

**Cabinet****Thursday, 31 January 2019, County Hall, Worcester,  
10.00 am****Present:****Minutes**

Mr S E Geraghty (Chairman), Mr A T Amos,  
Mr A I Hardman, Mr M J Hart, Mrs L C Hodgson,  
Ms K J May, Mr A P Miller, Dr K A Pollock,  
Mr A C Roberts and Mr J H Smith

**Also attended:**

Mr C J Bloore, Mr A D Kent, Mr R C Lunn,  
Mr P Middlebrough, Mrs F Oborski and Mrs E B Tucker

**Available Papers**

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated); and
- B. The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2018 (previously circulated).

**1896 Apologies and  
Declarations of  
Interest**

None

**1897 Public  
Participation**

There was one Public Participant, Mr Mark Regan, who spoke on behalf of the Friends of Worcestershire Archives. Mr Regan put forward a proposal to reduce the budget to the Archives Service without requiring funds from the County Council. Mr Regan was thanked for his contribution.

**1898 Confirmation of  
the Minutes of  
the previous  
meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**1899 2019/20 Budget  
and Medium  
Term Financial  
Plan Update  
2019-22**

The Cabinet considered the 2019/20 Budget and medium term financial plan update 2019-22. The details were set out in the report and its appendices.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and highlighted that although the Council's income had increased, the increase was not enough to cover the demand led pressures for Adults and Children's services. Worcestershire's economic policy was succeeding but an ambitious reform programme was still necessary to produce a balanced budget. The Council welcomed the

75% business rates retention pilot which would generate up to an extra £4.9 million to be put against social care pressures.

The budget included £14million to be invested in Adults Social care; over £7million into children's services as well as investment in the economy. The Council tax would be increased by 3.99% but that still meant that Worcestershire had one of the lowest rates in the Country.

Having listened to comments from the OSPB, parishes and communities, amendments had been made to the proposed budget such as the reduction of cuts to highways, the countryside service, libraries and the archives service and the creation of a communities fund. Additions were being made to the capital budget which would be spent on measures to cut congestion, railway station improvement, game-changer sites around Worcestershire, town centre improvements, walking and cycling routes and the Members' highways fund. However despite the positive investment in the County the Leader cautioned the Council not to forget the backdrop that further reform would be needed in future years.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- They were pleased with the way the budget had come together although the Council still faced considerable challenges. The Government had contributed to Adults' and Children's social care funding but only with one-off amounts
- Council Tax was being kept at a reasonable level. However, there was some concern that in future pensioners may be adversely affected if Council Tax continued to be increased at above CPI rates of inflation. It was pointed out that Worcestershire residents paid one of the lowest amounts of Council tax, only 1.7% more than the lowest, 5.1% below the average and 14.6% below the highest Council tax amount
- Investment had been made in the necessary areas – Children's Social Care, SEND, adults social care, learning disabilities services, highways and the economy
- The Local Members Capital Fund was welcomed
- Keeping 75% of business rates would help with demand prevention and was an ambitious project even though it was only a pilot at present
- Minor amendments had been made to the Adult services budget. The Public Health Ring Fenced

Grant was enabling the grant for the stroke association specialist support programme to continue for a further year and the quality checkers and assurance team had offered to accept a reduction in their pay to enable the 8 people in the team with Learning Disabilities to keep their jobs

- It was recognised that children and families had been an area of growth in terms of finance over the last couple of years, but further funding would still be required in future as the Council was looking to improve safeguarding, the numbers of placements had increased by 10% and there was a shift in policy to help families to stay together. The Cabinet Member understood that to meet these demands put pressure on other areas, but it needed to be remembered that the child should be at the centre of everything we do
- A tribute was paid to the Leader for achieving the balanced budget and to staff who had worked very hard on the budget and the medium-term financial plan
- The Cabinet Member for Highways was pleased with the 'no cuts' highways budget which meant that the infrastructure for economic growth could be delivered by increasing highways capacity and tackling congestion. The aim of Worcestershire being in the top quartile for the condition of roads and pavements could also be achieved. Money was being invested in schemes such as cutting congestion, improvements to town centres and upgrading walking and cycling bridges. The Members Highways Fund was welcomed as it would help with smaller highways works
- During the consultation on the future of libraries, the CMR had visited all 23 libraries and residents of Worcestershire were assured that it was not about closing libraries but about doing things differently. Due to the strategic initiatives fund there was a reduction in the savings necessary from £1million to £800,000. The Leader thanked the Cabinet Member for Communities for her hard work in reforming services and clarified that they weren't planning to close libraries and if that became an issue then a further consultation would be required
- The decision to charge for parking at the Countryside Centre had been rescinded following a call-in and the Cabinet Member thanked the people who attended to provide information
- Following concerns that cuts to the archive service

would mean a loss of accreditation the budget cuts to the archive department had been reduced. The Cabinet Member welcomed the Communities Fund as a chance to support local projects such as community transport

- Cabinet was delighted that SEND was receiving £625,000 which would allow the backlog of EHCPs to be tackled. Fairer funding for schools would continue to be a matter raised with Central Government
- Projects receiving investment were mentioned; improving railway stations, investing in game-changer sites around the County, improving town centres and the Redditch gateway
- The County was aiming to turn County Enterprises into a cost-free enterprise to continue to offer those with disabilities work
- One Cabinet Member felt that the NHS needed to step up and provide further support to adults
- Work was being done with businesses to help them become more productive and Worcestershire had been successful in attracting grants for businesses. The Natural Networks programme was being launched to increase biodiversity and ran with the help of volunteers
- The fund to help tackle congestion was welcomed although it was recognised that it was not an easy problem to solve
- More was needed in future around prevention and improved work with health
- The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board explained that he felt more at ease with the transparency of the process this year which meant Councillors were in the best position they could be to make the decision on the budget. There was still room for improvement on performance data but SLT was now more stable which made the process easier, and the constitutional set-up of the Council allowed changes to be made once issues were raised. The Adult budget made sense and was robust in the way it approached challenges and there had been an upsurge in enthusiasm and morale in the Directorate. More scrutiny would be required around Worcestershire Children First. Overall the budget was well put together, but there were some concerns about sustainability, with the BCF and other Government funding. He hoped the administration would work together with opposition members to lobby the Government
- There was a need to balance council tax around the Country so that it was fair. The green paper on

Adult Social Care and the reform of local government finance were awaited while lobbying of central government would continue

- A member from outside the Cabinet felt the creation of the Member Advisory Group to look at the Archive service was helpful and pointed out that the public speaker had given the answer about how £50,000 could be saved. The Leader confirmed that the Cabinet Member for Communities would be working with the Member Advisory Group to reduce the net subsidy, both growing the income base as well as making savings.

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:**  
that

- a) the budget requirement for 2019/20 be approved at £330.390 million as set out at Appendix 1b having regard to the proposed Transformation and Reforms programme set out in Appendix 1c;
- b) the Council Tax Band D equivalent for 2019/20 be set at £1,260.75 which includes £90.83 relating to the ring-fenced Adult Social Care precept, and the Council Tax Requirement be set at £264.428 million, which will increase the Council Tax Precept by 3.99% in relation to two parts:
  - 2.99% to provide financial support for the delivery of outcomes in line with the Corporate Plan '*Shaping Worcestershire's Future*' and the priorities identified by the public and business community
  - 1% Adult Social Care Precept ring-fenced for Adult Social Care services in order to contribute to existing cost pressures due to increases in demand led Social Care
- c) the Capital Strategy 2019-22 and Capital Programme of £397.510 million be approved as

- set out at Appendix 1D and 1E respectively;
- d) the earmarked reserves schedule as set out at Appendix 2 be approved;
- e) the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators set out at Appendix 5 be approved; and
- f) the Council's Pay Policy Statement set out in Appendix 6 be approved.

**RESOLVED:** that Cabinet

- g) gave delegated authority to the Leader of the Council to recommend to Full Council, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, any further adjustments to the revenue cash limits as a result of Central Government confirming the final Local Government Finance Settlement, Council Tax and Business Rates Income, and associated Specific Grants for 2019/20; and
- h) authorised the Director of Adult Services and the Director of Children, Families and Communities in consultation with relevant Cabinet Members with Responsibilities, to approve the agreement for the use of resources between the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Groups under Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006 (the Section 75 Agreement) for 2019/20.

**1900 School Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, Academic Year 2020/21**

The Cabinet considered the School Admissions policy for community and voluntary controlled schools for the academic year 2020/21. The details were given in the agenda and in the appendices. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills introduced the report.

It was explained that the proposal included items of significant change so had been brought to Cabinet rather than being dealt with as a Cabinet Member Decision. The Cabinet felt that the proposed changes to the admissions criteria and the co-ordination of in-year admissions was sensible and fair.

**RESOLVED:** that Cabinet

- a) approved the Admissions Policy for Community

**and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2020/21 as set out in Appendices 1a and 1b;**

- b) approved the scheme for Co-ordinated Admissions for Primary/Middle and Secondary Schools for 2020/21 as set out in Appendices 2a and 2b; and**
- (c) approved the scheme for In-Year Co-ordination for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix 3.**

**1901 Worcestershire Passenger Transport Review and Strategy Development**

The Cabinet considered the Worcestershire Passenger transport review and strategy development. The details were given in the agenda and the appendix. The Cabinet Member for Highways introduced the report, highlighting that a comprehensive review would take place, starting with full data gathering exercise and then a 12-week public consultation.

Cabinet members went on to make the following points:

- Home to school transport and SEND transport for children and young people would be included in the review along with other passenger transport
- It was clarified that the amount of money being discussed was in excess of £20 million
- The timescale was discussed with some proposing that it was taking too long while others pointed out that it would take time to carry out a comprehensive review as lots of areas needed to be considered and in fact an extra round of consultation may become necessary to deal with the volume of responses
- A Member from outside the Cabinet pointed out that co-ordination with neighbouring authorities was important to ensure that people can have access to services outside Worcestershire as well as co-ordinating the use of bus passes. Some consideration should also be taken about the impact of the impending congestion zone
- Another member from outside the Cabinet pointed out that she and some other Councillors used their Divisional Fund to help fund scheduled bus services. Services needed to be integrated and school services should be available to the public
- During the consultation about Libraries, members of the public had mentioned that buses were necessary for the public to be able to get to libraries. It was agreed that Community transport should be part of the review
- One Cabinet Member was disappointed that

although 1000s of responses were expected, if those people all used the buses there would be no need to reduce services.

**RESOLVED: that Cabinet agreed that**

- a) Worcestershire Passenger Transport Strategy be developed, taking a strategic and holistic view of all public and community transport provision, including home to school transport arrangements, fares and ticketing, concessionary travel, bus priority, infrastructure and information;**
- (b) this Passenger Transport Strategy would be informed by a Passenger Transport Review of needs and demands (including future development) together with an assessment of how well these were met by current services;**
- (c) the Passenger Transport Review would also consider changes in the local market for public transport and different options for the future; and**
- (d) the Directors of Economy and Infrastructure and Children, Families and Communities be authorised to undertake the Passenger Transport Review and, in consultation with the Cabinet Members with Responsibility for Highways, and Education and Skills, develop a draft Passenger Transport Strategy to be presented to Cabinet in June 2019 for formal approval for public consultation with a view to a decision regarding the Passenger Transport Strategy at the November 2019 Cabinet.**

The meeting ended at 11.35am

Chairman .....