

Cabinet**Thursday, 18 March 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, Ms K J May, Mr A P Miller, Dr K A Pollock, Mr A C Roberts and Mr J H Smith
Also attended:		Mrs J A Brunner, Mr B Clayton, Mr M E Jenkins, Mr R C Lunn, Mrs F M Oborski and Mrs E B Tucker
2027	Apologies and Declarations of Interest	Apologies had been received from Mrs L C Hodgson. Mr S E Geraghty declared an interest in items 7 and 8 as a member of the LEP Board and Item 7 as a Worcester City Councillor. Mr A C Roberts declared an interest in item 7 as a Worcester City Councillor.
2028	Public Participation	None
2029	Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting	The Leader explained that one correction had already been made to the draft minutes regarding Minute 2025 – Scrutiny Report: the Council’s Energy Purchasing Arrangements, to correct the amount spent on energy procurement. Subject to the amendment it was then agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of the previous meeting and could be signed by the Chairman.
2030	Approval of Worcestershire Children First's Business Plan 2021/22	The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the report. On 1 October 2019, Worcestershire Children First took over operational responsibility for the delivery of Children’s Social Care and Education but responsibility for children’s safety remained with the Lead Member and the Director of Children’s Services. A business plan for 2021/22 had been produced and been seen by the Department for Education without the need for any major changes. The report detailed that the gross cost of the contract was over £127 million and covered the priorities and challenges expected in the next year. The report gave details of how the WCF would work with the Council and included considerations about responses to Covid.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills explained that he and the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Commissioning both sat on the Worcestershire Children First Board but they were not required to make a formal declaration of interest. He felt the Council and WCF worked well together with a focus that was clearly on the well-being of Children. He wished particularly, to point out that the vision, mission and values included in the plan were not just words and needed to translate into action. He had confidence in the plan, that it would allow children's services to go from strength to strength.

A Member from outside the Cabinet explained that there had been considerable concern over what a wholly owned company would mean for scrutiny, but Scrutiny now believed the Company was doing a great job and should be congratulated.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Services welcomed the development of an all age disability strategy and agreed that it was right that it should be one of the plan's priorities. He requested that Cabinet look at the disability strategy in more detail at a future meeting.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility pointed out that although improvements had been made there was no complacency; it was recognised that there were still risks and worries and the Company was still on its improvement journey. Catherine Driscoll, the previous Director of Children Services, and Tina Russell, the current Interim Director were thanked for their hard work, as well as all the staff whose hard work had enabled the service to become successful.

The Leader felt that the team effort, which had allowed Children's Services to be turned around and provide an improved and safe service for children, was one of the main achievements of the current Council.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) noted the contractual performance update on Worcestershire Children First;**
- (b) approved Worcestershire Children First's Business Plan 2021/22; and**
- (c) noted the agreed contract sum for 2021/22 to WCF as set out in paragraph 18 of the report and noted the indicative contract sum for 2022/23 and 2023/24 included in the Business Plan.**

2031 Update on the Review of Medical Education Provision in Worcestershire and Recommended Delivery Approach

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Education and Skills introduced the report. A Medical Education Provision had become a statutory duty under the 1996 Education Act and three sites around the County provided access to teaching. The three sites were now felt to be not suitable and provided only a limited education offer, so a review of the service and facilities which would be provided in future had been necessary. The review, co-produced with Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG, had been undertaken and a stakeholder engagement exercise had considered the proposals. There would be an investment by health, especially to support students with their mental health and the new service would be registered and inspected by Ofsted.

With expressions of interest sought in September and October of 2021, followed by the necessary planning involvement and TUPE arrangements for existing staff next spring, the new provider would begin operating from September 2022. The start date was a year later than planned due to Covid. Consultation on the proposal would now take place and then procurement for the provider, which would be signed off by the CMR in consultation with the Director of Children's Services, would be progressed.

Members commented that they were pleased with the review and proposals. The County should not have a reactive service, which was not registered and delivered in poorly suited buildings. It was important to work on prevention and intervention at an early stage and then achieve re-integration at the right time. The caring approach of officers was recognised.

A Member from outside the Cabinet commented that the proposals were welcomed as the current sites of Medical Education Provision, which were co-located with Pupil Referral Units, were not particularly suitable. Scrutiny was also happy that the new service would be Ofsted registered which would be better for the teachers as well as the children.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

(a) noted the feedback and findings of the review of Medical Education Provision;

- (b) noted the development of and rationale for a preventative approach including the:**
 - i. role of NHS partners and deployment of NHS resource to assist prevention and early intervention, and**
 - ii. proposal for a different delivery approach;**
- (c) authorised the statutory Interim Director of Children’s Services to consult on the policy approach to delivering statutory Medical Education provision in Worcestershire, including the revised funding agreement with Schools; noting the risk of further pressure on the Dedicated Schools Grant; and**
- (d) delegated authority to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills, in consultation with the statutory Interim Director of Children’s Services, to consider the outcome of the consultation and make the final decision.**

2032 Hampton Bridge

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure gave a brief introduction to the report which detailed how plans for a new bridge over the River Avon at Hampton were progressing. The bridge, first proposed in 2014, as a pedestrian /cycle bridge fitted in with the idea of active travel and would offer health benefits to allow walking and cycling in a safe environment and at the same time reduce the traffic using Abbey Bridge. It was clarified that the bridge was not at the same place as the 800-year old ferry. Funding from S106 money and the County Council was already in place with around £1million still to be found.

Other Members of the Cabinet were pleased that the project would help walking and cycling but there was disappointment that the developers who were involved had delayed for so long. In response to a query about how such delays caused by developers could be prevented in future, it was clarified that officers had worked hard to ensure that planning conditions were fulfilled but it was suggested that until a court case was won against developers who delay on fulfilling their obligations, it could be difficult to enforce some planning

conditions.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) authorised the continuation of the surveys and negotiations necessary to progress the Hampton Bridge scheme;**

- (b) endorsed the allocation of s.106 and WNEP contributions towards the scheme;**

- (c) authorised the completion of a pre-planning public engagement exercise and the preparation and submission of a Planning Application for the Hampton Bridge Project;**

- (d) authorised the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure and the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change to acquire the land or part thereof necessary to deliver the scheme (shown edged red in Appendix 1 to the report) through negotiation if possible, and, if not possible, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure, to make a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to acquire the land and rights required for the project, and further authorised the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure and the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change to approve any Statement of Reasons in relation to the land, that must accompany any CPO submitted for confirmation to the Secretary of State and noted that this will be approved prior to the making of any CPO;**

- (e) authorised the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure and the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change, in**

consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure, to revise the extent of the land to be acquired if necessary;

(f) authorised the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure to finalise the design of the bridge and links; and

(g) authorised the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure, to award contracts and to enter any other such agreements as are necessary to complete the bridge within the funding envelope already secured.

2033 Kepax Bridge

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure introduced a report regarding progress of a further walking and cycling bridge, this one over the River Severn at Worcester. The project still needed to go through the planning process in the summer and would be completed by the end of 2022.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways thought it was excellent that walking and cycling projects were being supported, which helped the economy and environment as well as improving health. It was noted that the County Council would be working with the City Council on the project. A note of caution was raised by the CMR for Highways as he mentioned that he had received letters about the inconsiderate actions of cyclists, so he urged cyclists to make use of shared routes with care.

Mr M E Jenkins, declaring an interest as he was a Member of Bike Worcester, asked why the width of the proposed bridge was due to be narrower than the 4 metre path which led to it? He also asked what lighting there would be, had flooding been considered and what was the expected modal shift in transport? In response it was clarified that the planning process would deal with the issues in detail but it was pointed out that on the east side of the bridge there would be a 90° turn, so the path

would not be fast and the width was a function of cost. Adequate lighting would be considered and with regards to flooding the bridge would be 7 metres above normal river level and would join Gheluvelt Park at its highest point. At present in the City of Worcester 70% commuted by car, 17% walked, 4% commuted by bike. It was hoped the bridge would enable a greater number of people to walk or cycle.

Members believed the bridge would be exciting for tourism and create a good circular route along the river. In terms of aesthetic, the Kepax Bridge would be of similar design to Sabrina and Diglis Bridge. It was noted that bridges were becoming more popular with residents in the County.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

(a) noted progress with the scheme and welcomed the completion of the Business Case: and

(b) authorised the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure to award construction contracts and enter into any other such agreements as are necessary to progress delivery of the bridge within the funding envelope already secured.

2034 Gamechanger 2, Redditch Railway Quarter and Transport Interchange

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure explained that the report was asking Cabinet to endorse the transformation of Redditch railway station into a transport hub which would necessitate the purchase of land around the station. The project was supported by Redditch Borough Council and would encourage active travel, increase the use of the railway, and maximise opportunities for people to access Redditch.

Cabinet Members commented that:

- This was an ambitious infrastructure project which would benefit Redditch residents and visitors and support economic growth
- Following a question from a Member outside the Cabinet, Cabinet were assured that all possible measures would be taken to ensure safety of

people using the Interchange and the local area. There would be a bridge over the road from the station directly to the shopping centre

- The investment was seen as a game changer which would allow improved access to Redditch and everything it had to offer
- The Cabinet Member with responsibility wished to point out that the West Midlands Rail Executive Investment Strategy proposed that there would be enhanced train services to Redditch, this would support economic, housing population and employment growth.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) noted the progress to date and supported the redevelopment of Redditch Railway Quarter as a Gamechanger 2 site;**

- (b) endorsed the proposal to acquire the land required to deliver the Railway Quarter proposals in accordance with the delegations as set out in the Land Acquisition Cabinet report of 19 November 2020 (and shown on Appendix 2 marked red to the report);**

- (c) should it not be possible to acquire all the land by negotiation, authorised in principle the acquisition of necessary land and rights over land through the making of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) and authorised the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure to finalise the details and make the final decision on the making of such a CPO including any compulsory acquisition of rights, including over land outside the red line, required for the programme, and to approve any Statement of Reasons in relation to the land that must accompany any CPO submitted**

for the confirmation to the Secretary of State for Transport, and noted that this will be approved prior to making of the CPO;

(d) authorised the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure to commence, continue and conclude contracts required for the delivery of the project;

(e) authorised the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure to approve the detailed redevelopment proposals for the site; and

(f) authorised the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure to implement the delivery of those proposals, including submitting planning applications and obtaining any other consents required.

2035 Resources Report - Revenue Budget Monitoring Month 9 (31 December) 2020/21

The Leader who has Responsibility for Finance, introduced the Resources Report and explained that despite all the Covid challenges, a small underspend was expected for 2020/21 of around £400,000. Enormous sums had been spent dealing with Covid but the Government had produced enormous sums to cover the expenditure. He believed the Council was in a good position with a budget which had been set allowing for a series of investment.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Adult Services stated that the money given by the Government to cover actions necessary to deal with Covid gave reassurance that the budget was realistic and deliverable. The People Directorate was projecting a 0.3 of a percent underspend in its budget and although there was pressure on the learning disability budget, there had been a reduction in spending on older adults. It was reported that it was likely that the planned Fair Funding review would be delayed for another year. Despite the predicted 2.5% underspend on community services there had been successes such as libraries becoming more like community hubs and the Here2Help scheme.

Comment

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

(A) ENDORSED THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR FINANCE CONCERNING REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING UP TO 31 DECEMBER 2020; AND

(B) NOTED THE FINANCIAL IMPACT AND FORECAST FOR COVID-19 EXPENDITURE.

The Chairman wished to mark the end of the current Council and thank colleagues in the Cabinet and across the Council. He thanked John Smith and Ken Pollock for the work they had done over the past four years as they had decided to stand down at the election. Councillors Smith and Pollock thanked Members of Cabinet and Officers for their support and hard work.

The Chairman thanked officers for their work behind the scenes which had allowed for stable services to be provided and offered good luck to Councillors for the next four years.

The meeting ended at 11.30am

Chairman