

Cabinet**Thursday, 4 February 2021, Online only,
10.00 am****Minutes****Present:**

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

Also attended:

Mr R C Adams, Mrs E B Tucker, Mrs E A Eyre,
Mr A D Kent, Mr R C Lunn, Mrs F M Oborski,
Mrs M A Rayner and Mr R M Udall

**2018 Apologies and
Declarations of
Interest**

There were no apologies.

Mr A C Roberts declared an interest in that he was the Council's representative on PPL (Item 9) and he and Mrs L C Hodgson were Governors at Lyppard Primary School (Item 5).

Mr J H Smith and Mr A I Hardman declared that they were the Council's nominated representatives on the West Mercia Energy Joint Committee (Item 8).

**2019 Public
Participation**

None

**2020 Confirmation of
the Minutes of
the previous
meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 January 2020, were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and would be signed by the Chairman.

**2021 2021/22 Draft
Budget and
Medium-Term
Financial Plan
Update 2022-24**

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance, who is also the Leader of the Council introduced the draft budget report. The budget supported services which helped to protect the vulnerable and although income had increased more money was needed to meet the full amount for demand led pressures of some services. He highlighted the increased resources for public rights of way; that the Council Tax would be increased by 2.5 %, 1% of which was ring fenced for adult social care and that Scrutiny had given their feedback on the draft budget. He added that the increase in Council Tax was a balance between the need for resources and people's ability to pay and even with the proposed increase, Worcestershire remained in the lowest 25% for Council

tax.

Cabinet Members made the following contributions:

- Overall Cabinet Members were very pleased that additional money would be spent on improving rights of way, within towns as well as in rural areas. Increased amounts of money were also to be spent on highways, tackling congestion and various projects to help the economy and environment around the County.
- The Cabinet Member for Adult Services pointed out that The Government has reimbursed councils for the cost of the pandemic but the Council tax increase was needed to meet increased demand and the money would be going to an already reformed service. A new simpler home care fee system would be introduced in April which would combine rural and city rates and carers in Worcestershire were already paid at rates which were above the West Midlands average. There would also be some other fee uplifts.
- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families felt that Worcestershire had spent well compared to other authorities and the development of the Family First strategy helped families to stay together and was resulting in lower numbers of children needing to be taken into care.
- The Cabinet Member for Highways highlighted that an increasing number of projects were being completed to tackle congestion and improve footways.
- The Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure mentioned the capital projects which supported railways, the economy and the countryside with flood alleviation schemes.
- The Cabinet Member for the Environment praised the work done by officers and Cabinet Members to produce the draft budget. The projects undertaken and planned by the Council reflected their stance on climate change, for example making it possible for people to work from home, tackling congestion, updating lights to LEDs, planting trees and flood alleviation schemes.
- The Cabinet Member for Communities welcomed

the budget and was pleased that Worcestershire remained in the lowest quartile for Council Tax even with the increase. She felt the Here2Help project helped to support the most vulnerable in the County and praised volunteers who helped at vaccine centres. She was pleased with the digital offer made by the library service but did mention that there was still a small amount of savings to be made in that area. She also mentioned the investment made in the science park.

- The Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being was pleased that the investment in public rights of way would help people maintain healthy lifestyles. The hard work of the Director of Public Health and her staff during the pandemic was recognised.
- The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills felt that it was right that there had been a pragmatic approach to Council Tax with a small increase. He also reminded members that Councillors still had access to their divisional fund which could support projects in their own areas and although the Council did not control the amount of Dedicated Schools Grant, overall there was an additional £56 million for schools.
- The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Commissioning thanked the team for working on digital connectivity which allowed people to work more efficiently, often from home, which minimised car use.

The main comments and questions from outside the Cabinet included:

- The Chairman of the Corporate and Communities Scrutiny Panel recognised that the officers had pulled the budget together in difficult circumstances and thanked them for making the budget scrutiny process easier and more transparent than in previous years. The Scrutiny Panel believed the draft budget addressed the needs of the residents and was glad the Council had had the foresight to invest in broadband and in future would be investing in rights of way.
- In response to a question by the Leader of the

Labour Group the Chairman responded that no specific mention had been made of the gap of £22 million which would appear in 2022 because it was a similar figure which the Council had been able to address previously. He believed that the economy would bounce back and efficiencies would be found. When they received the 3 year spending review the Council would work with the Government to address any gaps and it didn't need to be addressed at this time.

- The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board appreciated the co-operation of Cabinet Members and officers in addressing the concerns of the OSPB. There was some concern at the amount of support available for businesses but generally as long as income generation continued, they were content with the direction of travel. The Chairman responded that the Business reserve was available and the Council was working with the LEP and District Councils to support businesses.

RESOLVED that Cabinet to recommend to Council that:

- (a) the budget requirement for 2021/22 be approved at £355.531 million as set out at Appendix 1B to the report, having regard to the proposed Transformation and Reforms programme set out in section 9 of the report;**
- (b) the Council Tax Band D equivalent for 2021/22 be set at £1,343.83 which includes £129.15 relating to the ring-fenced Adult Social Care precept, and the Council Tax Requirement be set at £285.219 million, which will increase the Council Tax Precept by 2.50% in relation to two parts:**
 - **1.50% to provide financial support for the delivery of outcomes in line with the Corporate Plan 'Shaping Worcestershire's Future' and the priorities identified by the public and business community**
 - **1.00% Adult Social Care Precept ring-fenced for Adult Social Care services in order to contribute to existing cost pressures due to Worcestershire's ageing population;**
- (c) the Capital Strategy 2021-24 and Capital**

Programme of £391.645 million be approved as set out at Appendix 1C and 1D and section 8 of the report;

- (d) the earmarked reserves schedule as set out at Appendix 2 to the report be approved;**
- (e) the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators set out at Appendix 4 to the report be approved; and**
- (f) the Council's Pay Policy Statement set out at Appendix 5 to the report be approved.**

2. The Cabinet agreed:

- (a) to delegate authority to the Leader of the Council to recommend to Full Council, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, any further adjustments to the revenue cash limits as a result of Central Government confirming the final Local Government Finance Settlement, Council Tax and Business Rates Income, and associated Specific Grants and income for 2021/22; and**
- (b) to authorise the Strategic Director for People and the Director of Children's Services in consultation with relevant Cabinet Members with Responsibilities, to approve the agreement for the use of resources between the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Groups under Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006 (the Section 75 Agreement) for 2021/22.**

2022 Annual Update to the School Organisation Plan and Recommendation for Provision in Worcester City

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills explained that Worcestershire had a very diverse education system. In Worcester City actions had been taken to expand provision as much as possible but now a situation had been reached where a new Secondary School was required. Officers would be tasked with acquiring a parcel of land which would allow a school to be built to deal with the expected need and with enough room to be future proof. This would allow more pupils to get into their first preference school. A report would be brought back to Cabinet for approval and consultation would take place with stakeholders.

Cabinet agreed that this was a key milestone and was a positive action that would have a long-term effect when so many decisions during the pandemic seemed short term.

The Chairman of OSPB stated that the school needed to be fully comprehensive. It was clarified that new schools

had be free academies and as such had the discretion to set their own admissions criteria but it was hoped that the school would be fully inclusive.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) noted the updated annual sufficiency information for all areas of education added to the five-year School Organisation Plan 2019-24 in line with the Cabinet decision in December 2018;**
- (b) noted the pressure on Mainstream and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) places, the impact on the provision of childcare as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the work being undertaken to support Post-16 provision, highlighted in the report;**
- (c) approved the publication of the 2020 update of place sufficiency information as part of the School Organisation Plan;**
- (d) agreed that a new Secondary School will be built to address the shortfall in places as identified in the report;**
- (e) delegated authority to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Director of Children's Services to identify funding sources to be able to implement the recommended actions, to be approved by Council and Cabinet by the funding approval process;**
- (f) delegated authority to the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the Director of Children's Services, Chief Finance Officer and Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) where appropriate to enter into a form of Memorandum of Understanding and continue and conclude the negotiation of an Option to acquire land to deliver a new Secondary School in the Worcester City District boundary with the intention of presenting this Option for agreement by Cabinet;**
- (g) approved a pre-publication engagement with stakeholders on the proposal for a new Secondary School in Worcester City Council boundary;**
- (h) will consider a full report for a new Secondary School later in 2021 to include approval of capital programme, school specification, and agreement of land purchase subject to planning**

2023 School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2022/23, Co-ordinated Admission Schemes 2022/23 and Published Admission Number Changes for 2022/23

approval and to authorise commencement of formal consultation on the proposals; and

- (i) will consider a report that identifies opportunities to invest locally to meet specific Special Education Needs and Disabilities in Autumn term 2021 based on the principles outlined in paragraph 52 of the report.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills gave a brief introduction to the report on School Admissions. He explained that the main change was to the oversubscription criteria at Wolverley CE Secondary school and involved removing the category for people who were regular church attendees. There were also a small number of PAN reductions.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) approved the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2022/23 as set out in Appendices 1a and 1b to the report;
- (b) approved the scheme for Co-ordinated Admissions for Primary/Middle and Secondary Schools for 2022/23 as set out in Appendices 2a and 2b to the report; and
- (c) approved the Published Admission Numbers for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, including the proposed reduction, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

2024 A Review of Day Opportunities for Adults with Learning Disabilities

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Services introduced the report and explained that the review of day opportunities was a complex process. It was recognised that the service was overproviding for some, at the expense of others, which left the service as unsustainable. More work was needed on the review and a further report would be brought back later in the year. Tribute was paid to the carers who had helped families and service users even when centres had been closed due to Covid.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) noted the findings of the first phase of the day opportunities review as summarised in paragraph 12 of the report and outlined in detail in the full report in Appendix 1;

2025 Scrutiny Report: The Council's Energy Purchasing Arrangements

- (b) approved the commencement of the second phase of the review as outlined in paragraph 15 of the report; and**
- (c) agreed to receive a further report later in 2021 which will make recommendations on proposals for the future service delivery model and the commencement of any formal consultation if required.**

The Chairman of the Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel explained that the scrutiny had come about following discussions of the costs of street lighting. He thanked the Councillors and Scrutiny Officers who had worked on the report. The recommendations in the report had, in the main, been accepted by the Cabinet Member and the OSPB.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning explained that the Council was a member of the West Mercia Energy Committee. The Council buys almost £6 million of energy a year and it was noted that energy procurement was a very complicated matter.

Comments were made that the Joint Committee was now seeing the benefits of a flexible purchasing model and praise was given to Councillor Hardman for doing a good job as the Chairman of the Joint Committee.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) received the Scrutiny Report about the Council's Energy Purchasing Arrangements, together with the response from the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning; and**
- (b) noted the Scrutiny Report's findings and recommendations and adopted the response of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility as the way forward.**

2026 Corporate Landlord and Facilities Management Delivery Model

The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Commissioning explained that in March 2020 the County Council had given notice to leave Place Partnership at the end of March 2021. It was decided that winding up the company was in the best interest of all parties and that the company should be liquidated at the end of March 2021. There would be a Members Voluntary Liquidation in September 2021. Work was on-going over

how services would be best supplied going forward and how to minimise redundancies.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) noted the progress to date and endorsed the actions taken;**
- (b) approved the delivery model for Corporate Landlord and Facilities Management as outlined in the report;**
- (c) agreed to the dissolution of Place Partnership Limited (PPL) by way of Members Voluntary Liquidation and authorised the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning and Chief Finance Officer to finalise the arrangements for this and for all necessary actions to be taken to give effect to this decision; and**
- (d) notwithstanding the above recommendations, authorised the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning and Chief Finance Officer to finalise the financial arrangements for the closing down of PPL, which may include leaving Place Partnership on 31 March 2021 prior to the dissolution, as is the current formal position.**

The meeting ended at 12.00pm

Chairman