

**Cabinet****Thursday, 14 November 2019, County Hall, Worcester,  
10.00 am****Minutes****Present:**

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

**Also attended:**

Mr D Benson, Chairman of the Worcestershire  
Safeguarding Children Board for Item 7.

**1942 Apologies and  
Declarations of  
Interest**

Apologies had been received from Ms K J May.

Mr S E Geraghty, Mr A T Amos, Mrs L C Hodgson and  
Mr A C Roberts all declared an interest in Item 5 – Kepax  
Bridge as they were members of Worcester City and had  
already discussed the Kepax Bridge.

Mr A P Miller declared that he was a member of the  
Rivers and Canal Trust who had an interest in the Kepax  
Bridge.

**1943 Public  
Participation**

None

**1944 Confirmation of  
the Minutes of  
the previous  
meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting on 24 October were  
agreed to be an accurate record and were signed by the  
Chairman.

**1945 Worcestershire  
Passenger  
Transport  
Strategy**

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways  
introduced the report and explained that following a 13-  
week comprehensive consultation, the passenger  
transport strategy was ready to be implemented. The  
Cabinet Member stated that he supported all forms of  
passenger transport including subsidised buses and  
community transport and he looked forward to an  
expanded network of services and routes.

The strategy would be based on what the Cabinet  
Member referred to as the 'seven pillars of wisdom' which  
included; providing transport between the larger areas of  
population with community transport providing services to  
smaller villages; improving the infrastructure such as bus

shelters and the provision of real time information; the County Council playing an active role in publicity, encourage more flexible ticketing and also the integration of public transport with rail transport.

The consultation received 2500 responses, with almost half the responses from retired residents and 2/3 from people who lived in urban areas. 90% wanted a bus information service. The results showed that people wanted the County Council to support services, even if they were little used and a number of respondents who used buses for work, school or healthcare appointments said they had no alternative form of transport. Only 1% of respondents felt that cycling was an alternative for their bus journey. In reality the only alternative for buses was cars.

Now the consultation had been completed a review of all services would be carried out to look at best value and to score services based on seven categories. The Cabinet Member felt that passengers needed to make use of buses or they would disappear and bus companies needed to ensure their services were reliable and punctual.

Members of the Cabinet made the following comments:

- The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills pointed out that the Council had a statutory duty to provide transport for children attending school (dependent on the age of the child and the distance) and also for SEND transport. Around £30 million a year was spent on passenger transport so it was right that the money was spent wisely and services were sustainable.
- Cabinet Members thanked the transport officers for their work with the consultation and preparing the Strategy and the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways was thanked for his work on the consultation and the seven pillars were welcomed.
- It was suggested that a consideration of transport needs and services should be included in the planning process, especially when considering areas of low-cost housing.
- There were some concerns around the use of the deprivation index as some divisions which appeared well off had pockets of high deprivation and that was at risk of being masked. This issue had been highlighted by the Rural Services network. It was hoped the process would not be as mechanical as it first appeared.

- Community transport was commended and recognised for being useful in rural areas and helping against social isolation.
- Members were pleased that the whole system of transport would be considered and not just buses.
- It was important that links to other transport networks outside the County were considered.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

- (a) adopted the proposed Passenger Transport Strategy, which had been informed by a robust and comprehensive public consultation;**
- (b) authorised the Director of Economy and Infrastructure to implement the Strategy and formulate operational policies with an appropriate implementation schedule having regard to the Strategy and in consultation with the above Cabinet Members with Responsibility in relation to any strategic impacts; and**
- (c) authorised the commencement of a full review by the Director of Economy and Infrastructure of the Council's Passenger Transport network in accordance with the adopted Strategy, which would incorporate Home to School Transport, Public Transport, Community Transport and Social Care Transport.**

**1946 Kepax Bridge**

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure explained that the outline business case marked the start of the process which would include gaining planning permission, the development of a full business case and the return of a report to Cabinet. The project would not progress if full funding had not been secured.

The bridge was part of the active travel policy for cycling and walking and would promote public health and safe cycling. Some people felt that a bridge was needed for cars but the Cabinet Member pointed out that that was a separate issue. £8.9 million of funding would be required for the project and after a contribution from Worcester City and the County Council, around £6.5 million would need to be found from third parties. The bridge would be useful in future as it was likely that under the South Worcestershire Development Plan more housing would be built in that area.

In the ensuing discussion the following main points were raised:

- There were social, health, economic and transport benefits to support a new walking and cycling route. The bridge would link with existing cycle routes along the river.
- For the Council's contribution of £1.5 million, which had already been allocated for walking and cycling, the result would be a £9 million bridge which made good economic sense.
- There were obvious benefits to physical and mental health.
- Transport benefits were that congestion would be reduced and walking and cycling connectivity would be improved in the northern part of the city with increased links to national and regional cycle routes.
- It was felt that other areas of the County made much better use of riversides and had created far more scenic paths than Worcester so it was good that this bridge was being built to enable access to the Riverside park – although it was really a natural place rather than a park.
- The bridge would be good for development and tourism and added connectivity as it would link up to other cycle routes such as the one to the Three Counties Showground.
- There was some concern that Section 106 monies would be required and had not yet been agreed as it was suggested that in some areas developers were trying to avoid paying their 106 money.
- The bridge could improve journeys for car owners as it could get a number of cyclists off the roads and reduce the amount of braking needed for vehicles who encounter cyclists which in turn would reduce the amount of fuel being used.
- Other works around the County were also being carried out to improve walking and cycling routes .

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

- (a) welcomed the contents of the Strategic Outline Business Case and authorised the development of a Full Business Case;**

- (b) authorised the preparation of a Planning Application for the Kepax Bridge Project and delegated the decision to submit the Planning Application to the Director of Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility;**
- (c) allocated £1.5m from the Capital Programme allocation for Walking and Cycling Bridges towards this scheme;**
- (d) authorised the submission of funding bids to third parties for the completion of the scheme;**
- (e) approved the expenditure of the funds necessary to complete the Full Business Case and to prepare the Planning Application up to the parameter for preparation set out in paragraph 19;**
- (f) authorised the completion of a pre-planning public engagement exercise;**
- (g) receive a further report regarding the project following the outcome of the Planning Application and with details of the Full Business Case and progress on funding applications; and**
- (h) noted that commencement of construction would not occur until funding sources have been secured.**

**1947 Update on Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Action Plan including the Local Government Ombudsman Report**

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills introduced the report and explained that since the joint Ofsted and CQC inspection of special educational needs and disabilities in March 2018, a lot of work had been carried out to improve services. The County Council, the NHS and CCGs all had statutory duties around SEND.

The Improvement Board, Chaired by Nick Wilson until the end of October, had consisted of representatives from Children's Services (now Worcestershire Children First) the CCGs, Babcock, SENDIASS, schools and Parents and carers. The October Board meeting had received a visit from the Inspector and it had been noted how far things had improved. The number of EHCP plans

completed within 20 days had been at 12% in 2018 but was now at 66%, which had been achieved by investing £675,000 and employing 20 new staff to carry out the reviews.

With reference to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman report included with this item it was acknowledged that Worcestershire had learnt from the Ombudsman's recommendations and children were no longer being let down.

In the discussion which followed, various points were raised:

- Members of the Cabinet thanked Nick Wilson and the other staff who had been involved in the improvement work and payed tribute to the support given to staff by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility. It was noted that Sarah Wilkins and Mari Gay were now joint Chairmen of the Improvement Board.
- The numbers of health assessments and access to therapy for Looked After Children had also improved.
- The Children and Families Scrutiny Panel had looked at SEND and the Chairman of the Scrutiny Board endorsed the comments made by the CMR. They had received a damning report from the inspectors saying that children were being let down, but things were now improving. A connected issue which was causing concern was that of elective home education and whether a proportion of parents with autistic children felt that suitable schooling was not available for them. A Scrutiny task group would be set up to look at the issue.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

- (a) acknowledged that progress was underway on the Written Statement of Action (Improvement Plan) to show how the agencies would tackle areas for improvement identified by that letter in order to improve outcomes for all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND);**
- (b) acknowledged the Department for Education and NHS England monitoring visit and feedback provided;**

**1948 Worcestershire  
Safeguarding  
Children's  
Board Annual  
Report 2018/19**

**(c) considered and noted the recommendations of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report; and**

**(d) endorsed the Action Plan in response to the Ombudsman's recommendations.**

Derek Benson, Independent Chairman of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board informed Cabinet that the Safeguarding Board had worked on various priorities during the 2018/19 year and worked together with the Adults Safeguarding Board the Health and Well-being Board and the Community Safety Partnership. Priority areas which were dealt with included:

- Developing a neglect strategy and toolkit.
- They supported the excellent work done around exploitation with the Get Safe project which was led by West Mercia Police with support from Tina Russell and the Council along with health partners.
- Early help was important and work was on-going around thresholds and the quality of referrals.
- Listening to the voice of the Child was a perennial issue.
- The Safeguarding Board had been briefed about Ofsted inspection through the Service Improvement Plan.
- Work had been done to prepare for the new Safeguarding Partnership which meant the Police, CCGs and local authorities were jointly responsible for safeguarding.
- Whenever serious case reviews took place (although there had been none in 2018/19) the learning was disseminated where possible.
- Worcestershire had strong multi-agency support for the Partnership and there had been a significant improvement in the last 3 years.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families confirmed the need for Partnership work in safeguarding. He mentioned that he had been very impressed with Adam Kent at the last full Council meeting and was pleased to announce that Adam was now the Get Safe Champion. The message needed to continue to be disseminated and needed to be passed on through to the community.

Other comments made at the meeting included:

- that the Child Death Overview Panel would

**1949 EU Exit Preparedness Update Report**

continue to review child deaths and that a certain number of deaths involved modifiable factors that had contributed to the death.

- Safeguarding was everyone's business and the positive comments by the Chairman of the Safeguarding Board regarding Worcestershire were welcomed.
- A Member Outside the Cabinet had been impressed to see information about Get Safe on screens at her Doctors surgery.
- The progress was noted and it was hoped that the new Partnership arrangements proved to be successful.
- Derek Benson was thanked for his work with the Safeguarding Board.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

**(a) received the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2018/19; and**

**(b) noted the progress of the work of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board.**

The Leader introduced the report and explained that the report had been requested at Council. Andrew Spice had been named as the Lead Officer for the Council with the Local Resilience Forum leading arrangements. Funding of £167,000 had been received from the Government for Brexit related issues.

National guidance had been produced but key issues for Worcestershire included:

- That local businesses should look to growth hubs at Worcester Business Central based at the Chamber of Commerce for information.
- Internally the Council was considering risks to Social care and the sector considered that it had good business continuity plans in place.
- Changes in people's ability to work – ensuring individuals were aware of requirements.
- Provision of supplies such as fuel and food.
- Regulatory issues and investment in capacity.

The following comments were made:

- People needed to be reassured that the Council had been prudent in looking at all eventualities.
- It was hoped that people from the European

Union living in this country were not feeling unwelcome as it was a straight forward bureaucratic process to be able to stay. Registration services were working hard to make the process as painless as possible.

- Trading standards were offering support for businesses who exported their goods.
- The Emergency Planning Section had everything in place for Brexit.
- Cabinet was thanked for the report and it was hoped that industries who relied on exports were supported. The Leader said the Growth Plan arrangements would be considered at the LEP.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

- (a) noted the responsibility of the Council to contribute to Government-directed EU Exit contingency planning activity (co-ordinated through the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum);**
- (b) noted the internal planning taking place to ensure that key Council services identify risks and were prepared; and**
- (c) considered what, if any, further preparations were needed to support the local economy and residents.**

The meeting ended at 11.25

Chairman .....