

Agenda

Council

Thursday, 14 January 2021, 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, 14 January 2021, 10.00 am, Online

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, 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, Mr T A L Wells and Vacancy

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, 11 January). 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 12 November 2020 (previously circulated electronically).

4 Chairman's Announcements

To receive any announcements to be made by the Chairman.

5 Reports of Cabinet 1 - 4

To consider the reports of the Cabinet – Summary of decisions taken and to receive answers to any questions asked on it.

6 Annual Report of the Leader of the Council 5 - 14

To receive this report and to receive answers to any questions on it.

7 Annual Report of the Chief Executive 15 - 24

To receive the report of the Chief Executive and any answers to questions on it.

8 Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility 25 - 30

To receive the report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care on current issues and proposed developments within his area of responsibility and to receive answers to any questions on the report.

9 Annual Report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board 31 - 44

To receive the annual report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board and answers to any questions on it.

10 Notices of Motion 45 - 48

To receive the report of the 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 Tuesday, 5 January 2021.

11 Question Time 49 - 50

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 Tuesday, 5 January 2021 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 and the Chairman agrees the matter is urgent'.)*

12 Reports of Committees 51 - 60

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

- Audit and Governance Committee;
- Pensions Committee; and
- Planning and Regulatory 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, 6 January 2021

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COUNCIL
14 JANUARY 2021**REPORT OF CABINET - SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN**

Land Acquisition

1. At its meeting in November, Council agreed to the addition of £15 million to the capital programme for the purpose of enabling economic growth, including the purchase of Gamechanger 2 Sites, in accordance with adopted policies for transport and growth and as part of the post pandemic recovery.

2. Cabinet has recognised that as well as investing in technology and skills, the Council needs to focus on ensuring that the County is agile and flexible to new opportunities, including the way and where people work. Key to that will be our transport infrastructure hubs. Our capital programme already had plans to spend £5 million across 2019-23 across our rail stations in the County. Cabinet has agreed the process for acquiring 'Gamechanger 2' sites adjacent to rail infrastructure as part of its role in promoting economic development and building on its recent considerable experience in the delivery of rail transport and Gamechanger infrastructure and assets.

3. Once the Council has completed its purchase of a complete Gamechanger 2 Site (which may be by way of land assembly), officers will spend six months working with relevant interested parties to develop a shared development vision with defined outputs most likely through a project board. This vision will be produced as a development specification and will serve both as the basis for seeking governance approvals to proceed to the next step of inviting developer interest and the promotion to the developer market.

4. Cabinet has authorised the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure to commence, continue and conclude the negotiation of contracts for the purchase of interests in Gamechanger 2 Sites, provided that any proposed purchases fit within the Parameters set out in the Cabinet report. The Strategic Director is also authorised to conclude the purchase of Gamechanger 2 Sites in concurrence with the Assistant Director of Legal and Governance, Chief Finance Officer and the Cabinet Members for Economy and Infrastructure and Transformation and Commissioning. Cabinet will consider proposals for the development of the Gamechanger 2 Sites in the second half of 2021.

Revenue Budget Monitoring – Month 6 (30 September) 2020/21

5. At the end of Month 6, 2020/21, the Council was forecasting a balanced budget outturn for 2020/21 but with a potential need to use the ear marked Financial Risk reserve or minimum revenue provision to fund any shortfall in funding from Government to meet the additional costs of COVID-19.

6. Cabinet acknowledged there was still risk to this forecast given the pressures on services currently being felt coupled with national trends, and whilst the Council has

flexibility to use reserves in this way during 2020/21, we will continue to lobby Government for financial support towards these costs.

7. The most significant key assumptions were that the latest information regarding a second wave of COVID-19 and the financial impact of all GOLD and SILVER command decisions are reflected in the forecast; qualifying expenditure that supports hospital discharges will be fully reimbursed via the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) from the Department of Health; and that Council Tax and Business Rates collection fund deficits will be accounted for over the next three years from 2021/22 – therefore no impact this year.

Wheels to Work

8. Cabinet has considered proposals to bring forward a Wheels to Work and Education scheme, in response to a Notice of Motion submitted to Council 16 July 2020.

9. Wheels to Work schemes exist to ensure those with limited means are able to access employment and become and/or remain economically active. They also deliver other strategic benefits by enabling users to access other services (health, education and training) as well as leisure and social opportunities, which can deliver a significantly improved quality of life. Schemes can include bike and e-bikes which are environmentally friendly and may encourage users to maintain using these modes of transport beyond their participation in the Wheels to Work scheme, reducing personal travel costs and assisting in addressing environmental issues including air quality deterioration and congestion.

10. A further current consideration for a Wheels to Work scheme is that younger people are known to be disproportionately struggling to secure employment during the COVID-19 pandemic, whilst also being less likely to have access to private transport. A Wheels to Work scheme may increase opportunities for younger people to access a greater breadth of employment options at the very beginning of their working lives, at a time when opportunities may be more scarce than normal.

11. Local Authorities either deliver Wheels to Work Schemes in house, or commission these out to third sector or private sector providers. A business case will consider potential delivery options, based on experience from elsewhere, scheme focus and scope, risks and cost.

12. Wheels to Work schemes cover a variety of modal options, from moped and cycle hire to the provision of passes for public transport. No further work is proposed for the public transport option as this will duplicate alternative provision which is already established through the Job Centre and would therefore bring no additional benefits to Worcestershire.

13. However, it is proposed that the business case includes a review of the bicycle (including e-bikes) and moped options for Worcestershire to assess the potential benefits and costs of these different modes.

14. Cabinet has approved commissioning a business case for a Wheels to Work Scheme to confirm whether investment in a bespoke Scheme for Worcestershire offers benefit to the County and value for money. The business case will come to a future meeting of Cabinet for a decision.

Fair Funding for Schools 2021-22 – National and Local Funding Arrangements for Schools

15. The Council is required to consult the Worcestershire Schools Forum (WSF) on any changes to the Local Schools Funding Formula (LSFF). The Council has always expanded this requirement to consult with all schools, governing bodies and other interested parties. For the three-year period 2018-19 to 2020-21 the Government introduced their National Funding Formula (NFF) arrangements for Dedicated School Grant (DSG). In December 2017 and December 2019 Cabinet approved the LSFF for this to be based as far as practicable and affordable upon the DfE NFF parameters.

16. It was anticipated that a fully prescribed NFF i.e. a 'hard' formula for schools would be in place for 2021-22. However, the DfE confirmed that local authorities would continue to be able to set a LSFF for 2021-22 within their policy parameters. Given previous approvals the WSF at its meeting in September 2020 endorsed and approved the continuation of the current funding arrangements for 2020-21 into 2021-22. Consequently, a further local consultation was not required for LSFF and other matters. Schools were provided with details of the DfE's policy and the proposal to continue with the current arrangements and given the opportunity to comment on the proposals. There have been no contra indications received from schools on the continuation of the existing arrangements for a further year.

17. The Cabinet has considered all the issues including the feedback from the consultation, the involvement of the WSF members and schools during the consultation and the former's views on the LSFF issues for 2021-22 and other matters. The Cabinet has approved the LSFF for Worcestershire mainstream schools from April 2021 to apply for 2021-22 to include the DfE Minimum Funding Levels for Primary £4,180; Key Stage 3 £5,215; Key Stage 4 £5,715; Secondary £5,415, having regard to the feedback from schools and the views of WSF, to be based as far as is practicable and affordable upon the DfE NFF parameters.

18. The Cabinet has also authorised the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills to make the required submission to the Education and Skills Funding Agency by 21 January 2021 for the approved LSFF for 2021-22 taking account of any impact and change on the approved units of resource, Minimum Funding Guarantee and capping arrangements as a consequence of the October 2020 census and other 2020 data changes and the final 2021-22 DSG.

Mr S E Geraghty
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 and background papers for the meetings of the Cabinet held on 19 November and 10 December 2020.

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

14 JANUARY 2021**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

1. My Annual Report is presented at a time when our country is seriously affected by an on-going global pandemic and new arrangements outside of the European Union commence. The wide ranging economic and societal impacts of these events are far from being over. COVID-19 has delivered an economic shock and accelerated some of the trends I mentioned last year, with a rapid move to the adoption of digital technologies and remote and flexible working. Our towns and City Centre are visibly changing with the move to online shopping and a digital offer, requiring unprecedented economic support to those individuals and businesses affected. In addition, Worcestershire has suffered from several significant flood events impacting many homes and businesses.

2. It has truly been an extraordinary year but working together as “One Worcestershire” we have collectively sought to respond with a bold and co-ordinated response with partners to these unprecedented challenges. The community response has been equally impressive; individuals and local groups offering support to others in need and the willingness of so many to help in whatever way they can. Alongside the Here2Help service, this community effort demonstrates what we can achieve when we come together.

3. The County Council will continue to play its part as the recovery from the pandemic begins in earnest once the vaccines have been deployed to a sufficient proportion of the population to safely allow restrictions to be released. Worcestershire’s Strategy for Restart and Recovery, agreed with district councils and Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, sets out key actions and interventions that have already begun.

4. Despite the resources and focus these events have demanded, the Council has worked to progress many other projects and non COVID related matters during the year and I have used this report to try to highlight many of those achievements.

5. Locally, on 1 October we celebrated the first anniversary of our wholly owned Council company, Worcestershire Children First. Service improvement has continued, relationships with the Council and other partners remain strong and outcomes for all children and young people in Worcestershire has remained a key focus.

6. All top tier posts have been recruited to for the agreed organisational structure outlined as part of the Council redesign. Our systems and structures have proven highly resilient over the last year and the major investment in ICT systems and software has supported this resilience. This has enabled the continued delivery of services through mobile and flexible working. Our focus is now firmly fixed on how the Council will emerge from these challenges with a new way of working, tempered by that experience.

Open for Business

7. The local economy continues to be a key priority for the Council and with the impact of COVID-19 this has never been more the case. We have continued to invest in infrastructure and have committed more funding to support local businesses to adapt to the changing environment and to build future resilience. A successful local economy is essential for our business community and for the health and wellbeing of our residents.

8. Throughout the year we have worked with partners from district councils, business membership organisations and government departments to ensure a joined-up approach to our economic response across the county. We have allocated over £3.5m to support our local businesses through the provision of expert advice, support for businesses to employ new graduates and grants. This support has and will continue to provide businesses with the much-needed investment to make the changes that are required to ensure future resilience and to take advantage of current market opportunities.

9. We continue to work collaboratively with the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) on the revised Strategic Economic Plan; setting the future economic priorities for the county and our ambition for a connected, creative, dynamic economy for all. As part of our commitment to WLEP, members of our Economic Development Team work within the local growth hub, Worcestershire Business Central, whose role is to ensure local businesses access support that is available locally, regionally and nationally.

10. This collaboration continues to be successful with the county securing £12m from the Getting Building Fund for a wide-ranging package of projects that will deliver a much-needed boost to the local economy. The projects are expected to drive growth across the county through the development of innovation and business and include the expansion of the Malvern Technology Park and Vale Park, projects to reduce congestion and to enable the strategic development of our rail infrastructure in Redditch and Worcester.

11. Sites within our game changer programme; Worcester Six, Redditch Gateway, Kidderminster and Malvern Hills Science Park, continue to attract significant occupiers, generating new jobs and investment. Work has now commenced on the creation of the Malvern Hills Science and Technology Park, which will be the first larger scale science park in the county. We have also seen significant businesses invest in Worcester Six, with Kohler Mira expected to open in early 2021 and planning permission being granted to a new data centre on the site, which is expected to be complete later in 2021.

12. The award-winning Worcestershire Parkway, the first new station in Worcestershire for over 100 years, opened last February improving rail connectivity and the new station building and much-improved forecourt at Kidderminster Station opened in June.

13. Despite the impact of flooding and COVID-19, there has been significant progress on the Southern Link Road with recent major milestones including the installation of the new Carrington Bridge, Powick Viaduct, and Broomhall Way footbridge, alongside the full opening of Crookbarrow Way and Hams Way footbridges.

14. Work has progressed well on the A38 Bromsgrove capacity improvements at the A38 junction with the M5 at Lydiate Ash and the junction with the M42 at Lickey End. Work will begin on initial Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme (BREP) schemes this year and the next stage Business Case will be submitted to the Department for Transport to support the remainder of the programme next financial year.

15. The Superfast Broadband programme has continued to transform the availability of faster broadband in the county with 97% of premises now able to access 24Mbps+. Nationally and locally the focus has changed to increasing the percentage coverage of

Gigabit capable and fibre to the premise broadband. In December 2019 these were both reported at 3.8% and at December 2020 at 36.4% and 11.5% respectively.

16. Positively, in 2020, commercial operators began or announced their proposed fibre to the premises deployments in the county including around Bromsgrove, Worcester, Evesham and Malvern. In addition, supported by the Council team, businesses and communities have been very successful in securing £2.5m of Rural Gigabit Vouchers to bring Gigabit connectivity to their communities. This puts Worcestershire in the top ten of areas in terms of value secured.

17. The Worcestershire 5G consortium successfully concluded the Industry 4.0 and Security by Design focussed project in the summer. Post project, recognising the benefits 5G can offer industry, a 'Testbed as a Service' model is developing at Malvern Hills Science Park, allowing businesses to develop their products and services on a private 5G network. In addition, funding has been secured for West Mercia Rural 5G, a two-year project focussed on understanding the delivery of rural 5G solutions and opportunities it can offer around the areas of health and social care.

18. The current Local Transport Plan 4 was adopted in December 2017 and significant work has been underway since then to develop the proposed schemes. Progress so far has been excellent, with the 150 proposed schemes listed in the LTP4, 18 schemes are now fully completed, 24 are in the delivery phase and 44 are in the feasibility phase.

19. The Council has adopted a comprehensive rail investment strategy for the county. The Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy sets out an ambitious investment plan for Worcestershire's rail infrastructure and services, providing additional capacity to support change in travel demand essential to support Worcestershire's growth aspirations.

20. Worcestershire County Council continues to work closely with partners to deliver the aims and ambitions of this economically vital strategy. The Council is playing a leading role in the North Cotswold Line Taskforce, which aims to lobby Government, the rail industry and funding bodies to invest in this critical corridor to enable Worcestershire to achieve its aim of two trains per hour between Worcester and London Paddington.

21. The Major Road Network (MRN) includes sections of the key A-road network. The bidding process for funding is currently underway and is managed through our local sub-regional transport body, Midlands Connect. The A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme (BREP) is a key component of the MRN scheme development programme.

22. Looking to the future, an important focus to aid regeneration and renewal will be working with district councils and the WLEP on successfully maximising the opportunities of funding being provided by the Government through Future High Street Fund and Towns Fund. Likewise, working with regional bodies like Midlands Engine and Midlands Connect to access the significant resources to be made available for improving major infrastructure, economic and environmental projects will be important to help unlock future growth and prosperity.

Environment

23. The quality of the County's natural environment is one of our key assets and is highly valued by us all. It helps attract visitors, market the County to prospective investors and skilled individuals that our economy needs to support sustainable growth.

24. The Environment Bill is scheduled to obtain Royal Assent in 2021. One of the Bill's aims is to change how we manage our resources and waste by introducing a consistent approach to recycling and introducing weekly food waste collections. The Council along with partners in the Borough, City and Districts have collaborated throughout to provide consultation responses and will continue to work together to plan the changes required.

25. Our Energy from Waste plant, EnviRecover, continues to perform well and now has the relevant permissions to enable it to process 230,000 tonnes per annum - an increase in potential capacity of 15%. The energy created provides electricity for 32,000 homes.

26. The county has suffered two major flood events in the autumn of 2019 and the winter of 2020. Record breaking rainfall combined with saturated ground conditions led to the River Severn and the River Teme reaching almost record high levels and remaining elevated for a long time. Nearly 700 residential properties, over 200 businesses and many pieces of critical infrastructure were severely impacted, a number of them twice or even three times during the extended flood period. The combined response and recovery efforts were significant, and some aspects of the recovery remain ongoing. We have continued to complete a range of drainage and flood mitigation schemes to improve our resilience and plan further investment this year.

27. The Council continues to invest in highways, with a further additional investment of £12m for improving roads in Worcestershire over 2020/21 and this coming year. Surfacing work on over 400 roads across the county has already been completed last year, with many more planned for 2021. Our additional investment of £8m for footways will see over 215 footway schemes completed by the end of this financial year, with a similar number to be completed next year. There are 10 footway teams working across the network, increasing to 12 in January, the most we have ever had in the county.

28. The progressive roll-out of LED lighting across our network continues, providing a further reduction in the energy consumption. The service also supports lighting schemes as part of the major infrastructure projects, e.g. Churchfields, Pinvin, Southern Link Road. Planned further investment will help accelerate the switch to LED street lighting.

29. A number of congestion, town centre improvement and highways schemes have been completed or are nearing completion. These include improvements at Sidbury and Pump Street in Worcester, Stourport High Street, Pinvin Crossroads near Pershore and Churchfields in Kidderminster. Further town centre schemes are due to start in Evesham and Redditch in the first half of this year, together with schemes to tackle congestion at Hoobrook Roundabout in Kidderminster, the A38 \ A4104 staggered junction, Pershore Link Road, Parkside Junction in Bromsgrove and junction improvements in Hagley.

30. Throughout the major flooding earlier this year and the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to deliver vital support to residents within Worcestershire. Transport Operations co-ordinated delivery of food parcels, medical supplies and PPE throughout.

31. The unprecedented challenges faced this year within the passenger transport market has meant our Worcestershire Passenger Transport Strategy has been delayed. Our main focus has been to ensure local transport operators have been supported during this difficult time and to ensure the future of the local transport networks moving forward.

32. The county has continued to invest in Active Travel, with many schemes progressed and delivered. A number of funding bids have been submitted, including to the DfT Local Pinch Point Fund. Worcestershire secured £800,000 from the DfT Emergency Active Travel Fund phases 1 and 2. Sabrina Bridge is also being completely refurbished.

33. Last year the County Council committed to reducing its own operational Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions to net zero by 2050. The Sustainability Team are co-ordinating work aimed at achieving this goal, a Zero Carbon Board is in place and operating. The Council's GHG emissions have reduced by 40% between 2009/10 to 2019/20. In October 2020, Cabinet agreed the County Council Net Zero Carbon Plan, which sets out our ambition and an annual progress report will be returned to Cabinet in 2021.

34. The Council is a major contributor to the delivery of the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership's Energy Strategy, launched in 2019. The Council is working closely with the Worcestershire LEP to identify challenges and solutions for businesses and communities which struggle with power, heat and transport, including grid capacity.

35. In the last four years the Sustainability Team has secured over £15m of European, Central Government and private sector funding in order to support businesses and communities across the county to save energy, save money, cut carbon emissions, enhance the natural environment and grow our low carbon economy.

36. The Council's flagship commitment, Diamond Leaf, to plant 150,000 trees over the next five years in partnership with The Woodland Trust has been accepted as one of a series of countrywide projects to be publicised as part of the Queen's Platinum anniversary celebrations. The two initial sites, one at Norton near Evesham and the other at Bewdley, are intended to see planting commencing this coming winter.

37. Looking ahead, our work around environmental sustainability in all its forms will remain a central focus for the Council, to ensure we play our part in the significant changes that will take place in the coming years to further reduce environmental impact.

Children and Families

38. I am pleased to say 2020 was a positive year for Children's Services. The focus was to continue service improvement and to improve outcomes for children and families. Alongside this focus was embedding the company governance and monitoring arrangements required for both the Council and DfE to monitor performance of Worcestershire Children First.

39. Significant achievements have been made during the first year of operation, including the seamless transition of support for children and families with no disruption at go live. The experience of other Children's companies has been to see a drop in KPIs following transition to any company and this has not happened in WCF. WCF Quarter 3 and 4 data for 2019/20, alongside feedback from colleagues in DfE, Regional Schools Commissioner, Schools, partners and importantly our WCF staff has been positive.

40. There are strong working relationships between WCC and WCF which go far beyond the formal contractual monitoring arrangements. Our Strategic Director of People, who has the lead commissioning role of WCF within the Council, has further strengthened the strategic leadership required to improve outcomes. This has already led to a detailed commitment to the development of an all age disability programme of work. The Director

of Social Care and Safeguarding and Director of Education and Early Help fully contributed to our response in dealing with COVID-19. WCF's Director of Resources is a member of the Council's Finance Management Team and has a place on the Council's Chief Officer Group which helps financial planning.

41. The refreshed 2020/21 Business Plan was approved by Cabinet (and the DfE), in March 2020. It maintained the previously agreed aims for WCF, which are to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Worcestershire. This was refreshed in June to take account of the impact of COVID-19 and shared with all key stakeholders.

42. 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 has commended the progress being made, including the management of the transfer of the SEND Support Services from Babcock Prime to WCF.

43. Another area of significant progress is the rate of completion of Education, Health and Care plans. Since February 2020 the 20-week completion rate has maintained at 100% 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 colleagues and most importantly better outcomes.

44. Children's social care services remained operational throughout the pandemic in order to protect and support vulnerable children. The model of operation changed as set out in the April 2020 emergency C-19 service delivery protocol for social care and safeguarding services focusing on a risk-based approach to face to face assessments and contacts. The protocol has been updated in four phases to initial emergency response through to current operation and this is reviewed regularly. The DfE have monitored our performance during the pandemic and Worcestershire has consistently performed very well comparatively both regionally and nationally.

45. On 1 October WCF held its first Annual General Meeting as well as submission of a joint report on the progress of the first year of operation as required by the statutory direction and civil servants updated the Secretary of State in December on progress.

46. This year has delivered considerable progress despite the unexpected challenges in dealing with the impact of COVID-19. The demand for advice, guidance and practical support has increased. The response from all teams has been excellent and this has been acknowledged and appreciated by a wide range of partners and stakeholders.

47. To build on our ability to effectively support children and young people to remain at home in the care of their parents, a new service was designed that went live in January 2020. The service works with families on the verge of breakdown, supporting them to find solutions to their issues and ultimately stay together, provided it is safe to do so.

48. The service in Worcestershire is known as Supporting Families First. The approach is strengths based, it identifies and manages risk, is family solution focused and sustainable. Outcome measures are recorded to demonstrate the positive impact for families, children and young people. We have already seen a reduction in the number of children aged 10 years plus coming into care.

49. WCF were successful in securing Worcestershire's Business Rate Pilot resources in January 2020 to implement a Family Safeguarding Model in Worcestershire to continue to transform our approach to working with children and families. It is based on a

successful, independently evaluated initiative developed by Hertfordshire County Council which radically improved services and reduced demand, whilst also significantly reducing the number of children who became looked after and subject to child protection plans.

50. The Worcestershire model will support the role of a social worker to provide rapid, proactive support to children and their parents and will be delivered by specialist workers trained in specialist areas of Substance Misuse, Domestic Violence and Mental Health.

51. The Family Safeguarding Model reflects our commitment to valuing family life through supporting and empowering parents to care for their own children who are 0-10 years old and have certain circumstances that pose a risk. The anticipated impact on children and family lives include; reduced time of children on Child Protection Plan, reduced number of children entering pre-proceedings, reduced numbers of Care Proceeding applications, reduction in accommodation needs for looked after children under 10 years old, as well as parents/children feeling listened to and being supported.

52. Significant progress has been made in Children's Services in the last few years and I would like to place on record my thanks to Catherine Driscoll as she moves on to new challenges and look forward to our improvement journey continuing under Tina Russell.

Health and Wellbeing

53. Health and Wellbeing is very much in everyone's thoughts at the moment due to the impact of the pandemic. It remains one of the four key themes in our Corporate Plan as it had for many years as it is so central to the work of this Council and our public health duties. Promoting independence remains the key aim to ensure people live independent and healthy lives, for as long as possible in their own homes.

54. To achieve this, Adult Social Care continues to build on their strengths-based approach with ambition and plans to enable a partnership approach to enabling our communities. This approach builds on the success of the Here2Help offer through the development of an Integrated Wellbeing Hub that will provide advice, information and access to support and services as a key part of the Council's customer offer.

55. In addition, the new Community Reablement Service is now live, ensuring people are supported and enabled to remain at home, for as long as possible. Further implementation of the national requirements of "Home First" and reablement offer is being provided to everyone at the point of hospital discharge.

56. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought opportunities to progress, at pace, our ambition to enable service provision digitally and through the last few months enhancements have been made to on-line offers for our libraries, heritage and adult learning services. All digital provision has seen unprecedented levels of access, which is both being sustained and receiving significant positive feedback from our residents who have been able to remain engaged in these services during periods of restriction.

57. Public health has been at the forefront of our efforts to protect the health of the Worcestershire population, and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and reduce health inequalities. A key focus has been working in partnership to achieve these aims and I would like to particularly acknowledge the joint work in outbreak response with Worcestershire Regulatory Services, our districts and with our NHS partners.

58. Building on existing relationships with Public Health England, district councils, health partners, police and others as well as the many communities in Worcestershire has been vital in our response to the pandemic. This will be more important than ever as we work closely with health partners to plan the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccination to the population of Worcestershire. This will be one of the biggest logistical programmes the NHS will have delivered and therefore the close working relationship will be essential.

59. The health and wellbeing strategy is in the process of review and we are working towards having a new strategy from July this year. This strategy will be really important in priority setting working with the NHS, community and voluntary sector and other system partners. Our main focus and priority in the pandemic has been to protect the population of Worcestershire whilst also maintaining other key public health work. Public health as a statutory function of the County Council has the dual aspect to improve and protect the Worcestershire population. It very much requires working with system partners, specifically Public Health England and the NHS.

60. As part of our response to COVID-19, we have also set up our Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT). This service was set up rapidly and with a huge amount of effort across Council teams and wider partners. The Local Outbreak Response Team have key roles in containing outbreaks and directing and promoting prevention measures that protect health. Within this team, we have dedicated Public Health staff alongside Environmental Health Officers who work closely with a wide range of partners to respond to outbreaks of COVID-19 in our settings and communities.

61. The Council spends some £30m on Public Health, funded through the Government ring fenced grant, and, alongside mandated services, we are continually looking for innovative ways to achieve the goals set. This includes investing in our Council services.

62. The key focus now is to support the continued testing regime, strong communications and to support the rapid and effective roll out of vaccinations. The effectiveness of our Public Health strategy remains vital for the wellbeing of all residents in Worcestershire and my thanks go to our Director of Public Health, Dr Kathryn Cobain, and her team for leading our Public Health response so effectively over this period.

The Financial Challenge

63. In my last two Annual Reports I outlined that Worcestershire County Council was facing in-year pressures to deliver balanced budgets. I am pleased to say that despite the extraordinary year we have faced we are projecting a small underspend of £13,000.

64. That is no small feat when we consider by the end of the financial year, we are likely to have received nearly £100 million of Government grants to respond and deal with the pandemic, incurring just over that in spend. Putting that in perspective, that is nearly the same amount we spend on Children's Services. Keeping track of that and completing Government returns has not been easy but thanks to strong financial controls and reporting we have been able to ensure we have a full audit trail. Back in March the Finance Team set up monitoring regimes that were shared with MHCLG as best practice, and this work was used in supporting our case for further COVID funding.

65. At the same time the Finance Team were able to close down the accounts and we were one of the first in the country (4th) to have their accounts signed off, well ahead of the deadline and unqualified, with a further unqualified opinion on our Value for Money

assessment from our external auditors, Grant Thornton. This achievement, when around 65% of councils failed to gain an opinion on time, is a credit to the team.

66. At the same time as responding to COVID-19 and all of its uncertainty and managing the position in 2020/21, we have been working to produce the draft 2021/22 revenue and capital budgets. Active financial management has enabled us to put forward proposals that see a Council Tax and Social Care Levy of just 2.5%, that will see us remain in the lowest quartile amongst county councils of what we charge our residents. Yet, at the same time, we have protected services and ensured investment in both our county's infrastructure and economy.

67. Looking forward, Government have announced that we will receive further funding for COVID-19 and social care and the additional monies are a welcome reflection of the lobbying we have undertaken alongside our CCN partners.

68. We look set to receive up to an additional £2.177m for Social Care and over £8m for High Needs and SEND. Alongside the other proposed measures around Council Tax and continuing reform, this means we have a balanced draft budget for 2021/22.

69. Going forward, we will continue to lobby for a new funding formula, now expected in 2022 following further deferment due to COVID-19, that reflects the key drivers of cost and adjusts the weighting for rurality and sparsity. This could further help to ensure the sustainability of the services we deliver today for future years.

Our Communities

70. A specific initiative as part of our response to the pandemic has been our Here2Help initiative, which has provided help to people within our communities in need of support. Here2Help was launched as One Worcestershire's community action response with the sole aim of supporting residents through the COVID-19 pandemic. Developed in-house at the beginning of the pandemic, Here2Help has assisted with more than 4300 requests for help and coordinated 2000 offers of help from those volunteering to assist in communities.

71. Understandably it has been more difficult for us to carry out some of our regular structured engagement with communities, such as our summer roadshows that were cancelled this year. We have, however, continued with our Residents' Viewpoint Survey and in September 2020 asked some 4538 panellists to complete a survey.

72. Overall the results of the survey have been positive, with significant increases in the overall satisfaction of residents with Worcestershire County Council, agreement that the County Council provides value for money, satisfaction with the local area as a place to live and in those who feel they belong to their local area.

Council of the future

73. Over the last twelve months we have completed the deployment of Windows 10 devices, rolled out Microsoft Teams as a new collaboration tool for the Council, migrated to Office 365 and new cloud-based services for greater access to data on the go. As part of the Council's mobilisation of the workforce to work remotely during the pandemic, staff have been provided with appropriate IT equipment and tools to work from home, as well as scaling up the Council's IT infrastructure and systems to support a remote workforce.

74. Major investment has been made in a new social work case management system, with migration from Frameworki to Liquidlogic now complete. This enables staff to better access and update files, enhances productivity and supports mobile and flexible working.

75. Digital is transforming everyday lives on a global scale and will continue to do so at an ever-increasing pace. Having access to the internet is now often described as the fourth utility and this drive to be better connected is also changing what people want and need from our Council. Our new Digital Strategy defines the Council's digital ambition, its approach to the use of technology, and the digital skills required.

76. We have completed senior officer recruitment for our redesigned organisation and commenced transformation programmes across a number of the critical support service areas. At the onset of the first lockdown, we implemented a pause to the organisation redesign programme, allowing the Council to focus its attentions on the COVID response. We will continue to deliver this programme in the coming months and review opportunities for further transformation in light of our experience through the pandemic.

77. Synergies and benefits from our new design for the top three tiers of the organisation are already being seen. Our Workforce Strategy and approach to Total Reward will complement this and the priority remains to ensure we have a performance and productivity culture optimised for the post pandemic environment. We have introduced our new Chief Officer Group, who are responsible for operationally delivering the priorities and projects. This group, made up of all our Assistant Directors, has already started to make a difference, setting specific service plans (2021-22) for every area, setting out success measures and objectives which can be used in our annual performance plans.

78. Our Workforce Strategy for 2021 – 2024 is being developed to ensure we have a workforce with the personal and collective resilience to drive us forward in these challenging times. We are focused on building a high performance and high productivity culture and the right working conditions, where employees are valued and supported to perform at their best. Our workforce strategy sets out clear pillars of success and an employee's promise focusing on wellbeing, leadership, recruitment, workforce transformation and culture ensuring we have the capacity and capability to meet needs.

79. Finally, I would like to thank Cabinet Members, our management team and the wider workforce, as well as all Members of the Council for the invaluable contribution they have made throughout the year to improving Worcestershire and the services of the Council. This has been a testing year and I am grateful to all for the concerted effort of the whole Council to support residents and businesses through this extraordinary year.

Simon Geraghty
Leader of the Council
January 2021

COUNCIL
14 JANUARY 2021**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

1. The following report reviews the work of the Chief Executive over the last year and would normally provide Members with a detailed update on key priorities, actions and achievements in that time. This year the report has been produced differently as it appears on the same agenda as the Leader's report and the report of the Cabinet member for adult social care. In order to prevent duplication and repetition I have not included within this report the many examples, achievements and outcomes that are already detailed in the Leader's and the Cabinet Members' reports. However, I would ask that Members reflect on the details in those reports and take this report in conjunction with that content. I am happy to provide Members with the opportunity to seek further clarification where required on both this report or the examples and detail contained within the Leader's and Cabinet Members reports provided as part of this agenda.

2. I would like to start by thanking all staff working for and on behalf of Worcestershire County Council, striving to ensure residents, businesses and communities receive the services they deem important within a very tightly defined financial envelope. Containing costs and managing demand remains a significant issue which has been further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic over the last year.

3. Clearly this has not been a typical year, and the scale of challenge and the need to move at pace to deal with emerging issues has never been so acute. As Members will recall we started 2020 with very serious and wide scale flooding which required the organisation to operate under our emergency planning procedures. The work to manage the flooding needed to be managed in addition to all day to day service requirements and represented a significant additional effort for all staff involved. I am pleased to report to Members that our emergency planning worked well and working with our partners in the Environment Agency, the Police, Local Resilience Forum and District Councils the flooding situation was contained.

4. What we could not foresee at that stage was both the scale and impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. No sooner had we started to step down our response to flooding, the COVID outbreak began in earnest. This necessitated a further emergency response and one that has continued until today. This level of additional work is unprecedented and a huge challenge. The new council structure, systems and processes introduced previously have made this more manageable and the Council's finances are broadly in line with the budget set at the start of the year, when the costs of COVID and the associated grants are set to one side. Should any use of reserves be required at year end, these will be at a low level and sustainable within the Council's overall financial position.

5. Effective Council leadership requires a strong relationship between the officer core and elected Members. As you will recall this was a key priority for myself and the strategic management team. Over the last year these relationships have been tested in our response to the pandemic and without the strong level of understanding and trust

between officers and Members leading to clear decision making, financial planning, organisational redesign and performance management the organisation would not have met the challenge presented by COVID-19.

Public Health

6. This last year has been dominated by the nation's response to the public health threat of COVID-19. As a Public Health Authority this has placed the County Council at the forefront of the response to the pandemic and has placed additional responsibilities on the Council, on myself, as the Chief Executive, and the Director of Public Health. Some of these responsibilities are placed specifically on the individuals making them personally accountable, however, within Worcestershire County Council, we have continued to operate as a team thereby spreading the burden and ensuring our response met the requirements set by Government.

7. Flexibility has been the key internally and I wish to thank all the members of the Strategic Leadership team, the Chief Officer Group and the members of staff on our gold, silver and bronze emergency planning teams for their hard work, innovation and willingness to take on and resolve issues in rapidly changing times.

8. We did not however do this alone. 2020 has been a year of partnership working. Early discussions with District Council Leaders and Chief Executives led to a one Worcestershire approach, consistent messaging and the ability to work across organisational boundaries as never before. This has been vital to ensuring public services continue to operate in both County and District Council areas. The joint working has led to the integration of teams. Examples of this are the Here2Help service, the distribution of food to shielding residents, work to house the homeless and the joint working between Public Health and Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

9. Outside local government, People services and Children's services have worked in partnership with the NHS, schools and the Clinical Commissioning Group. Again, the levels of joint working, information sharing, and issue resolution has been exceptional. Many historical issues that were often seen as insolvable have been overcome. For example, our ability to work with the Acute hospital to move people out of hospital beds quickly and efficiently has been an incredible achievement and is continuing to operate today.

10. Children's services have worked tirelessly to protect children and young people (CYP) but in addition the support we have provided to our schools has been vital.

11. The 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 and Worcestershire CCG and Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) to reduce the risk of further transmission of COVID-19 as well as the national Test and Trace service. The LORT is now fully operational 7 days a week from 9am to 6pm.

12. 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.

13. A key role of the LORT is to support schools in the event of a positive case. Upon notification of a symptomatic or a confirmed positive CYP or staff case, 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. Again, this has been achieved and is detailed later in the report.

14. Each area of the Council's services has adapted to and contributed to the need to control COVID-19; however, this has necessitated the need for co-ordination, data collection and analysis, partnership working and both regional and national working. The control and co-ordination have been achieved in two ways, the first was via the Council's emergency planning system of Bronze, Silver and Gold teams, the second through the Director of Public Health and her team. Ultimately our strategy, objectives and implementation have all been channelled through the Public Health team and the Bronze, Silver and Gold groups thereby bringing the maximum level of resources, capacity and resilience whilst still maintaining control.

15. There are far too many examples to list in how Public Health has responded to the pandemic however their work has been outstanding as has the leadership, management and technical advice of the Director of Public Health.

Financial Management

16. Strengthening financial management remains a key strand of the Strategic Leadership team and the wider management team's agenda. I am pleased to report back today several improvements over the last 12 months, most notably:

- Our 2018/19 Statement of Accounts were one of the first in the country to be produced, and our External Auditors signed them off unqualified and on time. This included a clean, unqualified opinion on our value for money assessment. Nationally less than 50% of audits were signed off on time and given the year we have had in responding to COVID together with an enhanced level of audit scrutiny this was a tremendous achievement.
- We set a balanced budget for 2020/21 and despite everything that has happened we are forecasting to deliver a balanced budget at year end.
- We brought responsibility for the General Ledger back in-house during 2020 and have made significant improvements in the use and operation of the finance system. At the same time, we have continued to work closely with Liberata on performance improvements, including reviewing payment terms which has been vital in ensuring our key providers responding to COVID to ensure their cashflow.
- Our Pension Fund valuation has remained broadly unchanged despite the impact of COVID on the global economy due to high performance on our asset management, with the Fund now standing at circa 90%. We are also investing resources into responsible investment and working with the Pension Committee to develop our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policy.

- We continue to strengthen the governance of our Pension Fund in light of national recommendations from the Pension Regulator and the Scheme Advisory Board.
- The Internal Audit service has continued to develop over the year, with a combined focus on high level assurance audits and service and school-based audits. Our audit approach has enabled us to switch focus to assure the governance of the response to the COVID pandemic whilst also providing assurance to financial and asset management.
- Internal Audit have supported operational managers by certifying 10 grants with a value of over £30 million, with a further 5 due before the end of the year.
- Our focus on Risk management has seen a challenge and improvement to our processes and we have introduced separate reporting to support the COVID and EU Exit positions.
- Our Appointees and Deputies team have worked with our most vulnerable clients in very different ways to give them access to their money and ensure they are financially protected.
- We have worked with our commissioning colleagues to ensure the social care grants for providers are sent out quickly and accurately resulting in over 1000 additional payments, whilst changing core systems and reporting, to ensure we can quickly and accurately provide the returns required by Central Government.
- The social care payments and receipts system (Controcc) alongside the Social Care data system (LiquidLogic) has been in operation now for 12 months for Adults and 10 months for Children's. The new payments portal for our providers has helped ensure over 600 paper invoices per month have been replaced with automation and ensure providers are paid within days of submitting. This has been well received by our providers.
- We have strengthened our Finance function with a restructure that not only delivered on the savings target but saw the introduction of 11 apprentices, including one graduate from Worcester University and 9 from our local colleges.

17. There is still more to do, and we are not resting on our laurels with several key projects ongoing, including:

- Centralising and improving the efficiency of the way we pay and collect monies. This is being monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee.
- Strengthening our Internal Audit function further, building on peer reviews and adopting new ways of working, again monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee.
- We are reviewing the Financial Regulations, schemes of delegation and procedure manuals. This will extend to continued training of budget holders, and a workforce plan for our Finance Team that will include bringing in more apprentices and I am pleased to say we are focused on recruiting from our Worcestershire schools, colleges and university and from our care leavers.

Organisational Redesign and Human Resource Management

18. Organisational redesign has been a major feature of our work this year involving all departments at all levels. The fundamentals behind the programmed redesign were to remove operational silos, drive performance and productivity, reform processes to be more efficient and cost effective, and to use digital technology where appropriate to its full potential. The response to COVID-19 has accelerated the transformation programme and fundamentally changed the way in which the organisation works.

19. Synergies and benefits from our new design for the top three tiers of the organisation are already being seen. We have introduced our new Chief Officer Group who are responsible for operationally delivering the strategic vision of the Strategic Leadership Team and our Corporate Strategic Plan. This group, made up of all our Assistant Directors, has already started to make a difference, setting specific service plans (2021-22) for every functional area and setting out success measures and objectives which can be used in our annual performance plans creating a golden thread throughout the organisation.

20. Our Workforce Strategy for 2021 – 2024 is being developed to ensure we have a workforce with the personal and collective resilience to drive us forward in these challenging times. We are focused on building a high performance and productivity culture and the right working conditions, where employees are valued and supported to perform at their best. Our workforce strategy sets out clear pillars of success and an employee's promise focusing on wellbeing, leadership, recruitment, workforce transformation and culture ensuring we have the capacity and capability to meet the needs of our communities and to benefit local people and our economy.

21. As a result of COVID-19 many of our programmed transformations have already been implemented however going forward we will now need to assess what has been successful and therefore should be retained, what needs to improve further, and what has not worked as expected and needs to change. This will be the focus over the next few months as we look to the future following COVID-19.

Worcestershire Children's First

22. 2020 was a positive year in the new relationship between the Council and Worcestershire Children's First our wholly owned company. Clearly the pandemic has placed significant additional pressures on both the Council and the company. We did, however, make an early decision in full consultation with the Chairman of the Company and the Board to ensure that any contractual bureaucracy did not get in the way of providing services to children and young people. This has been an extremely successful approach and has not only ensured that services have been maintained but has also allowed for service improvement to continue and to improve outcomes for children and families. Alongside this focus was embedding the company governance and monitoring arrangements required for both the Council and DfE to monitor performance of Worcestershire Children First.

23. There are strong working relationships between WCC and WCF which go far beyond the formal contractual monitoring arrangements. The working relationship with our Strategic Director of People who has the lead commissioning role of WCF within the

Council has further strengthened the strategic system leadership required to improve outcomes for the county's children and young people.

24. Further details of the service achievements and outcomes are contained in the Leader's report on this agenda and are therefore not repeated here.

The People Directorate

25. The People Directorate is now established, with the appointment of the Strategic Director for People, who joined the Strategic Leadership Team in May 2020. This is important in strengthening relationships across Worcestershire Children First, Community Services, Public Health and wider partners, including the NHS.

26. These relationships underpin the delivery of the vision and strategy for Worcestershire's People and Communities: to modernise council services to best meet peoples' needs; to shape the care market so that services and support maximise the way in which people live their lives; all underpinned with an ethos of a person centred approach – focused on enabling and improving people's health, wellbeing and independence.

27. Partnerships with health and care organisations are being explored under the national policy direction of Integrated Care Systems, where all partners work closer together for the improved health and wellbeing of all residents.

28. Budget pressures remain a concern as demand continues to rise due to the needs and complexity of those requiring support. It remains the priority of Adult Social Care that the most vulnerable individuals are protected and supported. The full implementation of the 3 Conversation model has seen significant benefits in relation to promoting self-reliance and demand management.

29. We have seen an Acute Hospital System under increasing pressure which has had a significant impact on the level and type of services we provide to support people following a hospital admission. A key objective in 2021 will be to maximise opportunities to actively work with our citizens to avoid hospital admission and promote access to reablement.

30. Following the creation of Worcestershire Children First our 'Community' Services are now located with the new People Directorate. Much of the focus of these services over the past year has been on implementing our response to COVID-19 with staff moving from their permanent roles to work in new areas responding to the needs of the community and the organisation. A clear example of this was the creation of the new Here2Help service early in the year where many of our library staff took on these roles and provided a vital and excellent service to our communities.

31. Further details of the service achievements and outcomes are contained in the Cabinet Members report on this agenda and are therefore not repeated here.

Commercial and Change Directorate

32. The One Worcestershire strategy to raise the profile of the county goes from strength to strength. The Council is working with a growing network of private and public sector partners from all parts of Worcestershire to promote the county as an excellent place to live, work and invest.

33. The One Worcestershire brand has also been used across the County in the COVID-19 response providing a coherent brand for key messages and communications. It has also been embraced by all our District Council partners as a single source of quality information for the public regarding the COVID-19 response.

34. In terms of the Council's transformation programme at the onset of the first lockdown, we implemented a short term pause to allow the Authority to focus its attentions on COVID response activities. As part of a gradual scaling up of activities, we have completed senior officer recruitment, and commenced transformation programmes across number of the critical support service areas, including commercial, HR and Programmes. We will continue to deliver this important programme in the coming months, and review opportunities for further transformation in-light of our new ways of working.

35. In March this year, the Authority gave notice to Place Partnership Limited of its intention to migrate all property management services for our corporate estates back in-house. Subsequently, all partners have chosen to withdraw from Place Partnership, and options are being considered on how to draw the company to an effective close on or near the 31st March 2021. A new team will be established under the direct control of the Authority, allowing us to focus on delivering an improved and commercially optimised service in the 12 months that follows.

IT Services

36. Over the last year we have completed the deployment of Windows 10 devices to all Members and staff, rolled out Microsoft Teams as a new collaboration tool for the Council and migrated to Office 365 and new cloud-based services for greater access to data on the go. As part of the Council's mobilisation of the workforce to work remotely during the pandemic, staff have been provided with appropriate IT equipment and tools to work from home, as well as scaling up the Council's IT infrastructure and systems to support a remote workforce. In addition, many new digital services were launched during the lockdown to support staff and our communities.

37. Major investment has been made in a new social work case management system, with migration from Frameworki to Liquidlogic completed. The new system enables staff to better access and update case files, enhances productivity and supports mobile and flexible working.

38. Digital is transforming everyday lives on a global scale and will continue to do so at an ever-increasing pace. Having access to the internet is now often described as the fourth utility and this drive to be better connected is also changing what people want and need from the Council. Our new Digital Strategy defines the Council's digital ambition, its approach to the use of technology, and the digital skills required.

39. I also want to take this opportunity to pay my thanks to the Council's IT teams as their work over the past year has been invaluable to the Council in enabling flexible working during the pandemic. The move to online working, remote meetings and even Full Council being online has been efficient, effective and reliable. We are all users of their services and as a consumer it has been the core of our ability to react and successfully continue delivering services to our communities.

Projects and Programme Management

40. The team have assisted with an incredible variety of emergency response, change and savings projects including the purchase and supply of personal protective equipment, the move to online working and the establishment of the Here2Help service.

41. The support to front line and back office service delivery has been excellent, finding new ways to organise, purchase and deliver key resources I know has been a challenge often against almost impossible deadlines, yet our staff have once again risen to the challenge and delivered time and time again.

Economy and Infrastructure Directorate

42. The impact of COVID-19 on E&I Services and the role of E&I services and staff in the response has been detailed in recent COVID-19 Cabinet reports, in addition many of the service achievements have also been included in the Leader's report which is also part of this agenda. I have therefore not repeated the information here, however I am happy to respond to any question's Members may have about the E&I work over the last year as detailed in the Leader's report.

43. In addition to the above the E&I Directorate have been the lead in respect of the Council's emergency response. The Strategic Director took on the role of Gold Commander and organised the emergency response on behalf of the Council. This began at the start of the year with our response to flooding and then continued throughout the year with regard to COVID-19. This is a huge undertaking involving both internal management and organisation combined with being the primary contact point and liaison with partners. To provide an insight this has involved attending the Local Resilience Forum, the local Strategic Coordination Group with partners, arranging, chairing and managing a twice weekly internal gold meeting as well as chairing a weekly meeting with our District Council colleagues.

44. Further support from the Directorate came from their management team, one of whom also took on the role of chairing the silver group, again a very busy and intensive role where strategic decisions are formed into operational delivery plans which the bronze group then enacts.

45. All of this has been delivered from within existing resources and is work in addition to the normal day job and under circumstances where the use of remote working and digital technology were the only solutions available.

46. The individuals and teams involved have gone above and beyond anything that could reasonably be expected and have also shown real leadership and accountability in the work they have done. This is incredibly satisfying to see and was a key part of the

organisational restructure we implemented which aimed to release capacity, give greater authority to managers and to let them then get on with the job. Our response to COVID-19 has shown that this was the right way to progress and that staff have responded in a positive way to the opportunities the restructure has provided.

47. It has been a busy and productive year despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the above are only a small fraction of the services and outputs the County Council has achieved. It has been a year of new challenges, new ways of working, transformation and working in partnership however the Council and our partners have risen to that challenge and delivered not only against our service plans but also in response to the pandemic. I would therefore like to conclude this report as I started by expressing my thanks to all the staff, managers, Councillors and our partners who have made this all possible.

Paul Robinson
Chief Executive
January 2021

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 Chief Executive) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

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COUNCIL
14 JANUARY 2021**REPORTS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH RESPONSIBILITY**
– CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADULT
SOCIAL CARE

Introduction

1. It gives me great pleasure to be able to bring my report to Council. It continues to be my aim to build on the vision as set out in Corporate Plan. *“It is our priority, working with partners, to ensure Worcestershire residents are healthier, live longer, have a better quality of life and remain independent for as long as possible.*
2. *We will work together with partners and communities to enable Worcestershire residents to make responsible choices when planning their lives to achieve the best possible outcomes. We will enable individuals to become or remain independent, self-reliant and an integrated part of their local communities.”* We have continued to bring direction, balance, and order to this vision.
3. 2020 has been an unprecedented year, with Adults Social Care customers, staff, and providers having to respond dynamically to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, on the most vulnerable of our society.
4. The over 70 population in Worcestershire is estimated to be around 99,500, up from 83,000 in 2014.
5. The increase is largely due to an increase in those in the 70-74 age group due to the ageing of the baby boom cohort, but there have been increases in all older age groups as people in Worcestershire are generally living longer. The number of people in the oldest 75+ age group is projected to increase from 62,500 to 78,000 between 2019 and 2025. People in the oldest age group are likely to have higher needs associated with frailty, comorbidity and living alone. This is an increase of 15,500 people or a percentage increase of 25%. Overall, 23% of our population are now aged over 65.
6. Our vision and strategy will continue to focus on ensuring as many of our vulnerable residents to remain independent, for as long as possible. Some of our main achievements in this area and focus for the next 3 years is detailed later in the report.
7. I must again pay tribute to our carers, during an unprecedented time, when their unique role has been paramount in continuing to ensure those they care for have remained safe and well during the Covid-19 pandemic.

8. There are over 70,000 carers in Worcestershire and unpaid carers perform an exceptional role in our society and increasingly, most of us are likely to assume responsibility for helping to care or support someone close to us at some point in our lives. We become carers when our caring responsibilities exceed normal expectations for a relationship due to the illness or chronic condition of someone close to us. Many people enjoy or derive great satisfaction from their carer role and may acquire new skills and friendships, but carers often unknowingly place their own physical, mental and financial wellbeing at risk of harm without appropriate support.

9. The Council's main support for carers is delivered by Worcestershire Association of Carers (WAC) – which receives around £1.6m to carry out their essential role in assessing carers, supporting individuals and advocating for carers as an invaluable group. WAC immediately stood up to offer proactive and one to one support for our carers and have worked tirelessly, in partnership with Adults Social Care to ensure carers have been supported through this challenging time.

10. Our People Strategy focuses on supporting people to stay safe and remain independent for as long as possible. Protecting people from the experience or risk of abuse or neglect is a key element in achieving this. In 2019/20 (*figures always a year behind*) there were 3921 safeguarding concerns reported of which around 14% met the criteria for a safeguarding enquiry to be completed. The priorities of Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) are:

- **Making the System Work** – continue to oversee the delivery of safeguarding requirements (S42 safeguarding duty, Making Safeguarding Personal and Liberty Protection Safeguards), ensuring that learning is embedded across all services and that the pathways are understood;
- **Joint Working** – build on joint working with other Worcestershire Partnerships to ensure that adult safeguarding issues receive the appropriate strategic ownership and provision across all services; and
- **Wicked Issues** (for example, complex multi-agency issues) – develop the WSAB ability to understand the ‘wicked issues’ which have the potential to have an impact on safeguarding adults with care and support needs.

Responding to COVID-19

11. Adult Social Care has continued to work in partnership with NHS colleagues to promote the “Home First” way of working to ensure we maximise people’s opportunities to return home after a hospital admission. This is continuing to reduce the number of individuals entering long term Residential and Nursing care due to hospital acquired functional decline.

12. Social work teams have seen increases in activity, as people seek support during the pandemic. Social Care staff continue to work proactively to ensure individuals access the care and support they need. Options for support in some areas remain curtailed due to the need for services to be Covid-19 safe but alternatives are being identified where possible.

13. Work also continues to analyse the resilience of the care market in Worcestershire and to plan appropriate support and mitigate the risks identified.

14. The Council has financially supported its suppliers during the peak of the COVID-19 Crisis and our services are adapting to new ways of supporting people, which meets the guidelines of social distancing and greater personal protection. Inevitably this brings about changes for customers, which they are being supported to adapt to; e.g. buildings-based services can no longer admit as many people as before and remain Covid-19 safe. Services are therefore engaging with our customers to bring forward different opportunities for supporting them.

15. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, intensive work has taken place to support care homes to put in place effective infection prevention and control measures. The “Worcestershire Care Home Hub” was established at the outset of lockdown to strategically lead, co-ordinate and facilitate action across the system, to support care homes and prevent infection during Covid-19, and it will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The joint working across Adult Social Care, Worcestershire Public Health, Public Health England, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and other health partners enables pooling of capacity and resources, using a proactive and supportive methodology, in order to minimise the number of homes experiencing an outbreak and reduce the absolute number of cases and deaths.

Key Areas of Success

16. Adult Social Care have continued on their journey of transformation, during the pandemic, which is a credit to the new Strategic Director for People, her management team and the staff across the service. Over the last 12 months we have:

- Launched the new **Community Reablement** Service, ensuring people are supported and enabled to remain at home, for as long as possible.
- Implemented the national requirements of “**Home First**” and reablement offer being provided to everyone at point of hospital discharge.
- **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS)**: The number of high priority DOLS requests waiting to be assessed has begun to reduce.
- Good progress continues to be made towards our target of having 650 people in **supported living** accommodation by the end of the financial year.
- There has been a **drop in admissions to permanent residential and nursing care** homes of 216 fewer admissions comparing September 2019 to September 2020.
- As placements in permanent care homes have fallen the number of **people receiving domiciliary care** in their own homes has risen.
- **Budget**: for the first time for several years, Adult Services is **forecast to break even** by year end – this is due to a concentrated and focused effort including:
 - Tighter control on overall spend and managing accountability
 - Changed entry pathway into residential/nursing care and increase in people returning home with support
 - Decrease in projected numbers of people coming into the care system on a long-term basis

Looking Ahead

17. As Adults Social Care became part of the new People Directorate, we have strengthened our relationships across Worcestershire Children First, Community Services and Public Health and this underpins our vision with a clear strategy for Worcestershire's People and Communities, under three key pillars of change.

18. Our **Person-Centred Approach** ensures we place people at the heart of what we do across People Directorate, the council, and with partners - to enable and empower people to live the life they wish through a new operating model, appropriate training and assurance.

- a) We are building on our Here2Help offer and developing an integrated customer wellbeing model, across all services/offers: face to face & digital offer;
- b) We are embedding a Think Local Act Personal ethos; information, advice and guidance based; self-reliance, self-directed and self-assessment approach which is relationship based;
- c) We are developing formal partnerships with key stakeholders, community and voluntary sector to promote wellbeing and reduce health inequalities based on our strengths-based approach; and
- d) We are developing locality based integrated teams for social care with health, district council and voluntary sector that focus on the customer to ensure we have visibility of needs and risks in one place and offer long term management for some customers.

19. We are **Shaping our Services** with a focus on all age approaches and choices for people to remain well and independent.

- a) We are increasing our Shared Lives and Supported Living placements;
- b) We are adding to our day centre resources by creating a wider set of support into offers for independence, choice and wellbeing;
- c) We are working with Worcestershire Children First and health partners to develop an all age offer for people with disabilities, aged 0-25;
- d) We are on track to deliver Adults Mental Health Social Care directly, in collaboration with NHS and other partners to prevent and reduce Mental Health crises;
- e) We have implemented a single reablement model that will fit into a longer term integrated intermediate care model; and
- f) We have launched, in partnership with University of Worcester, a Community Support Programme. This will provide start up investment funding to develop and run up to 9 centres for people with Dementia and their carers, across each of the six districts in Worcestershire. £620,000 has been identified for allocation over the next 3 years of up to £60,000 for each centre awarded.

20. We are working closely with providers and engaging with them to develop independence and choice through our **Shaping and Effective Market** theme. Bringing focus to whole population commissioning not just those who access “services”.

21. The care market is expected to shrink over the next few months and years as people and providers adjust to the COVID-19 and post COVID-19 world. Occupancy levels in some care homes are currently low and there is a trend for more people requesting care at home.

- a) We want to retain this focus on enabling people to live independently, at home, for as long as possible and are re-focusing the use of residential and nursing care;
- b) We plan to invite tenders from the market in the next few weeks for reablement focused domiciliary care so people can recover from ill health;
- b) We are re-defining our replacement care offer through clear policy and range of responses;
- c) We will continue to embed the effective use of enablers to independence, building on the success of our approach to Assistive Technology; and
- d) We are increasing the use of Direct Payments and Personal Assistants.

Looking Forward to a Few Strategic Priorities Over the Next Two Years

22. There is general consensus that the only viable solution to the rising demands for care must be a national funding solution; it is very disappointing that no progress has been made on this topic during the course of the year. I do understand that it has been very hard for the Secretary of State to concentrate on the funding issue, while engaged in a global pandemic crisis but I do hope that after this is resolved; we see a speedy green paper consultation which will resolve not only the funding of councils social care responsibilities but also to resolve how individuals should pay for care – I still believe we need to encourage people to plan for their care needs in the same way that they plan for their pensions and not face catastrophic costs that intensive levels of care can cause.

23. We have embarked on an ambitious programme of partnership with our health, district council and community/voluntary sector partners. This will see us apply to become accredited as an integrated care system which enables a focus on improved wellbeing, tackling health inequalities, making best use of the Worcestershire resources we have in a coordinated way, and ultimately deliver better outcomes for residents.

24. I would just like to thank all our staff for their help and support over the year.

Adrian Hardman

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care

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COUNCIL
14 JANUARY 2021**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE BOARD**

Recommendation

1. **The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance recommends that the Council receives the annual report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board for 2020.**
2. The Council will be asked to receive this report and to receive answers to any questions on it.

Supporting Information

Appendix - Annual report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board for 2020.

Contact Point 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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Overview and Scrutiny **Annual Report 2020**

January 2021

www.worcestershire.gov.uk



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Foreword

My first full year as Chairman, did not go as planned. Clearly the lockdown caused by COVID–19 was all consuming and it changed many of our plans and directions. Some of the issues we had planned to scrutinise could not happen, we have not forgotten those issues and we will return to them. However, our priority had to change due to the Pandemic, and we used the facilities available to us and targeted our resources to examine the County Council’s reaction to the COVID emergency.

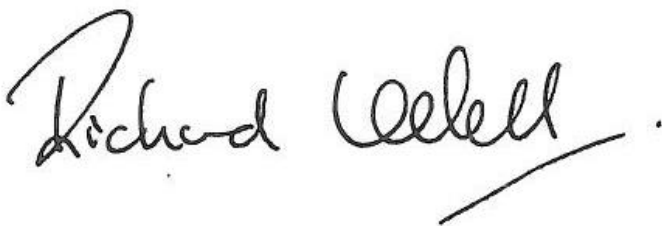
I would like to thank the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive for their full co-operation and support. They made themselves available to us for Scrutiny and we used every opportunity to question, challenge and examine their response to COVID and their future plans.

I believe Scrutiny in Worcestershire is effective, it’s a good example of cross party working which holds the Executive to account and dares to speak truth to power. This is not done for political advantage, but for the collective good of the Council, local residents and businesses.

We have a large backlog of work to complete next year, but it will be with a new Council and with new ideas and priorities, clearly some things will have to change. I hope we will be able to find time to examine some non-Council services in Worcestershire which are provided by outside agencies, this must be an important area of our work. I would also hope the area of policy development is expanded and Scrutiny Panels will identify areas in which they can help and support the Executive with new ideas, proposals and policies.

All Members who took part in Scrutiny during the year did so with their normal commitment and with a common endeavour to advance the County, I would like to thank my Vice-Chairman Liz Eyre, I fully depend on her wise counsel and advice, her support is appreciated, likewise sincere thanks to all Members of the Overview, Scrutiny and Performance Board, I believe we work well together and achieve results.

As always, I would always wish to record my heartfelt and sincere thanks to all the Scrutiny staff who work very hard on our behalf. Without their dedication and support we would not be able to be so effective.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Udall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Richard Udall
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board

Introduction

COVID-19 has meant unprecedented changes to lives across the globe. In the UK, on 23 March the Prime Minister asked the public to stay at home, to protect the NHS and to save lives. Schools were closed nationally from the end of Friday 20 March, whilst being required to provide a service for vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

Following Government guidance, on 16 March 2020 the Council moved away from business as usual activity and established an emergency planning approach to developing and enabling its response to the pandemic, whilst continuing to meet statutory duties. As a consequence, Scrutiny was paused from this time until May when it started to plan for a phased return.

A significant change arising from the pandemic has been the operation of the Council's public meetings. The Government temporarily removed the legal requirement for local authorities to hold public meetings in person and issued temporary regulations to allow public meetings to be held online, visible to the public, whilst they could not take place at a specific place such as County Hall.

The Council quickly adapted and made use of the available technology to hold public meetings virtually, therefore continuing to make critical decisions on the delivery of its services for Worcestershire residents in a way that was both transparent and accessible to the public. Where appropriate, Scrutiny has continued to play a key role ensuring that democracy continued during this difficult time.

Unsurprisingly, much of the scrutiny focus during 2020 has been on the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's services and the recovery response going forward. This Report highlights some of the key pieces of work from the past year undertaken by the Scrutiny function of the Council. A diagram showing where Scrutiny fits in the governance of the Council is enclosed at the appendix. Details of the membership of scrutiny bodies and their [meetings](#) are on the Council's website.

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB)

The primary role of the Board is to co-ordinate the work of the Scrutiny Panels. However, it has also considered a range of issues in 2020, generally focusing on strategic Council-wide matters.

Scrutiny Annual Work Programme for 2020/21

The Scrutiny Work Programme was drawn up following consideration by each Panel, so that their individual priorities could be taken into account. The work programme was endorsed by [Council](#) in September 2020

Scrutiny of Other Agencies

Usually, the Board meets each year with representatives of the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) to receive an annual update on the achievements of the WLEP over the last 12 months and to understand the strategic objectives for the forthcoming year. In 2020, the impact of the COVID pandemic meant that this was not possible and instead the Board has received a written update covering 2020/21.

Community Safety

The Board is the Council's designated statutory Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee. As part of this responsibility, the Board meets on an annual basis with Crime and Disorder partners, to discuss issues of mutual interest. Due to COVID-19 and the exceptional demands on partners in responding to this, the Annual Meeting was deferred. The Board was, however, provided with an interim report, setting out some of the current issues and summarising how key areas of work were being managed across the partnerships during the pandemic and how some activities had been adapting to help keep people safe.

During this discussion, it was noted that the Domestic Abuse Bill, which was currently going through the House of Commons, would place new duties on the Council to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within refuges and other safe accommodation. At a later meeting, the Board considered the Council's preparations to be ready to implement these new duties with its key partners.

Budget 2021/22

The Board will collate views on the draft budget for 2021/22 at its meeting in February for consideration by Cabinet later that month. The Scrutiny function has maintained its approach to monitoring and challenging service and budget performance this year. Regular updates are included in each Panel's work programme and this has led to some 'deep dive' work being undertaken to follow up queries. This has helped Panel Members to be proactive when scrutinising the budget and to develop a deeper understanding of the services.

In November, the Overview and Scrutiny Panels started to look at the emerging budgetary pressures and challenges for services. These discussions will help to inform the Panels' scrutiny of the draft 2021/22 Budget.

Adult Care and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Much of the Panel's focus during 2020 in respect of COVID-19 has been on social care services for adults. Positive feedback from residents has been very reassuring to members, in particular the Here2Help community action response, which has been looked at in more detail by the Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Panel has been interested to hear about how changes to ways of working during COVID, have in some cases brought positive results to some challenging areas. For example, the Panel has strived to understand how patients can be discharged from hospital more effectively to their own home with less admission to residential or nursing homes and has heard that this has improved during COVID through increased joint working and understanding.

The viability of the care home market is an area which the Panel has continued to monitor, including support provided by the Council during COVID. Regular updates on care homes was a recommendation of the 2019 scrutiny review of quality assurance of care and nursing homes.

Following the directorate restructure, the Panel has been keen to understand the new Director's Strategy for People and Communities and is supportive of its approach and objectives. In particular Members welcomed the aim to reach people earlier, thereby reducing the number requiring long-term services and enabling independence, for example through the new Reablement Service. The Panel recognised that the new Strategy seeks to address one of the main messages from the February 2020 Peer Review: the need for more targeted intervention at an earlier stage and the perceived need for a clearer overall vision.

The Panel has continued to monitor services and plans for those with learning disabilities (the focus of the Peer Review). This includes the review of day opportunities for people with a learning disability which aims to take account of learning in response to the challenges presented by COVID-19. These discussions have benefitted greatly from the contributions of Speak Easy N.O.W (self-advocacy charity) and Healthwatch Worcestershire.

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

As with other scrutiny panels, the main focus of the Panel's work this year has been the response to COVID-19, particularly in relation to children's social care and education. Members were keen to understand the protocols that were put in place and the different delivery methods used to ensure that children were safeguarded and able to access education, while ensuring the safety of children, families and staff. They wished to compliment staff on their adaptability in response to an unprecedented situation.

The Panel received six monthly updates on plans for a new delivery model for medical education provision and looks forward to scrutinising the final proposals in January. Members have also received updates on educational outcomes and Ofsted inspections in Worcestershire schools, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities improvement journey, and provision for overnight short breaks for children with disabilities, as well as quarterly monitoring of performance indicators and in-year budget information.

Members have considered two services which are commissioned by the County Council and provided by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust. The Panel welcomed the way in which the Starting Well Service had responded to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic but wished to see further information on how the effectiveness of community projects was evaluated. In relation to the assessment pathway for children and young people who may have autism (the Umbrella Pathway), the Panel acknowledged the significant progress made. However, Members were still very concerned about the length of waiting times from referral to diagnosis and the impact on families and will continue to monitor the situation in 2021.

2020 was the first full year of operation for Worcestershire Children First, the company set up to deliver children's services on behalf of the County Council. Members had been concerned that the move to WCF would disrupt the flow of information to the Scrutiny Panel but have been pleased to note that this has not proved to be the case.

In November the Panel saw a change in Chairman with Councillor Tom Wells taking over from Councillor Fran Oborski. At its final meeting of 2020, Members of the Panel expressed thanks to Councillor Oborski for her hard work and leadership during her time as Chairman.

Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Panel looked at the implications of COVID-19 with a particular focus on the Council's commercial activities including new contract requirements and a re-profiling of major contracts due for renewal. Also, of significant interest to Members was the Here2Help scheme including how the experience and knowledge gained would be used to provide a foundation for an Integrated Health and Well-being Hub Programme. Members were hugely appreciative of the efforts of all staff, both on the front line and in support teams, who had played their role in ensuring that residents were safeguarded and that critical services for residents were maintained.

The Panel has used the quarterly performance monitoring information it receives as a focus for some of its scrutiny. One such area was the Council's statutory and corporate complaints and compliments system. Members looked at this in some detail earlier in the year and the Panel has kept a watching brief throughout the year and will receive an annual report in future.

Members of the Panel welcomed plans for the introduction of a Member Query Case Management system and the benefits it could bring including enhancing the productivity of Councillors and enabling the Council's managers to gain an understanding of the levels and areas of demand. The detailed work for this was expected to commence in September 2020 and the Panel looks forward to hearing how it progresses.

The Panel was keen to understand how the Council handled Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Request (SAR) processes and how it complied with Data Protection legislation. Members gained a thorough understanding of the significant level of requests that the Council receives, the complex nature of many of these requests and the labour-intensive processes in place to ensure they are handled correctly. In order to scrutinise this activity going forward, the Panel has requested that details of these services are included in the quarterly Performance Monitoring report.

In March this year, the Council's Corporate Transformation Programme was paused due to COVID-19. The Panel received an update on progress in November and was told that, since August, opportunities had been explored to deliver some changes to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, as well as develop capability, without the need for major structural change. The Council is continuing to learn from current ways of working, identifying practices that will enable enhanced productivity and effectiveness when the response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic is over. The learning from the digital experience will be particularly valuable in this regard and the Panel will continue to monitor developments in 2021.

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The condition and maintenance of Worcestershire's roads forms a considerable part of councillors' work with residents. The Panel was therefore keen to hear how new developments and efficiencies are benefitting roads in Worcestershire and this has been explored through two discussions with the Council's highways maintenance contractor and the Council's responsible officers, which the Panel found very useful.

2020 has undoubtedly been dominated by COVID-19. However, another major challenge for the Council has been two serious flood periods between October 2019 and March 2020. During its annual update with Council officers, the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water, the Panel very much welcomed the flood alleviation work completed, and whilst appreciating the complexity involved, encouraged continued thought around ways to speed up development of future schemes. The Panel also requested more regular Member updates on the delivery of flood alleviation schemes.

Other topics considered by the Panel have included diversionary routes, streetlighting and an annual update on superfast broadband, which is a requirement of the Council's contracts with BT. The excellent achievements in extending superfast broadband so far were welcomed, and the Panel will continue to monitor the extension of gigabit capable infrastructure, which will be especially important with increased home working.

Online public meetings during COVID have meant increased public participation and the Panel has really appreciated input from the public to its discussions on active travel and the Council's work to tackle climate change. Moving forward, the Panel has requested an annual update on the Council's work to enable and promote cycling and walking.

Close attention is paid to the budget and performance monitoring reports and the Panel has identified developer funded highways infrastructure as a potential area for further scrutiny after the County Council elections.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

The focus of the Committee's work this year has continued to be monitoring progress of acute hospital services in Worcestershire, and regular performance updates have been requested from Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust. In March, representatives from organisations across Worcestershire's health and social care sector were invited to a 'select committee' style meeting, where discussion with each organisation took place in turn, and this proved a very useful basis for future scrutiny. Committee members are delighted that the Trust is now out of special measures and will continue to monitor progress.

The COVID-19 pandemic has of course brought a new set of challenges and the Committee has recognised the enormous commitment of all the organisations across the health system in responding to COVID-19. From July, a new regular update was added to agendas to keep committee members informed about any temporary changes to services, how services are being restored and improvements arising from new ways of working during COVID. These discussions have also benefitted from feedback and reports from Healthwatch Worcestershire.

The Committee welcomed the news that some new ways of working have been very successful for some services and service users. For example, 40% of consultations for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services were now via video link with very good feedback. Nonetheless the Committee is very conscious of those members of the public who may not have accessed GP services during COVID, the importance of face to face consultation and the implications of unmet demand. The impact of the pandemic on mental health is also a great concern which has been added to the work programme for the New Year. In July the Committee had a specific update on access to GP services.

End of Life Care and Recommended Summary Plan for Emergency Care and Treatment (ReSPECT) was subject to discussion in September, and the Committee heard about the refocus taking place on the Personalised End of Life Care Strategy, including learning from COVID. An update has been requested for 2021 to hear about further progress, including out of hours provision and the challenge of ensuring all organisations have access to ReSPECT forms through electronic records.

Other topics looked at have included an update on the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Sustainable Transformation Partnership and the NHS Long-term Plan. More recently the Committee has considered the new 'NHS 111 First' national programme which is designed to help manage urgent care, COVID pressures and inappropriate use of walk-in Emergency Departments.

Scrutiny Task Groups

Care Work as a Career

In February 2019, the Council agreed a Notice of Motion asking the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care to consider ways in which the work of Worcestershire residents who worked in the care industry could be celebrated and encouraged, and how the importance of the care worker's role could be emphasised. The CMR subsequently suggested that a Scrutiny Task Group could look at how to develop the career pathway for care workers and how to promote care work as a career with justifiable rewards.

The Task Group was led by Mrs Tucker, Vice Chairman of the Adult Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Its terms of reference were *'How the Council can promote and develop care work as a career and how the existing care workforce can be better supported and celebrated.*

The Task Group's report was completed just before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which of course has shone a spotlight onto the commitment, determination and fortitude of employees in the NHS and the social care sector. The Task Group felt that the findings of their report were even more important and relevant as a result of the pandemic.

The Task Group made 12 recommendations, ranging from providing resources for a publicity campaign with the aim of promoting the care worker role, signing up to the Skills for Care 'I Care Ambassador' scheme and scaling up the numbers of care work apprentices to flow into adult social care. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care fully supported 10 of the recommendations, with a further one being partly supported. A report on progress in implementing the recommendations will be considered at OSPB in January 2021.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

A Scrutiny Task Group to look at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was set up in early 2020 but was only able to meet once before the national lockdown in March. As health partners were required to focus on the response to the pandemic, the scrutiny was put on hold but remains on the scrutiny work programme.

The Council's Energy Purchasing Arrangements

This issue initially arose during a budget monitoring discussion at the Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel in November 2019, when attention was drawn to a cost pressure relating to street lighting. As a consequence, the Corporate & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel (C&C Panel) was asked to look into the Council's energy purchasing arrangements. The C&C Panel received an initial report on the subject which led to some research being carried out by a small group of Panel Members.

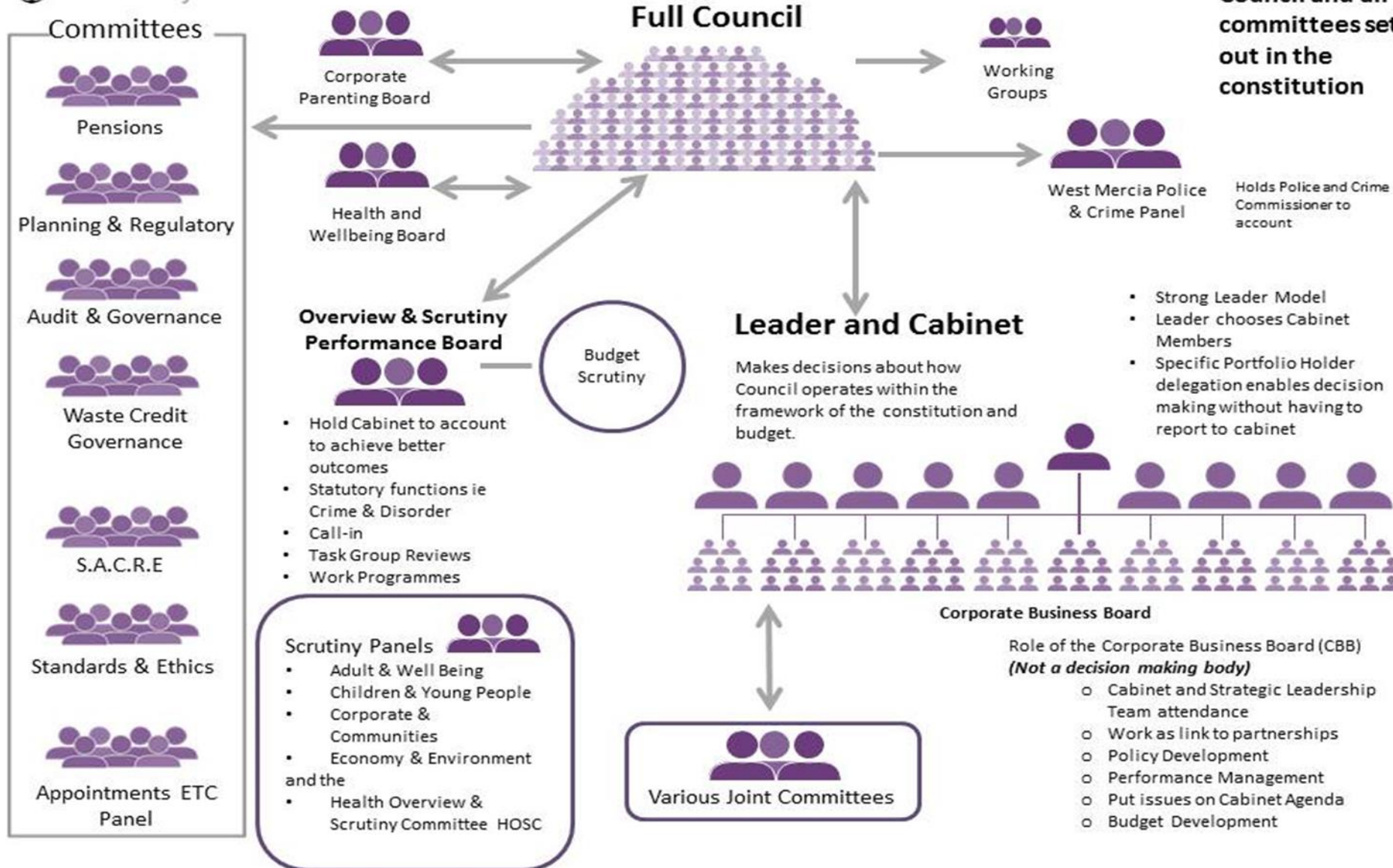
In July 2020, it was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) that a Scrutiny Task Group would be set up, led by Councillor Adam Kent (Chairman of the Corporate and Communities O&S Panel). Its terms of reference were *'to review the Council's energy purchasing arrangements from West Mercia Energy (WME) to ensure best value for Worcestershire County Council'.*

As at December 2020, the Task Group is reaching the end of its work and a final Task Group report will be presented to OSPB in January 2021.

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Governance Model

Role of Full Council and all committees set out in the constitution



Further copies of this report are available from:

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This document can be made available in other formats (large print, audio tape, computer disk and Braille) on request from the Overview and Scrutiny Team on telephone number 01905 844963 or by emailing scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

COUNCIL
14 JANUARY 2021**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 – Kinship Carers

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 R C Lunn, Ms C M Stalker, Ms P Agar, Ms P A Hill, Mr P Denham, Mr P M McDonald, and Mr L C R Mallett:

“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 2 – Library Service

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 Mr R C Lunn, Ms C M Stalker, and Ms P Agar:

“This Council supports a publicly owned and accountable library service. We support them becoming ever more a centre of community and encourage their use as a local learning and public leisure facility,

Furthermore, Council records its thanks and appreciation to all Worcestershire Library employees and volunteers.”

Notice of Motion 3 – Trade Unions

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 M Udall, Mr R C Lunn, Mr P Denham, Mr P M McDonald and Mr L C R Mallett:

“Council notes that 2021 is the 150th anniversary of the passing of the Trade Union Act, which legalised trade unions in the U.K. for the first time. Council recognises the important contribution trade unions have provided to Worcestershire society and the advancement of worker rights which they have championed in Worcestershire and across the world. Council actively encourages and supports trade union membership among its own employees and encourages all contractors and suppliers of services to the Council to do likewise. Furthermore, Council sends congratulations to the Trade Union Congress on this important anniversary”.

Notice of Motion 4 – Local 20mph Speed Limits

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 M E Jenkins, Dr C Hotham, Dr J W Raine, Mrs M A Rayner and Mr T A L Wells:

“Requests for more 20mph speed limits, particularly in residential areas and near schools, are often made to councillors. This motion requests that a task group or member advisory group be set up to review how 20mph areas are currently considered and look at the feasibility of creating a process that would allow a 20mph area to be created within a councillor’s division.

A review was carried out three years ago for resident parking and this motion calls for something similar with regards to 20mph speed limits. The process would be determined by this group, but the general idea would be as follows:

1. Councillor receives a request for 20mph in an area;
2. If the councillor supports this idea, then they discuss it with a Highways Officer.
3. If the Highways Officer considers a 20mph speed limit feasible with little need for costly interventions, then it can proceed to the initial design stage.
 - a. Costs would need to be met by the local councillor, from their highways maintenance budget and/or their divisional fund;
4. The initial plans would then go to a public vote of those residents in the area. This vote would follow the rules for resident parking schemes. Eg. At least 50% return their vote, and of those who vote 80% are in favour;
5. If the vote is successful, then detailed plans can be drawn up and implemented like any other Traffic Regulation Order.

The benefit of this approach is that it allows greater local decision making, whilst keeping the costs for the council to a minimum.

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
14 JANUARY 2021**QUESTION TIME**

Question 1 – Energy from Waste plant at Hartlebury

1. Mr P A Tuthill will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment:

"It has now been confirmed that the overall thermal efficiency of converting waste to electricity is approximately 30%. At the time of writing work is being done to determine the split of the other 70%- such flue gas, residues and particularly the lower grade heat from the cooling fans [the equivalent of cooling towers on a large power station].

I am aware there have been discussions with a nearby brick maker- clearly there cannot be district heating given the location- but some power stations supply local greenhouses. Could the Cabinet Member with Responsibility confirm what progress has been made and what is planned for this site to further contribute to Worcestershire County Council energy saving?"

Question 2 – Covid 19 Vaccination Sites

2. Mr R C Lunn will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health:

"Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility inform Council as to how many Covid vaccination sites there are currently in Worcestershire, and how many will be added across the County?"

Question 3 – Lyme Disease

3. Mr R M Udall will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities:

"Will the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Countryside Centres and Country Parks confirm what action she has taken to raise awareness and improve education about the risks of Lyme Disease in the county. Lyme Disease can have serious long-term effects on individuals and is present in the county. Would she consider working with the charity Lyme Disease UK to ensure information is available to the public and notices are placed at Countryside Centre's and Country Parks to advise residents of the dangers, risks and precautions they could take to minimise the risks?"

Question 4 – Covid 19 - Test and Trace System

4. Mr R C Lunn will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health:

"Based on the most recent data, can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility inform Council as to what is the ratio of people being contacted by national Test and Trace compared to our local Public Health teams?"

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
14 JANUARY 2021**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****(a) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

Internal Audit Progress Report

1. A total of 101 work items are included in the 2020/21 Internal audit Plan. 18 audits are currently underway or completed, including 11 linking to Worcestershire Children First (WCF), with a further 34 planned for the remainder of the year. Of the completed audits, 3 have been given substantial assurance and 1 limited assurance. The limited assurance audit relates to St Egwin's Middle School, where audit work found that the overall control framework is adequate, but the operation of controls is poor. A number of actions have been agreed with the school management team.
2. Audit actions are tracked and regular contact is made with operational managers to follow up progress. There are currently 16 audits with 52 open actions.
3. The Key work themes for the next quarter are: Financial management framework audits; IT audits; Corporate governance arrangements relating to Covid19; Asset management; and school audits. Other audits will be undertaken on a risk basis. The Committee has noted the progress to date and approved the focus of the quarter 4 audit plan.

External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update

4. Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditor has produced an External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update. The report provided an update on progress made by the external auditor in delivering its responsibilities. Peter Barber, the Engagement Lead at Grant Thornton introduced the report and members asked a series of questions with particular focus on the proposed increase in the fee to the Council for the work undertaken by the external auditor. The Committee has noted the content of the report.

Income Management

5. The Council has recruited two senior managers: A Payments Manager and Income and a Debt Manager to help the management of income/debt. The process of reviewing all transactional services has now commenced, and in particular those around income management. Increased capacity has been agreed within Legal

Services for a 12-month period to support the requirement for greater challenge and action going forward to collect debt. The deeper analysis of debt is progressing whilst the data extraction and analysis reporting is improving which will enable information to be accessed faster.

6. The latest level of short-term debt stands at £30.2 million, 67% (£20.2 million) of which was raised this financial year. This has risen significantly in the last month although this mainly relates to four debtors who have just had new accounts raised to them. Collection will be prioritised for these larger amounts. The total debt recorded greater than 30 days old, for which there is not an instalment or pending cancellation is £17.911 million (59%).

7. The timing of the data extraction has identified the top four debtors having £8.8 million raised within the last month. Discussions are taking place with the education sector, Council and NHS debtors to obtain payment. It is expected that these will be cleared quickly. The Committee has noted the Income Management report.

Risk Management Update

8. A revised risk management process has been approved by the Chief Officers' Group and the outcome of which is being implemented. Work is underway with operational teams to understand the current risk position. This has identified a wide diversity in the risks which are being managed and the Risk and Assurance Manager is working to confirm the revised process with these teams. The current corporate risk register, which has been maintained at an operational level is being reviewed. There are currently 16 risks which are classified as high and work is taking place with these service areas to ensure these are clear, current and representative. The EU Exit project maintains a separate risk register and the project managers are being engaged to ensure that these risks are being effectively managed. There are currently no risks classified as high.

9. Covid risk management continues to be a key focus. The move into a second lockdown has not had a significant impact on the risks being managed. Internal Audit continues to work with the Covid response team to understand emerging risks, such as distribution of vaccines.

10. One red Covid risk remains in relation to social care placement availability – diminishing availability of care home beds in Worcestershire. This situation continues to be closely monitored. The Committee has noted the Risk Management update.

Statutory Accounts Update

11. The County Council's and the Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund's 2019/20 Statutory Accounts were signed off on 27 October 2020. Additionally, the external auditor issued an unqualified Value for Money conclusion for the County Council on the same day. There remains as planned some audit fieldwork around the completion of the Whole of Government Accounts statistical return before the Audit Certificate can be issued. This work is in progress with no matters arising

12. The Committee received an update on the progress on the 2020/21 Statutory Accounts Process including an update on the Accounts team resources, the introduction of a new financial standard in respect of leases, the introduction of new regulations in respect of the accounting treatment of the Dedicated Schools Grant, and details of the 2020/21 Accounts planning. The Committee has noted the Statutory Accounts update.

Work Programme

13. . The Committee has noted its future work programme.

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 4 December 2020.

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

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COUNCIL
14 JANUARY 2021**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 meeting on 25 November 2020 and the Board meeting on 13 November 2020.

LGPS Central Update

2. There are no further transitions of the Fund's existing assets planned at this stage, but the Fund is presently looking at potential infrastructure investments with LGPS Central. The level of investment will be between 1 and 2% (£30 to £60m) of the Fund overall Value. The first iteration of the Strategic Business Plan and proposed budget for 2021/22 is due to be presented to the next Practitioner Advisory Forum meeting on the 3 December and the final proposals are planned to come to Committee for approval on the 28 January 2021.

3. The 2020 Cost Savings Model which is used to allocate and apportion costs and savings to individual partner funds is currently being updated and agreed with LGPS Central and will be presented to Committee in January 2021. Patrick O'Hara has been appointed as Director for Responsible Investment and Engagement, Cara Forrest as Client Relationship Manager and Satvinder Saini as Enterprise Risk Manager at LGPS Central. The Committee received a presentation from Mike Weston, Chief Executive of LGPS Central and has noted the LGPS Central update.

Pension Investment Update

4. 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.

5. The Covid 19 pandemic has had a significant impact on March 2020 estimated funding levels, but there was a slight recovery in April 2020 which has continued to recover to a funding level of 92% in September 2020. However, it is most likely that the market volatility will continue over the ensuing months which will impact on the

overall funding levels. The Committee has noted the funding position compared to the investment performance.

6. The revised Equity Protection Strategy that was adopted in September 2020 has required increased active management than the previously implemented strategies and fortnightly monitoring meetings have taken place with River and Mercantile since September 2020. The revised Strategy includes the implementation of trigger points to consider restructuring the Strategy for both upward and downward market moves. The Committee has noted the update on the Equity Protection current static Strategy.

7. 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.

8. The Committee has noted the update on the development of a Climate Risk Scenario Monitoring report and the Environment Social and Governance (ESG) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) mapping Audit exercise

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 23 November 2020 which included an update on the Funds Good Governance position statement and Competition and Markets authority (CMA) Independent Investment Advisor objectives.

Risk Register

10. The Risk Register is kept under regular review and, following the November 2020 review by officers, the residual risk score of WPF07 (Future change to LGPS regulations or other legislation) has increased from 20 (green) to 40 (amber). No new risks were added to the Register. Mitigating actions have been updated for new measures and previous measures that have been completed or developed further or have changed timelines. The Committee has noted the Risk Register as at 5 November 2020.

Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) rectification

11. The Fund's supplier ITM have completed their dry run of the GMP rectification. ITM have reviewed a total of 8,952 pensioners and 1,005 dependant pensioner members. The initial findings show around 2% of the population reviewed will require a correction, which looks very typical for an LGPS fund. The results show 174 pensioners and 34 dependant pensioners will require a recalculation. If a trivial threshold of £12 per annum is applied the members who will require a re-calculation reduces to 95 pensioners and 17 dependant pensioners. The total cost of the adjustments, before a trivial threshold is applied, is within the authorised value delegated to the Chief Financial Officer.

12. The Committee has noted the previous decisions made by the Committee shown in the ITM report and specifically in respect of i) Historic overpayments will not be recovered; and ii) Historic underpayments will be paid, including back-pay, with interest. The Committee has approved i) Trivial threshold of £12 per annum for both under and over payments; ii) Correction of pension for overpayments will be made by decreasing the pension from the rectification date, of 28 February 2021; and iii) Correction of pension for underpayments will be made by increasing the pension from the rectification date of 28 February 2021.

Pension Fund Audited Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2020

13. The Pension Fund accounts were formally signed off by External Audit on the 27 October 2020 and are included as part of the County Councils accounts. The Annual Report is a key communications channel between the fund and a wide variety of stakeholders. The report contains information relating to the Pension funds audited annual accounts including the fund investments, administration, governance, valuations, accounts and membership. The report has been verified by External Audit. The Committee has approved the Pension Fund Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Training Update

14. The Committee has noted the feedback from the Induction training and specific training events that have been undertaken since the last Committee meeting. 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.

LGPS Regulation Update

32. The Government has recently introduced legislation, in the form of the Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020, which will cap (at £95,000) the amount of exit payments that can be paid by employers to public sector employees when they leave employment (e.g. because of redundancy). The Exit Payments Regulations came into force on 4 November 2020.

33. The sorts of exit payments ("Exit Payments") caught by the £95,000 cap are listed in Regulation 5 of the Exit Payments Regulations, and generally include the sorts of payments made to employees in consequence of termination of employment or loss of office. They also include (at Regulation 5(2)(b)) *'any payment to reduce or eliminate an actuarial reduction to a pension on early retirement or in respect to the cost to a pension scheme of such a reduction not being made'*.

34. These Regulation 5(2)(b) payments would cover 'funding strain' payments that LGPS employers can be required to make to their LGPS fund under regulation 68(2) of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 where they make an employee redundant over age 55. In those circumstances, regulation 30(7) of the LGPS Regulations requires the Administering Authority to pay the member an immediate unreduced early retirement pension.

35. The Exit Payments Regulations do not include any transitional provisions for redundancies that have commenced before 4 November 2020, but which will not conclude until after that date. There were two options for the Committee to consider in order to address this issue:

- **Option 1** – which is to pay a member an immediate full unreduced pension under existing regulation 30(7) and collect the strain cost above £95k from the employer in the future; or
- **Option 2** – which is to pay a member a fully reduced pension under existing regulation 30(5).

36. The Committee has approved Option 1 and restricted to exceptional cases (redundancies that started before 4 November) where the risk of challenge may outweigh the cost of non-payment, and determined in the interim period (4 November until LGPS Regulation changes enacted). The Committee also agreed that the Fund's policy be amended to make a partial move to using the draft GAD guidance to calculate strain costs for those employers subject to the Exit Cap Regulations.

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 December 2020.

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

COUNCIL
14 JANUARY 2021**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****(c) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE PLANNING
AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE**

Applications

1. The Committee approved the following applications subject to detailed conditions:
 - Demolition of part of the existing industrial building; erection of extension of retained building and connection to adjacent waste transfer station to provide additional storage space for waste materials, office and staff facilities, and a new weighbridge (part-retrospective) at Metal and Ores Industrial Estate, 138 Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Worcestershire
 - Proposed retention of existing double mobile classroom building at Hanbury Church of England (CE) First School, Hanbury, Worcestershire.
2. Details of the above application can be found in the agenda papers for the Committee meeting held on 1 December 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 1 December 2020.

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

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