of the woodlands of the Wyre Forest and Chaddesley Woods. There are significant areas of lowland heathland, acid grasslands and wetlands which make a key contribution to biodiversity. To the west the land is elevated and dominated by the Wyre Forest ancient semi-natural woodland and the Abberley & Malvern Hills Geopark. The District is home to a number of protected species which are often found along the watercourses and in the pools and marshland areas. A rich heritage is also present, including buildings, conservation areas, monuments, landscapes and archaeology.

### **Deprivation**

- 3.9 Wyre Forest District experiences relatively low levels of deprivation compared to other local authority areas. It is ranked 162 out of 354, with a rank of 1 being the most deprived, and within the West Midlands it is 15th of 34. However, there are pockets of real deprivation such as Oldington and Foley Park, Greenhill and Broadwaters, that experience high levels of poverty, poor health, social exclusion and low educational attainment. Oldington and Foley Park ward is the most deprived in Worcestershire and in the top 10% nationally.

## **4. The Audit**

- 4.1 The baseline audit undertaken by Wyre Forest District Council Officers sought to identify the different types and quantity of community facilities that exist within the District. This was undertaken through, desk top analysis, data searching (including the Valuation Office Agency), internal record

investigation and contacts with other Council sections (Licensing, Development Control) and site visits. All of the data was recorded on a site pro-forma and added into a comprehensive database. The completed site pro-forma's are also included within the report at Appendix 1. Where possible and to complement the audit a questionnaire was sent to service providers to ascertain further information regarding sites. This can be seen at Appendix 2.

4.2 Additionally, in order to understand the spatial representation of the different community facilities, all of the venues were mapped onto the Council's Geographical Information System. A number of maps detailing the different facilities can be viewed throughout the report.

4.3 It should be noted that this was primarily a desk-top exercise and involved collating as much information as possible about each facility. Therefore the amount of detail does vary depending on how available certain information was when undertaking the audit. The full details can be seen in Appendix 1.

### **Community Facilities**

4.4 As previously mentioned, this audit concentrated on the following types of facilities:

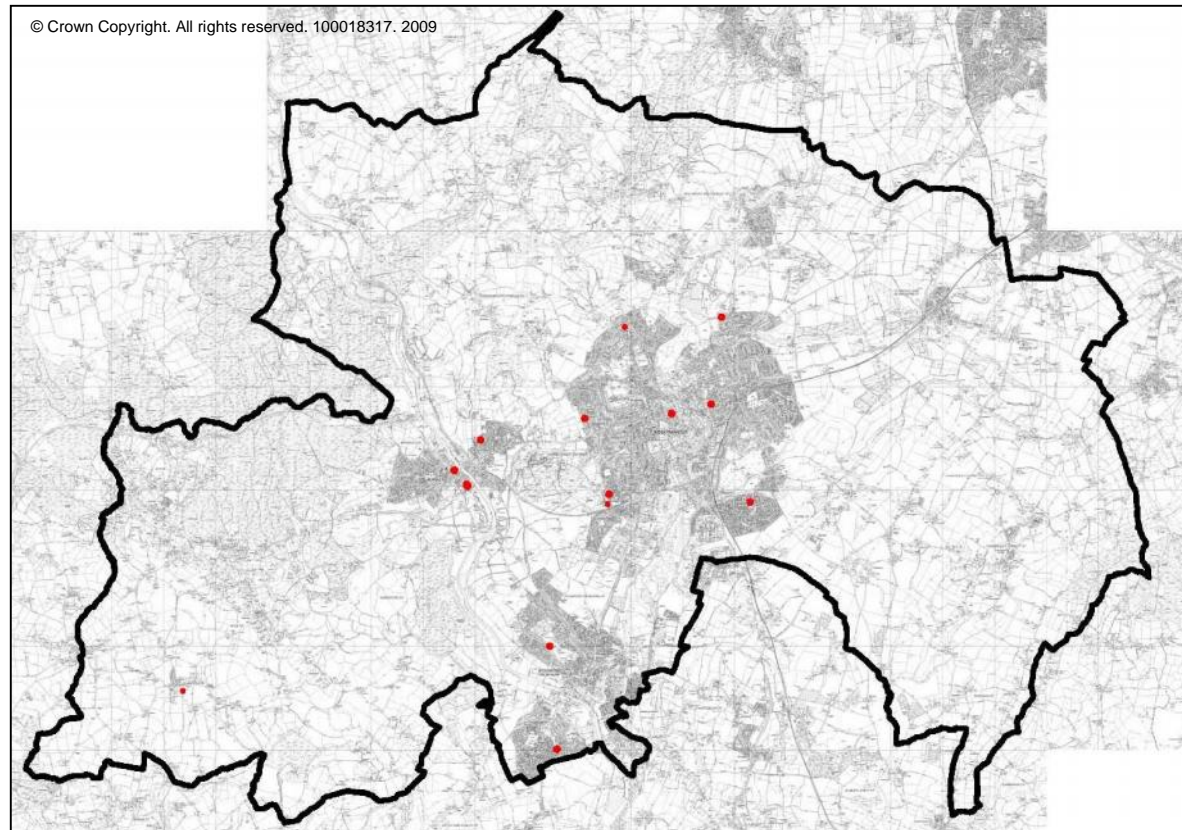
1. Community Centres
2. Civic Halls
3. Church Hall
4. Village Hall
5. 'Other Hall'
6. Places of Worship
7. Community Schools
8. Scout Hut
9. Day Centre
10. Library
11. Social Club
12. Nursery / Crèche
13. Doctors
14. Dentists
15. Emergency Services Facilities
16. Museums
17. Theatres
18. Cinemas

4.5 The location and quality of these facilities are discussed in further detail on the following pages. A detailed map showing the locations of all of the community facilities audited can be seen at Appendix 3.



## 5. Community Centres

- 5.1 There are a total of 14 community centres throughout the District. The centres are fairly evenly distributed across the different wards. As would be expected, the greatest concentration is within the District's towns.

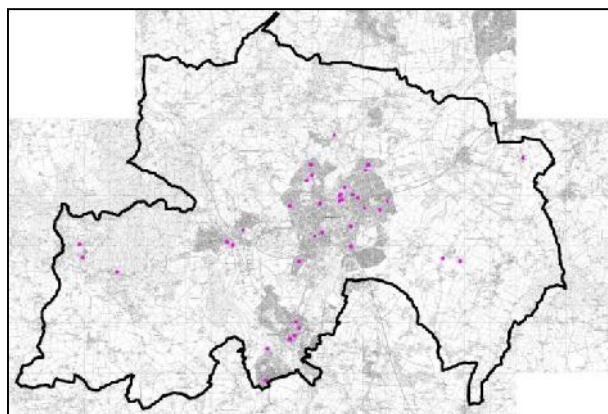


## 6. Civic / Church / Village / 'Other' Halls

6.1 There are a wide variety of community 'halls' that exist throughout the District. Their size, location and use vary widely and reflect some of the different needs of the various communities that exist within the District. In total, community halls make up a large percentage of the community facilities that exist within Wyre Forest. A total of 66 different 'halls' exist within the District providing for a diverse range of activities such as:

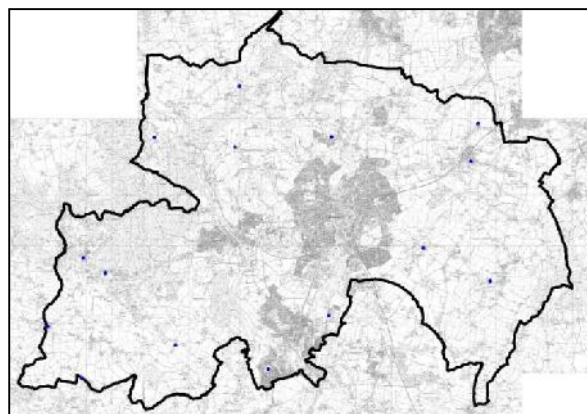
- Indoor Bowls
- Womens Institute
- Slimming Club
- Parties
- Dog Club
- Parent and Toddler Group
- Bingo
- Adult Learning
- Keep Fit Class
- Yoga
- Bridge
- Dancing Classes
- Music Venue
- Parish Council Meetings
- Art Groups

6.2 These are a selection of the activities that are carried out at the various halls within the District, and the list is not comprehensive. This list does, however, highlight the multi-functional role that the various halls perform. Furthermore, as each of the halls provide for such a wide range of activities it highlights the importance of ensuring that they are maintained for the benefit of the community.



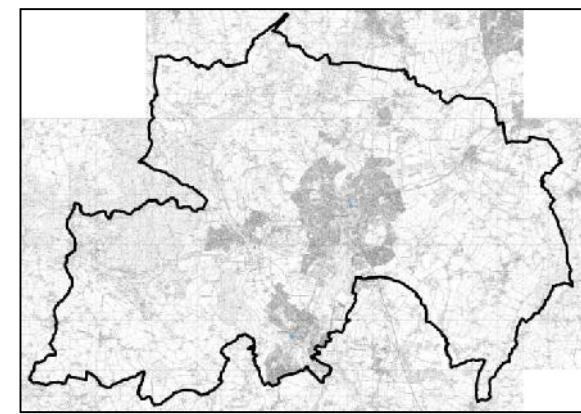
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Village Halls



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Church Halls

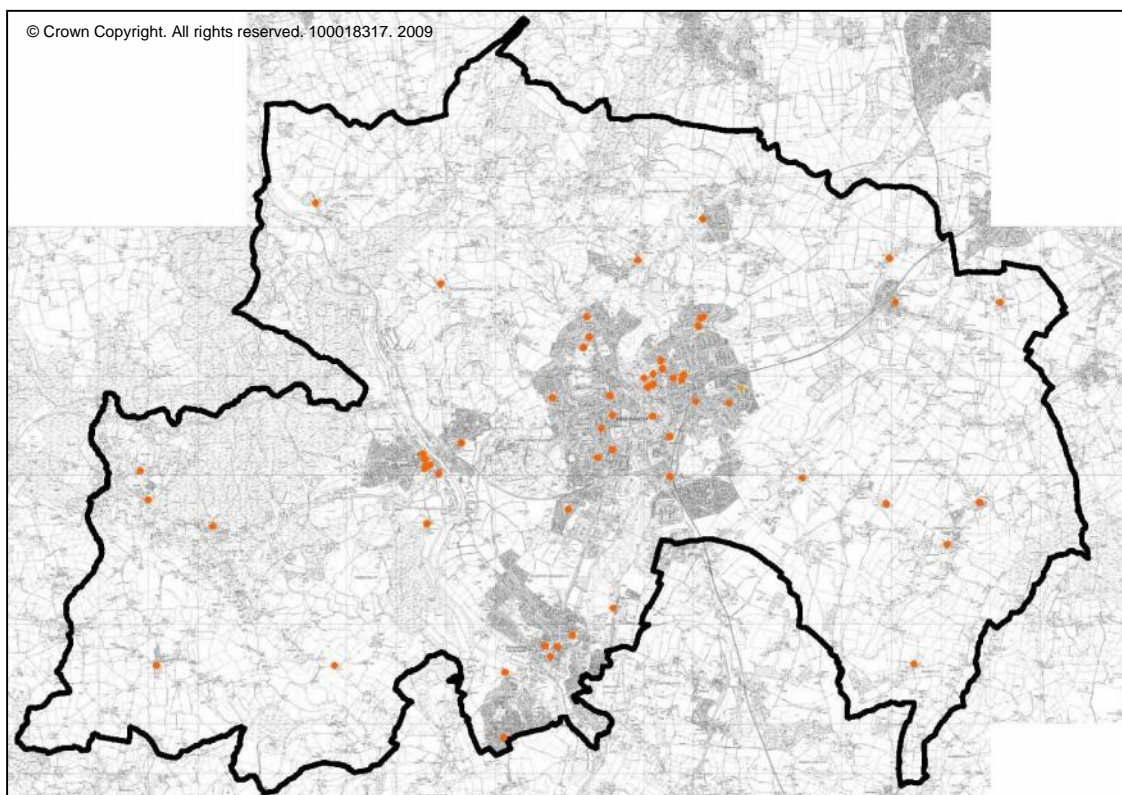


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Civic Halls

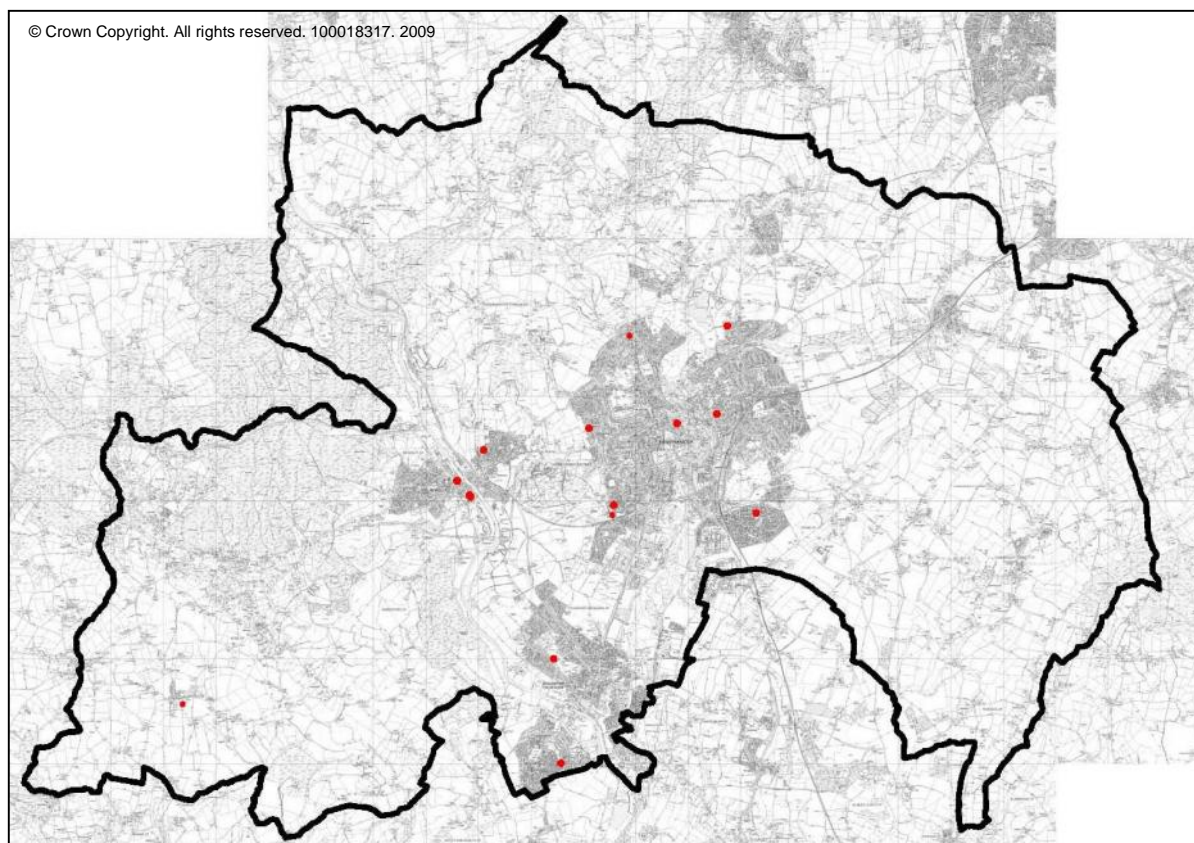
## 7. Places of Worship

- 7.1 Another large proportion of facilities that exist throughout the District are the Places of Worship. In total, there are 59 buildings used as Places of Worship. There are a wide variety of faiths that exist within the District and this is reflected by the wide range of spiritual buildings that are present throughout.



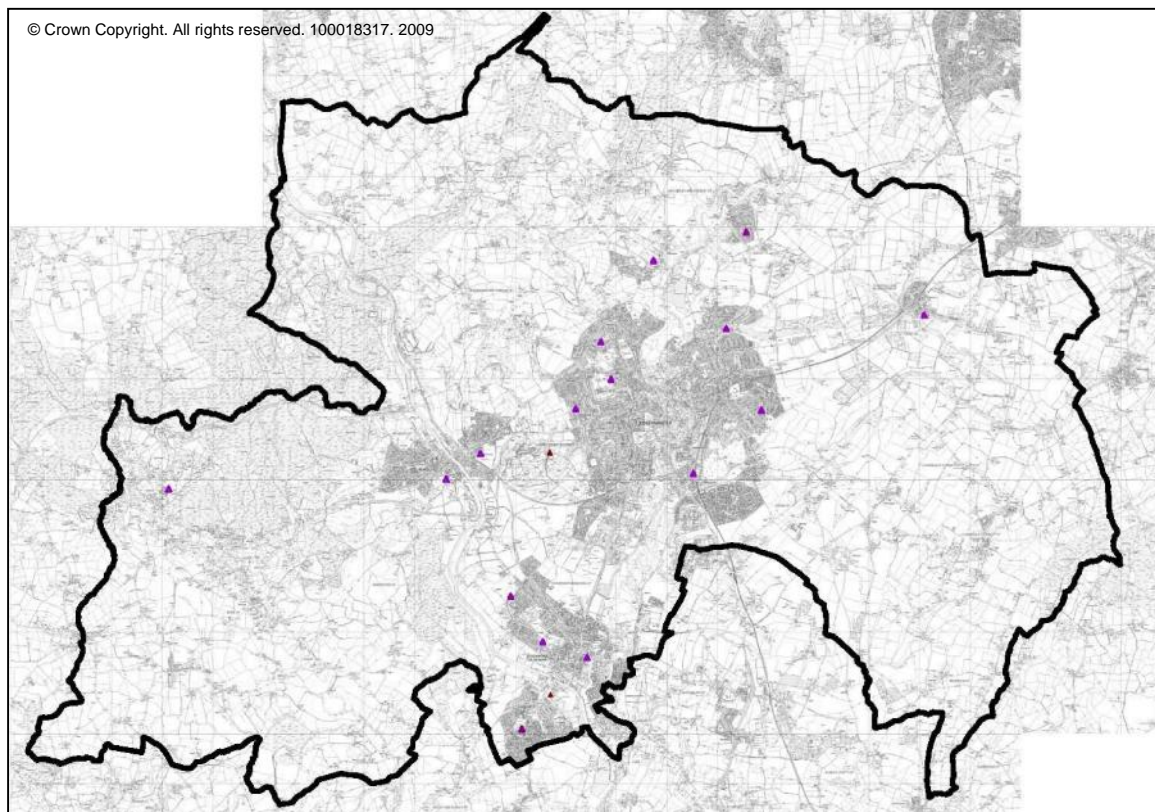
## 8. Community Schools

- 8.1 Educational facilities are an important community facility, providing the buildings for people to learn as well as other important social infrastructure, such as halls, sports pitches and recreational areas.



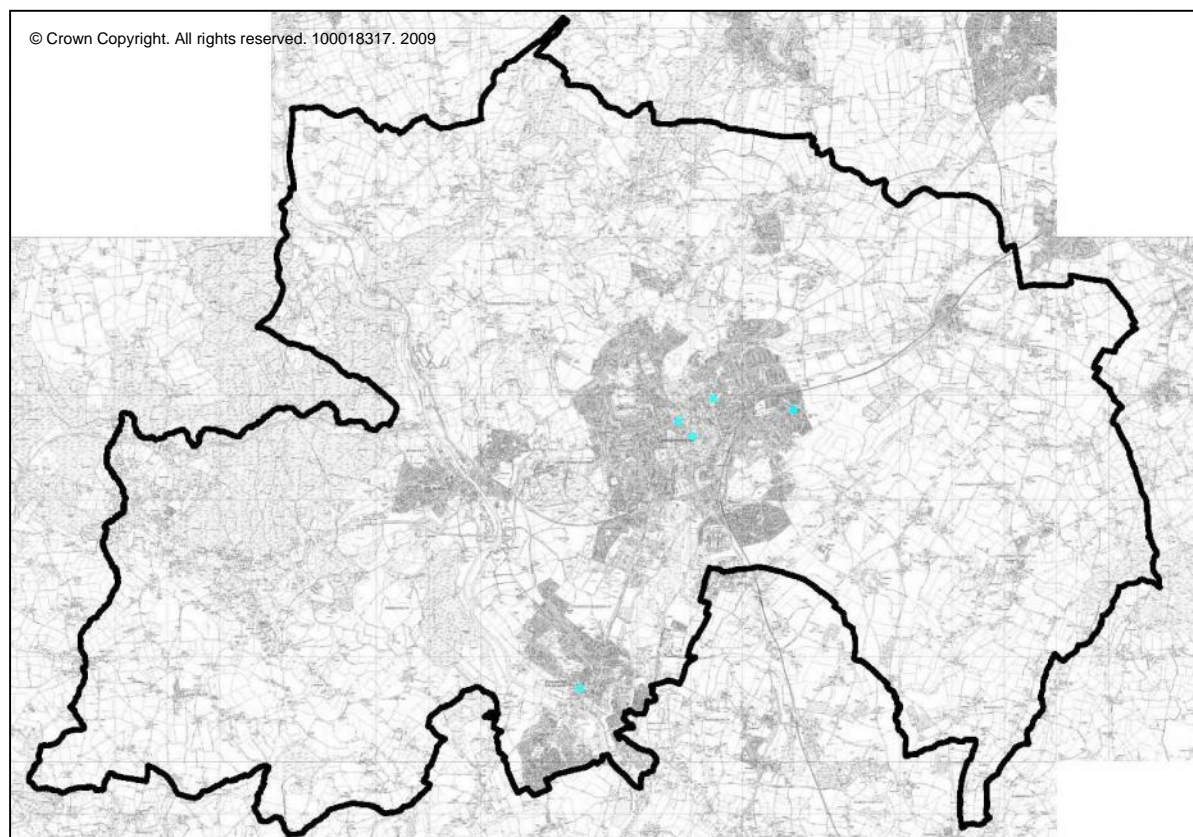
## 9. Scout Huts

- 9.1 There are a total of 18 'Scout Huts' that exist throughout the District. These provide important venues, especially for the young people of the District



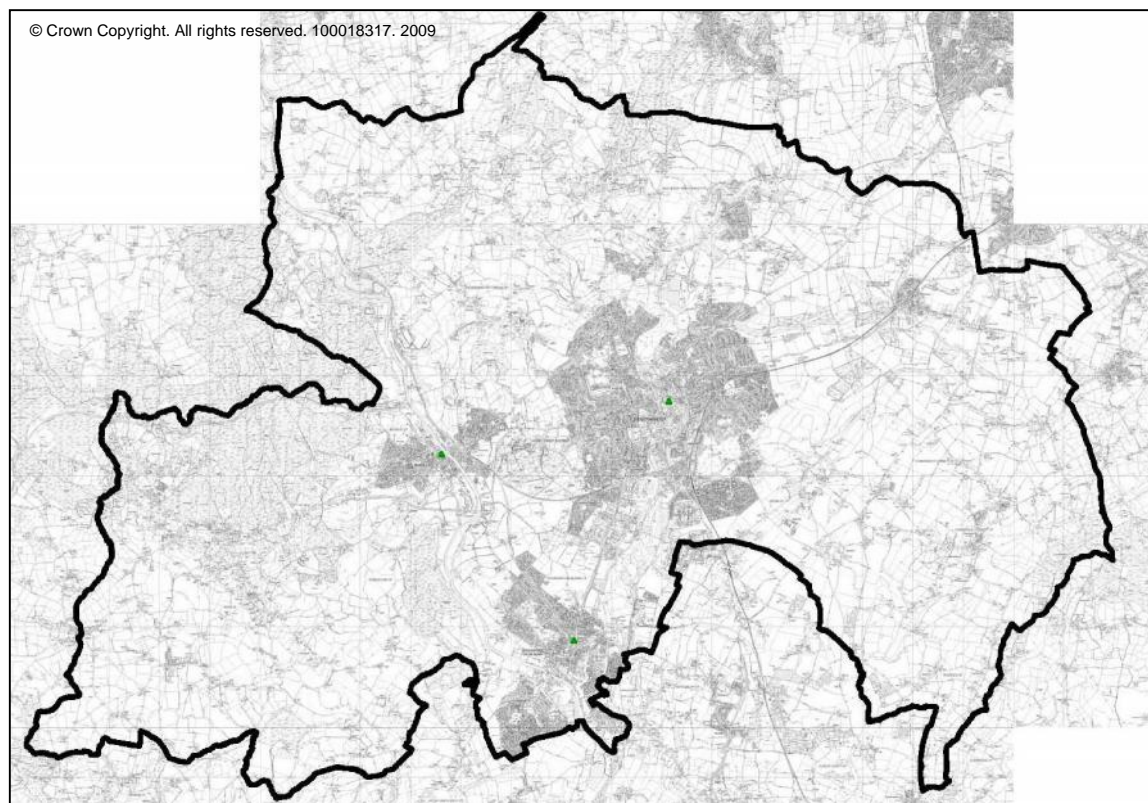
## 10. Day Centres

10.1 There are only 5 venues classed as Day Centre within the District. These centres provide the space for a number of activities, which includes weight watchers, civic societies, age concern and some limited children's parties.



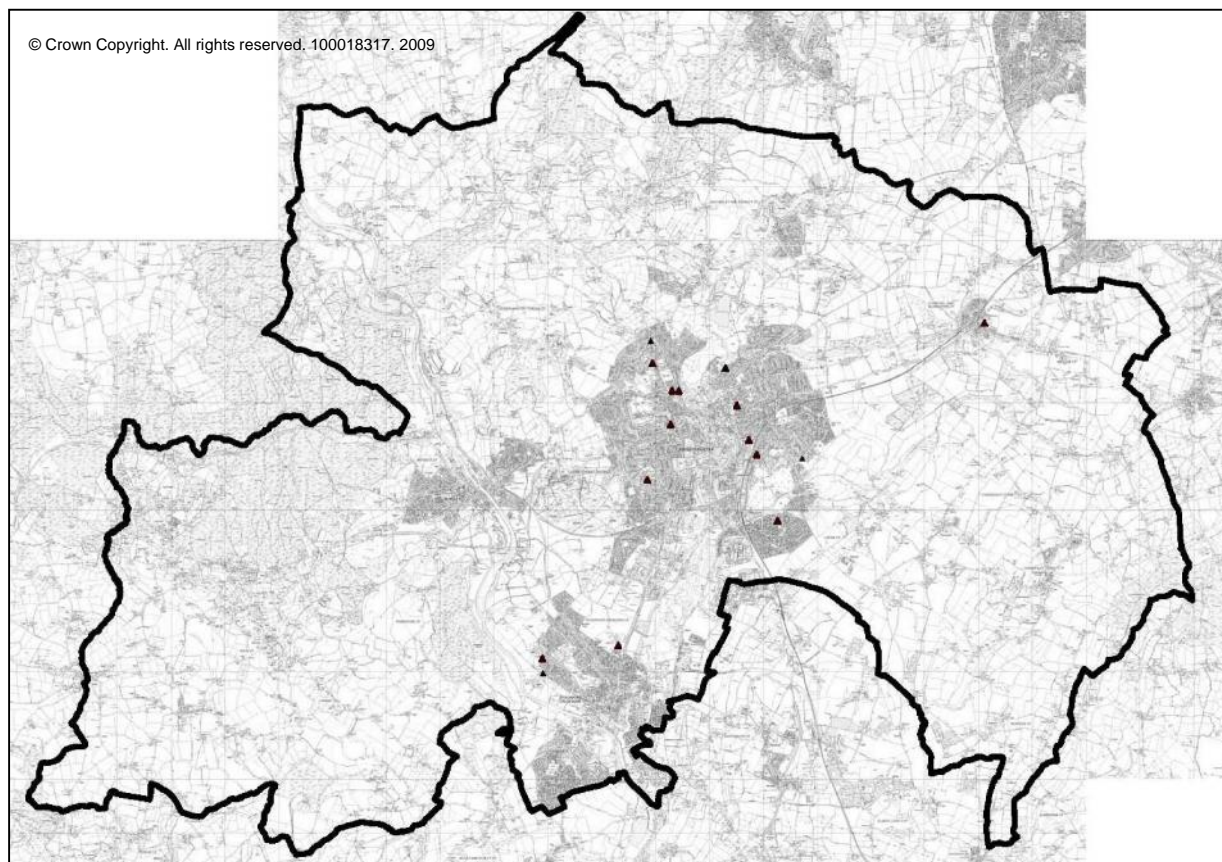
## 11. Libraries

11.1 Libraries are an important educational resource and each of the towns within the District contains a library. The size of the libraries and resources generally reflects the population within each of the towns. Kidderminster library is therefore the largest resource, followed by Stourport and then Bewdley. The libraries provide important facilities for the resident population and each centre has access to the internet as well as more traditional learning resources.



## 12. Nursery / Crèche

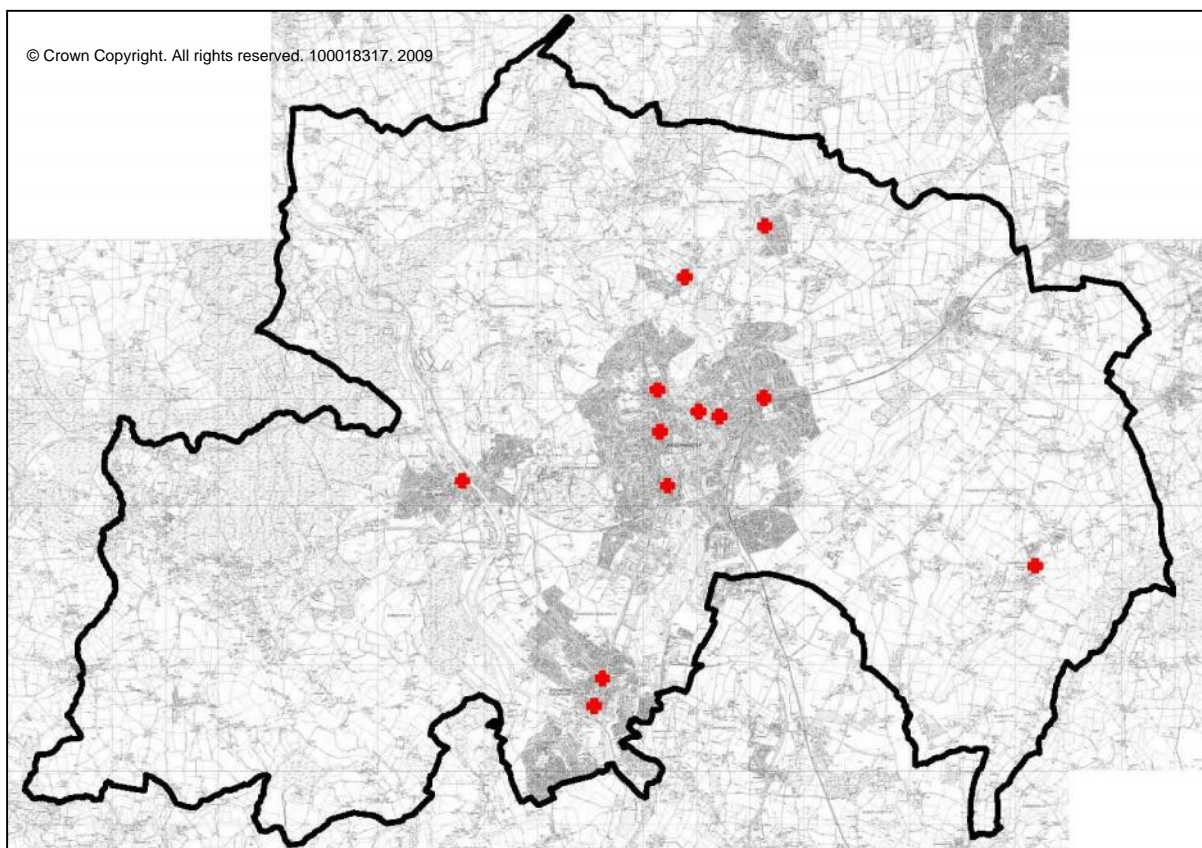
12.1 There are a total of 16 nurseries / crèches that exist throughout the District, providing important community facilities for the resident population.





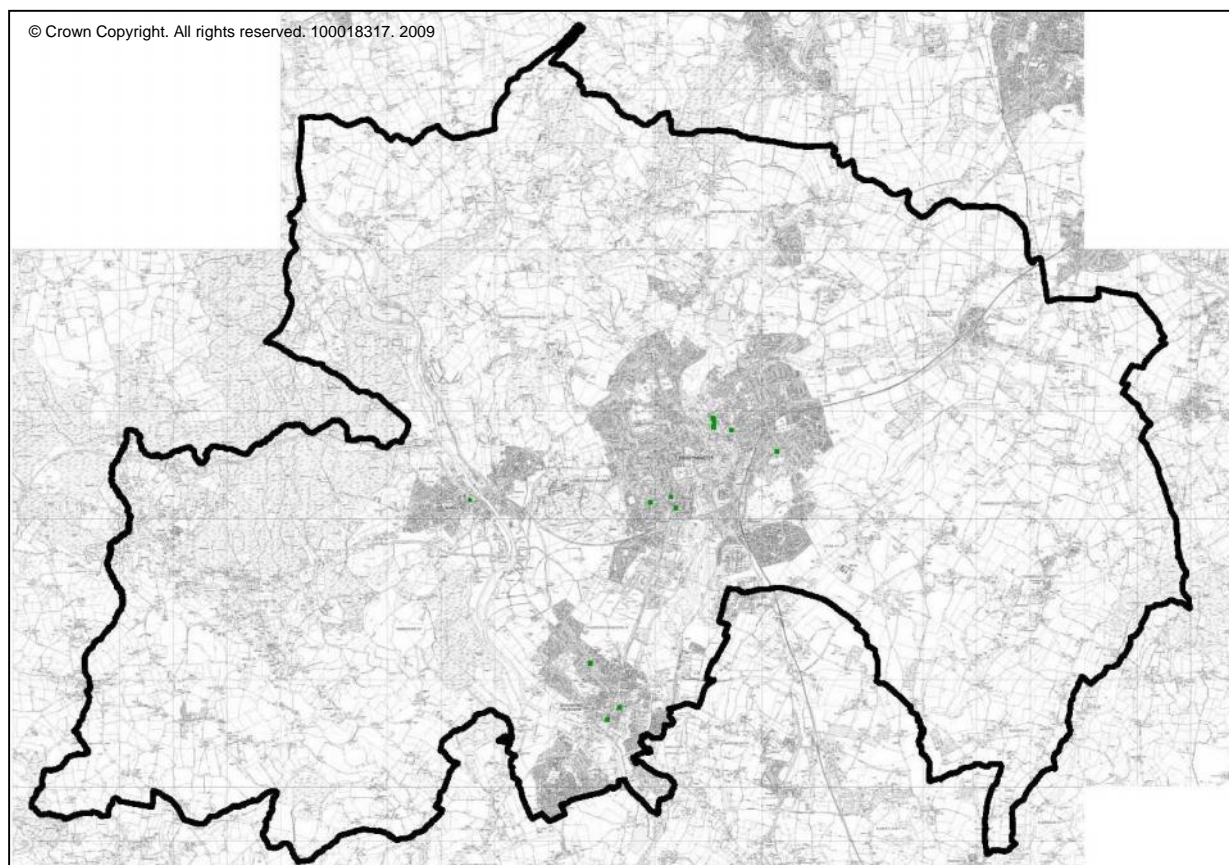
### 13. Doctors

13.1 There are 12 doctor / GP practices that operate within the District. These facilities provide a vital service to the local community and are generally concentrated in the main towns, as can be seen by the map below.



## 14. Dentists

14.1 The majority of the dental practices within the District are located within Kidderminster, with a specific concentration around Church Street. Each of the town's has its own dental practice and there are a mixture of private and NHS run practices.



## **15. Emergency Services – Hospitals / Fire Stations / Police Stations**

15.1 There are a number of important emergency facilities that exist within the District. There is a main hospital located on Bewdley Road in Kidderminster which serves the needs of the District and some of the surrounding area. The hospital does not have an A&E facility but does provide important minor care facilities. There are three fire stations within the District and are located within the three main towns. Similarly the main Police stations are in the three main towns, with a number of other 'satellite' stations existing throughout the rest of the District.

## **16. Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities**

16.1 A full PPG17 compliant audit the District's Open Space, Sport and recreation facilities had already been carried out by consultants and the information relating to this can be seen in the final publication which is available to view on the District Council's website. (<http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/cms/non-lgnl-pages/planning-and-regulatory-servic/planning-policy/ldf-evidence-base.aspx>) A map of the final Audit, detailing the open space, sport and recreation facilities within the District can be seen at Appendix 4 to this paper.

## **17. Museums, theatres and cinemas**

17.1 The District has the Rose Theatre within the Broadwaters ward of Kidderminster. Kidderminster also has a small cinema located within the town centre. There are two popular and successful Museums within the District. The Bewdley Museum has recently been refurbished and offers many activities and learning opportunities. The Severn Valley Railway Museum also offers excellent facilities and holds many community events.

## **18. Breakdown of Community facilities by Ward**

18.1 The following table identifies the breakdown of community facilities by ward. This helps to give a greater spatial awareness of where facilities are located and also to highlight any potential deficiencies within certain areas. As you would expect, the majority of the facilities are located within the urban wards, however, the more rural areas do appear to be quite well served in a number of key areas, with short trips into the surrounding towns providing access to other facilities.

**Table 1: Community Facilities by Ward**

Ward	Community Centre	Civic Hall	Community School	Place of Worship	Church Hall	Village Hall	Other Hall	Youth Centre	Scout Hut	Day Centre	Library	Nursery /Crèche	Social Club	Doctors	Dentists	Museum / Cinema/ Theatre	Total
Aggborough & Spennells	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	6
Areley Kings	1	0	1	2	2	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	14
Bewdley & Arley	3	0	1	8	2	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	4	1	1	1	26
Blakedown & Chaddesley	0	0	1	7	4	4	2	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	23
Broadwaters	1	0	2	8	7	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	1	25
Cookley	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	5
Franche	0	0	2	3	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	15
Greenhill	1	1	1	7	5	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	5	3	5	2	34
Habberley & Blakebrook	1	0	3	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	14
Lickhill	1	0	4	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	3	3	0	1	0	16
Mitton	0	1	2	5	4	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	7	2	3	0	29
Offmore & Comberton	0	0	3	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	1	0	14
Oldington & Foley Park	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	8
Rock	1	0	1	5	3	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
Sutton Park	1	0	2	4	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	14
Wolverley	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	8
Wribbenhall	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	15
<b>Totals</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>282</b>

## 19. Conclusion

- 19.1 The future protection, maintenance and, enhancement of community facilities is a vital part of ensuring that future development within the District meets the needs of its residents. Community facilities cater for a large audience and their role is multi-functional. The facilities in the District range from village halls through to nurseries and schools but regardless of the type of facility they all provide similar functions, as a focus for the community. Therefore, any future planning of the District needs to ensure that community facilities are taken account and properly planned for. The needs and requirements of communities are likely to change over time and therefore the planning system put in place needs to be able to respond flexibly to meet the needs of the community. By understanding the current situation within the District, through this audit, more informed judgements will be able to be made about the future of the facilities enjoyed and required by the public.
- 19.2 This audit has been carried out to ascertain the type, location and number of community facilities that exist throughout Wyre Forest District, whilst also trying to collate what types of activities run from the different areas. The audit provides baseline information which will help to inform future planning policy within the District. All of the information collated from the audit has been stored in a comprehensive database and mapped onto the Council's Geographical Information System. This information will help to shape future decision making processes regarding the future of community facilities and will be of vital importance for future site assessment and selection through the LDF and particularly the Site Allocations and Policies DPD and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan DPD.
- 19.3 Recent policy changes have not affected the emphasis placed on the provision of accessible community facilities and therefore, the LDF must continue to ensure that it incorporates policies to safeguard, enhance and deliver community facilities.
- 19.4 For more information on the Local Development Framework and the other Evidence Base Studies available, please visit the Council's website. ([www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk)).