

Agenda

Council

Thursday, 12 November 2020, 10.00 am
Online only

Notes:

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic Worcestershire County Council will be holding this meeting in accordance with the relevant legislative arrangements for remote meetings of a local authority. For more information please refer to: Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Please note that this is a public meeting, conducting remotely by videoconferencing between invited participants and live streamed for general access via a link on the Council's website to the Council's Youtube channel at [10am](#) and [1.30pm](#).

The Agenda papers and background papers can be accessed electronically on the Council's website. Members of the public and press are permitted to report on the proceedings.

This document can be provided in alternative formats such as Large Print, an audio recording or Braille; it can also be emailed as a Microsoft Word attachment. Please contact Democratic Services on telephone number 01905 846621 or by emailing democraticservices@worcestershire.gov.uk

DISCLOSING INTERESTS

There are now 2 types of interests:
'Disclosable pecuniary interests' and **'other disclosable interests'**

WHAT IS A 'DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST' (DPI)?

- Any **employment**, office, trade or vocation carried on for profit or gain
- **Sponsorship** by a 3rd party of your member or election expenses
- Any **contract** for goods, services or works between the Council and you, a firm where you are a partner/director, or company in which you hold shares
- Interests in **land** in Worcestershire (including licence to occupy for a month or longer)
- **Shares** etc (with either a total nominal value above £25,000 or 1% of the total issued share capital) in companies with a place of business or land in Worcestershire.

NB Your DPIs include the interests of your spouse/partner as well as you

WHAT MUST I DO WITH A DPI?

- **Register** it within 28 days and
- **Declare** it where you have a DPI in a matter at a particular meeting
 - you must **not participate** and you **must withdraw**.

NB It is a criminal offence to participate in matters in which you have a DPI

WHAT ABOUT 'OTHER DISCLOSABLE INTERESTS'?

- No need to register them but
- You must **declare** them at a particular meeting where:
You/your family/person or body with whom you are associated have a **pecuniary interest** in or **close connection** with the matter under discussion.

WHAT ABOUT MEMBERSHIP OF ANOTHER AUTHORITY OR PUBLIC BODY?

You will not normally even need to declare this as an interest. The only exception is where the conflict of interest is so significant it is seen as likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.

DO I HAVE TO WITHDRAW IF I HAVE A DISCLOSABLE INTEREST WHICH ISN'T A DPI?

Not normally. You must withdraw only if it:

- affects your **pecuniary interests** **OR** relates to a **planning or regulatory** matter
- **AND** it is seen as likely to **prejudice your judgement** of the public interest.

DON'T FORGET

- If you have a disclosable interest at a meeting you must **disclose both its existence and nature** – 'as noted/recorded' is insufficient
- **Declarations must relate to specific business** on the agenda
 - General scattergun declarations are not needed and achieve little
- Breaches of most of the **DPI provisions** are now **criminal offences** which may be referred to the police which can on conviction by a court lead to fines up to £5,000 and disqualification up to 5 years
- Formal **dispensation** in respect of interests can be sought in appropriate cases.

Thursday, 12 November 2020, 10.00 am, Online only

Agenda and Summons

Councillors: Mr G R Brookes (Chairman), Mr A A J Adams, Mr R C Adams, Ms P Agar, Mr A T Amos, Mr T Baker-Price, Mr R W Banks, Mr R M Bennett, Mrs J A Brunner, Mr B Clayton, Mr K D Daisley, Mr P Denham, Ms R L Dent, Mr N Desmond, Mrs E A Eyre, Mr A Fry, Mr S E Geraghty, Mr P Grove, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr A I Hardman, Mr P B Harrison, Mr M J Hart, Ms P A Hill, Mrs A T Hingley, Mrs L C Hodgson, Dr A J Hopkins, Dr C Hotham, Mr M E Jenkins, Mr A D Kent, Mr R C Lunn, Mr P M McDonald, Mr S J Mackay, Mr L C R Mallett, Ms K J May, Mr P Middlebrough, Mr A P Miller, Mr R J Morris, Mr J A D O'Donnell, Mrs F M Oborski, Ms T L Onslow, Dr K A Pollock, Mrs J A Potter, Prof J W Raine, Mrs M A Rayner, Mr A C Roberts, Mr C Rogers, Mr J H Smith, Mr A Stafford, Ms C M Stalker, Mr C B Taylor, Mr R P Tomlinson, Mrs E B Tucker, Mr P A Tuthill, Mr R M Udall, Mrs R Vale, Ms S A Webb and Mr T A L Wells

1 Apologies and Declaration of Interests

To receive apologies and invite any councillor to declare any interest in any of the items on the agenda.

2 Public Participation

To allow a member of the public to present a petition, or ask a question relating to the functions of the Council, or to make a comment on any matter on the agenda.

Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance in writing or by e-mail indicating both the nature and content of their proposed participation no later than 9.00am on the Monday before the meeting (in this case 9 November 2020). Further details are available on the Council's website. Enquiries can also be made through the telephone number/e-mail address listed below.

3 Minutes

To approve as a correct record and authorise the signing of the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2020 (previously circulated electronically).

4 Chairman's Announcements

To receive any announcements to be made by the Chairman.

5 Fire and Rescue Authority 1 - 4

To consider the annual report of the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority to be presented by Mr P A Tuthill, Vice-Chairman and to receive answers to any questions

asked about this report. It is planned for the Chief Fire Officer to attend the meeting.

6 Reports of Cabinet 5 - 18

To consider the reports of the Cabinet and to receive answers to any questions asked on those reports as follows:

- a) Reports of Cabinet – Matters which require a decision; and
- b) Report of Cabinet – Summary of decisions taken.

7 Constitutional Matters 19 - 24

To consider a report on:

- a) Political balance; and
- b) Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Member Bodies.

8 Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility 25 - 46

To receive the reports of the following Cabinet Members with Responsibility on current issues and proposed developments within their area of responsibility and to receive answers to any questions on their reports:

- a) Children and Families; and
- b) Education and Skills.

9 Notices of Motion 47 - 50

To receive the report of the Head of Assistant Director for Legal and Governance on any Notices of Motion received by him.

Councillors are asked to note that any Notices of Motion must be received by the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance no later than noon on 3 November 2020.

10 Question Time 51 - 52

To receive answers to any questions asked by Councillors.

(Members are reminded of the timescale adopted by Council for notice of questions. A Councillor may only ask a question if:

- *It is delivered in writing to the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance by noon on 3 November 2020 or*
- *If it relates to urgent business, the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance is notified at least half an hour before the start of the meeting.)*

11 Reports of Committees 53 - 66

To consider the reports of Committees and to receive answers to any questions asked on those reports as follows:

- a) Audit and Governance Committee;
- b) Pensions Committee;

- c) Planning and Regulatory Committee; and
- d) Standards and Ethics Committee.

Agenda produced and published by Abraham Ezekiel, Assistant Director for Legal and Governance County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP. The above reports and supporting information can be accessed via the Council's website at: www.worcestershire.gov.uk

To obtain further information or a paper copy of this agenda please contact Simon Lewis, Committee Officer by telephone on Worcester (01905) 846621 or slewis@worcestershire.gov.uk

Date of Issue: Wednesday, 4 November 2020

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Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

2019/20 Annual Report to Worcestershire County Council

Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

1. Councillor R J Phillips, from Herefordshire Council, was re-elected as Chairman of the Authority and Councillor P Tuthill, from Worcestershire County Council, was re-elected as Vice-Chairman.

Organisational Change and Employee Relations

2. In order to deliver significant efficiencies and achieve a sustainable budgetary position going forward, as well as avert a potential legal challenge from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) regarding the Service's innovative Day Crewing Plus (DCP) duty system (despite it being well-liked by local crews), the Fire Authority made some difficult decisions in 2019 and 2020 regarding frontline crewing arrangements. Unfortunately, this led initially to a trade dispute with the FBU which then required further work by all parties to resolve, but the final outcome has been substantial agreement for changes across the Service that has also managed to be delivered within the limitations of its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The process of reaching agreement has also strengthened local employee relations.

Response to Wide Area Flooding and Covid-19

3. Throughout 2020, the Service has been responding to two overlapping major incidents, firstly the wide area flooding that hit the two counties throughout January – March, followed swiftly by the coronavirus pandemic from March until the present day. As a key partner at the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), HWFRS led in many areas of the flood response at the beginning of 2020 – responding to nearly 2500 calls for assistance (over the period that included Storm Ciara, Storm Dennis and Storm Jorge), ranging from water rescues and property flooding to supporting vulnerable people isolated in their homes with food deliveries and welfare checks. This also involved individuals and teams from right across the Service and not exclusively frontline crews.
4. In respect to the pandemic, HWFRS has also been a strong supporter of partners in the LRF, such as Local Authorities and health providers, undertaking a range of activities such as PPE distribution and face-mask fit testing, as well as helping to plan to support patient transport services, if required. This has resulted in the Service using its skills and resources to good effect in areas of work not normally associated with the Fire and Rescue Service, but in priority areas that have benefitted both partner agencies and the local communities.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan

5. Following on from its 2018 inspection, the Service has been making good progress against its improvement plan, particular in the 'People' area, such as developing and adopting a reviewed set of core values, investment into the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as an overhaul of its selection and promotion process focussing on fairness together with attraction and retention of people from under-represented groups and backgrounds. At the time of writing this report, the anticipated 2020 HMICFRS follow-up inspection had been postponed until sometime in 2021, although a specific Covid-19 inspection of English FRS's will be undertaken during autumn / winter 2020.

Strategic Alliance with Shropshire Fire Authority

6. The Strategic Fire Alliance between Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services continues to make progress in the four priority areas.
7. The priority projects are as follows:
 - a. Fire Control: scoping the future requirements for ensuring a resilient Command & Control function (taking into account the Grenfell Tower and Manchester Arena Inquiry recommendations),
 - b. Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP): aligning Community Risk Management Planning processes (to use within the 2021-2025 CRMP)
 - c. ICT: developing organisational arrangements for the provision of Information & Communications Technology functions.
 - d. Procurement: identifying areas of potential efficiencies and alignment in the procurement of goods and services, as well as procurement practice.

Police and Crime Commissioner's Case for Governance of Fire and Rescue Service

8. Following national political direction from the government, the role of Police & Crime Commissioners (PCC) has now come under formal review, with a view to consider its expansion. In addition, at a local level, the Policing Minister has requested the West Mercia PCC to review their business case for taking over governance of the two Fire & Rescue Services, effectively resulting in withdrawal of the original case as well as delaying the submission of any reviewed business case until after the findings of the wider PCC review (post-May 2021 elections).
9. This has allowed the two Fire Authorities to withdraw their application for a second judicial review (after the first review had failed on appeal), as it was based on the argument that the business case needed to be reviewed due to significant changes in the local circumstances.

New Station Build Programme

10. The transfer to the new Wyre Forest Blue Light Hub took place in February / March 2020, following a slight delay due to the organisational and operational demands placed up on the Service by the wide area flooding over that period. In addition, replacement plans continue to be developed and progressed for new stations at Redditch, Hereford and Broadway.

Operational Activity

11. During the year, we attended 7,901 incidents, an increase of circa 400 incidents over the previous year, but still 3 per cent lower than 10 years ago. This increase was due mainly to a 44% increase in Special Service calls (e.g. flooding) as a consequence of extreme weather events in October 2019 and February 2020. We attended 34 fewer house fires and 14 fewer road traffic collisions than last year, but were called to many more flooding incidents, together with a large increase in calls to assist other agencies, such as the Police and Ambulance Service.

12. False alarms still made up the majority of incidents we attended (44 per cent of all incidents), although these remained almost exclusively from either accidental activation of business fire alarm systems and domestic smoke alarms or people calling in a suspected incident in good faith. In contrast, we received only 57 malicious false alarm calls out of a total of 3451 incidents. The Fire Authority continues to monitor this changing operational activity on a quarterly basis and regularly scrutinises the Service on its prevention plans and activities in this area.

**Cllr R Phillips, Chairman and Cllr P Tuthill, Vice-Chairman
Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority**

FURTHER INFORMATION is available in the Fire Authority Annual Report 2020/21 on the Service's website at www.hwfire.org.uk/your-right-to-know/our-publications/

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COUNCIL
12 NOVEMBER 2020**REPORT OF CABINET – MATTERS WHICH REQUIRE A
DECISION BY COUNCIL**

**RESOURCES REPORT – REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET
MONITORING – MONTH 4 (31 JULY) 2020/21****Recommendation**

1. **The Leader and Cabinet recommend that Council approves the updated capital programme as set out in Appendix 1.**
2. The Cabinet has considered the report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Finance which included an updated Capital Programme. The timing of capital expenditure over the current and future years has been reviewed and an updated profile provided.
3. The revised profile has taken account of the roll forward of capital schemes from last financial year and the impact that has on the current year's profile of expenditure and estimate for future years, along with re-profiling across financial years based on current best information available.
4. There have been changes to values of capital schemes due to increases in external income expected, and reallocations between schemes to take account of more realistic planning which are also included.

**UPDATE ON THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S COVID RESPONSE AND
RECOVERY**

5. **The Leader and Cabinet recommend that Council notes the financial summary and agrees to a £15m addition to the updated Capital Programme at Appendix 2.**
6. Cabinet has considered a report providing a broad overview of the activities being led or supported by the Council in respect of COVID response and recovery. The report also included proposals for revisions to the Capital Programme.
7. The full economic impact of Covid-19 is yet to be understood, but from national data provided by Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) the projected decline in gross value added (GVA) across Worcestershire ranges from 26% to 41%. Using this same approach, GVA for Worcestershire is estimated to fall by 36%, with the largest contribution to the fall from manufacturing followed by wholesale and retail, other sectors significantly affected in the county include accommodation, leisure, culture and entertainment.

8. The National Business Impact of Covid Survey, undertaken by ONS between 10 and 23 August 2020, shows 1.1% of businesses remain temporarily closed. Of these they are reporting that 16.3% of staff are fully or partially furloughed.

9. The Council set its 2020/21 Capital Programme as part of the February 2020 Full Council meeting to establish its budget and council tax precept. Since that date the Council, its residents and businesses have been responding to COVID-19 and the full economic and social impacts brought with that. The way the high street and business will operate over the coming years is now being challenged and the County Council, working with all partners needs to have flexibility to enable prompt decisions to be made that help facilitate the continued state and hopefully growth of our local economy.

10. Whilst the Council continues to lobby Central Government for funding with success seen over recent months, for example the investment in the county's roads and transport, the Council recognises it may need to engage in the economic environment to facilitate recovery. As part of this the Council needs to recognise the potential need for further borrowing and an increase in the capacity within the Capital Programme it has set to aid the economic recovery arising due to COVID. The ability to increase the Capital Programme in year is reserved to Full Council and Council is being asked to consider and approve a modest increase in order to achieve that goal.

11. The Council has already developed a strong economic plan, working with partners such as the District Councils and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The Council's initial response to COVID-19 included re-focusing £3.5m of the Open For Business funds to support the recovery. It has also led the call for bids to Government to secure further capital schemes (EA flood scheme at Tenbury as an example), as well as transport schemes, including the Getting Building Funding announced for Worcestershire in the summer.

12. The Cabinet recognises that as well as investing in technology and skills, the Council also need to focus its efforts on ensuring that the County is agile and flexible to new opportunities, including the way and where people work. Key to that will be transport infrastructure and economic development activity. The capital programme already had plans to spend £5 million across 2019-23 across rail stations in the County. Cabinet proposes increasing that to £20 million, with the additional £15 million funded from borrowing as and when any future decision is taken by Cabinet on consideration of a full and robust business case.

13. There has already been a significant shift in where and how people work and there are new opportunities to grow the local economy through further investment in rail stations and associated regeneration around them that will enable easier access to new workplaces and allow greater productivity. They also have the potential to draw in further Government and third-party development funds, from which is often leveraged more local wealth and employment. Such schemes can enable less road congestion and a wider employment resource, both of which are often key factors to attract new investment.

14. The Council has a fiduciary duty to maintain the on-going viability and delivery of services in making these decisions and as such will need to enter into any ventures following rigorous due diligence and assessment of any financial and/or social impact against any commercial gains or losses. As such whilst Council is asked to increase the Capital Programme this would be funded from borrowing that would only be drawn down

following thorough business cases and due diligence to the economic worth of such schemes. These would be presented and considered at Cabinet in every case, and as such be subject to the usual constitutional conditions. Therefore, no decisions to spend are taken by this recommendation.

Mr S E Geraghty
Chairman

Supporting Information – Available with the reports to Cabinet 24 September and 22 October 2020 at

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=131&Year=0>

Appendix 1, Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2023, 24 September 2020

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=131&MId=3170&Ver=4>

Appendix 2, Capital Programme 2019/20 – 2022/23 onwards, showing recommended changes, 22 October 2020

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=131&MId=3171&Ver=4>

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and background papers for the meetings of the Cabinet held on 24 September and 22 October 2020.

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COUNCIL
12 NOVEMBER 2020**REPORT OF CABINET - SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN**

Use of Children's Centre Buildings – Transfer of the Centre at Bewdley Primary School

1. In June 2016 WCC Cabinet agreed a range of recommendations relating to the provision of effective prevention services for children and young people including optimising the use of children's centre buildings for delivery in localities.
2. This included the proposal that the Children's Centre building known as Riverside Children's Centre located at Bewdley Primary School be leased to the Governing Body of Bewdley Primary School for the delivery of Early Year's Education for 2-year-olds and other local support services.
3. Following consultation, the school has proposed that they would continue to operate 2-year old provision from this building, with no alteration to staff, children, or number of places offered, but that the nursery, and the site, be absorbed into the maintained estate. The integration of this facility into the maintained age range of the school would enable a consistent education programme from 2-11 and improve communication and administration across the school community, along with securing ongoing availability of early education and care provision for 2-year-olds in this area.
4. In agreeing this change the school have confirmed that they will continue to use the building to provide early years provision, as well as allowing the use of the building for existing community services to continue as this is in the interests of the development and welfare of young children and families in the community. Therefore, this proposal continues to meet the statutory definition of a Sure Start Children's Centre, meeting the requirements of the Sure Start, Early Years, and Childcare Grant (SSEYCG) which was invested in the site.
5. Cabinet agreed the proposals for the future use of the Children's Centre building at Bewdley Primary School, authorised the Directors of Children's Services and of Commercial and Change to take all necessary steps to effect the change and has authorised the Directors of Children's Services and Public Health, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members to take all decisions in relation to change of use of Children's Centre buildings so long as they continue to provide services under the definition of a Sure Start Children's Centre.

A New Approach to Delivering Integrated Services for Adult Mental Health

6. Cabinet has considered a report about the termination of the Agreement for Section 75 Integrated Provider Adult Mental Health, Older Adult Mental Health and Learning Disabilities which was entered into with Worcestershire Health and Care

NHS Trust on 1 April 2016. The Overarching Framework Agreement and the all other s75 Provider Agreements made under it are not affected by the proposed termination.

7. The purpose of the adult mental health agreement is to ensure the efficiency and effective delivery of integrated mental health services, by delegating the duties and powers of the Council to the Trust. At the time, this approach was the preferred strategic direction of national policy to deliver integration and placed the Council and local NHS at the forefront of developments in mental health.

8. The Community Mental Health Framework for Adults and Older Adults (NHS, September 2019) envisages holistic mental health care that is place-based, personalised and community-focused and with social care playing a central role. The Framework underpins the Transforming Community Mental Health Services agenda. The Trust has been appointed as a pilot on behalf of Herefordshire and Worcestershire STP to trial the adoption of the Community Mental Health Framework.

9. In light of the national agenda, the Council's Strategy for People and Communities and following discussions with Worcestershire Health and Care Trust, it is clear that the original intention of the s75 adult mental health agreement is no longer fit for purpose. The legal purpose of s75 arrangements are to allow the creation of a pooled budget. Without a pooled budget in place, there are better ways of working in partnership without the need for a s75. There is a need for continued social work specialist development and professional leadership, a role which sits best with the County Council as the responsible lead.

10. Cabinet has therefore agreed to terminate the Agreement for Section 75 Integrated Provider Adult Mental Health, Older Adult Mental Health and Learning Disabilities with Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust with effect from 31 March 2021 and noted that the Council will resume direct management of all adult social care mental health functions and services with effect from 1 April 2021. The Strategic Director of People, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, is authorised, to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Trust by 1 April 2021 to ensure the delivery of personalised, place-based and integrated services to people with mental health difficulties, and to ensure the transfer of relevant staff to the Council, arrangements for co-location of staff as appropriate and the establishment of an operational mental health social care function within the People Directorate within the existing budget

Minerals and Waste Local Development Scheme

11. Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended, sets out the requirement for Local Planning Authorities to prepare and maintain a scheme and schedule of planning policy documents that it intends to produce, known as a Local Development Scheme. The Minerals and Waste Local Development Scheme (LDS) has two main purposes, to inform the public about the preparation and adoption of planning documents and to establish and reflect Council priorities and enable work programmes to be set for the preparation of the documents.

12. The LDS should be reviewed regularly and in order to balance the use of Cabinet time and maintaining appropriate political oversight and awareness of mineral and waste policy development, Cabinet agreed that more frequent updates are delegated

to the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member. The updated LDS will be brought to Cabinet for approval in 2023.

13. Restrictions on meetings during the Covid outbreak meant that the public hearing sessions scheduled for May and June 2020 in the 2018 LDS had to be postponed and are likely to be held virtually in November. This will delay the adoption of the Plan by Council until Q4 2022 or Q1 2023.

14. Cabinet approved the Minerals and Waste Local Development Scheme September 2020 – December 2023 and delegated authority to the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure to make minor amendments to it prior to publication.

Resources Report – Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring – Month 4 (31 July) 2020/21

15. Cabinet has considered details of the 2020/21 outturn forecast for the Council's £345 million net revenue budget as at Month 4 (31 July 2020), the estimated financial impact of COVID-19 and progress to date on the savings and reforms programme.

16. The Council is forecasting a £1.6 million cost pressure after management actions to reduce expenditure in year. Around £20 additional expenditure was being incurred on Adult Services, with a further £27m on whole Council/countywide services such as hubs, PPE and allowing for lower income collection levels.

17. In addition to this, at the time the Council was managing around £52 million of additional one-off funding to support its response to COVID-19 working alongside partners and suppliers to ensure vital support services are enabled across the County area. At this stage for 2020/21, no second wave had been assumed and costs were broadly in line with the additional funding allocated by Central Government. Looking forward, there are risks to council tax and business rates income as well as the uncertainty around the impact of changes in the economy and spending priorities.

18. This report also updated Cabinet on the latest position with regard to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block.

19. The current DSG position is a forecast overspend of £0.6 million against a total budget of £220 million. The overspend is exclusively within the High Needs block of the DSG and this will increase the overall DSG deficit brought forward from 2019/20 of £6.2 million to £6.8 million at the end of the year.

20. High Needs funding was increased by £8.7 million in 2020/21, bringing budget broadly in line with expenditure, although future allocations and spend management measures will need to make good the deficit balance.

21. The Council is working with Schools to optimise pressures within funding, whilst taking every opportunity to lobby Central Government about overall funding allocations. Worcestershire is not alone with regard to these pressures.

22. Cabinet endorsed the conclusions about revenue and capital budget monitoring up to 31 July 2020, noted the financial impact and forecast for COVID-19 expenditure; noted current progress regarding savings plans approved by Council in February 2020 and noted borrowing and lending transactions during 2019/20.

A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme

23. The County Council has been working with partners including Highways England (HE), Bromsgrove District Council (BDC), Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) to relieve congestion on the A38 through a programme of improvement works.

24. The programme was identified in Local Transport Plan 4 to support the sustainable growth of Bromsgrove, relieve existing traffic congestion and to support the growth identified in the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan. The programme is also critical to assist to support the objectives of the Redditch Local Plan, and both the Worcestershire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull Strategic Economic Plans.

25. Proposals for the A38 in Bromsgrove were considered by Cabinet in July and November 2018. The full proposal has been divided into an early works package known as Package 1, with the remainder of the proposed works being packaged together as the A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme (BREP). BREP consists of seven Highways Schemes (A-G) and six Active Travel Schemes (1-6).

26. Package 1 consisted of enhancements and improvements to three junctions:

- Works Complete: A38 / Barley Mow Lane
- A38 / M42 Junction 1 and A38 / M5 Junction 4: both currently in delivery'
- This phase is being funded by a combination of monies from Highways England, WLEP, GBSLEP and section 106 developer contributions.

27. A38 BREP is a part of the Major Road Network (MRN). The BREP proposal is currently being developed and promoted through the Department of Transport (DfT) Major Road Network fund for major schemes up to a maximum of £50 million plus a 15% local contribution. WLEP and Midlands Connect (MC) have identified BREP as one of West Midlands Regional 10 MRN priority schemes securing important regional support for the scheme

28. On this basis the Council developed and submitted a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to the DfT in summer 2019. The SOBC highlighted that the scheme provides very high value for money with a Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) of 4.5. As the SOBC was well received by the DfT work is now underway on the more detailed Outline Business Case (OBC) as the next step to securing funding from the scheme. This is due to be submitted to the DfT in 2021.

29. The programme contains a mixture of highway capacity and safety enhancements aimed at providing additional capacity within the area and improving overall journey time reliability. In addition, it includes a series of Active Travel enhancements providing opportunities for walking and cycling, alternatives to car use for short journeys and link to the Active Travel schemes provided though the Bromsgrove National Productivity Investment Fund.

30. As part of the development of the OBC a public engagement exercise was carried out in early 2020. This highlighted matters which the Council has since sought to address and has led to several changes to the programme from the SOBC submission. These are:

- greater provision for Active Travel with additional cycle schemes and pedestrian crossing points within the corridor to reduce severance and promote cycling and walking as a realistic alternative mode for short journeys within Bromsgrove.
- further local widening of the highway to optimise capacity and enhance safety
- to review scheme F (M42 J1 and Birmingham Road) and undertake further public engagement.

31. The walking and cycling provision brings the scheme in line with current government proposals and guidance for Active Travel which were revised in July 2020.

32. WLEP allocated £7.5 million to support both the delivery of Package 1 improvements and development of the A38 BREP proposals through the Local Growth Fund. Government is now seeking to ensure that all this money is spent within the current financial year (2020/21). This money has been allocated to complete the following activities:

- Delivery of Package 1 which is in progress
- Development of the A38 BREP proposals and submission of the SOBC which is complete;
- The current further development of the A38 BREP proposals up to and including submission of the OBC; and
- Detailed design of selected A38 BREP schemes to provide a series of schemes ready for delivery.

33. Cabinet has noted the progress made to date on the BREP and supported the its continued development and approved the further development and submission of an Outline Business Case to the Department of Transport during 2021. Cabinet also delegated authority to the Strategic Directors for Economy and Infrastructure and for Commercial and Change, as appropriate, to undertake public engagement regarding Scheme F if required, and in consultation with the CMR, to finalise and award contracts to deliver the A38 BREP proposals and acquire land. The forward funding of the development of the Full Business Case was also supported.

Reducing Congestion Update

34. A total of £22.9m has been made available for the overall Reducing Congestion Programme and Cabinet has considered a summary of the schemes and progress to date.

35. The congestion programme is in accordance with the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP 4) which was consulted on extensively and the schemes have been developed in consultation with appropriate Divisional Councillors, statutory and other stakeholders.

36. The schemes are the Upton Roundabout Scheme; Hoobrook Roundabout scheme at Kidderminster; Parkside Junctions scheme in Bromsgrove and Evesham junctions scheme.

37. Cabinet has noted progress with the schemes and approved the continuation of activities to progress their implementation; authorised the purchase of land necessary to complete the A38 Upton Roundabout scheme, including by compulsory purchase if necessary, and delegated the award of contracts and agreements required for the

schemes to the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure. Expenditure in line with funds allocated to the Reducing Congestion programme in the capital programme has also been approved.

Council provided Day Services for Adults with a Learning Disability

38. As part of its duties under the Care Act 2014, the Council must meet the care and support needs of adults and the support needs of carers who are assessed as eligible under the Act's eligibility criteria. Eligible needs may be met by the provision of day opportunities to meet the adult's outcomes as identified in their needs assessment and will be recorded in their care and support plan.

39. There is a mixed market of day opportunities for people with learning disabilities within Worcestershire. Currently 207 people attend internally provided day opportunities while around 300 people attend services provided by the external market.

40. The Council has directly provided internal day opportunity provision for over 25 years through Resource Centres and Connect Services. Resource Centres operate Monday to Friday and provide a variety of activities for people with complex learning disabilities. Many of these activities are building based with some community-based activities planned according to individual needs and preferences. Support for individuals includes personal care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language support, behaviour support, psychology support and support to access the community.

41. Connect Centre Services operate Monday to Friday and they provide mainly community-based day opportunities to adults with less complex learning disabilities. This service provides support such as: access to employment/work experience, education and volunteering, personal care, meeting friends, computer/IT literacy support.

42. Following a decision in November 2018 to close and relocate some Connect Services, internal day opportunities have continued to operate with requests for support being made by the learning disability social work teams. The services have been well utilised, with only a small amount of capacity remaining in services. However, all practice changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and there is now a need to look at things afresh.

43. Council-provided Day Opportunities had to temporarily close in March 2020 due to the reduction in demand and the updated government guidance relating to Covid-19. This was in line with external providers who took the same approach. Despite having to close centres, staff continued to provide welfare checks, stayed in touch with families, provided support by collecting shopping and supported people out in the community. Day Centres, both internal and external have slowly begun to reopen, albeit with limited capacity due to the Covid-19 protective measures requirements and social distancing restrictions.

44. It was decided to commence engagement, in early July, with a small cohort of individuals who use Council run day opportunities to learn from the experiences throughout lockdown and consider more fully formed options for the future delivery of Day Opportunities. The engagement was individual based, to understand how changes as a result of Covid-19 have impacted on service users personally, and how to best

help them to adapt and access relevant support as well as how day opportunities need to adapt in order to support them effectively.

45. As a result of this engagement with service users, a decision was made to re-open Resources Centres to prioritise supporting adults (and their carers) who have higher or more complex needs. Covid-19 restrictions have meant that the service hasn't been able to offer as many places as they could prior to the pandemic and it has worked closely with individuals, their families/carers to confirm arrangements.

46. For those people who receive support through the Connect Services, these buildings have not reopened. This is because there are limitations on the number of spaces due to Covid-19 restrictions and there is more potential to meet individuals' needs with external providers including through direct payments. In the meantime, the Council continues to work closely with service users and their carers to find solutions to best support their eligible needs.

47. Following the changes to the Council's Day Opportunities provision, as a result of Covid-19, there is need to review the Council's long-term position in providing access to day service support both internally and externally in order to continue to meet assessed need. This will help meet the ambition of the Council's People Directorate to ensure Worcestershire residents are healthier, live longer, have a better quality of life and remain independent for as long as possible

48. The purpose of the Day Opportunities Review is to consider how the Council may continue to meet assessed eligible need in the most efficient and cost-effective way that promotes independence, social inclusion and positive outcomes for individuals and carers. The Council's preferred approach is to move to the position where internal day opportunities will only be provided where there isn't the capacity or capability within the external market to meet eligible need. The proposed review will explore and test this approach. Any proposals affecting the long-term future of internal day opportunities will be consulted upon with all stakeholders before Cabinet is invited to make the final decision. There will be several stages to the review all underpinned by engagement with service users and their families/carers. The review will also take into account financial and value for money implications

County Council Net Zero Carbon Plan

52. The Net Zero Carbon plan has been produced in direct response to the notice of motion agreed at the 16 May 2019 Council meeting. At that meeting Worcestershire County Council reaffirmed its commitment to tackle climate change.

49. The proposed Net Zero Carbon Plan outlines how the Council could reduce the above emissions to Net Zero and achieve its pledge of carbon neutrality within its own estate and operations by 2050.

50. The plan also recognises the wider role of the Council in influencing emissions reduction across the county, as well as responding to the impact of climate change.

51. The proposed plan sets out progress to date, provides a baseline carbon emissions assessment and outlines the strategy the Council could take to deliver on its commitments.

52. The Council's proposed approach to achieving net zero emissions includes:
- The reduction of carbon emissions associated with the Council's estate and activities as far and as fast as possible and practical. (The plan sets short and longer-term reduction targets)
 - The requirement for carbon reduction measures to be cost effective, (e.g. maximum payback times will be set)
 - The prioritisation of local carbon offsetting projects with environmental and/or social benefit, where offsetting is necessary
 - Continuation of the requirement to assess the environmental impact of all proposed Council projects, including carbon emissions and the impact of severe weather and climatic change, (through the Joint Impact Assessment process)
 - The continuation of the Council's role in cutting carbon emissions and promoting environmental improvement across the county, working together with partners to achieve this aim,
 - The communication of Climate Change, raising the awareness of staff and of residents of the need to cut carbon emissions, the Council's role in this and how everyone can play their part.

53. Measures to achieve net zero emissions from the Council's estate and operations include:

- Ongoing investment in energy efficiency measures in WCC properties to achieve annual reduction in energy consumption and to ready them for zero carbon emission heating systems
- Further investment in generation of renewable energy at WCC properties
- Moving to 100% LED street lighting
- Moving to 100% Ultra Low Emission fleet vehicles (ULEVs)
- Procurement of 100% renewable electricity for property and street lighting
- Inclusion of carbon reduction requirements in new contracts
- Provision of carbon reduction advice sessions with service providers, (in particular SMEs)

54. Offsetting will be required to balance remaining WCC emissions. More detail on this will emerge. As an initial example, the Council has already committed to the planting of 150,000 trees, which will offset annually an average 350 tonnes CO₂.

55. Cabinet has approved the Net Zero Carbon Plan and agreed that an annual progress report and updated plan be brought to Cabinet for approval in 2021.

Update on COVID-19 Response and Recovery Including Economic Development

56. Cabinet has considered a broad overview of the activities being led or supported by the Council in respect of COVID Response and Recovery. The report covered three distinct areas:

- Specific project, forum and support updates covering LRF, Economic Recovery, Business Support, Here2Help, and Local Outbreak Response Plan (LORP)
- Services and Directorate Status Updates
- Capital Programme – Proposals on Revisions (referred to separately on the Council agenda).

57. Cabinet has noted the current situation in all three areas and acknowledged that circumstances are changing regularly. Members thanked the Council's officers for their continued hard work in addressing the impact of the pandemic and recovery in Worcestershire.

Mr S E Geraghty
Chairman

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and background papers for the meetings of the Cabinet held on 24 September and 22 October 2020.

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=131&Year=0>

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COUNCIL
12 NOVEMBER 2020**CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

Political Balance**Recommendation**

- 1. The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance recommends that Council approves the recalculation of political balance set out in Appendix 1 and requires him to give effect to it in accordance with the nominations from the respective Group leaders from time to time.**
2. The Council is divided into Political Groups and the size of these is used to calculate the allocation of seats to each of them on committees and panels.
3. Following recent changes to Group membership the Council is required to review the political balance. The changes are that the 2017 and Independent Alliance Groups have ceased, replaced by the Liberal Democrat and Independent and Green Alliance Groups respectively.
4. The membership of the political Groups as of 2 November 2020 is:
 - Conservative 41
 - Labour 9
 - Independent and Green Alliance (formerly Independent Alliance) 5 (+3)
 - Liberal Democrat (formerly 2017) 2 (-3)
5. Legislation requires that the allocation of seats on ordinary committees must, as far as reasonably practicable, be in accordance with the principles of political balance. These principles are based on the membership of political Groups within the Council which members join, rather than political parties as such.
6. Political balance principles are that the majority Group is entitled to a majority on each committee; subject to this, the aggregate allocation of committee seats overall should reflect political balance, and subject to this, individual committee membership should reflect political balance as far as practicable. Council can depart from these principles in allocating seats provided no member votes against doing so.
7. A proposed allocation of seats on Committees is set out in Appendix 1 reflecting the political composition of the Council, and which is compliant with the principles of political balance.
8. Changes in the individual membership of committees would be made by the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance in accordance with the nominations from the respective political Groups in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

(b) Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Member Bodies

Recommendation

9. The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance recommends that the constitutional appointments as set out in Appendix 2 to this report be confirmed, including the appointment of the nominee of the District Council representative on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Mrs Frances Smith, as Vice-Chairman of HOSC.

10. The Council from time to time appoints Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of member bodies to fill certain positions within its constitutional structures.

11. As a result of recent changes to the political balance there are some vacancies in various chairmanships and vice-chairmanships of Scrutiny Panels and thus Lead Scrutiny Members. The nominations for a number of appointments are set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

12. In addition, the Council is asked on an annual basis to agree the appointment of a Vice-Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) when the nomination of the District Councils has been made.

13. The Council's Constitution states that the Vice-Chairman of HOSC is to be selected by and from the District representatives on that Committee. The nomination from the District representatives made at HOSC on 30 September 2020 was Mrs Frances Smith (Wychavon District Council).

Contact Point

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Supporting information

Appendix 1 – Political Structures – Proposed Allocation of Places
Appendix 2 – Constitutional appointments

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers and Minutes of HOSC on 30 September 2020

12 November 2020 Appendix 1

Political Structures - Proposed Allocation of Places

A - Committees

	TOTAL	CON	LABOUR	IND & GREEN	LIB DEM
Planning & Regulatory Committee	15	11	2	1	1
Standards & Ethics Committee	8	6	2	0	0
Pensions Committee	5	4	1	0	0
Waste Credit Governance Committee	8	6	1	0	1
Audit & Governance	8	6	1	1	0
Appointments etc Panel	6	4	1	1	0
Scrutiny					
OSPB	8	6	1	1	0
HOSC	8	6	1	1	0
Children & Families	10	6	2	1	1
Corporate and Communities	9	6	1	1	1
Economy & Environment	9	7	1	1	0
Adult Care and Well-being	9	6	2	1	0
TOTAL	103	74	16	9	4

B - HEREFORD AND WORCESTER FIRE AUTHORITY

TOTAL	19	13	3	2	1
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In addition the Pension Investment Sub Committee allocation changes from 3 Conservative, 1 Labour and 1 2017 group to 3 Conservative, 1 Labour and 1 Independent and Green Alliance.

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Constitutional Appointments

- **Scrutiny bodies**

	Chairman	Vice-Chairman
Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board	Mr R Udall	Mrs E A Eyre*
	Additional Lead Scrutiny Member – Ms R Vale*	
Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Mr P A Tuthill*	**Mrs F Smith
Children and Families Panel	* Mr T A L Wells	Mr S Mackay
Economy and Environment Panel	Mr A A J Adams*	Mr P Denham
Adult Care and Well-being Panel	Mrs J A Potter*	Mrs M Rayner
Corporate and Communities Panel	Mr A Kent*	Mrs E B Tucker

Lead Scrutiny members are as asterisked*

**District Council nominee to continue in office until any further nomination from the District Councils is recommended for the Vice-Chairmanship in due course.

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COUNCIL
12 NOVEMBER 2020**REPORTS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH RESPONSIBILITY**

(a) Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families**Introduction**

1. Since I last reported to Council in September 2018 there have been advances on two strategies, improving services for children and families and complying with the government's direction to create an Alternative Delivery Model (ADM)
2. Improvements in service were recognised by Ofsted in the months prior to the set-up of Worcestershire Children First (WCF). This unique success was thanks to the dedication of the Director of Children's Services, the Safeguarding Director, social and throughcare staff and those who support them.
3. In January 2020 the direction from the Department for Education was amended and is now limited to the County working with WCF, taking assistance as may be required and providing quarterly reports.

Ofsted

4. In June 2019 Ofsted undertook an inspection of Children's Services. The report stated the 'outcomes for many children and their families are better, the changes are embedded on core practice and there is evidence of a sustained trajectory of improvement'. To improve practice further topics for focused work was identified, which has informed the subsequent agenda.

Worcestershire Children First

5. WCF, a company wholly owned by the Council, was launched on 1 October 2019 to the timescale agreed with the Department for Education. On the same date WCF Fostering registered with Ofsted as an independent fostering agency.
6. Over 800 staff transferred to the company and there was a smooth and successful transition of service responsibility. WCF's present business plan was reviewed during August 2020 to assess the effect of the pandemic on delivery of service priorities. Whilst Covid - 19 has impacted on the speed of progress in some areas, it has been possible to continue with development and innovation.

Covid – 19

7. To protect and support vulnerable children social care services remained operational throughout the pandemic. The model of operation changed as set out in the

April 2020 Emergency Covid - 19 Service Delivery Protocol for Social Care and Safeguarding Services, focusing on a risk-based approach to face-to-face assessments and contacts.

8. Performance measures for 2019/20 remained very positive, although Covid - 19 impacted on some areas. The DfE selected some key issues of performance to monitor during the pandemic. When compared regionally and nationally Worcestershire has consistently performed very well throughout this monitoring period.

9. Operationally there has been a continuing increase in demand for contact and social work assessments at the Family Front Door, and conversion rates (from contact to social work assessment) have reduced. This arises, respectively, from the threshold not being met by partners, and a reduction in the percentage in the need for Children Social Care intervention (social worker assessments being undertaken).

10. The causes include social worker and partner agencies fearing missing ‘hidden harm’, as well as a professional anxiety about managing risk and the effectiveness of early help provision. Whilst these are legitimate concerns, it is important to understand it leads to children’s safeguarding services not being properly focused. Instead there is a struggle with demand, which can affect quality, potentially becomes oppressive to families and leads to a failure to provide early help in a timely way. Strategic managers in WCF are working with senior partners in Police, Health and Education to address the concern and a review of Early Help is underway.

11. Looked after children numbers continue to rise, although prevention of care work completed by Strengthening Families First (see below) remains positive. New accommodations this year and in 2019/20 have been lower than the previous year. Worcestershire remains within the top two Local Authorities in the region for the lowest number of newly accommodated children. However, the number exiting care has still not reached normal levels due to the impact of Covid-19 on care planning for children returning to community and in-care proceedings work. This impacts on the overall numbers of children in our care. Cases open to care proceedings have all now been identified with court dates, so we will see care and permanency planning for these children progress over the next few months.

12. Child protection numbers are now above statistical neighbours and England averages. This reflects our Covid - 19 protocol where children were not removed from child protection plans April – June 20, due to the more limited ability to complete direct work and incorporate partnership contributions to the social work assessment. Maintaining child protection plans in place for these children during Covid - 19 (and specifically during the early national lockdown and school closures) is ‘safe practice’.

Early Help

13. Early Help is the provision that lies between universal and safeguarding services. It is delivered by a wide range of agencies including universal services, the voluntary and community sector and specialist services.

14. The current Early Help Services provided by WCF are the Early Intervention Family Support Service – level 2, and Targeted Family Support Service - level 3. These services have financial contributions from Public Health, DSG and Troubled Families PBR Grant. A review of this Early Help provision, its approach and model were launched October 2020.

Troubled Families

15. Local authorities are responsible for ensuring delivery of the programme, through strong partnership working and provision of quality services that bring about sustained change to improve the lives of families.

16. 2019/20 was the final year of Phase 2 of the five-year Payment by Results programme, though this has been extended by a year. The target was to make claims for 3,180 families.

17. At June 2018 Worcestershire had completed 9% of the programme and faced losing significant income. A recovery plan was implemented and in September 2019 it was agreed that the authority was no longer 'in recovery' having 'turned the programme around'.

18. By the final quarter of last year evidence was provided of significant and sustained change for families, mainly through the delivery of support and intervention via early help. £2.049m, 81% of the total programme income, was achieved. A further £426,400 is available in the extension year.

Supporting Families First

19. The Supporting Families team went live on the 20 January 2020, offering multi-disciplinary support for children and their families. Where required the team will also support parents independently. The team works with young people aged 10 to 18 years of age. Supporting Families First predominantly works with families on a Child in Need basis or where young people are subject to a Child Protection Plan.

20. The key element of the Supporting Family team's work is based around understanding the context of behaviours by linking this to the thoughts and feelings of each person within the family home.

Corporate Parenting Board

21. Ofsted found that 'Since October 2016 the Local Authority has made considerable progress improving the quality of services; essential steps have been taken to meet the goals of the service improvement plan and Corporate Parenting has been strengthened'.

22. Representation at Corporate Parenting Board meeting by Districts has now improved. However, membership and engagement of Children in Care and Care Leavers at the Corporate Parenting Board is under review to ensure we engage with as wide a group as possible to hear the voice and lived experience of these children and young people.

23. The Board has considered and continues to focus on apprenticeships, accommodation for care leavers and access to mental health provision.

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership

24. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) introduced a requirement for new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to replace Local Safeguarding Children Boards

(WSCB). The responsibility for ensuring implementation of the new arrangements rested with the County Council, Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group.

25. These were implemented in September 2019. The Partnership meets twice a year. Its Executive Group is mandated to monitor the activity of sub-groups, review any escalated priorities and receive and approve Serious Care Reviews/Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Serious Case Reviews

26. Worcestershire Child Safeguarding Practice (WSCP) currently has two child safeguarding practice reviews in progress. Both reviews are being overseen by the Worcestershire Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group on behalf of the WSCP and are likely to be published report in 2021

Short Breaks Respite for Children with Disabilities

27. During this year the delivery of community short breaks has been impacted on by the Covid-19 pandemic (as have children's homes). In March 2020 services were initially closed as work was done with providers to review how their services could be delivered safely whilst protecting children and staff from contracting and spreading the virus.

28. From March to August 2020 a crisis home support service was developed for those families that needed an immediate level of support or a holiday support offer (to cover the usual school holiday period). Financial support to the providers has continued to minimise any reduction in services in the medium and longer term.

29. In July 2020 Ofsted approved the increase of our overnight short breaks offer at Providence Road, Bromsgrove from four to six beds. Full new demand for this has not yet been seen. This is a direct result of Covid-19 and parental management of risk to these vulnerable children. However, a number have replaced services to children following the closure of Ludlow Road by Worcestershire Health and Care Trust.

Adoption Central England

30. Following the Government's commitment to redesign adoption services across the country, the local authorities of Coventry, Solihull, Warwickshire and Worcestershire set up a new regional adoption agency called Adoption Central England (ACE). It launched on the 1 February 2018. Worcestershire staff members transferred via TUPE and this was finalised in March 2020, with staff now under the formal employment of ACE.

31. ACE is hosted by Warwickshire County Council and not within the scope of WCF. The local authority retains a clear governance arrangement for ACE and strong links with the safeguarding service, to ensure there is high quality and timely transitions of work between the two services.

32. Local authorities do not have to register their adoption services separately and they are inspected by Ofsted. The requirement of WCC to register ACE as an independent adoption agency following the creation of WCF has been challenged by Ofsted. Legal advice has been sought again. This has been a 'debated point' for all ADM's and whilst not yet resolved we are preparing to register ACE as an independent Adoption Agency.

Strategic Commitment

33. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 outlines that 'Local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of all children'. To do this effectively 'Local authorities should work with organisations and agencies to develop joined-up early help services based on a clear understanding of local needs.'

34. The 2019 Ofsted reported found, 'Good Strategic Partnerships have created conditions for improvement in practice and reputation in the Local Judiciary and has enabled the development of an encompassing 'Get Safe2' strategy to address exploitation.'

35. Looking forward, a critical factor for future improvement will be the consolidation and greater efficiency of the relationship with partners. The children and Young People Strategic Board is a key vehicle for this work.

Andy Roberts

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families

(b) Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills

Introduction

36. It gives me great pleasure to present my report to Council. The last time I reported to Council as cabinet member was September 2018.

37. An awful lot has happened since then. As you would expect, Education is an ever-changing landscape and much has happened since my last report not least of all schools closing save for children of key workers and vulnerable children and the cancellation of GCSE and A-Level exams this year. As I write the finishing touches of this report, we are about to go into another national lockdown, but this time schools, colleges and early years settings will remain open.

Early Years

38. Worcestershire currently has 529 settings offering Nursery Education Funded provision. This number has remained stable from the Summer Term, with only 6 group settings closing since April 2020. A recent Worcestershire survey on business sustainability within funded Early Years provision identified that only 23% of respondents are confident that their business would survive another lockdown. However, 45% of respondents have seen no change to levels of demand across their setting as a result of Covid-19 and of those who are seeing a change, almost half have seen an increased demand in at least one age group. The Early Years BusiTeam is providing ongoing bespoke support to any providers that report financial concerns, in addition to the ongoing support, advice and guidance.

39. The sufficiency of two, three and four-year-old funded provision remains positive across Worcestershire as a whole Six wards within the County (Church Hill, Droitwich South West, Evesham South, Foley Park and Hoobrook, Kempsey and Warndon) have been identified as being at greatest risk of having local insufficiency and funding has been made available to support their ongoing sustainability to safeguard the number of places available. National data and local intelligence suggest that sustainability issues will become more apparent over the next 6-12 months as financial support decreases; this is likely to result in the closure of more Early Years providers. Analysis of updated sufficiency data is being completed on a termly basis, rather than annually, to ensure that market changes are monitored effectively.

40. Due to the increase in parents working from home, we have identified a significant risk to the sustainability of out of school provision. A recent Worcestershire support forum for out of school provision supports this concern, as do the results of the Business Sustainability survey. As a result, a second forum has been arranged for the out of school providers, with a focus on business sustainability. The Early Years Sufficiency Assessment is also being expanded to include assessment of childcare in its wider context.

41. Take-up of 2-year-old funding has decreased over the Summer and Autumn terms. Based on estimated numbers of eligible families, approximately 65% of children are now accessing their free entitlement, compared to 73% at the beginning of the year. As the majority of funded two-year-old families are not in work, using childcare is not considered essential and this is therefore not unexpected. Take-up of 3 & 4-year-old

funding is also slightly lower than average, with approximately 93% of all 3-year olds accessing provision during the Autumn Term to date. Whilst this is lower than Worcestershire’s typical take-up, it is on a par with national figures for 2019 and 2020, without any adjustment for the impact of Covid-19. Promoting the take-up of funded places is recognised as a priority and is taking place via a multi-agency response.

42. Early Years settings have requested inclusion funding support for 853 children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) in the Autumn Term 2020. There has been a 35% decrease in Early Years settings applying for inclusion funding to support children with additional needs, in comparison to the Autumn Term 2019. Reduction in demand from parents for NEF places will account for some of the reduction in SEND claims.

Schools Context

43. The education provision planning landscape in 2020 is a complex one. The Council retains direct responsibility and decision making for a majority of its schools however, the majority of our pupils are educated in academies.

44. Worcestershire has a total of 243 State-funded schools, of which 199 are Academy or Free schools and 124 are maintained¹. These are made up of 1 nursery, 177 Primary/First schools of which 75 are academies, 19 Middle schools of which 10 are academies, 30 Secondary and High schools of which 26 are Academies and 9 Special Schools of which 4 are academies, and 6 Alternative Provision / Pupil Referral Units of which 3 are academies.

45. These schools operate across 16 Education Planning Areas based around the main population centres of the County. 4 separate tier structures are in operation across the County, with 11 of the 16 areas operating on a 2-tier structure where children transfer from primary to secondary, and 5 operate a 3-tier structure with first, middle and high schools. 2-tier routes also exist within 4 of these education planning areas.

46. The current pattern of Ofsted judgements shows that:

	Maintained schools (124)			Academies (119)			All schools (243)	
Outstanding	24	19%	87%	17	14%	80%	17%	84%
Good	84	68%		78	66%		67%	
RI	10	8%		10	8%		8%	
Ofsted category	6	5%		13*	11%		8%	
No Ofsted judgement				1				

¹ As at October 2020

* However, it must be noted that this figure also includes those schools that have been subject to an academy order as a result of their inspection, and so have three years from conversion before their next inspection.

School Places

47. During the last academic year approximately 14,500 applications were made for school places across Worcestershire. This year over 98 % of applications were made electronically, making the process more convenient for parents/guardians and much more efficient to run.

48. For high schools just over 6000 applications were received with over 89% being offered places at their first-choice school. A further 6 % received offers for their second-choice school. For middle schools, of the 2242 applications received over 95% received offers for one of their top 2 choices. For Primary schools over almost 6200 applications were received with over 91% being offered places at their first-choice school. Over 95% of children received offers for one of their first 2 choices.

49. In terms of Worcestershire's performance national comparative data is available for Year 7 1st preferences, which for Worcestershire are 88.5% against the England average of 82.2 % and the West Midlands average of 82.1%, showing that we meet more 1st preferences than are met both nationally and regionally.

50. By contrast, when this service began in 2007, 4% of applications received were made online.

51. At every phase no children were left without an offer of a primary, middle or high school place.

52. On 1 June 2020, we began the co-ordination of in-year applications, that is those children moving schools outside of the normal starting point for a school. To date we have processed over 1500 in-year applications for children moving schools.

Ofsted inspections

53. Of the 52 school inspections between March 2019 and March 2020, 47 received positive feedback in relation to SEND (any theme).

54. Due to Covid no Ofsted inspections have occurred in Worcestershire since 11 March 2020 and are not due to recommence until January 2021. Ofsted visits will occur during the Autumn term. The aim of these visits is to talk about any barriers that the school is facing in managing the return to opening fully, how pupils are getting back into expected routines and their behaviour, and the school's safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors will also talk to school leaders about how remote learning fits into their wider curriculum plans. As these visits are not inspections, they will not result in a grade but a short letter published on the Ofsted reports website. The visits will include schools of different types and of all Ofsted grades. To date 5 visits have occurred:

Chadsgrove Educational Trust Learning Centre (academy), Cherry Orchard Primary (maintained), Foley Park Primary and Nursery (academy), Offmore Primary (maintained) and Westacre Middle School (maintained).

Attainment

55. In 2020, Key Stage ²(KS)1 and KS2 SATs, phonics and multiplication tests were cancelled and KS4 and KS5 outcomes were based on Teacher Assessment. Performance tables are suspended for the 2019 to 2020 academic year and no school will be judged on data based on exams and assessments from 2020. Until the new data release is available, all those working with schools, including Ofsted and DfE regional teams, should refer to the 2019 data.

56. In 2021 all statutory assessments are currently expected to take place as per 'normal'. There are some changes to content assessment and timing for KS4 and KS5. For more detail see here – [the outcome of Ofqual consultation](#)

Attendance

57. Year on year, attendance has previously been the same or better for each phase and this is also reflected in National figures (approximately 94-96%). June 2020 figures showed a drop due to the pandemic but by September the figures had improved greatly due to wider school-reopening, supported by WCF, and are close to pre-pandemic levels (approximately 93-96%).

58. Data is currently collected by the Department for Education (DfE) on a daily basis. Of the schools reporting to the DfE they had opened, 99.6% on 19 October reported as being fully open, compared to a national average of 97.9%. Our head teachers across both maintained and academies reported high levels of attendance, and DfE reporting figures show a 90.0% attendance rate in Worcestershire schools compared to a national average of 86.2% (on 19 October 2020).

59. Special schools reported a lower return for children with very complex needs (82% attendance rate on 19 October 2020) but that is to be expected and as a multi-agency approach there will be intensive planning and support to get children into school and ensure provision of education is appropriate.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) & Vulnerable Learners

High Level Needs Funding

60. Nationally the provision of High Needs funding for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability and vulnerable learners is an area of significant concern. In Worcestershire the Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG) High Needs block is currently forecast to spend £54.1m in 2020/21. This is an overspend of £2.0m on a £52.1m budget. This is an increase on the 2019/20 outturn of £52.3m, and £44.6m in 2018/19. This figure is the Dedicated High Needs block only and does not include the cost of the SEND service itself, or any Home to School Transport funding.

61. The High Needs overspend in 2019/20 was £8.7m with the accumulated deficit at 31 March 2020 £6.2 million. This deficit must be carried forward and be recovered from savings in future DSG allocations. A sustainable financial position has not yet been achieved for 2020-21 with the deficit budgeted to grow by a further £2.0 million from the forecast high needs overspend by 31 March 2021. Worcestershire Children First have

² <https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum>

continued to press the Department for Education (DfE) to come up with a sustainable plan, with more funding and a definitive explanation on how the financial management of the high needs block will work.

62. The DfE announced a review of SEND last September but this has yet to be published, therefore Worcestershire must develop a plan that manages demand within the available resources.

63. Q1 data for 2020/21 showed that 4,239 currently children have an EHCP in Worcestershire. This means that broadly, each EHCP draws from the High Needs block an average of £12,456 per year (£239pw) to arrive at a total spend of £52.8m (the forecast spend as at Q1). If the DSG High Needs block was forecast to budget, this figure would be £236pw.

64. All indications point to an increase in the prevalence and complexity of SEND nationally. Over the last 5 years the number of learners with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in Worcestershire has increased by 62%. Whilst reflective of need, this increase also in part reflects the change in legislation resulting from the Children and Families Act 2014, which means that Local Authorities are now responsible for meeting the needs of their learners with EHCPs to the age of 25.

65. These factors suggest that need with Worcestershire is not going to decrease, and that in order to mitigate pressures on the DSG High Needs block going forward, relative spend per child would have to reduce. A draft High-Level Needs (HLN) management plan has been agreed with activity that will be undertaken in the 20-21 academic year in order to manage HLN funding. The expected impact of these activities will be:

- a) Increased transparency and visibility of the spend from the HLN budget;
- b) Improved outcomes for Children and Young People; and
- c) Change in spend per pupil.

66. In cases where activities result in increased spend per pupil these are planned in order to reduce spend in other areas or to ensure that statutory responsibilities for vulnerable learners are fulfilled.

67. The draft HLN plan will be discussed with WCF Executive Leadership Team and signed off with the School Forum in November. A current focus for planning to address future spend is our Post 16 placements including students leaving Special Schools in Worcestershire.

68. Changes to the CAP were agreed earlier in this financial year, and schools are reporting positive feedback. The intention is that investment in more local provision will reduce further spend on out of area placements.

SEND Improvement

69. The SEND Improvement programme has continued to make positive progress and improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. Feedback from our DfE and NHSE Advisors, through monitoring visits and SEND Structured conversations, has

continued to commend the progress being made including the management of the transfer of the SEND Support Services from Babcock Prime to WCF.

70. At the latest monitoring visit (24 Sept 2020), the following feedback was provided by the DfE:

- a) At the time of this meeting, Worcestershire were focused on the return to school of all children. Strengthened relationships with schools, FIP and partners along with proactive communication have assisted in a strong return. Any pupils not attending are tracked and supported. FIP report increasing parental confidence;
- b) Work has begun with Families in Partnership and SENDIASS to understand how engagement and co-production work can be done differently. Wider engagement is being sought through surveys and planned consultations. Co-production is the norm in the SEND Improvement programme, and they are prepared to invest time in getting this right as demonstrated in the thoughtful approach to developing the SEND Strategy;
- c) Those leading the statutory function in Worcestershire have made impressive gains in timeliness and are determined to match this by the actions they are taking to improve the quality of new EHC plans and then Annual Reviews. Transparency, clarity and communication are the themes coming through in ensuring that they take all stakeholders with them on this journey. Gathering the improved felt experience of parents, schools and professionals will provide strong evidence of what has been achieved and gains still to be made;
- d) The local area has developed a comprehensive SEND dashboard which clearly provides evidence of current position and progression. Concerns raised with the increase and delayed waiting times which have occurred within the therapies during Covid-19; however, impact has been assessed and recovery plans are in place; and
- e) The Strategic Improvement Board continues to have oversight of a well organised and coherent improvement programme underpinned by a strong focus on coproduction and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. It continues to be advisable through this period that decisions to delay any actions and mitigations put in place are captured as evidence that Worcestershire has set itself ambitions beyond sufficient progress on the areas of concern.

Education Health and Care Plans

71. Significant progress has been made to the rate of completion of Education, Health and Care plans. Since February 2020, the 20-week completion rate has maintained at 100% providing, except for June 2020 (98%) where one EHCP was not completed on time. This improved timeliness includes improved holistic EHC needs assessment, improved timeliness of advice from health and social care.

Medical Education Provision Review

72. The Review of Medical Education Service timeline was agreed by the Cabinet in June 2020. Surveys to gather key stakeholders' views including a parent / carer survey have been shared to understand the current model - what's working well and what's not. Three task and finish groups have taken place between 2nd and 9th October to help digest and review the information received through the review to produce some options and possibilities for Worcestershire. These task and finish groups include a focus on the following areas:

- a) Prevention, early intervention and “reasonable adjustments”
- b) WCF and NHS interventions; and
- c) Overall model of provision in Worcestershire and creating a coherent end to end offer and experience for children, young people and families.

The review will propose recommendations to Cabinet for decisions in January 2021.

Alternative Provision and Exclusion Review

73. The local and national context with regard to exclusions and alternative provision indicate that approaches in Worcestershire require review. To have the greatest impact on outcomes for children and young people and longer-term sustainability this review will need to consider three aspects of local practice:

- a) Prevention: How to reduce exclusions;
- b) Intervention: How to ensure the decision to commission alternative provision for a pupil is appropriate and that the support put in place by the alternative provision is of high quality; and
- c) Reintegration: How to ensure pupils reintegrate back into mainstream education or onto a different pathway for their education where appropriate in a timely manner.

74. An Advisory Group is set up to ensure that the activity described in the review plan meets the three aims of the review described above and to provide multi-agency advice and perspectives as needed in relation to key themes to be explored during the review.

Vulnerable Learners

75. As of 16 October 2020, there are a total of 43 children who are missing education and a further 195 investigations to establish a child’s whereabouts (123 since September). 248 investigations have been completed and closed since September. This is a similar for the same period in 2019 and shows that although the Covid pandemic has caused an increase in children moving schools, parents electing to home educate and attendance issues, this has not affected the numbers of children missing education other than making investigations more difficult.

76. The Children Missing Education (CME) Team are reviewing recording systems and processes and have just completed an “end-to-end” exercise to review and make changes to ensure that there is no duplication of work at any point throughout the process. There are robust systems in place to prioritise SEND children and those open to Children’s Social Care. The new Fair Access Protocol has just been implemented and the continuation of Missing Mondays to ensure that children are missing from education for the shortest amount of time possible.

77. The number of children who are electively home educated continues to rise – particularly due to the impact of Covid-19. The following table shows the number of referrals since September 2020, in comparison to the number for the same period in 2019:

	04/09/2020	11/09/2020	18/09/2020	25/09/2020	02/10/2020	09/10/2020	16/10/2020	23/10/2020
Number of Referrals since the 01 Sept 2020 - Cumulative	15	25	55	72	117	138	149	175
Number of Referrals from 01 Sept 2019 - Cumulative	8	26	38	49	64	72	81	100

78. The team systems continue to improve including additional resource to lessen the capacity issues. Up until September 2020, all new cases were triaged within 10 days and were being assessed for suitability within our 12-week timeframe. As of September 2020, 100% of annual contacts were up to date. Since September, some triage cases have taken a little longer than 10 days, but work is in hand to combat this, and within the next 2 weeks this will be back to all being within timeframes. The EHE team work much more closely with both SEND and Children's social care, with contact within 10 days, and annual reviews are carried out jointly between SEND and the EHE team. Due to triage and assessment of suitability processes being much tighter, we are able to support children to return to school, where appropriate, in a much timelier manner. There are currently a total of 768 registered EHE pupils in Worcestershire.

Virtual School

79. The Virtual School has continued to support Children Looked After (CLA) through the Covid period including ensuring all CLA residing and receiving their education out of county have undertaken a Personal Education Plan which has been quality assured by the Virtual School. 92.2% overall attendance of all pupils currently in care (statutory school age), from the beginning of the academic year. This is higher than DfE tracking for all pupils. Also, five CLA pupils identified as Children Missing Education (CME) are all receiving tuition whilst waiting to be placed on a school roll. This is a reduced number of CME from last academic year.

80. The Virtual School Improvement Plan (2020-21) sets out clear priorities including:

- Tracking the development of Children Looked After (CLA) aged 2, 3 & 4, who access education; analyse and evaluate outcomes to inform strategy
- Raising the attainment and improving the progress through targeted interventions following identification of gaps and barriers in learning
- Increasing focus on quality and continuity of welfare and education provision in out of county placements through evaluation and analysis of provision and outcomes to meet individual needs
- Reducing the length of time CLA are not on a school roll

- All CLA with no recorded school are accessing remote (not at a school base) learning
- Attendance is better than national average for CLA pupils
- To provide a coherent plan of CPD for school staff to enhance their support of CLA with Social, Emotional & Mental Health needs
- to provide support, advice and challenge to professionals working with CLA children with SEND to ensure the best outcomes
- Improve communication between Virtual School and Social Care teams (incidents, change of placements, change of social worker & reference to education)

Governors

81. Schools and governors have received regular advice and guidance about the expectations for governors. This has included advice about how to hold virtual meetings and undertake headteacher performance management in light of the Covid situation. This information has been shared via Governors newsletters with all those that have an SLA with WCF, through the Education and Early Help news bulletin to all schools and through the School Improvement Advisors for maintained schools.

82. The Interim Executive Board's (IEBs) at Westacre Middle School and North Bromsgrove High School are moving to shadow boards. Grove Primary School has moved to an IEB.

83. Governor services continually seek to recruit new governors and have made links to Worcestershire Association of Governors and Governors for Schools.

Learning and Achievement Services

84. Since the launch of Worcestershire Children First in October 2019, we have continued our development to improve the services delivered to children, young people and families in our county. We published our Business Plan for 2020-21 which set out our ambition and priorities, with a significant area being the transfer of Learning and Achievement services from Babcock Prime to have one joined up educational service for Worcestershire. On the 1 June 2020 we successfully transferred over 130 staff to WCF with an increased full year contract value of £6.5m. The transfer also delivered the savings required as part of the MTFP. The decision to transfer during Covid-19 and having services that provide support to Schools and Early Years Setting in one place has really helped to us respond agilely to the challenges of Covid-19 and the reopening of schools.

WCF Board

85. The governance structure for the Boards of Worcestershire Children First can be seen in the diagram below:



Monthly board meetings have taken place since go live with the first public meeting held on 18 February 2020, I attend as a Non-Executive Director. Both sub boards have met, with the Quality Assurance Board having an overview of the procedures in the Company and a focused look at SEND and social care in detail.

Education Provision Planning

Capital funding

86. Capital projects are primarily funded via three main capital sources for education:

- a) Basic Need - To increase pupil places at all tax funded schools where the need for those places is identified by the Council;
- b) Condition Programme – For highest priority condition work at maintained schools based on condition surveys. This is an annual grant which reduces as schools become academies; and
- c) S106/CIL Developer Contributions – To mitigate school place requirements needed as a direct result of new housing development.

87. In addition, the Government has occasionally released capital funding rounds to support specific initiatives. In the past this has included the expansion of early years provision, Universal Infants School Meals, 14-19, Primary Schools Building Programme, and most recently the Special Provision Capital Fund.

88. As the Council seeks to meet the additional places required as a result of demographic and housing growth, the pressure on these grants in the next five-year period will be high. As such the Council is only able to address the highest priorities and funding prioritised to ensure a sufficiency of places.

89. In the period 2020-25 the table below shows the following confirmed capital funding to meet the requirements of the Education Capital Programme:

Confirmed Capital Funding Forecast 2020-25

Year	2020-21 £m	2021-22 £m	2022-23 £m	2023-24 £m	2024-25 £m	Total £m
Carry fwd.	14.0	-	-	-	-	14.0
Basic Need	11.0	4.9	-	-	-	

						15.9
Condition	4.1	2.8	-	-	-	6.9
SPF*	0.4	-	-	-	-	0.4
Estimated S106**	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.7	1.7	6.1
Total	30.3	8.7	-	-	-	43.3

*Special Provision Fund **To fund new schools

Capital programme

90. The table below shows the current programme of expenditure required to meet the five-year Education Capital Programme for 2020-25:

Worcestershire planned expenditure 2020-25

Year	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Basic Need	5.5	5.1	10.2	28.9	4.5	54.2
Condition	4.5	3.5	2.4	2.0	2.0	14.4
SPF*	1.1					1.1
Total	11.1	8.6	12.6	30.9	6.5	69.7

New schools

91. Three new schools are proposed over the next 6 years as a direct result of new housing on the South Worcester Urban Expansion, West Worcester Urban Expansion and the Foxlydiate Redditch Urban Expansion.

92. An initial non-statutory consultation was undertaken in January 2020 to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to comment on these proposals for which no negative responses were received.

93. At present we are predicting that the new Primary and Nursery for the South Worcester Urban Expansion and the new First and Nursery for the Foxlydiate development will need to be delivered for September 2024, with a new Primary and Nursery for the West Worcester Urban Expansion delivered 2 years after.

94. These schools will predominantly be funded by the developers. However, in the case of larger housing developments, S106 funding will often be provided in instalments throughout the lifetime of the development, meaning that in the case of these new schools, the LA is required to forward fund this provision in order for schools to be delivered early enough in the development. This creates a substantial additional cost.

New schools planned for future housing developments

95. As part of District Council Development Plan reviews, WCF supports the planning of new educational infrastructure required for future housing beyond 2025.

96. The South Worcestershire District Councils are currently reviewing their Development Plans through to 2041. We have identified the need for the following new schools across Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Wychavon which will be delivered alongside proposed new housing through to 2041:

- 1 new First School for Droitwich Town
- 4 new primary schools and 1 new secondary school for proposed Parkway Garden Village
- 1 new Primary school and 1 new all-through school for proposed Throckmorton Strategic Growth Area
- 1 new Primary school at Rushwick
- 1 new Secondary School in Worcester South East
- 1 new Primary School at Mitton (Tewksbury Urban Expansion)
- 1 new First School at Pershore.

97. North Worcestershire District Councils of Bromsgrove and Redditch have not undertaken Local Plan Reviews yet, but the following new schools are proposed as part of the Wyre Forest Review.

- 1 new primary school at Kidderminster East Urban Expansion
- 1 new Primary school at Lea Castle (North Kidderminster).

98. WCF will continue to work with district councils and respond to changes to local plans and applications as they come forward to ensure a sufficiency of school places.

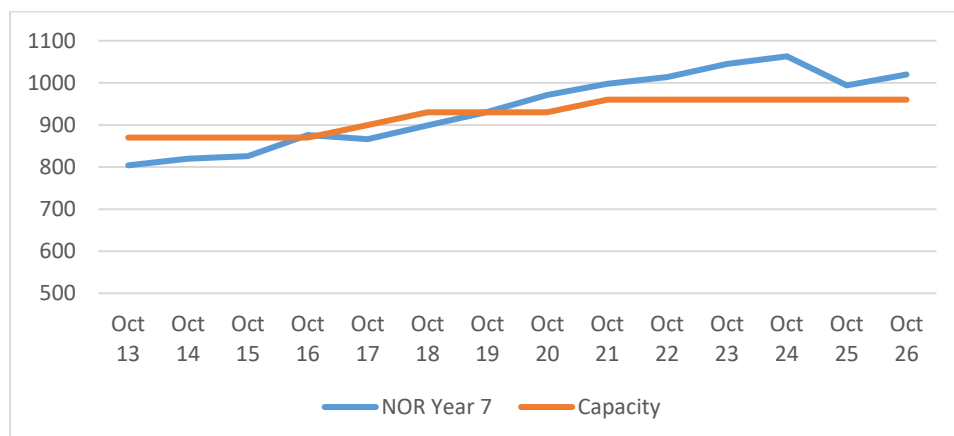
South Worcester – new secondary school

99. Worcester City is expanding quickly, and with it the school-age population. Following increases undertaken to Primary schools to meet the rise in cohort levels entering reception up to 2016, the first wave of requirements for additional secondary provision hit the City in 2017 accompanied by the expansion of 3 secondary schools over the last 4 years, with the further planned expansions of Bishop Perowne in 2021 following the improvement of the school to 'Good' by Ofsted.

100. Despite this, cohorts across Worcester City continue to grow and in Autumn term 2020 there are only just 8 spare places (0.7%) across the 5 Worcester secondary schools, with 1 school taking above Pupil Admission Number (PAN) and 3 at PAN. This provides limited opportunity for in-year movement and meeting our sufficiency duty for any families moving into the City and requiring a place in Year 7.

101. In September 2021 forecasts indicate 10 spare places, even following the expansion at Bishop Perowne. In the period 2022 to 2026 we will have an insufficiency of places, peaking at 37 less places than required across the City. This strain is particularly the case for the 2 Secondary schools in the South East of the City – Nunnery Wood High and Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic. The rise in population in this region,

before the South Worcester Urban Expansion is taken into account, shows a significant shortfall in provision that is already affecting pupils in feeder schools.



102. With extensive levels of housing planned within urban expansions, and the proposal to provide an additional 40,000 new homes across South Worcestershire Councils, extensive investment must be made to ensure we can meet our sufficiency duty within Worcester City.

103. Nunnery Wood High is our largest Secondary School in Worcestershire with over 1,400 pupils on roll. Key ancillary and support spaces are now at capacity and the school would require major investment to support additional capacity. Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic is on an extremely restricted site.

104. Work undertaken so far to assess the whole Worcestershire school estate has shown that options may exist to utilise space on existing school sites, though further detailed assessment of the options will be explored over the next 12 months.

105. At the same time, the provision of a new Secondary School located within the South East of the City remains a consideration that will be explored further in order for a full options appraisal to meet this need to be considered.

Covid 19 Education response

Progress following September full re-opening of school provision

106. Following Government guidance, all children and young people, in all year groups, returned to school full-time from the beginning of September 2020.

Risk Assessments for September full opening

107. WCF provided all LA maintained schools (including voluntary aided) with a Risk Assessment addendum form including additional questions to highlight risks in relation to; Public Health, Health & Safety, Accommodation, and Staffing).

108. As a part of the continued offer of support for all education settings across the county, specialist teams are now offering to support Academies in their infection prevention and control processes. A checklist, based on our risk assessment addendum

and latest guidance, has been created by specialist teams and will be shared with Academies to support them to conduct a self-assessment. Any queries or concerns raised through this process can then be discussed and addressed through a webinar and series of surgery events that will be available for all schools and include learning from outbreak case examples.

The handling of outbreaks in schools and other settings

109. Worcestershire County Council Public Health team has responded swiftly to the COVID-19 pandemic. Publishing a robust Outbreak Control Plan (OCP) which has a Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT) at its centre, responding to local outbreaks in settings and communities and working with partners such as Public Health England, Herefordshire & Worcestershire CCG and Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) to reduce the risk of further transmission of COVID19 as well as the national Test & Trace service. The LORT is now fully operational 7 days a week from 9am to 6pm.

110. The LORT recognised an increase in volume of enquiries from the first week of September as schools returned which impacted on resource capacity. Additional resource was mobilised immediately to assist the LORT and enable the Public Health professionals to focus on infection prevention and control. Through this period, key improvements have been made to the process for schools contacting the LORT, including the refining of the school notification form to create a more streamlined experience for schools.

111. A key role of the LORT is to support schools in the event of a positive case. Upon notification of symptomatic or confirmed positive CYP or staff, the LORT undertake a risk assessment, support testing, provide infection prevention control and self-isolation advice, contact tracing and public health action to prevent any further transmission within the setting or wider community. In schools, this has involved support and advice when school bubbles have to be collapsed to prevent further transmission. To further support education settings, the LORT notify the Education COVID Response Team when a bubble is collapsed so that a Liaison Person can be identified to contact the school and offer further support, advice and guidance. This process has been well received by schools. The process has been refined following each bubble closure and support is now offered to the school to identify issues and offer suggested solutions around themes such as free school meals, vulnerable learners, media enquiries, communication for parents and support for staff.

112. The standard operating procedures for schools are well used and have been refined following feedback through Education Incident planning meetings, with representatives from across school phases and types. On 18th September, a specific scenario planning session was held to review, and stress test a range of potential situations and work through the stages of response and reaction. The scenarios were used to further test the protective measures and controls that schools have put in place, the OCP standard operating procedures and the resilience of both local settings and the wider system. This session was very well received. Breakout sessions were used to work through the scenarios and key learning from the first few weeks of the autumn term was consolidated and built upon.

113. WCC has committed to supporting schools and setting to stay open and provide education in a safe and appropriate way. Additional resource has been earmarked to support the Liaison Person role to assist schools with practical measures when

outbreaks occur and to coordinate the learning and feed this back to schools along with being the education link to the District Incident Management Team meetings that have been established to develop a district specific system wide approach to the management of COVID-19 across each district council region within Worcestershire.

Catch Up funding

114. All schools have been given funding for specific activities to support their pupils to catch up for lost teaching, in line with the guidance on [curriculum expectations for the next academic year](#). Schools have the flexibility to spend their funding in the best way for their cohort and circumstances.

115. Primary, middle, secondary and all through local authority-maintained schools, academies and free schools receive £80 for each pupil aged 4 and over recorded in Reception to Year Group 11 in the October 2019 school census.

116. Local authority maintained special schools, pupil referral units and hospital schools receive £240 for each high needs place recorded on their local authority's [section 251 budget return statement for 2019 to 2020](#)

117. Special, AP and hospital academies and free schools, and non-maintained special schools receive £240 per place from published high needs place numbers for the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

118. SEND pupils placed in independent special settings also receive £240 for each pupil with an Education Health and Care Plan, or SEN support, educated in an independent special setting, as recorded on their January 2020 alternative provision census.

119. The first payment in the Autumn term is based on 25% of these provisional allocations and there will be two further payments in 2021. These will be based on final allocations using pupil numbers from the October 2020 census for mainstream schools. The final allocations could be significantly different to the provisional allocations.

Remote Learning

120. On 1 October the Education Secretary announced further support to help children learn from home if they have to self-isolate. A new temporary Continuity Direction (under the Coronavirus Act 2020) means school have a duty to provide education at home, as they do when children are in the classroom.

121. Part of the Worcestershire Liaison process with schools who have partial or full bubble closures is to ensure that the school(s) enact their Remote Learning plans. The School Improvement Team have written Contingency Planning advice and guidance, and this has been shared with all schools through the Education and Early Help news bulletin. As part of a Covid response package of CPD this team are rolling out CPD to schools on Effective Remote Learning and the first session webinar has been delivered to 29 schools with more sessions planned.

Education Transport

122. Following significant planning throughout the summer, the transport team have ensured that the provision of dedicated home to school transport is safe, available and compliant with the most up to date guidance issued by both the Department for Education and the Department for Transport. Measures introduced include addition of extra buses, creation of “closed” services which would have been open to the public and coordinated seating plans.

123. Dedicated Schools Transport for Mainstream and SEND pupils has been operating relatively smoothly from the start of the new term. Reports from operators indicate that most pupils have adapted to the seating plans. From Tuesday 6th October young people in year 7 and above are required to wear face coverings on home to school transport unless exemptions apply to them. This measure has been changed to respond to the growth in positive cases and an achievable control measure that promotes a continuity of approach.

124. Monitoring of train use and management of peak services and stations focused on Hagley and Worcester and during the first week of term we received reports from WMT detailing their management of any issues. Reporting continued throughout early September as colleges returned and additional carriages were on hand to be deployed where needed.

Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger

125. I am delighted to say we worked with our 6 districts across the county to make sure that every vulnerable child in Worcestershire had access to a meal every day during the October half term holidays. We continue to support the Ready, Steady, Worcestershire initiative which combines the efforts of a range of agencies and food banks that provide a community response to holiday hunger. All district councils are providing welfare support services. Anyone still in need of our help was encouraged to get in touch with Here2Help Worcestershire.

Covid-19 Funding

126. The Council has received money from central government to support the response to Covid-19. One area of pressure was the Early Years sector and we set up regular meeting to address issues and confirmed to early year providers they will receive their full early years funding whether they are closed, partially open, or open as normal, until further notice as per the DfE guidance, through DSG and we set up system for early years providers to consider additional reimbursements for providers who apply to the council for further financial assistance during lockdown or now if a bubble collapses to ensure sufficiency.

Schools Funding and National Funding Formula (NFF)

127. The funding per pupil for schools have increased to £5,000 in secondary and £3,750 in primary and then £4,000 for primary in 2020/21. The increase is a real testament to the determination of headteachers, governors, schools, parents and the local authority that have continually raised awareness of the need for further funding within education. One of the council’s key priorities for a number of years now, has been to improve the quality of education, help and support for all children and young people

across the county, including those with special educational needs. The funding formula for Worcestershire is closely aligned with the national funding formula.

128. The DfE are not changing Local Authorities role in the distribution of school funding in 2021/22, therefore our local formula will continue and as it is based upon the DfE's National Funding Formula. During 2020/21 we have made some changes to the funding formula for special schools, so that the funding cap that had been applied to some schools to ensure the Minimum Funding Guarantee, is disapplied in the local special schools funding formula from April 2020 to ensure consistency with mainstream schools.

129. The Council in conjunction with all its key partners, particularly the F40 Group representing the lowest funded LAs and the Society of County Treasurer's, continues to lobby central Government for a fairer allocation of the total national allocation of funding as part of the continuing NFF process. Significant financial pressures within Education continues to be a nationwide issue that the majority of local authorities including Worcestershire are experiencing.

CMR visits

130. Over the last two months or so, I have been keen to get out and visit schools across the County, in particular more latterly to meet Head Teachers and discuss how they have implemented a safe school environment and continuing to keep their school open. I have visited Chaddesley Corbett, Blakedown and Heronswood Primary Schools in my own division. In addition, I have visited Wolverley Primary, Cookley Primary, Bewdley Primary, lyford Flavell First, Sedgeberrow First, Fladbury First, Matchborough First, Malvern Wells Primary, Malvern Wyche Primary, North Bromsgrove High, Aston Fields Middle, Catshill First and Middle, Kempsey Primary, Upton Primary and St Peters Primary Schools. I have also visited the all Medical Education provision sites in the County.

131. Finally, I am very grateful for all of the excellent work our school community are doing at this time. Could I also place on record my thanks to all of the staff at Worcestershire Children First (WCF) related to education and in particular, the Chief Executive, Catherine Driscoll and the Director for Education and Early Help, Sarah Wilkins for all of their support.

Marcus Hart

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills

COUNCIL
12 NOVEMBER 2020**NOTICES OF MOTION**

Notices of Motion Received

1. The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance reports that he has received the following 4 Notices of Motion. The Constitution provides that any submitted motion must be moved and seconded at the meeting. Otherwise, unless postponed with the consent of the Council, it will be treated as withdrawn.
2. If a motion is in relation to the exercise of an executive function it will be referred to the Cabinet for decision (if applicable this will be indicated below). Otherwise the Council may decide itself to determine the Motion, or refer it to the Cabinet or another appropriate Committee for advice before determining it at the next available meeting.

Notice of Motion 1 – Worcestershire’s rivers and waterways

3. This motion is not in relation to the exercise of an executive function and the Council may decide to determine the Motion.

4. Notice of Motion standing in the names of Mr P Middlebrough, Mrs L C Hodgson, Mr R J Morris Mr P A Tuthill and Mr T Baker-Price:

“Worcestershire rivers and waterways make an important contribution to the vibrancy of the county.

- They are important to the biodiversity of the county
- They provide opportunities to promote the health agenda
- They support the leisure economy
- They are a source of materials for the construction economy
- They contribute to reducing the carbon footprint.

Council asks the Cabinet to ensure the positive role made by Worcestershire’s rivers and waterways is reflected in all its policies.”

Notice of Motion 2 – Time limit for discussing Notices of Motion

5. This motion is not in relation to the exercise of an executive function and the Council may decide to determine the Motion.

6. Notice of Motion standing in the names of Prof J W Raine, Mrs M A Rayner, Mr T A L Wells, Dr C Hotham and Mr M E Jenkins:

“This Council believes that the opportunity for political groups to present Motions for debate and decision at each scheduled meeting of Council represents an important element of our local democracy. Accordingly, we should all be wary of constraining such opportunity or of wasting or misusing the available time, for example, by filibustering tactics.

Clearly, our time together at Council meetings has to be limited, and we have to leave sufficient time for all the other business that needs to be addressed. However, we consider it both realistic and fair for a period of up to 120 minutes (two hours) be reserved in every Council meeting for Motions, and that, during such a period, each political group should be permitted to present at least one motion should they so wish (i.e. with a maximum time per Group of 30 minutes).”

Notice of Motion 3 – Kinship Carers

7. This motion is not in relation to the exercise of an executive function and the Council may decide to determine the Motion.

8. Notice of Motion standing in the names of Mr R C Lunn, Mr R M Udall, Ms C M Stalker, Ms P A Hill, Mr P M McDonald, Mr L C R Mallett and Ms P Agar:

“Council recognises the important contribution from kinship carers in the county. However, some kinship carers especially grandparents and older siblings can face unexpected hardship, stress and anxiety. Council therefore requests the Cabinet Member responsible to review the services and support available to kinship carers and to bring a report to Cabinet to consider what future help, support and assistance could be provided to help and support kinship carers in Worcestershire.”

Notice of Motion 4 – Covid 19 – Track and Trace System

9. This motion is not in relation to the exercise of an executive function and the Council may decide to determine the Motion.

10. Notice of Motion standing in the names of Mr R C Lunn, Ms C M Stalker, Mr R M Udall and Mr L C R Mallett:

“This Council calls on the government to commit to a fully funded, locally controlled system of Track and Trace, involving all aspects of the local health service.

We also call on them, to ensure free School Meals to all children in Worcestershire who need them in the School Holidays, until the current pandemic is over.”

Contact Points

Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

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COUNCIL
12 NOVEMBER 2020**QUESTION TIME**

Question 1 – Crossing facilities in Kempsey

1. Mr P Middlebrough will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways:

"There is a great deal of concern in Kempsey that the A38 needs more controlled foot crossings along the A38. Will the Cabinet Member undertake a review to identify suitable locations for new crossings to be installed in Kempsey?"

Question 2 – Travel expenses

2. Mr P M McDonald will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning:

"Would the Cabinet Member with Responsibility please inform me of the cost from travelling expenses so far this year, compared with this time last year?"

Question 3 – The “lane rental” road repair scheme

3. Dr C Hotham will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways:

"The A441 at Bordesley, outside Alvechurch, has had horrendous problems with temporary traffic lights causing asymmetric traffic flow. The provision of “spotters” had little impact as they seem to spend most of their time in the van on their phones. Does the Cabinet Member for Highways agree that the Council's proposed new “lane rental” road repair scheme should also address this costly and frustrating annoyance with sanctions for transgressing operators?"

Question 4 – Help and support for self-employed residents

4. Mr R M Udall will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure:

"The Government has announced measures to help some of the self-employed during the current lockdown, however, many Worcestershire self-employed residents do not meet the eligibility criteria for support. What help and support can he provide or offer to assist those in Worcestershire who are self-employed during this difficult time?"

Question 5 – Careers advice for 14-18 year olds

5. Mr R C Lunn will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities:

"Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility explain how the success or otherwise of the Careers advice given to 14-18 year olds in the County is measured?"

Contact Points

Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

COUNCIL
12 NOVEMBER 2020**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****(a) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

Local Audit Reviews and Guidance Note

1. In June 2019 Sir Tony Redmond was asked by the then Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (Rt Hon. James Brokenshire MP) to undertake an independent review of the effectiveness of local audit and the transparency of local authority financial reporting – The Redmond Review. In April 2020 a new Code of Audit Practice came into force and consultation started shortly afterwards on its application and guidance for 2020/21 external audits. The Redmond Review was published early September 2020 and includes reference to the Audit Code, the consultation on which also closed early September 2020.

2. The report is broken down in to 8 sections, with an Executive Summary and recommendations. The Review is broken down into 4 key component areas:

- The regulation, procurement and performance of external audit: Sections 2-4
- The role of the Audit Committee and governance arrangements in place locally around audit: Section 5
- Audit coverage of financial resilience of local authorities: Section 6. This section links heavily to the Audit Guidance Note (AGN) 3 which sets out how local auditors are expected to approach and report on their Value for Money work under the new Code of Audit Practice
- The transparency of local government financial statements: Section 7.

Section 8 covers issues related to smaller audits, including parish / town councils that councillors may be interested to note.

3. The Committee has noted the report and appendices and wishes to bring the following observations on the initial review of the Sir Tony Redmond Independent Review of Local Audit to Council's attention:

- The findings of the review were broadly welcomed and accepted, especially the creation of a new body, the Office of Local Audit Regulation to manage, oversee and regulate local audit

- The Committee were open-minded about the appointment of an independent member but had reservations about what value the role could add to the work of the Committee
- The Committee did not feel that it was appropriate for the External Auditor to present an Annual Audit Report to the first Full Council after the 30 September deadline for the publication of the Annual Statutory Financial Statement as it undermined the important role of the Audit and Governance Committee, and
- The proposed extension to the deadline for the publication of the Annual Statutory Financial Statement up to the 30 September each year was welcomed but it was considered that local practices should be recognised which might be better suited to publication by the existing deadline of 31 July.

Internal Audit Progress Report

4. 10 audits are currently underway, including 5 of schools. The Corporate Governance - Covid 19 audit is an overarching thematic piece of work with 3 sub-areas – business continuity, executive decisions and governance meetings. A programme of school audits has been started following the Council’s risk assessment framework. 20 schools have been identified where an audit is required and the next tranche is being arranged.

5. Audit work has continued all year and audit actions have been completed within a reasonable timescale. As part of our ongoing improvements to the audit process, clearer guidance is being provided to operational managers about the priority which should be given to resolving actions identified. Actions are tracked and regular contact is made with operational managers to follow up progress. There are currently 16 audits with 55 open actions.

6. Due to the impact of the Covid pandemic, the planned audits for the remainder of the year have been re-assessed on both the ability to carry out the audits and operational ability to respond. Priorities have been adjusted to support the organisation and provide the necessary review and challenge during a time of significant change and uncertainty. The Committee has noted the Internal Audit progress report and approved the Internal Audit work programme for quarter 3.

Statutory Accounts and Pension Fund 2019/20 - External Audit Findings Report

7. Peter Barber, Key Audit Partner from Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditor, presented the External Audit – Findings Report for the Worcestershire County Council Statutory Accounts 2019/20 and Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund Accounts 2019/20. In response to an unprecedented situation relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to reduce the immediate resources pressure on councils and auditors to meet statutory audit deadlines, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 have been amended to allow the publication of the Statement of Accounts and public inspection of the accounts to be delayed. This Council will be one of the first County Councils to have produced and have audited accounts available for this year.

8. The key issues in relation to Worcestershire County Council Statutory Accounts 2019/20 are:

- Grant Thornton anticipates issuing an unqualified audit opinion, subject to outstanding queries being resolved
- The audit identified a number of misclassification and disclosure changes. All material changes have been adjusted
- The audit did not identify any events or conditions which may cast significant doubt on the going concern assumption
- The audit opinion for the County Council includes an 'Emphasis of Matter' comment with regard to the potential effects of COVID-19 on the valuation of Land and Building Assets. This refers the user of the accounts to Note 15.10 where the Council's Valuer has followed RICS guidance and acknowledged that there may be a material uncertainty on the valuation work undertaken this year. This is standard guidance and is expected to be the case across all local government audits
- There remain a small number of non-material changes which have not been adjusted in the accounts and these are recommended by Grant Thornton as future improvements which are accepted.

9. The Committee has noted Grant Thornton's Audit Findings Report for the Worcestershire County Council Statutory Accounts 2019/20 and Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund Accounts 2019/20.

Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

10. The Council is required, as part of its ongoing review of the effectiveness of its governance arrangements, to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2019/20. The AGS will form part of the Annual Statement of Accounts. The draft AGS was reported to the last Committee meeting on 30 July 2020 since then there have been no changes made to it.

11. The AGS is primarily retrospective. It reports on the assurance framework and measures in place for the financial year 2019/20 and takes into account any significant issues of governance up to the date of publication of the Statement of Accounts. The AGS outlines the actions taken or proposed to address governance issues identified.

12. Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors, have considered the AGS as part of their external audit, and have confirmed that it is consistent with their knowledge of our organisation and the financial statements. Unfortunately, the Engagement Manager for Grant Thornton was unable to attend the Committee meeting due to ill-health. As a result of the illness Grant Thornton have not been able to conclude their own internal review process and therefore the Annual Statutory Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020 could not be formally signed off at the meeting and as a result the Annual Governance Statement could not be approved.

13. The Committee has agreed that subject to the approval of the Worcestershire County Council Statutory Accounts 2019/20 and Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund Accounts 2019/20 by the Chairman in consultation with the Vice-Chairman, the Chief Financial Officer has been authorised to arrange for the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 to be formally signed by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council. If the Accounts cannot be signed off as set out above then consideration of the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 be deferred to a special meeting of the Committee prior to 30 November 2020. Subsequent to the meeting and following confirmation that the County Council Statutory Accounts 2019/20 and Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund Accounts 2019/20 had been signed off on 27 October 2020, the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council have signed the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20.

Annual Statutory Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020

14. In response to an unprecedented situation relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to reduce the immediate pressure on councils and auditors to meet statutory audit deadlines, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 have been amended to allow the publication of the statement of accounts and public inspection of the accounts to be delayed. Notwithstanding this, the Council has continued to prepare its accounts according to its existing timetable, at the same time increasing its output by producing new Group Accounts and enhancing the supporting evidence and working papers considering the uncertainty around COVID-19.

15. The Council has worked with Grant Thornton throughout and recognised that whilst audit fieldwork could be completed with only minor disruption, it was always likely to be the case that the additional consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on the accounts and in particular asset valuations and overall financial impact was likely to take longer for the External Audit team to consider, especially as circumstances continue to change.

16. The financial position reported in the Council's Statutory Accounts for 2019/20 is an overspend of £0.3 million against the net budget of £330 million, with an accounting deficit taking into account pension's actuarial costs, capital costs and other financial adjustments, of £16.1 million. The County Council's General Fund reserve balance remains at £12.2 million, whilst there has been a decrease of £5.2 million on available earmarked reserves taking their balance at 31 March 2020 to £76.3 million.

17. The financial impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on the Council and Pension Fund's assets has given rise to further work to ensure the accounts reflect any possible over or understatement of assets. To a great extent this is a matter of professional judgement with RICS guidance having been issued to property valuers that there is a risk of material uncertainty as a result, and the Pension Fund Actuary having similar considerations. Nevertheless, there has not been a material impact on any asset category nor evidence since the valuation data that needs to be taken into account.

18. The value of the Pension Fund's net assets decreased by £149.9 million from £2,795.3 million at 31 March 2019 to £2,645.4 million at 31 March 2020. During the year a surplus resulted on the Pension Fund accounts totalling £9.2 million, a decrease of £7.6 million from a surplus of £16.8 million in the previous year.

19. As referred to in paragraph 13 above, it was not possible to sign off the Accounts at the Committee meeting and therefore the Committee has agreed that the Chief Financial Officer provides a full update to the Committee by the end of October on Grant Thornton's progress on their final sign off and any changes, if any, and the proposed next steps. It is assumed that if there are no material changes or issues arising then the Committee recognises the technical reasons for not being able to sign off the accounts at this meeting and therefore the Chairman in consultation with the Vice-Chairman of the Committee has been authorised to approve the Final Accounts Pack, including the Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2020, assuming there are no material issues or disputed amendments remaining as advised by Grant Thornton. If there are any material adjustments or disputed changes that differ from the Audit Findings Report then the above procedure cannot be followed through and instead a special meeting of the Committee will be convened before 30 November 2020 to sign off prior to the deadline. Following approval by the Chairman, in consultation with the Vice-Chairman, and with prior notification of the Committee, the Chief Financial Officer has been authorised to sign the Letters of Representation on behalf of the County Council.

20. Subsequent to the meeting, the external auditor has issued an unqualified opinion and with no other issues or changes to those reported to Committee, the County Council Statutory Accounts 2019/20 and Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund Accounts 2019/20 were published on 27 October 2020.

Income Management

21. Whilst collection of aged debt was paused due to recovery and response in relation to COVID-19, a reboot has taken place since the last Committee meeting with a deeper analysis around corporate debts that are over 30 days old. However, progress has been slow due to the current complexity of managing this within the COVID environment. The latest level of total debt stands at £22.2 million, 79% (£17.5 million) of which was raised over the last year and a half.

22. The debt over a month old that is not scheduled to be collected by agreed instalments totals £16.8 million (76%), which is £6 million more than last reported to Committee. This increase was expected due to the prioritisation of workload as a result of COVID-19 response and recovery. However, action is now needed to recover this. A further analysis has been undertaken of all debts greater than £50,000. In total there are 49 such debtors which account for £12.1 million, that is 48% of the total debt due greater than 30 days. Of this, £3.5 million is with the NHS and £2 million with other public bodies

23. One positive to note in the last few months has been the significant increase in payment instalment plans agreed with debtors. When last reported to Committee there was a total of £0.651 million of debt being collected in this way, that has now risen to £1.9 million. There has also been a number of successful court settlements reached. The Committee has noted the Income Management Report.

Risk Management Update

24. Covid risk management is still the focus of the work, including the collation, challenge and reporting of Covid risks to support silver command. Over the period, some risks which had previously been reduced in severity are re-emerging. This is not unexpected and is in line with the national trajectory of the Covid response. More recent risks relate to the projected second wave and the Council's response. This includes the adult social care impact, supporting children if school closures are required and ensuring resource for the Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT). The red risk is for social care placement availability – diminishing availability of care home beds in Worcestershire. Considering the potential second wave, visitors to care homes are being discouraged. The situation continues to be closely monitored.

25. Non-Covid corporate risks are not being collated centrally and are being managed on an operational basis. The Chief Officer Group (COG) has requested the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to work on a new corporate risk approach. A revised process will be delivered to COG on 12 October and, subject to approval, will be implemented with a full corporate risk update provided to the Committee meeting in December. The Committee has noted the Risk Management update.

Work Programme

26. The Committee has noted its future work programme and requested that a training session on the Value for Money audit be arranged prior to its meeting on 4 December 2020.

Mr N Desmond
Chairman

Contact Points

Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 2 October 2020.

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=135&Year=0>

COUNCIL
12 NOVEMBER 2020**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****(b) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE PENSIONS COMMITTEE**

Pension Board and Pension Investment Sub-Committee Minutes

1. As set out in the Terms of Reference of the Pension Investment Sub-Committee (PISC), all decisions taken, and recommendations will be reported back to the next available ordinary meeting of the Pensions Committee in the form of the minutes of the PISC. In addition, the Pensions Board has requested that their deliberations be reported to the Committee. The Committee noted the Minutes of the PISC meetings on 16 and 17 September and the Board meeting on 18 September.

LGPS Central Update

2. The LGPS Central budget and Strategic Business Plan for 2020/21 has now been agreed at £11.728m, an increase limited to RPI. LGPS Central have been looking to build resources in the Private Markets team to facilitate the launch of new sub-funds, manage Partner Funds' legacy assets, generate investment cost savings and develop the internal investment capability for the collective benefit of Partner Funds. LGPS Central have appointed Ian Brown to the position of Head of Private Markets. A new Passive Portfolio Manager, Andrew Allison will also start shortly to add resilience and capacity to the team. Michael Marshall, who was the Director for Responsible Investment and Engagement has left LGPS Central. Interviews are currently in process for his replacement and the Committee will be kept updated on the appointment progress. The Committee has noted the LGPS Central update.

Pension Investment Update

3. The Committee has noted the Independent Financial Adviser's fund performance summary and market background. The Committee has noted the update on the Investment Managers placed 'on watch' by the Pension Investment Sub-Committee.

4. The last actuarial valuation was undertaken as at the 31 March 2019 showed the funding levels were 90% with a deficit of £295m. It was previously reported that there had been some recent significant volatility in the markets due mainly to the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic which has since been found to be unprecedented. This had a significant impact on the March 2020 estimated funding levels, with a slight recovery in April 2020 and has continued to recover up to August 2020. However, it is most likely that the market volatility will continue over the ensuing months which will potentially impact on the overall funding levels. The Committee has noted the funding position compared to the investment performance.

5. The original Equity Protection mandate expired on 7 August and it was agreed to continue the Equity Protection for a further 12 months on the S&P500 (for our US Passive equity Fund) and the FTSE100 (for our UK Passive equity Fund) and 18 months for the Eurostoxx50 (for our European Passive equity Fund). The revised strategy is more fluid and will require increased active management than the previous strategies that were implemented. Fortnightly monitoring meetings have been instigated with River and Mercantile. The Committee has noted the update on the Equity Protection current static Strategy.

6. The Committee has noted the update on Responsible Investment activities and Stewardship investment pooling and the Stewardship code. The Committee has noted the update on the LGPS Central report on the voting undertaken on the Funds behalf.

7. An Environment, Social and Governance procurement exercise was conducted early September through the Norfolk framework which had 6 potential service providers. 'Minerva' were appointed and an initial meeting took place on the 30 September 2020. Minerva are also currently conducting a similar exercise for Surrey County Council who have been contacted to learn from the experience that they are currently going through. The Committee has noted the update on the development of a Climate Risk Monitoring Platform and the Environment, Social and Governance procurement exercise.

8. The Committee also noted that a climate risk scenario report relating specifically to the Fund will be provided by LGPS Central and reported to the working group set up to review the findings on the 20 October 2020 with a view to reporting to the December Pensions Committee

Business Plan

9. The Business Plan is reviewed and updated quarterly to deliver an extra management / governance tool to: help officers to manage the Fund's activities; and assist the Pensions Committee to ensure the ongoing management and development of the Fund is in line with longer term policy, objectives and strategy. The Committee has noted the Worcestershire Pension Fund Business Plan as at 7 September 2020.

Risk Register

10. The Risk Register is kept under regular review and, following the officer review in September, no risks were amended and no new risks were added to the Register. The review noted that the gross (45) / residual (30) scoring of WPF 24 (Employers having insufficient skilled resources to supply our data requirements); of WPF 07 (Future change to LGPS regulations or other legislation) at 75 / 20; and of WPF 30 (Failure to maintain the quality of our member data) at 50 / 25 may require changing as our understanding of the impact of McCloud becomes clearer. The review noted that the scores of WPF 07 may also require changing following the government's response to its 'Restricting exit payments in the public sector' consultation.

11. The Committee has requested that Risk Reference WPF 08 – failure to appoint suitable investment managers and review their performance/market/contracts and WPF10 Being reliant on LGPS Central delivering its forecasted cost savings - be reviewed to make more explicit reference to the risk associated with the failure of LGPS Central to meet its performance targets relating to both of these risks. The Committee has noted the Risk Register as at 7 September 2020.

Pension Fund Audited Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20

12. The Committee was made aware that the Audit and Governance Committee was not able to sign off the Accounts at its meeting on 2 October 2020 due to the Engagement Manager for Grant Thornton being unable to attend the Committee meeting due to ill-health. The Committee has noted the unaudited Statutory Financial Statements for the Pension Fund for the year ended 31 March 2020. Subsequent to the meeting, the external auditor has issued an unqualified opinion and with no other issues or changes to those reported to Committee, the County Council Statutory Accounts 2019/20 and Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund Accounts 2019/20 were published on 27 October 2020.

13. The Annual report has not been finalised and therefore was not available at the meeting. The Committee noted that the Annual Report would be available for approval at the December Committee meeting.

Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund Administration Budget Forecast Outturn 2020/21

14. The forecast outturn for the Pension Fund is estimated to be £13.962m compared to a budget of £13.519m, a difference of £0.443m. The main reason for the variance is investment management fees (increase of £0.279m) due to some commitments to Property and Infrastructure being drawn earlier than originally anticipated. An increase above budget for investment professional fees (£0.075m) has also been incurred for the ESG Procurement and £0.060m for the set up and monitoring of Employer covenant and risk management with the actuary. This is within the £0.5m variation limit delegated to the Chief Financial Officer.

15. The budgeted Worcestershire Pension Fund administration costs are currently £20.55 per member for 2020/21. In terms of investment costs, the budget indicates spend of 46p per £1,000 (0.46% of market value as at March 2020) on managing its assets for 2020/21, including all pooled mandate costs. The Committee has noted the variation to the Pension Fund Administration Budget, including manager fees, for 2020/21 shown in the Appendix totalling £13,961,700.

Training Update

16. The Committee has noted the feedback from the Induction training and specific training events that have been undertaken since the last Committee meeting. Due to the continued impact of COVID-19, shorter but more regular training sessions may be included in the quarterly meetings. The Committee has noted the proposed training events plan for the next year up until April 2021.

Forward Plan

31. The Committee has noted the Forward Plan.

Mr P Middlebrough
Chairman

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance), the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Pensions Committee held on 9 October 2020.

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=391&Year=0>

COUNCIL
12 NOVEMBER 2020**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****(b) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE PLANNING
AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE**

Applications

1. The Committee approved the following application subject to detailed conditions:
 - Temporary permission (5 years) for a proposed materials recovery plant to process road sweepings and highway drainage clearance materials on land at Station House, Saltway, Hanbury, Worcestershire.
2. The Committee noted the Annual Review of activities carried out by the Council to manage and implement the Safety of Sports Grounds legislation.
3. Details of the above application can be found in the agenda papers for the Committee meeting held on 29 September 2020.

Mr R C Adams
Chairman

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the meetings of the Planning and Regulatory Committee held on 29 September 2020.

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=128&MId=3188&Ver=4>

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COUNCIL
12 NOVEMBER 2020**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****(d) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE STANDARDS
AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Local Government Association Draft Member Code of Conduct

1. The Local Government Association (LGA) has drafted a model Code of Conduct as part of its work in supporting the sector to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance. Once finalised, this will be offered as a template for councils to adopt as a whole and/or with local amendments. The LGA is currently preparing a revised draft, having consulted with local authorities, with a view to it being approved by the LGA Board in early December. The approved Code will then be published.
2. The Committee has noted the update on the LGA draft member Code of Conduct. Given the pan-Worcestershire Code is appreciated for the consistency in approach across local authorities in the area, the Committee has agreed that a further report about the LGA Code be considered once a final version has been published.

Code of Conduct – Complaints Update

3. Since the last report to the Committee in October 2019, the Council has received five formal complaints that County Councillors have breached the Code of Conduct for members. The Committee received a summary of the details of two of the formal complaints and noted that neither constituted an actual breach of the Code requiring no further action. Some of the those received in 2020 are still being reviewed, with the complainants having been notified of the circumstances of the delay.

Mr S Mackay
Chairman

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and

Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee held on 21 October 2019.

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=130&MId=3261&Ver=4>