

Council**Thursday, 12 January 2017, County Hall, Worcester - 10.00 am****Minutes****Present:**

Mr A P Miller (Chairman), Mr A A J Adams, Mr R C Adams, Ms P Agar, Mr A T Amos, Mrs S Askin, Mr J Baker, Mr R W Banks, Mr M L Bayliss, Mr A N Blagg, Mrs S L Blagg, Mr C J Bloore, Mr P J Bridle, Mr J P Campion, Mr S J M Clee, Mrs P E Davey, Mr P Denham, Mr N Desmond, Mrs E A Eyre, Ms L R Duffy, Mr A Fry, Mr S E Geraghty, Mrs J L M A Griffiths, Mr P Grove, Mr A I Hardman, Mr M J Hart, Ms P A Hill, Mrs A T Hingley, Mrs L C Hodgson, Mr C G Holt, Mr I Hopwood, Mr M E Jenkins, Ms R E Jenkins, Mr R C Lunn, Mr L C R Mallett, Mr P M McDonald, Mrs F M Oborski, Mr S R Peters, Dr K A Pollock, Mr D W Prodger MBE, Prof J W Raine, Mrs M A Rayner, Mr A C Roberts, Mr J H Smith, Mr C B Taylor, Mr J W R Thomas, Mrs E B Tucker, Mr P A Tuthill, Mr R M Udall, Mr G J Vickery, Mr T A L Wells and Mr G C Yarranton

Available papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. 13 questions submitted to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (previously circulated); and
- C. The Minutes of the Council held on 20 November 2016 (previously circulated electronically).

1850 Apologies and Declaration of Interests (agenda item 1)

Apologies were received from Mr S C Cross, Mr T A Muir, Mr R J Sutton and Mr R P Tomlinson.

Mr M L Bayliss declared a general interest as a member of his wider family worked for Children, Families and Communities within the County Council.

Mr A C Roberts and Mrs F M Oborski declared an interest in Agenda item 6 (a) as being in receipt of a local government pension.

Mr A C Roberts declared an interest in Agenda item 8 – Notice of Motion 1 as a member of the Board of St Richards Hospice.

<p>1851 Public Participation (Agenda item 2)</p>	<p>Mr C Bloore and Mrs N Reed presented a petition on behalf of residents on Redditch Road, Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove in relation to the request for a 30 mph speed limit along the A38 at Stoke Heath.</p> <p>Mr Martin Benbow spoke in support of the Notice of Motion in relation to Motor Neurone Disease at Agenda item 8.</p> <p>Mr R C Lunn presented a petition on behalf of parents of children attending Webheath Primary School Academy and Mount Carmel School, both in Downsell Road Webheath, to highlight the need for a zebra crossing outside Webheath Primary School Academy.</p>
<p>1852 Minutes (Agenda item 3)</p>	<p>RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.</p>
<p>1853 Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 4)</p>	<p>The Chairman drew members' attention to the printed announcements and gave particular thanks to Mr Philip Gretton for his contribution to the Council over his time serving on the authority in a number of key posts.</p>
<p>1854 Reports of Cabinet - Summary of Decisions Taken (Agenda item 5)</p>	<p>The Leader of the Council reported the following topics and answered questions in relation to them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FutureFit – Proposals for Change and Reform to support the Medium Term Financial Plan • 2017-18 Budget and Council Tax • Resources Report • Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2015/16 • Fair Funding Consultation Outcomes for 2017-18 – National and Local Changes to the Funding Arrangements for Schools • Local Transport Plan (LTP4) • Energy and Carbon Management Plan 2016-2021 • Disbanding of South Worcestershire Shared Service Joint Committee arrangements • Balanced Scorecard – FuturFit Performance and Corporate Risk Update.
<p>1855 Reports of Committees - Matters which require a decision by Council - LGPS</p>	<p>The Council had before it a recommendation from the Pensions Committee for the establishment of a Joint Committee with the participating authorities under s102 of the Local Government Act 1972 to oversee LGPS Central arrangements and the endorsement of the proposal to become a joint shareholder of LGPS Central as a private company limited by shares.</p>

**Central
Governance
(Agenda item 6
(a) (i))**

The report set out details of the LGPS Central Pool arrangements, the impact on the role of the Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund Pension Committee, pooling costs, LGPS Central key risks and operator setup options.

RESOLVED that subject to a condition that a cost share agreement is agreed with all LGPS Central pool members that ensures value for money in the opinion of the Chief Financial Officer for the Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund from entering into the LGPS Central investment pool:

- a) a Joint Committee be established with the participating authorities under s102 of the Local Government Act 1972 to oversee LGPS Central arrangements in accordance with this report and that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to finalise the formal terms of reference for such a Joint Committee in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer; and
- b) the proposal to become a joint shareholder of LGPS Central as a private company limited by shares as set out in this report be endorsed.

**1856 Reports of
Committees -
Matters which
require a
decision by
Council -
Arrangements
for the
appointment of
the County
Council's
External Auditor
(Agenda item 6
(a) (ii))**

The Council had before it a recommendation from the Audit and Governance Committee that the Council 'opt-in' to the appointing person arrangements proposed by the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the purpose of appointing the County Council's external auditors.

The report set out the advantages/benefits and disadvantages/risks of the following options for local appointment of External Auditors:

- Option 1 - To make a stand-alone appointment
- Option 2 - Set up a Joint Auditor Panel / local joint procurement arrangements
- Option 3 - Opt-in to a Sector Led Body (Preferred option).

The closing date for opting in to the PSAA was 9 March 2017 to enable audit contracts to be awarded by end of June 2017. The County Council had until December 2017 to make an appointment of external auditors from April 2018.

	<p>RESOLVED that the Council 'opt in' to the appointing person arrangements proposed by the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the purpose of appointing the County Council's external auditors as set out in the report (option 3).</p>
<p>1857 Reports of Committees - Summary of decisions taken by the Audit and Governance Committee (Agenda item 6 (b))</p>	<p>The Council received the report of the Audit and Governance Committee containing a summary of decisions taken.</p>
<p>1858 Reports of Committees - Summary of decisions taken by the Pensions Committee (Agenda item 6 (c))</p>	<p>The Council received the report of the Pensions Committee containing a summary of decisions taken.</p>
<p>1859 Reports of Committees - Summary of decisions taken by the Planning and Regulatory Committee (Agenda item 6 (d))</p>	<p>The Council received the report of the Planning and Regulatory Committee containing a summary of decisions taken.</p> <p>The Chairman of the Committee undertook to provide a written response to a question raised about the compliance with Government Policy of the Travel Plan set out in the Planning Statement for the application for the proposed change of use of agricultural buildings and associated land to reclamation facility (MRF) at Weights Farm, Weights Lane, Redditch, Worcestershire.</p>
<p>1860 Constitutional Matters - Report of the Cross-Party Council Working Group (Agenda item 7)</p>	<p>The Council had before it a proposed procedural alteration proposed by the cross-party Council Working Group (CWG) in relation to lateness of budget amendments being moved during the debate of the budget.</p> <p>The Council Working Group therefore proposed the following amendments with immediate effect so that paragraph 2.5 of the Budget and Policy Framework rules</p>

would read as follows:

'To ensure that the obligations contained in Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 are fulfilled and to allow prior consideration by all Groups, alternative budget, Council Tax proposals, or proposed amendments to the budget recommended on behalf of the executive must be lodged with the Chief Executive by noon 5 working days prior to the meeting scheduled to determine the budget and Council Tax precept (i.e. by the Thursday preceding the Council meeting on Thursday). The Chief Executive will ensure that all such proposals for alternative budget, Council tax precept or amendments to the recommended budget are passed to the Chief Financial Officer and all Group Leaders as soon as practicable after receipt. This provision is without prejudice to the rights of the executive to accept, partially adopt any such proposals or alter its recommendations in the light of them at the budget Council meeting itself, provided the Chief Financial Officer is able to comply with his statutory obligations. The Chairman of Council may also permit an amendment to be moved which has not met the above requirements if he or she considers there are urgent or exceptional circumstances which justify this.'

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised:

- The proposed procedural alteration was one small part of the work of the Working Group and did not bear any relation to the intention of the Notice of Motion approved by Council in January 2016
- This proposal allowed the administration time to consider amendments and alterations to budget proposals and discuss them with opposition groups. Under the current system there was often insufficient time to consider and adopt sensible last-minute amendments, and this sought to improve the process. If no agreement could be reached under the proposed arrangements then it would always be possible to debate and decide the proposed amendment at the Council meeting itself
- The problem with this proposal was its timing so near to the next budget-setting Council meeting. The new Council should be given the opportunity to discuss the matter
- There was no complete consensus at the Working Group to support this proposal and there was not cross-party agreement in the debate. The proposal would not give opposition groups

sufficient time to provide meaningful amendments after consultation with officers. The proposal should be referred back to the Working Group to reconsider and provide a consensual proposal

- Until now, members of the controlling group had been denied the opportunity of scrutinising the budget proposals put forward by the opposition groups. This proposal would allow proper scrutiny of all budget proposals for the benefit of Council taxpayers
- This proposal would deny members of the public the opportunity to put forward suggestions through their local councillor which could lead to a proposed amendment to the budget
- Similar proposals had been adopted at some districts without problem
- This proposal allowed opposition groups the opportunity to have their proposed alternative budgets or amendments fully costed by officers, increasing the possibility that they could be adopted by Council. This proposed alteration at this meeting would allow the process to be adopted in time for the consideration of the budget at the next Council meeting in February 2017.

RESOLVED that the procedural alteration proposed by the cross-party Council Working Group in relation to the deadline for both alternative budgets and budget amendments as set out above and in the report be approved.

1861 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 1 - Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Charter (Agenda item 8)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion standing in the names of Mrs R E Jenkins, Mrs F M Oborski, Mrs M A Rayner and Mr M E Jenkins as set out in the agenda papers.

The Council agreed to consider and deal with the Motion on the day.

An amendment was then suggested and adopted as an alteration by the Mover and Seconder to add the CMR for Adult Social Care.

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised:

- Supporting the Charter would send out a statement of respect, care and support to people living with MND and their carers that they deserved. Sufferers had complex needs and their condition could deteriorate rapidly. The complex

nature of MND posed a major challenge to health and social care services and it was vital that all partners worked together to provide the right care in the right place at the right time. Sufferers had the right to early diagnosis and information, high quality care and treatment, treatment as individuals with dignity and to maximise their quality of life

- Due to the nature of MND, it was important that the Council and its partner organisations provided a speedy and timely response to the needs of sufferers
- Education was a key tool in raising awareness of this illness and breaking down barriers for sufferers
- The important role that St Richards Hospice played in working with sufferers of MND was highlighted.

The motion as altered received general support and the Council **RESOLVED:**

"This motion is to endorse the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Charter, which sets out the care and support that people who are living with MND and also their carers deserve and should expect and to call upon the Cabinet Members for Children and Families and Adult Social Care to ensure the Council adopts the Charter.

By adopting the MND Charter, this Council would be agreeing to promote the Charter and to make it available to all councillors, council staff, partner organisations and health and social care professionals who deliver services for the council.

As Worcestershire County Council we would raise awareness of MND and what good care for those living with this devastating disease looks like, as stated in the Charter, and we will do everything we can as the Council to positively influence the quality of life for local people with MND and their carers living in our community.

Adoption would also mean taking on successful steps including identification of key programme leads by the Council, publicity and developing links with the Motor Neurone Disease Association who would provide resources and advice."

1862 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 2 - Return to a form of committee system (Agenda item 8)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion standing in the names of Mr M E Jenkins, Mrs F M Oborski, Mrs E B Tucker, Mrs S Askin and Mr T A L Wells:

"In November last year, Worcester City Council voted to switch to a committee system to run the council.

Worcester joins a growing list of councils, including county councils like ourselves, which have either switched or are actively looking at switching to some form of committee system to run their council.

The current Cabinet system excludes most councillors and Worcestershire residents from any meaningful input to decision-making. The elected representatives of the people of Worcestershire would serve their residents better through a cross-party committee system, which works from published papers and reports and thus gives far greater transparency and leads to better decision-making.

Council believes that we should start the process of moving to a form of committee system."

The Council agreed to consider and deal with the Motion on the day.

An amendment was then suggested by Mr R M Udall and adopted as an alteration by the Mover and Seconder that the final sentence of the Motion be deleted and replaced with:

"Council asks for an OSPB investigation into the future governance of the County Council and how a committee system could be introduced."

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised. Those speaking in favour:

- This Motion was concerned with establishing the best way to run the Council by fully representing the views of local residents, openly debating and scrutinising issues and using the local knowledge and expertise of local councillors. This could be best done through the introduction of a committee system
- An increasing number of Councils were reverting to a committee system because it was recognised that the majority of councillors were being side-lined and disenfranchised under the cabinet system. All councillors needed to take an active

role in policy development and the committee system made this possible

- To ensure that a consensus was achieved, the OSPB should be charged with investigating the future governance arrangements of the Council before a decision was made on the future governance model
- Experience of the committee system at district level showed that the quality and quantity of debate at meetings was better. The recent survey of county councillors indicated that there was much support for this proposed change
- The cabinet system undermined the role of the local councillor in that cabinet members were not just involved in strategic implementation but also day-to-day matters in local divisions
- No power or mandate would be removed from the administration by the re-introduction of the committee system but it would give every member the opportunity to discuss and improve the decisions made by the Council.

Those speaking against the Motion:

- There was no evidence of popular support in the country for the committee system with only 3 councils adopting it to date, all of whom had no overall control. This Council in contrast had a clear mandate to form an administration. The cabinet system provided the Council with strong leadership in order to represent it nationally and regionally to secure funding and make timely decisions in a fast moving environment
- Cabinet members were required to have knowledge across all service areas. In contrast, chairmen under the committee system would only have knowledge of their own service area for which their committee was responsible
- The Cabinet system provided clear leadership, gave clarity to officers and residents and provided an obvious point of accountability. The committee system led to inertia, confusion and weakness
- Backbenchers were not disenfranchised under the cabinet system, they just did not make best use of the opportunities available to them
- There was an opportunity for all councillors to challenge the decisions of the administration through the overview and scrutiny process.

On being put to the meeting the Motion as altered was lost.

1863 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 3 - Children's Centres (Agenda item 8)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion standing in the names of Mr J Baker, Mr P M McDonald, Mr R M Udall, Ms P A Hill, Mr R C Lunn, Mr C J Bloore and Mr G J Vickery:

"Council is aware of a number of Children's Centres that have either significantly reduced their services or have announced their closure. This is despite the Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) claiming at scrutiny meetings that "no children's centre will close". Council therefore calls upon the CMR to consider offering an apology to the service users who have been disadvantaged by his decision"

The Council agreed to consider and deal with the Motion on the day.

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised. Those speaking in favour of the Motion:

- The publicity/consultation ahead of the decision on the future of Children's Centres was misleading and unclear. People were told Children's Centres were not closing which was not the case. In particular, it was evident that Woodrow Children's Centre had been shut. The closure of these centres would have a serious impact on young mothers with young children
- Negotiations about future provision were still ongoing with the provider of services at Children's Centres so the public still did not know what services they would receive at which centre and how frequently. The onus was on the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families to clarify matters.

Those speaking against the Motion:

- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families commented that there had not been any misleading statements or any pledges broken. The Council had been clear and transparent about the proposed changes to service provision. All 32 Children's Centres (including Woodrow) remained open and information on service provision for each centre was available on the Council's web site. There was a period of transformation whilst these changes were being implemented. There would also be a loss of certain services albeit with a particular focus on those families in most need.

1864 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 4 - Co-operative Councils (Agenda item 8)

On being put to the meeting the Motion was lost.

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion standing in the names of Mr P M McDonald, Ms P A Hill, Mr R C Lunn and Mr G J Vickery:

"Council has been impressed by the number of Councils such as Oldham that have become leading Co-operative Councils. This was achieved by implementing a new council structure that reduced the financial burden, bureaucracy and administration. Council therefore requests the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board to consider an investigation on how this Council could achieve its required savings by advancing towards a new structure incorporating Co-operative values and principles."

The Council agreed to consider and deal with the Motion on the day.

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised. Those speaking in favour of the Motion:

- This Motion provided an opportunity to look at an alternative means of delivering services. Oldham Council had become a cooperative council with an ethical framework ensuring fair treatment of its employees and embracing the fair employment charter in which everyone contributed and everyone benefited. Services would be provided on behalf of the council through staff-owned co-operatives and mutuals. It represented a bottom-up approach that would respond to residents' concerns, protect services and ensure staff received the living wage
- The Motion was about redesigning services to make the necessary savings for the Council in a co-operative way and putting co-operative values at the heart of what the Council did. These values included self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, solidarity, open and voluntary membership, democratic control, economic participation, autonomy and independence, education and training and concern for the community
- As proposed in the Motion, the OSPB was the appropriate body to examine alternative ways of working
- The co-operative approach allowed the community to feel directly engaged with the

Council and helped them to feel ownership of the political process and engender trust.

The following principal points were raised against the Motion:

- It was not Council's responsibility to amend the work programme of the OSPB through Notices of Motion
- It was right that this Council examined other ways of working and indeed Oldham Council had some good practices which the Council could learn from, many of which this Council had already adopted. However there was no evidence to suggest that Oldham Council was a panacea for its approach to service delivery.

On being put to the meeting the Motion was lost.

1865 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 5 - Cross-country Train service to Bromsgrove Railway Station (Agenda item 8)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion standing in the names of Mr C J Bloore, Mr R C Lunn, Ms P A Hill, Mr R M Udall and Mr P M McDonald:

"Council recognises the concerning news that despite the large investment into Bromsgrove Railway Station, Cross-country Trains have put forward proposals to axe four long distance trains servicing Bromsgrove Railway Station.

Council asks the Leader and Chief Executive to write to Cross-county Trains on behalf of this Council to urge them to reconsider these damaging proposals"

The Council agreed to consider and deal with the Motion on the day.

An amendment was then suggested by Dr K Pollock and adopted by the Mover and Seconder.

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised:

- Cross Country Trains were proposing to remove four long distance trains services from Bromsgrove Railway Station. A considerable amount of money had been invested in the station and the Council should be looking to expand train services at this station, not reduce them
- The Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Skills and Economy indicated that train service provision was an evolving situation. The amendment to the

Motion asked the Chief Executive to write to all train operators to get the very best service for all current and potential train users. The franchise to run the commuting services for the West Midlands was currently out to tender. The specification in the invitation to tender greatly increased the quality of the service for all the people using Bromsgrove Station. It therefore put into perspective the existing very limited use of the Cross Country Train service at the station. Bromsgrove Station was unique in that often passengers were left on the platform because all the carriages were full. The current franchisee did not intend to add any carriages to trains stopping at the station until the line was electrified in early 2018. He would ensure that the tender requirements of the new franchise were fulfilled and Bromsgrove Station received a better service in the future

- The level of use of the Cross Country Train Service at Bromsgrove Train Station quoted by the Cabinet Member, was disputed. It was vital to fight against any decision to remove train services because once they were cancelled by the operator, they would not be re-instated
- The letter from the Chief Executive to Cross Country Trains should emphasise the importance of the provision of the cross-country rail link at Bromsgrove Station because of the potential impact on the services for Worcestershire as a whole. It should also impress the importance of the rail links between the north and south of the county
- It was important to receive information from members and residents about what train services they required to be delivered in the county. It was also vital to ensure that whatever service was provided was properly advertised to ensure everyone was aware of the services available to them.

The Motion as altered received general support and the Council **RESOLVED:**

"Council recognises the news that, despite the large investment into Bromsgrove Railway Station, Cross Country Trains have put forward proposals to axe four long distance trains servicing Bromsgrove Railway Station.

Council asks the Leader and Chief Executive to write

**1866 Key Issues
Debate - The
Council as
Corporate
Parent (Agenda
item 9)**

to Cross Country Trains, and all other current and potential train operators servicing Bromsgrove Station, and the other stations in the County, to seek to ensure that their timetables provide the optimal service for all current and potential rail users."

The Council had before it a briefing note that set out the responsibilities that County Councillors have as corporate parents to inform the County Council discussion including:

- What is corporate parenting?
- Why is corporate parenting important?
- Corporate Parenting Strategy, and
- What should Councillors do?

Any emerging views would be used to inform the Council's continuing provision for any child where the Council was the Corporate Parent.

Council received an introduction to the debate from the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and the Director of Children, Families and Communities followed by a presentation by representatives of the Children in Care Council.

No formal decisions were taken but in the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised:

- The Council as corporate parents should be achieving better than average outcomes for its Looked After Children
- The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) used to undertake Regulation 33 children's homes visits and these should be re-instated. All members also previously had the opportunity to attend foster care meetings in their local division. The CPB needed strong member leadership and a designated officer lead with sufficient stature in the organisation to ensure that any actions were implemented
- The majority of CPBs in the country had an element of scrutiny responsibility but not in this Council. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel had a huge range of areas to scrutinise and did not have the time to dig deep enough into the issues associated with Looked After Children. Given the county and district council input into the CPB, it would be appropriate for it to have a scrutiny function
- All Looked After Children should be provided with

an up-to-date care plan and be able to contribute to it. No Looked After Child on reaching 18 years of age should be sent to unsuitable B&B accommodation. The attainment gap between the majority of young people in the County and Looked After Children was unacceptable

- Awareness and participation of all councillors and partners in the issues associated with corporate parenting should be increased, perhaps with compulsory training for all councillors
- The Minutes of the CPB should be circulated by email to all councillors. Periodic reports from the CPB and the governing body of the Virtual School should be brought to Council. An action plan from the CPB should be reported to Council on an annual basis
- The Terms of Reference of the CPB should be amended to allow nominated substitutes
- The following issues should be added to the corporate parenting pledge: driving lessons for every care leaver; apprenticeships with the Council; join the teenager to work scheme and link it to other businesses; mentoring scheme within the Council; cooking groups; money management; access to rights and entitlements; and Personal Occupation Plans
- The work of the Virtual Head Teacher was important in challenging schools to improve the attainment levels of Looked After Children. All governors of schools had a role in monitoring the attainment levels of Looked After Children in their school
- The CPB should report somewhere to raise awareness. Any report to Council should include representations from Looked After Children, preferably through representatives of the Children in Care Council
- Councillors needed to be provided with more information about the Looked after Children in their division so that they knew who they were trying to help. Mandatory training should be considered for members
- The Terms of Reference of the Board should be amended so that Looked After Children were allowed to nominate their representative on the Board rather than through the Director of Children, Families and Communities
- The issue of homelessness amongst care leavers as well as mental health problems was a major cause for concern and cut across the work of a number of partner organisations.

1867 Annual report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (Agenda item 10)

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families concluded the debate and thanked everyone for their contribution to the debate especially the representatives of the Children in Care Council. He encouraged members to contact himself or the Director to see how they could engage further with issues associated with Looked After Children.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board introduced the report. He thanked participants for their contribution to the scrutiny process over the past year. He thanked scrutiny officers for their assistance over the course of the year.

The report was noted.

1868 Annual Report of the Chief Executive (Agenda item 11)

The Chief Executive presented her report to Council which covered various topics including:

- Worcestershire residents – what residents said and what we did
- Delivery of change in challenging times
- Investing in a workforce fit for the future
- Looking forwards to 2017.

The Chief Executive then answered a broad range of questions from members.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for her report.

1869 Question Time (Agenda item 12)

13 questions had been received by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and had been circulated before the meeting.

It was agreed by Council that, rather than receive answers at the meeting, all members of the Council would be sent the written response to the questions raised by the Monday following this meeting. (All answers are also enclosed with these Minutes.)

The meeting adjourned between 1.25pm and 2.05pm for lunch.
The meeting ended at 4.55pm.

Chairman

COUNCIL 12 JANUARY 2017 - AGENDA ITEM 12 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below.

QUESTION 1 – Mr M McDonald will ask Mrs S Blagg:

"Would the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care please inform me the number of our residents receiving Meals on Wheels in year 2013, 2014 and 2015"

Answer

Figures that we have recorded on Frameworki for people with a purchased meals service in place are as follows:

- 2013 – 500
- 2014 – 225
- 2015 – 49

The data is only relevant to our eligible service users and does not include all residents across the County. Eligible users cover approximately 1.5% of the Worcestershire population.

QUESTION 2 – Mr P McDonald will ask Mrs L Hodgson:

"Would the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Localism and Communities please inform me the number of people sleeping rough in Worcestershire in the year 2014, 2015 and 2016?"

Answer

Thank you Councillor McDonald for your question. As I am sure you are aware it is the District Councils who have the statutory responsibility for homelessness provision. It is the districts who carry the annual count of rough sleepers. So that I can give you an answer I have contacted the districts and they have provided the following information:-

District	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percentage Difference 2014/2015	2016
Bromsgrove	7	3	3	1	3	4	+25%	2
Malvern Hills	4	3	6	2	3	4	+25%	1
Redditch	1	3	3	2	3	0	-100%	5
Worcester	7	17	34	21	22	27	+19%	10
Wychavon	14	14	6	12	8	1	-88%	2
Wyre Forest	7	1	9	8	5	5		1
England	1,768	2181	2309	2414	2744	3599	+30%	
Worcs Total	40	41	61	46	44	41	-7%	21

The increase in rough sleeping has not been uniform across Worcestershire with both increases and decreases seen across the 5 years in individual districts. The total numbers of rough sleepers in Worcestershire has remained fairly static in the low to mid 40's with a

considerable spike in 2012. The annually required count has been undertaken for 2016 which has seen a significant decrease in numbers for Worcestershire and Worcester City but this information has to be verified before release by the Department of Communities and Local Government during January 2017.

There are a number of County Wide partnerships that work to together to look at the homelessness and the prevention of this is managed and this is where the county council may have an involvement.

- Worcestershire Strategic partnership – made up of CCG reps, 1 north and 1 south district rep, county council reps from Adults, children's and public health, DWP
- Worcestershire Strategic housing group made up of district housing officers and sets the county wide strategic and joint working and contracts
- Worcestershire Homeless Health Group

Where possible Homelessness prevention is managed county wide with many joint funding streams and projects and joint contracts to maximise the funding available and is coordinated with the groups mentioned above and include:-

- Rough Sleeper Entrenchment – partners work together to look at cases to see how they can work together to create a plan to take people of the streets, real evidence of success.
- Severe Weather protocol – this year been open 9 days with 56 stays. This is based on 3 nights or more where the temperature drops below a certain level and is run by CCP who will notify partners and located at Maggs day centre.
- There is a budget of £326k for use for providing temporary accommodation this has a 95% recovery of costs from housing benefits
- There was a recent announcement from DCLG of funding for rough sleepers and helping to develop no first night out. This will pay for a member of staff for each LA to identify those at risk and offer early intervention working with partners.

Support and help is also given to care leavers with pathway workers working with them to ensure they are housed properly.

QUESTION 3 – Mrs F M Oborski will ask Mr M Bayliss:

"Could the Cabinet Member for Children and Families tell me:

- a) The Location, number of staff and maximum Pupil Capacity of each MET Base?*
- b) How effective is each MET provision, by site? i.e in terms of pupil progress, value added, GCSE pass rates and achievement of 'pupil premium' pupils;*
- c) If young people can not access mainstream post 16 provision where do they go?*
- d) Which specific types of illness have resulted in young people needing MET intervention in the last two years?*
- e) What percentage of young people make a permanent transition back to mainstream school after MET intervention?*
- f) What are the inspection arrangements for MET Units?"*

Answer

(a) There are 3 bases – Worcester, Kidderminster, Redditch. Five/six staff per unit. This is a demand led service and numbers fluctuate over the year.

Some pupils attend the base and some receive home tuition, depending on individual need.

Pupil numbers have been as follows:

- 2010-11 =152
- 2011-12=184
- 2012-13=177
- 2014-15=132
- 2015-2016=137

(b) Results across all three units are comparable

For 2015/2016

5+ GCSEs		47%
Eng Lang	A* - C	47%
	D - G	53%
Eng Lit	A* - C	73%
	D - G	24%
Maths	A* - C	53%
	D - G	43%
Science	A* - C	50%
	D - G	50%
Additional Science	A* - C	79%
	D - G	17%

These results have to be placed in the context that for some students there are significant periods of absence prior to attending the MET units.

(c) Since the SEND reforms there is a duty to provide education for learners with special needs up to the age of 25, although this is not provided in the MET. The county has some post 19 special school provision, and is working with colleges to further develop this provision. In some cases it may be appropriate for education to be provided outside of the county.

(d) This is very varied but examples include – Mental health (anxiety, depression, body dysmorphic), Anorexia, Suicidal tendencies, ME, broken legs, spinal surgery, Cancer/chemotherapy. In addition, a number of pupils have a diagnosis (or are awaiting a diagnosis) of ASD and their access to school is affected by their SEN

(e) This is totally dependent on the year group the students belong to – the aim is for 100% of the students to return to mainstream. 100% KS2 return, approx. 80 – 90% of KS3 return to mainstream and the remainder go to specialist provision. KS4 Yr. 11 tend not to transition back unless they attended the MET for a physical condition.

(f) The MET bases complete their own self-evaluation, but are not subject to external inspection from Ofsted. This is not registered school provision, nor is it an SEN provision.

QUESTION 4 – Mrs F M Oborski will ask Mr M Hart:

"In February 2003, as a District Cllr for the then Sutton Park Ward of Wyre Forest DC, you presented a 2,000 signature petition to the Wyre Forest Highways Partnership Forum calling for either traffic lights or a roundabout to be installed at the Bewdley Hill/Sutton Park Road junction. You are quoted in the Kidderminster Shuttle as saying that, whilst you felt that £500,000 for a roundabout was probably unachievable, £50,000 for traffic lights could probably be found at County Hall. The LTP4 Consultation Document describes the A456 Bewdley Hill as a Key Corridor for Improvement. Will the installation of either traffic lights or

a roundabout at this dangerous junction be part of the improvements planned for this Key Corridor?"

Answer

Thank you for taking such a keen interest in my St John's Division Cllr Oborski!

I raised this very junction at a meeting I had with the Director just prior to Christmas when I indicated that this is the type of scheme I would like to see benefit from our £5 million congestion fund. I will also be ensuring that this scheme is considered as part of LTP4, but I fully support junction improvements, preferably traffic lights at this location and will continue to make the case as such.

QUESTION 5 – Mr T A L Wells will ask Dr K Pollock:

"Could the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure inform me which rail operators have formally stated they will use the new Worcestershire Parkway station?"

Answer

Great Western Railway and CrossCountry have both formally confirmed that they will serve the new Worcestershire Parkway station from the timetable change immediately following the date the station is open for public use, subject to finalising commercial agreements. As per normal industry practice, for both operators this commitment is conditional upon the rail industry timetable development process over the next 18 months confirming the current assumptions in respect of the impact on network capacity, connections and performance.

QUESTION 6 – Mr R C Lunn will ask Mr M Hart:

"Could the Cabinet Member responsible for Highways confirm the cost of Speed Activated Signs, and how much the cost has risen in the last 12 months?"

Answer

Mobile Vehicle Activated signs supplied by Westcotec cost as follows:

In 2016 (October): £2,925.00

In 2015 (October): £2,625.00

QUESTION 7 – Mr R M Udall will ask Mr S Geraghty:

"Will the Leader of the Council instigate emergency discussions with the ASHA Women's House Group to investigate how the County Council can help, with the use of balances, to help prevent closure. The ASHA House Group provides essential help and support to families across the county; its closure would be devastating and will leave vulnerable families and children with reduced support. Will he work with the Group and other agencies to secure funding which will enable their work to continue?"

Answer

Firstly can I thank Richard for his question.

We are aware of the work delivered through the ASHA centre, and along with other Voluntary Sector Organisations they have delivered various services to Worcestershire residents, that are funded from multiple sources.

As a commissioning authority, we commission services through an open and transparent process and actively engage with all sectors through our market engagement activities. Through our ongoing work with colleagues in the Voluntary Sector, we are ensuring that all Voluntary and Community Sector organisations are fully aware of our commissioning intentions, and ASHA along with other organisations would have had and would continue to have opportunities to tender for appropriate work to their field of expertise.

Whilst acknowledging the good work ASHA have done, I do not feel it would be appropriate at this late stage for the County Council to intervene in the way the member proposes.

QUESTION 8 – Mr R C Lunn will ask Dr K Pollock:

"Can the Cabinet Member for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure explain why in the consultations on the Local Transport Plan, public events have been organised in Malvern, Evesham, Bromsgrove, Kidderminster and Pershore, but not in Redditch? Will he work with Local Members to organise a Redditch based event during February, so that as many Redditch people as possible can take part in person as in the other districts of the county"

Answer

I can confirm that there will be a public consultation event in Redditch on January 26th at the Kingfisher Centre. Unfortunately we did not have confirmation of this at the time of updating the website hence why it was missing off the list. We are also looking to confirm a venue in Worcester City. The public consultation dates are as follows (between 2pm and 4pm):

Evesham – 14 January 2017
Bromsgrove – 17 January 2017
Kidderminster – 19 January 2017
Pershore – 25 January 2017
Redditch – 26 January 2017
Worcester – 30 January 2017

QUESTION 9 – Mr R W Banks will ask Dr Pollock:

"What progress has been made on getting Highways England to improve the A46 as part of the Midland Connect Long Term Transport Plan?"

Answer

Improvements to the A46 in Evesham are very high on the agenda for Highways England, Midlands Connect and Worcestershire County Council. The County Council are active members of a wider stakeholder group, both at an officer and member level, with a remit to pursue the case for improvements along the whole A46 corridor from between the M6/M69 (Coventry), M40 (Warwick) and M5 (Tewkesbury). The stakeholder group includes representatives from:

Highways England
Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership
GFirst (Gloucestershire) Local Enterprise Partnership
Coventry City Council
Warwickshire County Council

Worcestershire County Council – Adrian Hardman – Vice-Chairman
Gloucestershire County Council - Norman Smith - Chairman
Rugby Borough Council
Warwick District Council
Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Wychavon District Council
Tewkesbury Borough Council
Cheltenham Borough Council

We understand that the A46 Expressway concept is included in the Draft Midlands Connect Strategy to be published in March 2017.

QUESTION 10 – Mr G J Vickery will ask Mr Bayliss:

"Redditch is set to gain a fifth secondary school in 2017. In view of the current under population of at least one of the existing four, in the context of unilateral moves by an Academy to create a two tier system alongside the existing three tier structure, what implications for the future stability of the Redditch provision do you foresee?"

Answer

Tudor Grange Academy Redditch (formerly Kingsley College) altered its age range with effect from September 2016 following an application to the office of the Regional Schools Commissioner. At that time, although a middle school, Ridgeway offered secondary places so there has been secondary age provision in Redditch in five schools since September 2016. This has to an extent been complemented by age range changes in some of the town's first schools to all through primary. The short term impact of this is that there is likely to be over capacity in the town's secondary schools. In the longer term, this will to an extent be offset by demographic growth and the development of new housing, although as yet we are unable to quantify that demand. The transfer of first schools to all through primary schools should safeguard primary education, but there may again be over capacity in the middle schools sector

QUESTION 11 – Mr G J Vickery will ask Mr Bayliss:

"The former Social Services Director of Hackney Council, Sharon Shoesmith, has recently alleged that deaths of children identified as vulnerable by Social Services Authorities in England and Wales as a whole number in their hundreds each year. Would the Cabinet Member for Children and Families comment on the credibility of these statements and give the recent years' statistics for Worcestershire?"

Answer

The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP), under the governance of Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) and chaired by Dr Felix Borchardt, formally reviews the deaths of all children and young people under 18 years of age in Worcestershire. This includes deaths which are expected, for example because a child has a life limiting illness or condition, and those which are unexpected, such as those arising from accidents, suicide and abuse or neglect. The total numbers of child deaths in Worcestershire are relatively low compared with other local authority areas: 37 in 2013/14, 43 in 2014/15 and 38 in 2015/16.

The suggestion by Ms Shoesmith is that there are worryingly high numbers of children dying who have been assessed as vulnerable by social workers. Without further explanation of the term 'vulnerable', however, it is difficult to determine which children she is referring to specifically. The CDOP collates data for the Department of Education on those children who die whilst subject to a Child In Need Plan or Child Protection Plan. Arguably

all of these children are vulnerable to some extent (many of them by virtue of their disabilities or complex needs which are addressed through a Child In Need Plan), but they will not all be at risk from significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect which is very different. The numbers of Worcestershire children who die whilst subject to a Plan are extremely small.

If Members considered it helpful the CDOP could retrieve data on the numbers/percentage of children who have died in Worcestershire whilst being subject to a CIN Plan and/or a CP Plan up to the end of 2015/16. This data is available (but not routinely published) and may not relate specifically to the children being referred to by Ms Shoesmith. The CDOP does not collate data on the numbers of children who were known to Children's Social Care at the time of their death but were not subject to a CIN or CP Plan at the time, such as Looked After Children and those being assessed but not yet subject to a Plan. This information would only be available if a review of all the relevant paperwork pertaining to the death review for each child were to be undertaken manually, a time consuming process but one which could be undertaken if required.

The DFE would have collated data in respect of those children who have died whilst subject to a CIN Plan or CP Plan in England and Wales. This could be requested if considered helpful.

QUESTION 12 – Mr R M Udall will ask Mr Hart:

"Will the Cabinet Member for Highways comment on the relationship between the County Council and First Bus?"

Answer

The County Council and First Bus have a professional working relationship. First Bus is a commercial organisation and is ultimately responsible to its shareholders. I clearly recognise that some of their commercial decisions have had an adverse effect on services in Worcestershire, however in such cases First are working with the County Council to enhance communications and provide some mitigation where possible.

In summary the relationship is functional whilst recognising different corporate aspirations and objectives.

QUESTION 13 – Mr T A L Wells will ask Mr Geraghty:

"Does the Conservative administration have any plans to increase members' allowances in 2017?"

Answer

I thank the member for his question.

The administration has no plans to increase or decrease members' allowances during this Council.

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