

COUNCIL
18 JULY 2019**REPORTS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH
RESPONSIBILITY**

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY
FOR COMMUNITIES****Introduction**

1. It is my pleasure to submit my report as Cabinet Member for Communities to full Council on the work that has taken place in my areas of responsibility in the past year.
2. The role of Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities is a cross-cutting one covering several services from across the Council. I am pleased to report that since my last report to Council there has been significant progress in all areas of my portfolio as we continue to transform service delivery to provide high quality services, within the budget available, that are valued by Worcestershire's residents.

Libraries including The Hive

3. Worcestershire Libraries once again saw increases in participation throughout 2018/19 with the number of libraries visits up 2.1% on 2017/18 at 2.75 million. This reflects the impact of co-locating other services, such as the job centre plus, in some of our libraries.
 4. There was also a 28.7% increase in digital library membership with issues of e-book, e-audiobook and e-magazine increasing by over 25% to 74,208. The number of residents volunteering in libraries across the county rose by 11% to 576, with volunteer hours gifted to the service rising 6.5% to over 21,000 hours. In the 2018 Summer Reading Challenge Worcestershire libraries topped the regional table both for participants completing the challenge and the number of young volunteers supporting the scheme.
 5. In 2018/19 the service began to capture data on the impact of library services on a range of national and corporate priorities including health and wellbeing, digital literacy and open for business. Responses to a survey in October 2018 indicated that 25% of library customers experienced improved mental health as a direct result of using library services; 29% felt more confident and motivated to learn, 30% were more confident to access digital services and 50% felt more connected to their local community. Impact data will be used to drive further service development and improvement.
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6. As already mentioned, Libraries have continued to grow as community hubs through new co-locations with community services. The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) re-located local Job Centres into libraries at Kidderminster and Redditch in Spring 2018, and in February 2019 Wychavon re-located its Customer Service Hub to Evesham Library. As well as generating valuable income that helps to protect frontline library services, collaboration with new co-located partners has prompted the development of new library services including a Young People's Job Fair at Redditch in May 2019 and bespoke adult learning classes to support employability.
7. In June 2018 Libraries were commissioned to deliver the Council's face-to-face digital customer service offer across Wychavon, Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove and Redditch districts. In March 2019 coverage was extended to Malvern Hills. Libraries have added value to the users of these services by providing one-to-one digital support to almost 2,000 customers and signposting 1,252 customers to further library-based digital support services from Digital Champions and Adult Learning classes. The commission generates income for libraries, again helping to sustain frontline library services.
8. 2018/19 saw the launch of Connect Cafés across Worcestershire libraries in collaboration with local partners and volunteers, bringing residents together to connect over shared health and wellbeing interests and concerns. Regular sessions are in place for carers, dementia friends and people with disabilities which have helped to increase the reach of social connecting groups in libraries to over 10,000 adults. There has also been a significant growth in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related provision for children and families with coding clubs and science-based events delivered across the county. A new Family Learning programme has been launched, targeted at improving school readiness, and a more than 100% increase in the number of Digital Champions in libraries has facilitated a significant increase in digital support provision.
9. The Hive's profile as the UK's only integrated public and University library continues to provoke great interest. Over two hundred professionals from other libraries visited the Hive in 2018/19 and delegates from the Hive delivered keynote speeches in Denmark at their National Library Conference. The Hive also featured as a case study in the Arts Council publication *Independent Mind - Higher Education and Public Libraries*. A number of high-profile cultural projects have been showcased at Hive over the last 18 months, including 'Playback': an exhibition of short films made by young artists (Random Acts in Association with the ICA) and International Images for Science (Royal Photographic Society).
10. The Hive has been successful in its application to become a British Library Business and Intellectual Property Centre. This newly acquired status will attract funding to enhance the business and enterprise support offer at the Hive and extend it across the county library service.
11. A public consultation on the future of Worcestershire libraries was launched in October 2018 and ran until end February 2019. Work is now underway to shape future proposals for the transformation of libraries based on feedback from the public consultation, recommendations from libraries' 2018 Needs Assessment and the results of a library peer challenge undertaken by Local Government Association in May 2019.

Adult Learning

12. Over the last twelve months, the Adult Learning Service, along with the 16-18 Education Service and Learning and Development Employee Apprenticeship Service, has been working towards an integrated service under the banner of Learning Services. In February 2019 the quality of this Service was inspected by Ofsted and was judged as Good overall.

13. The Adult Learning Service has continued to support communities through a range of interventions from family learning through schools and children's centres to the leisure programme in the community utilising its close working relationship with the Libraries Service. The service has supported around 5000 learners and continues to be a key part of our libraries offer.

14. Over the last year the team has also supported over 200 learners to return to work through its European Social Funded employability programme directly and over 700 through its provider network. This programme has supported the job clubs in libraries and has offered a range of interventions from short employability workshops to long term English and Maths courses. It has been able to offer shorter more sharper interventions where needed to suit the learners' aspirations and to support them back in to the labour market. Planning for 2019/20 has started and the team aims to grow its valued Leisure programme as well as retain its learners through its Community programmes, a key focus will be maintaining relationships with the libraries team as the reorganisation of the County Council moves ahead.

Museums Worcestershire

15. The museums in Worcestershire continue to help make the county a great place to live, work and visit. Museums Worcestershire uses the power of objects from the museum collections to give people, including its team of 56 regular volunteers, an enhanced quality of life. 16% of visitors to museums say they come 'to escape from everyday life' and 13% of visitors to museums come 'for time to reflect'. 98% of visitors say that their whole experience of visiting the museums is either good or very good.

16. Museums Worcestershire continues to work with Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust on the presentation and development of Hartlebury Castle as a significant family and friends visitor destination for Worcestershire. Following HCPT's £5million Heritage Lottery-funded acquisition and development of the wider Bishop's Palace and grounds, the full destination was launched to the public in Spring 2018. The site was awarded a Hidden Gem accolade by Visit England.

17. Alongside the wider developments of the site, the County Museum opened a new Archaeology Gallery *On Ancient Tracks* starting the story of the history of Worcestershire told on site, with funding from Severn Waste. Additional grant funding has very recently been received to further research the County's outstanding transport collection, including the nationally significant Gypsy Vardo collection.

18. In 2018-19, the joint service attracted £176,000 of external grant funding and earned £158,000 in income. Using the Association of Independent Museums economic impact calculation, the three museum venues bring £1.5million of visitor spend into the County.

19. 4,816 children and adults participated in informal learning opportunities and 5,498 students enjoyed formal learning sessions at the three museums. The Commandery and the County Museum at Hartlebury were both awarded the Sandford Award for Excellence in Heritage Education, reflecting the quality of the formal education offer at both sites. The Commandery received additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Elmley Trust and the Arts Council to reinterpret the theme of Civil War, democracy and the power of decision making, engaging 450 school children. The museums welcomed over 200 home educated children and young people to the three sites, offering activities and a flexible learning environment tailored for this growing group of young people.

20. Museums Worcestershire worked in partnership with Worcestershire Archaeology and Archives Service on two significant projects: *Worcestershire World War One Hundred* exhibitions and events across all our sites, with the final exhibition *Fashioning Peace* opening at Hartlebury Castle in February 2019. *Lost Landscapes* focusing on the story of Worcester's pre-history, including the summer 2018 exhibition *Ice Age*. 177,000 people visited the exhibitions and almost 3000 people participated in workshops and talks. The exhibition provided opportunities for generations to enjoy museum displays together, grandparents and their grandchildren reading together in an Ice Age shelter, families creating batik cave paintings or even learning how to knap flint axes.

21. Scoping is now underway for a future joint project based on the Bromsgrove Guild collections held within the museums and archives. Museums Worcestershire works with partners to develop and share heritage expertise with the people of Worcestershire including through: Support for smaller local museums through skills-sharing courses with active hands-on sessions. The highly successful *Love Worcester* festival each February. Offering expertise in partnership, contributing to the £1.5 million redevelopment project at the Museum of Royal Worcester. Lending objects and exhibition contents to other museums locally, nationally and internationally. 740,000 people engaged with Worcester's and Worcestershire's collections at other venues in 2018-19.

22. Museums Worcestershire remains a strong and successful partnership between Worcester City and Worcestershire County. Visitor satisfaction ratings have been consistently higher as a joint service than as two separate services, while still allowing efficiency savings to have been made. In July 2018, Worcester City Council took on the hosting role for the City Museums' operational teams and the joint collections and management teams. This enables Museums Worcestershire to have a stronger voice in the heritage tourism and economic development of the area, a corporate priority for the City Council.

Severn Arts and the County Arts Service

23. On the 1 June 2018, Severn Arts officially transferred outside of the County Council into an independently owned charitable company. Now, as a new charitable company, with a well-established service, Severn Arts has the freedom and flexibility to diversify its business and to be entrepreneurial in its approach.

24. Leading Worcestershire's Music Education Hub, Severn Arts continues to hold an Arts Council England contract to develop and deliver an accessible, high quality music education for young people in Worcestershire. It currently provides music tuition, performance opportunities, instrument hire and other music education to pupils in Worcestershire and has a relationship with 95% of the county's schools.

This growing service currently impacts on 8-10,000 children and young people weekly and over 18,000 across a year.

25. Severn Arts also holds the contract with Worcestershire County Council for delivering the County Arts Service and supporting Worcestershire Arts Partnership. The Arts Service transferred to Severn Arts in September 2018 thus developing Severn Arts' remit beyond music education, and beyond young people.

26. The arts service has developed a closer working relationship with The Virtual School, creating several opportunities for Looked After Children to be involved in projects such as Young Voices New Visions and bespoke holiday schemes. Voices and Visions has been developed into a new format, Young Voices New Visions. This year the art exhibition was integrated into the performance as the audience were guided round the Cathedral in a promenade-style production. 65 Schools exhibited artwork, 50% more than last year; 360 performers took part; 400 audience members attended, and 12 artists were employed to work with the schools and teachers under the theme of "People and Places".

27. The service has been supporting the arts sector via Worcestershire Arts Partnership (WAP) through a series of Continued Professional Development (CPD) sessions which attracted 60 artists/arts organisations over 4 sessions. These sessions focused on themes such as; Developing Audiences, Evaluating Arts Projects, Income Generation and Developing a Business Plan.

28. The County Council is supporting The Arches – Worcester Cultural Development Fund Project, a partnership between Severn Arts, the Arts Service, Worcester City Council and the University of Worcester. £3 million was successfully secured from the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) as part of a £4.5m project over 3 years to grow the economy through arts and culture. This will result in 8 arches being transformed into creative industry spaces to support creative industries and Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Severn Arts will lead on a Festivals Programme for the City to develop audiences for and participation in the arts, providing four Festivals for Worcester. There is also a skills development strand to support graduates to remain in the City and to provide alternative routes into employment into the arts for young people through apprenticeships and internships.

29. The arts sector, as a result of the Arts Service, continues to thrive in Worcestershire and is getting noticed in the national arena, with more external investment coming in via Cultural Development Fund (CDF) funding; grants to develop Worcester Arts Workshop and the work undertaken by our National Portfolio organisations, DanceFest, Vamos and CandT. Severn Arts has appointed a new Chief Executive Officer and is continuing to act as the National Music Hub for Worcestershire, delivering music provision in schools against the core and extension roles in the National Plan for Music Education. The arts service, as a result of being transferred to Severn Arts, is contributing to the music offer working in tandem with the Music Hub and the Cultural Education Partnership and enabling wider access for children and young people to cultural activity. First Access to Music (FAME) and Big Sing Concerts have taken place at The Arena, with 200 children and over 100 schools participating in each one.

Corporate Information Management Unit (CIMU)

Records Management

30. For the first time, the team has one software system developed to provide a robust records management system to manage the Council's physical records. It is hoped that this system will begin roll out across the Council from September.

31. The service has reduced the number of boxes held in external storage to 1500 boxes, down from 21,000 4 years ago. Reviewing physical storage continues to reduce the number of records not just externally but also at County Hall and Wildwood.

32. The Subject Access Team (for Children, Families and Communities) - dealt with 192 requests for information this last financial year, an increase of 30% from the previous year. This has streamlined the process to continue to improve performance over the forthcoming year.

33. The Information Access Team – dealt with nearly 450 requests covering Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulation requests this past year, as well as data breaches. The plan is to raise awareness and explore potential changes in process to minimise risk.

34. Information Governance – The initial GDPR project has now concluded, with an Information Asset Register, Privacy Notices, Data Protection Impact Assessments and Data Sharing frameworks in place, and 96% of the workforce have completed their Data Protection training.

35. The focus of work this year is to comply with the NHS Data Security and Protection Toolkit. The Child Protection - Information Sharing project (CP-IS) is helping health and social care staff to share information securely to better protect society's most vulnerable children. The NHS will allow the Council to connect to the NHS network spine to facilitate this work upon successful compliance with their requirements

Registration and Coroner Services

36. The registration service has once again received another favourable report from the General Register Office. The annual customer survey also highlighted very high satisfaction levels. The service surpassed 2,000 wedding ceremonies in the last financial year for the first time, against a trend of a decreasing number of weddings nationally. The service continues to diversify with the launch of new ceremony packages aimed at providing as many options for couples as possible.

37. Changes for the forthcoming year include the introduction of opposite sex civil partnerships by the end of December and changes to the registration of marriage including the inclusion of mothers' (and parents') details in the register.

38. The new Senior Coroner starts on 1 July, when Mr Williams retires after 12 years' service. Mr Reid is currently one of our Assistant Coroners and a barrister. The service continues to seek better ways of working in the service. This includes an online referral process for professionals, electronic dissemination of documents and using conference call facilities for pre-inquest reviews. The latest statistics published in May indicated that the service is better than average against regional and national figures and, for the first time, with no cases over 2 years old.

39. Officers continue to work closely with the new Medical Examiner service to ensure that customers are not disadvantaged by it. The service manager now sits on several national groups representing the Local Authorities Registration and

Coroner services. This provides us with a unique opportunity to not only represent services on a national level but to influence change that aims to benefit all

Countryside and Greenspace Service

Gypsy Service Team

40. The Gypsy Service Team is self-financed through its management of seven residential traveller sites, providing important accommodation for 121 gypsy and traveller families. The Team is currently experiencing the roll-out of Universal Credit with many of its residents. The Service works with Highways, Police and other local authorities in Worcestershire to an agreed protocol to manage unauthorised encampments on local authority land in Worcestershire.

Countryside Greenspace Team

41. Waseley Hills Country Park, Worcester Woods Country Park and St. Wulstan's Nature Reserve have once again retained the nationally recognised Green Flag Award; evidencing the high standard of management for visitors and the natural environment.

42. A new 7-year lease agreement has been secured with the tenant of Orchard Café at Worcester Woods Country Park which celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2019.

43. The Team is currently 69% self-financing and is diversifying its range of income streams after the proposal to introduce parking charges at Worcester Woods Country Park was not taken forward. The Team continues to deliver chargeable services to others, secure external funding and reduce costs.

44. A considerable amount of work across the service (22,800 hours per year) is delivered by over 430 volunteers such as Parish Tree Wardens, Countryside Sites Volunteers and Health Walks Leaders.

Road Safety Education

Bikeability

45. The Road Safety Team delivers Bikeability National Standard cycle training across 3 levels to Worcestershire school pupils. Each year the team trains an increasing number of pupils and trained over 4,500 pupils last year. A small number of adults have also received cycle training in the Wyre Forest area via a joint project with public health. Some reception age pupils also benefit from the teams Bikeability Balance training programme. The team currently have Department for Transport funding to support the delivery. The team are now at full capacity over the summer months in terms of instructor availability and volume of school requests.

Road Safety Education & Training

46. The Road Safety Team offers road safety education and training to all Worcestershire pupils. This provides pupils with lifelong behaviours and attitudes for safe road use anywhere, at any time, on any journey. The team offer class talks to any age group and practical pedestrian training to year 2 and 4. Each year they train over 10,000 pupils. The team also offer pre-driver training workshops to

students aged 16-18 in colleges or sixth forms which is delivered via the Safer Roads Partnership.

School Crossing Patrol Service

47. The existing School Crossing Patrol service covers 42 crossing locations to assist the safety of children travelling to and from school in Worcestershire, serving 38 first, middle and primary schools. The service is delivered in accordance to national set criteria. A review of the service has been undertaken and there are some sites that either no longer meet criteria or have been upgraded in recent times with a more formal crossing facility, such as a pedestrian crossing or zebra. Six School Crossing Patrol sites remain vacant.

Malvern Hills AONB Partnership

48. The County Council hosts the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) Team (Unit) which supports a multi-agency partnership overseeing the conservation and enhancement of this nationally designated landscape. The Partnership's work is wide-ranging, covering many issues of relevance to Worcestershire County Council as well as helping the Council to meet its statutory duties in relation to the AONB. Examples of the Partnership's work last year include:

49. The Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project has been completed with £330,000 of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, to help preserve this most distinctive of Worcestershire habitats. Over 900 people volunteered for the project, helping to restore 34 veteran orchards. 40 volunteers attained 'Orchard Champion' status, giving over 2,000 hours of their time to the project and forming a network of local orchard knowledge and expertise that endures now that the project has finished. 3 'mother orchards' were established in the county, containing all known varieties of Worcestershire fruit trees and helping to ensure this genetic material is preserved for the future. N.B the Council's Greenspace team was a delivery partner in this project

50. £22,500 in Sustainable Development Fund grants have been provided to support 16 local projects. Successful projects for the year included connecting local school children to the landscape as part of the Ledbury Poetry Festival, training local people in the skills needed to identify local wildlife and supporting volunteers to help manage important geological sites.

51. A new State of the AONB report has been published which reports on the current condition of the AONB (following the collection and analysis of a wide range of data). A new Management Plan has been published for the AONB for the period 2019-24. This involved extensive consultation with a wide range of partners and local interests.

52. A visitor survey (the first in 20 years) of users of the Malvern Hills and Commons has been completed which revealed how people use the area and what they value most about it. Data from the survey were also used to inform a study which calculated that the physical and health benefits of the Malvern Hills and Commons have a value of £5.8m per annum.

53. Further details of the AONB Partnership's activities in 2018/19 can be found in its annual review:

<http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Malvern-Hills-AONB-Annual-Review-201819-Final.pdf>

Trading Standards and Animal Health (Regulatory Services)

54. The service maintains the 'level playing field' for trading in Worcestershire by discharging around 250 of the County Council's statutory duties that have grown out of its role as the local weights and measures authority. These duties cover many areas of consumer protection law, food and animal feed law, animal health law and other areas of business regulation.

55. The service's revenue budget is around £560K per annum including grants. Its broad remit means the service regulates in some way, all 33,325 VAT/PAYE registered Worcestershire-based business units along with thousands of smaller operations. The number of Citizen demand elements is significant, e.g. Advice Consumer Service Notifications 5,894 and 1,908 Advice Consumer Service Referrals.

56. These demands and enablers have resulted in the following legal process outcomes:

- Number of defendants taken through prosecution process: **5**
- Number of offenders to whom simple cautions issued: **1**
- Number of years' imprisonment: **2**
- Number of years of imprisonment where the sentence is suspended: **4.5**
- Fines awarded (£): **4050**; Costs awarded from court cases (£): **31,985**
- Community Punishment & Rehabilitation Orders (hours): **310**; Years of disqualification from Directorships: **5**

57. As well as this, over 16,000 illicit cigarettes and over 18Kg of hand rolling tobacco were removed from the supply chain in Worcestershire during 2018/19. The street value of these products is close to £11,000. Cases relating to tobacco seizures late in the previous year will soon be appearing before the courts. Counterfeit football kit, perfume, sunglasses and other clothing were also seized in various operations with a street value of around £10,000. On top of this a huge seizure of over 5,000 counterfeit rare vinyl records, mainly of American and Northern soul/ blues music were seized as part of a joint exercise with the Wales Regional Organised Crime Unit. A rough estimate of the trade value of these products to the criminal involved in these activities is in the region of £350,000 per annum but it may be significantly more. These counterfeiting cases should come to court over the next 12 months. The offences under the Trade Marks Act 1994 carry a maximum sentence of 10 years imprisonment, so this is serious crime.

58. Two large cases against builders were brought to trial during 2018/19. One was sentenced to two years imprisonment following numerous cases of knowingly or recklessly acting in a manner that did not meet the standards of normal professional diligence in this business area. The other received a sentence of 12 months suspended for 2 years for fraud and similar regulatory offences. The service often uses the Fraud Act 2006 to extend the sentencing powers available to the Courts when dealing with rogue traders, allowing Judges to properly deal with offenders in a way that addresses the facts of the case.

59. It is estimated that the work of the service during 2018/19 has prevented at least £641,000 of consumer detriment going into 2019/20.

60. The service also remains strongly engaged with local businesses under the Primary Authority provisions. Six businesses including Halfords and Worcester Bosch pay for assured advice from the service. The service is also currently partnered with CheckaTrade, some 509-member businesses have now been accredited by the service.

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS)

61. The service works to protect, preserve, manage, record, interpret and promote the history and historic environment of Worcestershire. The staff includes archive and archaeological specialists, a conservation and digitisation team, a learning and outreach team and includes the County's statutory archive service. WAAS is based at The Hive but works across Worcestershire.

62. The public services delivered from The Hive (largely centred on the archive collections) are popular, with a 98% customer satisfaction rating at the last survey. Commercial work includes archaeological projects in the West Midlands and further afield. Grant funded projects are focused on enhancing and promoting our collections for users in Worcestershire, across the UK and to a smaller extent overseas. The Hive was chosen as the setting for the English Launch of *Explore Your Archive* week in recognition of the achievements of WAAS over the last few years.

63. This year is the 60th anniversary of professional archaeological services in Worcestershire and Worcestershire Archaeology will be working on a wide range of archaeological sites of all periods across the West Midlands and beyond in 2019/20. Well respected for their professional and pragmatic response to development they continue to be the "go to" organisation for an increasing number of businesses.

64. Every year WAAS undertakes a range of workshops and events across the County to support individual and group learning in a friendly and collaborative atmosphere for people of all ages. WAAS worked with 48 different school groups over the last year.

65. In 2018/19 WAAS had a turnover c £2,000,000 of which £1,350,000 came from either commercial or grant income. It is seen as a model of best practice by both The National Archives and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

66. Many of the projects WAAS undertakes involve groups of volunteers working together to explore and enhance their communities. At the moment, this includes a project focussing on the market gardening heritage of the Vale of Evesham particularly the fast disappearing sheds known locally as hovels that market gardeners built at the end of their land.

67. A strength of the service is that covering both archives and archaeology it can deliver innovative projects across the heritage sector. In the last two months WAAS have completed three projects of this type

68. The first of these is the Freddy Charles Project. Both archaeological and archival specialists have worked on this lottery funded project. Freddy Charles and his wife Mary were trail blazing conservation architects who, from the early 1960s, restored historic buildings and recorded buildings prior to their demolition. They restored over 250 buildings in Worcestershire, many of them of national importance such as Middle Littleton tithe barn and The Great Barn of Bredon. The material

held in The Hive is an important archive of many of the most significant timber-framed buildings in the county and beyond. Thanks to grant funding from Historic England, the original archive has been electronically catalogued and is now fully accessible at The Hive. A digital archive of c. 1000 images has also been created by our in-house Digitisation Team and this digital archive has now been deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) to allow international access.

69. The Arthur Henry Whinfield centenary project has just been completed. Service staff and dedicated volunteers conserved, catalogued, digitised and then made available the 2,100 glass slides in this late 19th to early 20th century collection. The project followed in Whinfield's footsteps by recreating his magic lantern shows; projecting selected images onto The Hive building and the city wall; displaying selections of his images in the windows of the former Netherton's iron works opposite The Hive; school workshops and much more. All the glass slides in the collection have been uploaded onto *Lucerna*, a worldwide digital repository of magic lantern slides.

70. The service is in the final stages of cataloguing the John Poole archive with a grant from the Henry Moore Art Fund. John Poole was one of the most distinguished and versatile British architectural sculptors, letter-cutters and restorers during the last 50 years of the 20th century. Latterly he was based in Worcestershire, but his fine and often monumental works are to be found much further afield. His archive was deposited with the service by his daughter, a Worcestershire architect.

71. The Worcestershire World War 100 project is now drawing to its close. This was the largest WWI lottery funded project outside London and brought together a wide range of partner projects and events in the County. The impact of the project is now being assessed but safe to say the numbers of Worcestershire people (and others) who engaged in some way is large (>750,000). In recognition of its success Dr Adrian Gregson, who developed and led the project, was invited to a Buckingham Palace garden party in May.

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

72. As a priority for the County Council, as set out in our Corporate Plan "Shaping Worcestershire's Future," The ability to grow community capacity and enable individuals, families and communities to do more for themselves is vital if we are to realise our aspirations for Worcestershire.

73. Building on great successes across the county which demonstrate the power of local communities working together to meet local needs. "Act Local in Worcestershire" has seen local communities shaping and remodelling local services. We have acted as the enabler and have empowered communities to effect change and to make things happen in local areas.

74. Examples are many and include the ownership of local youth service provision, with approximately 45,000 hours gifted to support the delivery of a range of Council services including: Library and Museum Services; Country Parks and Green Spaces; Health Walks and many more.

75. Council approved investment in a Community Solutions Fund of £145K for 2019 to support local communities and organisations (such as Parish Councils), to address local issues to reduce future demand, through increased community capacity that drives reduced or avoids costs for the County Council. This Fund was

launched during National Volunteer Week, on 3 June at two special events at County Hall. The events were attended by over 100 staff and 50 representatives of the voluntary and community sector. The work of our volunteer workforce was recognised, staff were encouraged to pledge to volunteer in the future and the work of Worcestershire's VCS was celebrated.

76. There has been excellent progress in promoting Digital Inclusion across Worcestershire through the GoOn Worcestershire Partnership. A Partnership Development Coordinator was recruited to this project and has been central to this work, which engaged 8,703 people in the development of digital skills between September 2015 and June 2017. The current focus is on providing digital skills training for Digital Champions and they are exploring ways of ensuring the impact of the project is sustainable so that access to the internet is not a barrier to Worcestershire residents.

77. Social value guidance has been produced for all suppliers wishing to deliver contracts on behalf of the council and includes suggestions about working with and developing local VCS as part of council contracts. The Find it in Worcestershire (FIIW) business breakfast meeting has been expanded to include VCS organisations so that they can benefit from networking opportunities alongside private sector companies. The November 2016 FIIW focussed on corporate social responsibility and the role that the local VCS can play.

78. Through the Resident Viewpoint survey, residents have been engaged with to determine their drivers of volunteering and a new indicator has been added to the balanced scorecard to monitor levels of volunteering across the County.

79. The County Council ran a successful VCS celebration event in the summer of 2016 at the Hive (to coincide with National Volunteering Week), highlighting the work done by volunteers and VCS organisations. During the 2017 National Volunteer week the County Council and partner agencies showcased the excellent work of volunteers across the county. This was recognised by the chairman presenting several groups and volunteers Black Pear Trees awards.

Partnership Working

Syrian Refugee Resettlement

80. Over the past 10 months, a further 12 Syrian families have been successfully resettled in Worcestershire. This fulfilled the commitment made by Leaders' Board in February 2018 to resettle a further 50 refugees in 2018 and 2019 in addition to the 50 resettled in 2016/17. The latest families have been resettled in Bromsgrove, Malvern and Wychavon and continue to be supported to become independent and integrate into their local communities by our commissioned providers Refugee Action and Spring Housing and assisted by local refugee welcome groups.

81. The previous families, resettled in Redditch, Worcester and the Wyre Forest are being supported through our Libraries and Learning Adult Learning Provision. All provision provided has been to support their access for additional English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and employment opportunities. Each family across the county has had the offer of ESOL through group classes, 1-2-1 support and paired sessions, thus enabling them to progress at their own rates and with greater confidence. In addition to this, each family has had 1-2-1 Employment/Higher Education Support to help them continue their journey into social inclusion and where possible voluntary and/or paid employment.

County Association of Local Councils (CALC) & Parish and Town Councils

82. Chris Wayman has taken over from Richard Levitt and is the new Executive Officer for CALC. I look forward to working with him and continuing the good working relationship we have with CALC.

83. Preparations are underway for the next Parish Conference which will take place in the Council Chamber here at County Hall. As always Parish & Town Councils will be invited to shape the agenda and all County Councillors are welcome to attend.

Armed Forces Covenant

84. Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership is a multi-agency group which aims to ensure that those who serve or have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect.

85. As part of a cross-local authority bid with Herefordshire Council, Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council the Partnership has recently benefited from Ministry of Defence (MoD) funding to strengthen local government delivery of the Covenant. The funding has provided a dedicated Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Officer, who came into post in November 2018, supporting both Worcestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council until September 2020. Outcomes for this post include delivering a needs assessment of the Armed Forces Community in Worcestershire which is set to be completed this summer and will help identify and inform key priority areas for the Partnership to address.

86. Additional MoD funding has also been awarded to pilot a veteran hub in Worcestershire. This project is being overseen by a small working group, which includes several military charities and delivery partners and aims to create a one-stop referral service for veterans, as well as space for charities to deliver their outreach work across the county.

Conclusions

87. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Director of Children, Families and Communities, the Director of Commissioning and Commercial and Director of Economy and Infrastructure along with the relevant Heads of Service for their commitment and work since my last report. I believe we have a high calibre of officers within the County Council and the commitment shown by officers at all levels has meant we have made significant progress in all areas of my portfolio.

88. I do recognise that the financial climate facing the Local Authority continues to be very challenging and I see that within my portfolio significant progress has been made in meeting these financial challenges. However, we are aware that this will need to be done whilst sustaining services that local communities may wish to keep but will have to be delivered in a different way.

89. I submit this report to the Council. Thank you.

Lucy Hodgson

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities