

## **Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board**

### **Wednesday, 23 September 2020, 2.00 pm, Online only**

#### **Membership**

##### **Councillors:**

Mr R M Udall (Chairman), Mrs E A Eyre (Vice Chairman), Mr A A J Adams, Mr A D Kent, Mrs F M Oborski, Mrs J A Potter, Mr P A Tuthill and Mrs R Vale

##### **Co-opted Church Representatives (for education matters)**

Mr B Allbut (Church of England)

##### **Parent Governor Representatives (for education matters)**

Vacancy (Secondary)

### **Agenda Supplement**

<b>Item No</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page No</b>
7	<b>Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring</b>	1 - 2
8	<b>Member Update, Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan</b>	3 - 4

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Agenda produced and published by the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP. To obtain further information or hard copies of this agenda, please contact Alyson Grice (01905 844962)/Samantha Morris 01905 844963 email: [scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk)

All the above reports and supporting information can be accessed via the Council's website [here](#)

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**Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring 2020-21 - Feedback from Scrutiny Panel Chairmen – September 2020**

**Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 9 September 2020 – Chairman Councillor Adam Kent**

1. Forecast underspend of £625k for COACH and £527k for Chief Executives Unit.
2. Covid-19 Impact assumes additional costs are funded from external sources.

The Panel commended the team on another good performance

**Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 11 September 2020 – Chairman Councillor Alastair Adams**

1. The Good News is the Directorate have a projected year end underspend of £84,000 as at the end of Q1.
2. However, there were concerns expressed for the full year forecast based on what funding from central government is received to cover the COVID-19 measures.
3. In reply to a question of what savings were made during Lockdown, it was disclosed that the Council had continued to pay the bus companies for school transport throughout the Lockdown to help ensure the bus companies survived . It seems very few savings had been made during Lockdown except savings to staff mileage claims.
4. Highways personnel and Ringway staff were complimented for continuing to work throughout the Lockdown (although at reduced numbers) to keep all the County's roads and footways safe.
5. The number of 'Public Enquiries' was down considerably in March to June 2020 compared to the previous year (4668 compared to 7042) and this helped give the best ever performance of completions (there were only 705 outstanding public enquiries in May – the lowest ever!)
6. However, the number of reports of defects and obstructions on our Public Rights of Way (PROW) went in the other direction with the highest number reported in June of 359. This has led to the highest number of outstanding reports in the PROW department of 5905. The Panel asked the Assistant Director for Highways and Transport Operations what the PROW dept was doing to do to reverse this trend? He stated that an extra member of staff was in the process of being recruited and agreed that more use of the Countryside Access Volunteers could help. He agreed to report back with suggested improvement
7. There were 2 outstanding questions that the Panel asked concerning the Q4 performance data from our last meeting on 4 August. The questions were

- a. Question 1 for Highways  
**"The percentage of potholes fixed on time" is still not plausible saying 100% of all potholes fixed on time as it can't be proved! Can you change the graph so you can prove the data?**
- b. Question 2 for Highways  
**Technical Submissions /Days to Approve is going in the wrong direction – average time to approve Section 278 was 325 days in 2019/20, (in 2018/19 it was 213 days). Please confirm what steps are being taken to turn around this poor performance?**

Officers agreed they would provide written answers.

**Member Update on emerging issues and developments within the remit of each Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - September 2020**

**Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 9 September 2020 – Councillor Adam Kent**

1. Freedom of Information and Subject Access Reports were investigated.
  - a. The Panel was surprised by the scale of these and the number of requests and time needed to respond.
  - b. Several progressive ideas were put forward in terms of a Knowledge base (in case asked before)
  - c. Logging and reporting of time taken to respond to requests were discussed.
  - d. Include FOI/SAR in Quarterly Reports going forward
2. The County Council's Commissioning Arrangements – discussions focussed on:
  - a. Time frames and investigation of contracts affected by COVID-19.
  - b. Clarifying the position on contracts and expiry dates

**Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 11 September 2020 – Councillor Alastair Adams**

The main Agenda Item was 'Flood Risk Management Annual Report/Update on Flooding 2019-20'. Representatives from Worcestershire County Council (the Council), Severn Trent (ST) and the Environment Agency (EA) attended. The main points were:

1. Everyone recognised that Worcestershire suffered serious floods between October 2019 and March 2020. In October/November 2019 over 70 residential properties were flooded. In February/March 2020, circa 700 residential properties and over 200 businesses were impacted by flooding. All partners seemed to respond very effectively during these emergencies, and the Panel complimented all those involved.
2. Questions were raised on what learning points were made and what would be done differently in future. For example, the temporary flood barriers in Bewdley did over-top and there was a risk that they could have failed. Were new barriers to be designed for next time? The EA suggested that the barriers were already at the highest height for a temporary barrier, but other ideas were being explored.

3. **The key question raised by the Panel was the lack of information and the perceived lack of progress in the delivery of flood alleviation schemes.** Residents that have been affected by flooding want to know what is going to be done to prevent flooding in the future and when these schemes will be delivered. More information on the schemes listed on para 3.1 of the report will be provided. Paul Smith, the Assistant Director for Highways and Transport Operations, agreed that Members would receive regular detailed updates on flood alleviation projects with time frames. Councillor Kent requested Gantt charts should be provided for each project showing the various stages and the time frames.
4. It was reported that putting together a case for a flood alleviation scheme to obtain the grants was an onerous one and very time consuming and lengthy process. **The Panel asked the question “How can we speed this up?”** (The EA gave an example of the flood alleviation project at Tenbury which had just received a £4.9m grant and the EA was hoping to commence work in Q4 2021/22. Each project takes 4-5 years).
5. The point was made by Officers that the multi-agency approach taken in recent years does help produce better outcomes over time – for example when looking at river flooding, the whole stretch of the River Severn can be looked at holistically.
6. Following a question about paying farmers to allow some of their land to flood upstream of settlements to help prevent flooding, it was reported that there are current schemes but they are very complicated to apply for.
7. ST and EA agreed to provide their 24/7 contact details so Members can contact them in future flood situations. A specific sewage pumping station that failed in the flooding was discussed in Councillor Kent’s area and they agreed to investigate and report back.
8. The link to the Surface Water Management Plan on the Worcestershire County Council website would be circulated to all Councillors as it identifies 1,700 known flood spots. This will show each Councillor in each Division where surface water flooding is most likely to occur in their area. Local knowledge can feed back in to help fine tune the plans. The comment was made that all agencies were learning from each new flooding event and more modern techniques were being used such as using drones in flooding situations to map the extent of flooding. However, local knowledge is invaluable.
9. A question was raised for further help /training for District Councillors assessing planning applications where flooding is an issue.
10. ST agreed to give more information of the schemes they have delivered in the last 12-24 months, and the ones in the pipeline. It was confirmed they are developing their water and sewerage network to cope with future housing developments. It was also stated that OfWat approved in April 2020 that the water companies can work with developers to adopt and maintain Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) moving forward.