

Minutes of the Council

County Hall, Worcester

Thursday, 15 July 2021, 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Steve Mackay (Chairman), Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Salman Akbar, Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Alan Amos, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr David Chambers, Cllr Brandon Clayton, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, Cllr Matt Dormer, Cllr Elizabeth Eyre, Cllr Laura Gretton, Cllr Peter Griffiths, Cllr Karen Hanks, Cllr Ian Hardiman, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Paul Harrison, Cllr Marcus Hart, Cllr Bill Hopkins, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Adrian Kriss, Cllr Aled Luckman, Cllr Emma Marshall, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Tony Miller, Cllr Jo Monk, Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Tony Muir, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cllr Scott Richardson Brown, Cllr Andy Roberts, Cllr Josh Robinson, Cllr Linda Robinson, Cllr Chris Rogers, Cllr David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr Jack Satterthwaite, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Kit Taylor, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Craig Warhurst, Cllr Shirley Webb and Cllr Tom Wells

Available papers

The members had before them

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. 6 questions submitted to the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (previously circulated); and
- C. The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2021 (previously circulated).

2278 Apologies and Declaration of Interests (Agenda item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Kyle Daisley, Aled Evans, Luke Mallett, and Dan Morehead.

Cllr Tracey Onslow declared an interest as Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner in relation to Agenda item 6 – Notice of Motion 2.

Cllr Beverley Nielsen declared an interest as a director of the newly formed company, Malvern Hills Arts and Community College Ltd in relation to Agenda item 7 – Question Time – Question 6.

2279 Public Participation (Agenda item 2)

Cllr Lynn Denham presented a petition concerning the reinstatement of the school crossing patrol at Stanley Road Primary School on the corner of Stanley Road and Wylds Lane. Cllr Denham asked for the patrol to be reinstated as a matter of urgency due to the danger the busy area posed to school children crossing the road. Over 400 parents, children and teachers had signed the petition to reinstate the patrol.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Denham for the contribution and said she would receive a written response from the relevant cabinet member.

2280 Minutes (Agenda item 3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2281 Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 4)

The Chairman informed Members of his attendance at Bewdley Town Council where he witnessed the new Mayor, Councillor Paul Harrison, take office.

The Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman, Councillor Chris Rodgers, for attending the Armed Forces Day ceremony in his place.

Finally, the Chairman informed Members of his recent visit to the Guildhall in Worcester for a remembrance service in respect of the events surrounding the 1995 Srebrenica massacre.

2282 Reports of Cabinet (Agenda item 5)

The Leader of the Council reported the following topics and questions were answered on them:

- Children's Homes and Semi-Independent Accommodation
- Blakedown Rail Station Car Park Extension
- Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring - Financial Outturn for 2020/2021.

2283 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 1 - Climate Change (Agenda item 6)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Dan

Boatright, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Luke Mallett, Cllr Jake Satterthwaite and Cllr Josh Robinson.

The motion was moved by Cllr Dan Boatright and seconded by Cllr Lynn Denham who spoke in favour of it, and Council agreed to deal with it on the day.

The following amendment was moved by Cllr Tony Miller and Seconded by Cllr Marc Bayliss:

“Climate change is already causing a serious problem for our communities across Worcestershire and society across the world. The Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change’s 2018 Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C calls for urgent action within 12 years to protect people from the consequences of irreversible climate change. All governments, national, regional, and local have a duty to act.

Council declares a climate emergency and commits to doing the following:

- *Endorse the Councils ambitious Net Zero Carbon Plan.*
- *Continue to work with our partner authorities to review and update all relevant strategies.*
- *Establish a Member Advisory Group to assist with the future revision of plan and report annually on actions taken.*
- *This Council reaffirms the target of reaching net carbon neutral by 2050 in line with the Government’s target.”*

In the ensuing debate, the following points were raised:

- Although the target date of 2050 for becoming net carbon neutral aligned with the government target, it was an unambitious target. It was argued that the target of 2035 was achievable with the right investment strategies. The target of 2050 would be too late to achieve the necessary decrease in temperatures which was required
- Members described how the global effects of climate change were observable, most recently with the wildfires which had devastated parts of North America. The climate emergency was happening in the present moment. Urgent, systemic change was required, and it was argued that the amendment to set a 2050 target was not soon enough to tackle the crisis
- The proposed amendment with a 2050 target was more realistic as it enabled the Council to achieve it in a sustainable manner while allowing the Council to provide the level of service provision to meet the needs of the residents of Worcestershire at an affordable cost
- The amendment aligned the target with the current Government programme. Members outlined several of the different dates which had been set by the Government for climate change targets. It was not necessary to select 2035 as the target for Worcestershire, especially if it would be neither achievable nor viable
- It was necessary to consider what the Council had already achieved with regard to protecting the environment. The work undertaken with

small businesses to reduce power consumption was given as an example. It was hoped that the target would be achieved before 2050 however a date should not be selected which was unachievable

- The claim that the UK's climate change strategies were 'world-leading' was disputed. Denmark was the only country which was on track to achieve the 2050 target. Several UK authorities were named which it was claimed were doing more to tackle climate change than this Council.

At the conclusion of the debate and on a named vote this amendment was agreed.

Those in favour of the amendment were: Cllr Steve Mackay, Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Salman Akbar, Cllr Allan Amos, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr David chambers, Cllr Brandon Clayton, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, Cllr Matt Dormer, Cllr Elizabeth Eyre, Cllr Simon Geraghty, Cllr Laura Gretton, Cllr Peter Griffiths, Cllr Karen Hanks, Cllr Ian Hardiman, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Paul Harrison, Cllr Marcus Hart, Cllr Bill Hopkins, Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Adrian Kriss, Cllr Aled Luckman, Cllr Emma D Marshall, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Tony Miller, Cllr Jo Monk, Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Tony Muir, Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cllr Scott Richardson Brown, Cllr Andy Roberts, Cllr Linda Robinson, Cllr Chris Rogers, Cllr David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Kit Taylor, Cllr Craig Warhurst and Cllr Shirley Webb. (42)

Those against the amendment were: Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Jack Satterthwaite, Cllr Richard Udall, and Cllr Tom Wells. (10)

Those abstaining were: Cllr Josh Robinson (1)

Members then debated the substantive motion. The view was expressed that the 2050 target was not ambitious enough and the Council should set a closer target to focus its efforts. In response it was suggested that actions already being taken by the Council indicated its intent and that the 2050 date was the latest by which it should reach carbon neutrality. At the conclusion of the debate and on a named vote, the substantive motion was unanimously agreed.

Those in favour of the motion were: Cllr Steve Mackay (Chairman), Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Salman Akbar, Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Alan Amos, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr David Chambers, Cllr Brandon Clayton, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, Cllr Matt Dormer, Cllr Elizabeth Eyre, Cllr Laura Gretton, Cllr Peter Griffiths, Cllr Karen Hanks, Cllr Ian Hardiman, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Paul Harrison, Cllr Marcus Hart, Cllr Bill Hopkins, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Adrian Kriss, Cllr Aled Luckman, Cllr Emma Marshall, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Tony Miller, Cllr Jo Monk, Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Tony Muir, Cllr Beverley Nielsen,

Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cllr Scott Richardson Brown, Cllr Andy Roberts, Cllr Josh Robinson, Cllr Linda Robinson, Cllr Chris Rogers, Cllr David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr Jack Satterthwaite, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Kit Taylor, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Craig Warhurst, Cllr Shirley Webb and Cllr Tom Wells. (53)

Those against: None (0)

Those Abstaining were: None (0)

RESOLVED: “Climate change is already causing a serious problem for our communities across Worcestershire and society across the world. The Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change’s 2018 Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5% calls for urgent action within 12 years to protect people from the consequences of irreversible climate change. All governments, national, regional, and local have a duty to act.

Council declares a climate emergency and commits to doing the following:

- **Endorse the Councils ambitious Net Zero Carbon Plan.**
- **Continue to work with our partner authorities to review and update all relevant strategies.**
- **Establish a Member Advisory Group to assist with the future revision of plan and report annually on actions taken.**
- **This Council reaffirms the target of reaching net carbon neutral by 2050 in line with the Government’s target.”**

Those in favour of the motion were: Cllr Steve Mackay (Chairman), Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Salman Akbar, Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Alan Amos, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr David Chambers, Cllr Brandon Clayton, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, Cllr Matt Dormer, Cllr Elizabeth Eyre, Cllr Laura Gretton, Cllr Peter Griffiths, Cllr Karen Hanks, Cllr Ian Hardiman, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Paul Harrison, Cllr Marcus Hart, Cllr Bill Hopkins, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Adrian Kriss, Cllr Aled Luckman, Cllr Emma Marshall, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Tony Miller, Cllr Jo Monk, Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Tony Muir, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cllr Scott Richardson Brown, Cllr Andy Roberts, Cllr Josh Robinson, Cllr Linda Robinson, Cllr Chris Rogers, Cllr David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr Jack Satterthwaite, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Kit Taylor, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Craig Warhurst, Cllr Shirley Webb and Cllr Tom Wells. (53)

2284 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 2 - West Mercia Rape and Sexual Assault Support Centre (Agenda item 6)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Dan Boatright, and Cllr Lynn Denham.

The motion was moved by Cllr Richard Udall and seconded by Cllr Natalie McVey who spoke in favour of it, and Council agreed to deal with it on the day.

The following amendment was moved by Cllr Karen May and seconded by Cllr Tracey Onslow:

“Council notes with deep regret the decision of WMRSASC to close its waiting list for counselling services. Council calls upon the Cabinet Member with Responsibility to convene an urgent meeting of all associated partners to develop a strategic and sustainable long-term plan for the West Mercia Rape and Sexual Assault Support Centre”.

Cllr Richard Udall gave prior notice that he was willing to accept the amendment. Members spoke in favour of the amendment with the following points being made:

- The Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being outlined the current situation regarding funding for the Centre, which in this instance dealt with counselling for historic sexual violence. It was a complex landscape and it was not clear where responsibility for funding this service lay locally, but she indicated that a long-term sustainable solution was being sought with partners
- Councillors agreed that it was essential to continue to support the victims of rape and sexual violence.
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being agreed to provide updates or a report to Cabinet if appropriate on progress made with the actions in the amendment.

On being put to a vote, the amendment was carried and put as the substantive motion which was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED: “Council notes with deep regret the decision of WMRSASC to close its waiting list for counselling services. Council calls upon the Cabinet Member with Responsibility to convene an urgent meeting of all associated partners to develop a strategic and sustainable long-term plan for the West Mercia Rape and Sexual Assault Support Centre”.

2285 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 3 - Road Safety (Agenda item 6)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Matt Jenkins, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Natalie McVey and Cllr Tom Wells.

The motion was moved by Cllr Beverley Nielsen and seconded by Cllr Tom Wells, who both spoke in favour of it, and Council agreed to deal with it on the day.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were raised:

- Recent Department for Transport data showed that 56% of vehicles did not observe the 30mph speed limit; the costs of dealing with road traffic accidents was in excess of the costs of prevention and a multi agency approach was required to change behaviour
- There was concern in the community about speeding
- Road safety was an integral part of any activity or construction scheme on the highway network. Worcestershire Highways was already treating road safety as a top priority
- The number of Police-reported casualty accidents in Worcestershire had been declining since 2015. The 2019 figure was 878 which was 20% lower than in 2015. Casualties had not reached 1,000 since four years previously, contrary to what was stated in the motion
- 12% of casualty accidents involved a pedal cyclist and 10% a motor cyclist, contrary to the statement that these made up 50% of casualty accidents as stated in the motion. The overall casualty rates in Worcestershire were below the national average
- Speeding enforcement was a matter for the police, not Worcestershire Highways. The Association of Chief Police Officers set and used national standards of speed enforcement which would be the speed limit, plus 10%, plus 2%. These standards were based on legal and practical reasons relating to the accuracy of speedometers and speed cameras
- Regardless of this motion, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport would be meeting the Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss improving road safety across Worcestershire. He welcomed any suggestions of issues to be raised with the Commissioner
- It was argued that an increase of 1mph above the speed limit should not result in a fine. A sensible and flexible approach to dealing with speeding was necessary.
- The UK planned to follow the EU in the implementation of new legislation which provided that speed limiters were to be fitted on all new cars from 2022. This would prevent new cars from being able to drive above the speed limit
- Residents were writing to Councillors every day about the issue of speeding expressing their concern. A cultural shift in attitudes to speeding was required.

On being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

Council adjourned between 11.55am and 12.10pm

2286 Question Time (Agenda item 7)

Six questions had been received by the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance and had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The answers to all the questions are attached in the Appendix.

2287 Reports of Committees - Pensions Committee (Agenda item 8 (a))

The Council Received the report of the Pensions Committee containing a summary of the decisions taken.

In the ensuing debate, The Chairman of the Pension Committee undertook to provide a written response to a query about the level of investment by the Pension Fund into fossil fuel companies compared to the national level.

2288 Reports of Committees - Planning and Regulatory Committee (Agenda item 8 (b))

The Council received the report on the Planning and Regulatory Committee containing a summary of the decisions taken.

The meeting ended at 12.35 pm

Chairman

COUNCIL 15 JULY 2021 - AGENDA ITEM 7 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below.

QUESTION 1 – Cllr Josh Robinson asked Alan Amos:

“Does the Cabinet Member agree with residents of Lickey End, that any closure of School Lane as part of the A38 improvement plans is not acceptable?”

Answer

I thank Cllr Robinson for what is his Maiden Question.

Yes, I do agree with the residents of Lickey End about the closure of School Lane. I have listened to their representations and also to those from my colleagues Cllrs Karen May, Shirley Webb, and Kit Taylor. Consequently, the scheme that I will be putting forward will not include the closure of School Lane, and School Lane will remain open under the new proposals. This was one of the options and it is not one we are going to implement.

Supplementary Question

It was queried whether the right-hand turn would still be allowed, or would it be closed, allowing 180 vehicles at peak morning rush-hour to travel northbound. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways responded that before any decision was taken on the right-hand turn, he had asked officers to provide detailed information on the modelling exercises they had undertaken on it so he could consider the matter in detail.

QUESTION 2 – Cllr Jack Satterthwaite asked Alan Amos:

“After many years of waiting for adequate safe cycling routes that are physically separated from other traffic, when will the construction of a Malvern to Worcester cycle route finally begin?”

Answer

I thank Cllr Satterthwaite for what is his Maiden Question.

The proposal for a Worcester to Malvern walking and cycling route was set out in Local Transport Plan 4, adopted by the County Council in 2018.

On delivering this, I can confirm that a section of the route has been completed through the Southern Link Road phase 4 scheme with the new pedestrian and cycle bridge across Hams Way, linking to Old Road and Powick Old Bridge. Surfacing of Old Road has also been improved using the Active Travel Funding.

County Highways need to secure external funding for delivery of the remaining route from Powick to Malvern. In January 2020 we submitted a bid to the Department for Transport for Pinchpoint funding for this section of the route. Unfortunately, the DfT subsequently withdrew Pinchpoint funding. In June 2021 the link from the new bridge at Hams Way to Hospital Lane, Powick was included in the Levelling Up Fund bid submitted to the

Government by the Council. A decision on the bid is expected in Autumn 2021. This Hospital Lane, Powick, to Newlands, Malvern section is 2.5 miles.

I would point out that as the A449 Powick to Malvern is largely a 60 mph road, the cycle lane must be segregated and therefore 3 metres wide to comply with new government guidelines. The original Pinchpoint Fund bid was for £5m. for the whole corridor and additionally the Ketch-Kempsey corridor. We don't have the full costs for the necessary redesign for the route to comply with the new government guidelines but I can say that the increase in costs will be significant.

This is a priority route that I am keen to deliver and we will continue to explore other funding sources for the route to enable it to be completed. Whilst looking for alternative funding for this corridor, the delivery of it may be in multiple phases as funding becomes available, just like several other highways schemes.

Supplementary Question

Bearing in mind that previous bids have been labelled as 'too poor' to gain the available funding, what specific improvements have been made to cycling bids to try and achieve the funding in the future to deliver this bid? The Cabinet Member with Responsibility responded that funding had been provided for part of the bid and funding was being sought to complete the rest. A bid had been submitted and then the DfT subsequently changed the rules. A further bid had been submitted and the outcome was expected in the Autumn 2021. If the supplementary question referred to bids for phases 1 and 2 from the active travel fund, an extra £800,000 had been received from the Government for these bids.

QUESTION 3 – Cllr Richard Udall asked Marc Bayliss:

"The Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills will know of the proposed closure of Joy Mining, in my Division, which will see the loss of up to 200 quality, highly skilled engineering jobs in Worcester, the factory has been on the current site since 1925, formally known as Meco; it is the last of the many large engineering factories and manufacturers which used to exist on Bromyard Road.

Can the Cabinet Member comment on any discussions he might have already had with the owners of the site, what he can and will do to help the employees who will be losing their jobs and to ensure their skills are not lost to the local economy, furthermore, can he confirm what action he can take to ensure the site on Bromyard Road remains for employment use and is not lost to housing development?"

Answer

We are aware of the current situation in relation to Joy Mining (Komatsu) and we are liaising with the Department for Work and Pensions who are in touch directly with the company. As you will be aware the timescale for implementation for the changes has not yet been fully confirmed, but expected the early part of 2023. Contact has been made with the company via our partners and they are aware of our eagerness to support the business and employees where we can. We understand no final decisions have been made as yet and the company have said once these have been finalised they will be in touch so that we can put together a co-ordinated package of support where it is needed.

We are currently responding to a number of enquiries from companies wishing to locate to Worcestershire, we would always aim to find an alternative employment use for the site if and when this becomes available.

Supplementary Question

Assurances were sought about the use of this site given local opposition to it being lost to quality employment land and it was queried how the former Boughton Holt railway station could be utilised as part of the future transport infrastructure in the area, perhaps as a park and rail station for Worcester. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility commented that the Council would seek to retain the site for employment use. He had not seen any proposals for the use of former Boughton Holt railway station to date.

QUESTION 4 – Cllr Matt Jenkins asked Karen May:

"Can I ask the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Health and Wellbeing what the latest figures are for overweight and obese children in Worcestershire, and what steps are being taken to reduce these?"

Answer

The latest figures for Worcestershire are Reception age (4/5yrs), 21.3% are either overweight or obese compared to 22.6% nationally; for Year 6 (10/11yrs), 32.9% are overweight or obese compared to 34.6% nationally. The National Child Measurement programme is undertaken annually through schools, measurements were not fully completed last year due to Covid.

A feedback letter is sent to all parents/carers following measurement signposting families to local activities and opportunities and a health, exercise and nutrition support programme is available for families to take up. A wide range of prevention activity is available across the system by various agencies through leisure, food, planning, active travel, activate programmes and the voluntary sector.

Supplementary Question

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility undertook to encourage more schools to sign up to the "daily mile" which aimed to get children active while in school.

Cllr Jenkins asked about actions being taken to make roads safer for children to be able to walk and cycle to school. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility indicated that the County Council offered Bikeability cycle training to all schools in the County. Bikeability was supported by the DfT and was designed to give the next generation of children the skills and confidence to ride their bikes on today's roads.

QUESTION 5 – Cllr Natalie McVey asked Karen May:

"I am sure that we will all have been distressed by the news that as of 1 July, West Mercia Rape and Sexual Assault Support Centre have been forced to close their waiting list for referrals to their counselling service, due to a lack of adequate funding.

It is unacceptable that this unique, specialist service has to scratch around for funding every couple of years. Surely we can do better for some of the most vulnerable people in our County; survivors of the most heinous crimes.

My question to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility is:

How will Worcestershire County Council meet its moral obligation to ensure that this life saving service remains available to survivors, who include women, men and children from the age of 5?"

Answer

Worcestershire County Council is committed to collaborating with the PCC, Herefordshire Council and NHS partners to ensure vital support for victims of sexual abuse in the county can continue sustainably in the long term for the benefit of the residents of Worcestershire. In the coming weeks we will work with partners to better understand the level of need for counselling services for historical and other victims of sexual violence, how best to respond to those needs and the roles and responsibilities of partner organisations in meeting the needs of residents. We will then collectively be able to agree a sustainable, longer term solution with partners.

QUESTION 6 – Cllr Beverley Nielsen asked Marc Bayliss:

"In my division of Malvern Langland following a recent survey by Pickersleigh Community Project with 233 responses, residents noted that their top priority was being able to access new skills development and training. The government too have highlighted the importance of lifelong learning and adult education with their White Paper, Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth.

With the closure at the start of July of our local FE and adult education college, Malvern Hills College, by Warwickshire College Group having taken it on five years ago, over 800 adult students are now having to look elsewhere for skills development. I know there are many people in my division and across Malvern who feel passionately about the loss of this one hundred year old institution, whose dedicated staff are so highly esteemed, about its amazing contribution to life in our town, and its unique position in our county, region and beyond, as well as the many lives which have been transformed through minds opened up to new opportunity. They would be grateful to hear more about the Council's actions in prioritising access to skills development in arts, design and creativity, as well as lifelong learning in Malvern in light of the closure of Malvern Hills College and the actions being taken.

To add to their questions, I would ask if you would echo the words of Sir Antony Gormley who in providing support to the College in Malvern stated, "We must value the places where we can think through making and learn from each other in doing so. Art is the essential tool in making a future. We are not in the world only to make money but to contribute to the evolution of life itself - potentially a rich, positive and exciting venture. We do not need another complex of 'luxury' flats, but we do need Malvern Hills College".

Answer

Many thanks Beverley for your comments and questions in relation to the closure of Malvern Hills College. Worcestershire County Council, along with our partners within the Local Enterprise Partnership continue to be committed to improving skills and increasing employment opportunities for Worcestershire Residents. We know that the impact of the COVID pandemic has increased unemployment levels, with our young people being disproportionately affected. For example the rate of unemployment claimants in young people aged 18-24 has increased from 3.8% to 9.4% since the pandemic.

We, therefore, continue to focus on efforts in promoting job and training opportunities across Worcestershire through our www.worcestershirejobs.co.uk and are also working closely with the DWP in filling the 700 Kickstart placements we have across the County. This is along with all of the work we do with employment support providers, business and our schools. We also operate a successful adult learning service which offers a range of leisure lifelong learning programmes – you can find out more about the courses available on www.worcestershire.gov.uk/adultlearning. I would encourage any of the 800 adult

students you mention to take a look at the site and get in touch with the team if they need further support.

Supplementary Question

In response to request for further information about the discussions taking place with the parties involved in the closure of the college, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility indicated that he would continue to work with the local MP Harriet Baldwin who had led the campaign along with other local activists in the area to try and find a satisfactory outcome.

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