

**Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board  
County Hall, Worcester  
Thursday, 30 September 2021, 10.00 am**

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**Present:**

Cllr Tom Wells (Chairman), Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Brandon Clayton,  
Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Mike Rouse and Cllr Richard Udall

**Also attended:**

Cllr Simon Geraghty, Leader of the Council  
Cllr Adam Kent, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services &  
Communication  
Cllr Lucy Hodgson, Worcester City Council  
Mark Stansfeld, Chairman, Worcestershire Local Economic Partnership  
Gary Woodman, Executive Director, Worcestershire Local Enterprise  
Partnership (WLEP)  
Luke Willetts, Director of Operations, Worcestershire Local Enterprise  
Partnership

Andrew Spice, Strategic Director of Commercial and Change  
Michael Hudson, Chief Financial Officer  
Steph Simcox, Deputy Chief Finance Officer  
Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager  
Samantha Morris, Scrutiny Co-ordinator

**Available Papers**

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 July 2021 (previously circulated).

(A copy of documents A will be attached to the signed Minutes).

**1201 Apologies and Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Shirley Webb, Tim Reid (Co-opted Church Representative for Education matters) and Mark Hughes (Parent Governor Representative for Education matters (Primary)).

In addition Cllr Graham Ballinger (Wyre Forest District Council) had also given apologies.

**1202 Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip**

None.

**1203 Public Participation**

None.

**1204 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**1205 Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) Annual Report (2021/22)**

In attendance for this discussion:

Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP)

Mark Stansfeld, Chairman  
Gary Woodman, Chief Executive  
Luke Willetts, Director of Operations  
Steph Simcox, S151 Officer

District Councillor  
Lucy Hodgson (Worcester City)

The Board had before them an annual update on the achievements of the WLEP over the last 12 months and an outline of the strategic objectives for 2021/22.

The Chairman of the WLEP gave a brief introduction to the Report highlighting that:

- It was important for all partners to work together to make things happen
- The WLEP were driving a co-ordinated economic response
- Covid-19 had been a challenge but delivery had continued
- The Worcestershire 5G testbed programme had been successfully completed
- The WLEP had a clear Strategy for Growth (2020-2040) which had recently been launched and would serve as a long-term economic strategy for the county. It had four key strategic objectives for Worcestershire's economy:
  - ❖ Improving Worcestershire's strategic connectivity and infrastructure (physical, digital and energy)
  - ❖ Stimulating investment in research & development and innovation to create a dynamic Worcestershire business environment
  - ❖ Supporting a creative future-fit Worcestershire workforce (acknowledging that the skills agenda was a challenge); and
  - ❖ Revitalising our city and town centres
- It was agreed that the Board would be sent the link to the Strategy.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- The WLEP Board was diverse and had a good relationship with the County Council, the membership was constantly reviewed to ensure diversity, inclusivity and representation of the local economy. The Chairman of the WLEP commented that the culture of the Board was very important and an open and transparent Board created an open and transparent culture.
- Building relationships with new Councillors appointed following the May 2021 elections was ongoing and Councillor feedback was welcomed.
- A Member referred to the WLEP's Local Growth Fund (LGF) allocation of £71.725m from Government for 2020/21 and questioned how much funding in total the WLEP had managed to secure since its inception in 2014. The S151 Finance Officer advised that it was very difficult to give a precise amount as the WLEP worked in partnership but probably at

least double the growth fund. The Chairman of the WLEP stressed the importance of keeping an outward focus on opportunities for funding. A briefing for the Board was requested on the financial impact of the WLEP.

- A Member asked about the progress on the objectives set by the Worcestershire SEP to be achieved by 2025 and was advised that all objectives would be achieved. The objectives were to:
  - Create 25,000 jobs
  - Increase Gross Value Added (GVA) by £2.9billion; and
  - Contribute towards the delivery of 21,500 new homes
- In response to a question about what the challenges were relating to jobs in Worcestershire. The Board was advised that Worcestershire was below the average salary level and there was a shortage of skilled and advanced manufacturing jobs. Skills overall, was a big issue that needed a government focus.
- It was noted that a school level, the focus tended to be in science, technical engineering and maths. A Member suggested that there was too much of a focus on the higher skilled jobs and the focus should be wider ranging. The Leader suggested that as well as a focus on jobs for the future, it was important to recognise and promote jobs in other areas such as health care and construction etc.
- It was suggested that support for micro companies, particularly rural was essential and that the WLEP should consider working with the Co-operative movement, an idea which was agreed would be progressed.
- In response to a question about whether a small business could be provided with support for apprenticeships, the Chief Executive of the WLEP advised that following the change in the Apprentice Levy rules, investment was being made into Apprenticeship Training Agencies (these agencies recruited, employed and arranged training for apprentices on behalf of employers).
- A Member referred to the afore mentioned lower wages and skills gap in Worcestershire and questioned whether the WLEP could pivot, to drive the market into vacancies. The WLEP Chief Executive confirmed that this was possible and where a skills shortage was identified, the WLEP would talk to local businesses to start to plan ahead in order to be more responsive to skills shortages.
- The point was made that it was important for the WLEP to be agile enough to lean into emergencies as it could be quite challenging to convince people to step into the jobs available in the market, when it could involve a career change.
- Further discussion took place about the role of schools in signposting and promoting career opportunities and the variety of choices available to young people, not just option to go to university (which for some young people may not be the best option). As well as the WLEP presenting at skills shows, a Member suggested that parental involvement was key. It was agreed that the WLEP would consider ways in which to increase the marketing and promotion of jobs available to young people
- In terms of the role of the WLEP in the 'Green Agenda', the Board was advised that Worcestershire was in a good place, some businesses had good expertise and knowledge of net zero and a number of campaigns

were planned. The WLEP were also exploring some opportunities with local companies and there would be a discussion about net zero ambitions in Worcestershire at the next WLEP Board meeting. It was agreed that the next annual update would include the WLEP's Climate Strategy.

- It was agreed, following a Member request that the WLEP would promote coding skills and computer related technology jobs and would target women and girls (who were under-represented in the sector).
- It was suggested that in order to enhance the WLEP's relationship with new County Councillors, the 22 priority projects in the pipeline could be signposted to Councillors.
- It was confirmed that the WLEP had good relationships with Worcestershire Children First and had been involved in the development of the Education Skills Strategy.
- The WLEP were invited to attend the March 2022 meeting of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the discussion on Apprenticeships.
- P23 of the Agenda was referred to and it was questioned why diversity was shown as a challenge for the WLEP, it clarified that it was about the work of the WLEP being representative of the communities it served.
- The WLEP were commended on successful completion of the Worcestershire 5G Testbed programme and it was confirmed that gradually, operators were building across the county thus increasing the availability of 5G in Worcestershire.
- It was noted that the WLEP were establishing a sub-board focused on enhancing research and development and innovation ecosystem across the county. It was confirmed that Board would be mainly populated by business sector representatives.
- The Councillor representing Worcester City Council emphasised the importance of apprenticeships.
- It was confirmed that the WLEP were on the main board of the Towns Fund and had very strong relationships and would influence wherever appropriate.
- A Member requested that the sub-group (of the WLEP Board) included business representatives from the Agri-tech businesses situated in the Vale of Evesham. A request was also made for a WLEP representative to visit some of these businesses.
- It was suggested that WLEP should consider how to promote career resources in all high schools to encourage schools to have a careers resource.
- WLEP agreed that it was important to carry out more promotion of the success and good news stories of Worcestershire.
- The WLEP had been discussing with the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, the Police and Crime Plan 2021-25 to develop a focus on Crime prevention for business.

The Chairman thanked the WLEP for attending the meeting.

In summary, the actions agreed were:

- The Board would be provided with a briefing on the financial impact of the WLEP.

- The WLEP would consider working the Co-operative movement to support micro companies.
- In respect of the role of schools in signposting and promoting a variety of career choices to young people (not just university), the WLEP would consider ways in which to increase the marketing and promotion of jobs available to young people (and to signpost parents to these options too)
- The next annual update would include the WLEP's Climate Strategy.
- The WLEP would specifically promote coding skills and computer related technology jobs targeting women and girls.
- The WLEP would be invited to attend the March 2022 meeting of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the discussion of Apprenticeships.
- Consideration would be given to including representatives from the Agri-tech business from Evesham on the sub-group of WLEP Board and also for a WLEP representative to visit them.
- WLEP would promote career resources in all high schools.
- WLEP would promote more of the success and good news stories in Worcestershire.

## 1206 **Update on the Progress made against the Recommendations from the Council's Energy Purchasing Arrangements Scrutiny Report**

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication and the Strategic Director for Commercial and Change were invited to update the Board on the progress made against the recommendations from the Council's Energy Purchasing Scrutiny Report (Scrutiny Report).

At its meeting on 4 February 2021, the Cabinet considered the Scrutiny Report and resolved that the response of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility be adopted as the way forward.

The Director introduced the Report, noting that progress had been made against the majority of the recommendations within the gift of the County Council (as detailed in the Agenda Report).

The CMR highlighted that he was the Lead Member of the Task Group at the time of the Scrutiny and now found himself in the unusual position of Cabinet Member with Responsibility. He went on to say that although the energy market was unstable at the moment, as West Mercia Energy didn't actively trade, it didn't have the same risk as some energy companies had, however there was still risk which was being closely monitored. The trading position for the year was very good and was estimated to be within £1,000k of the budgeted position. The Accounts when finalised would be shared with the Board.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- It was noted that good progress had been made against the recommendations, although a couple of recommendations related specifically to WME rather than the County Council.
- A Member sought clarification on the progress against Recommendation 8 (succession planning). The Director explained that the Procurement Team was being restructured to bring it in line with modern practice of category management, which would ensure that there was a team of specialists operating in a broad area rather than one person with specialist expertise. It was important that succession planning was replicated for all areas of Council spend.
- It was confirmed that WME purchased energy for the Councils street lighting via a dynamic purchasing system on a fixed contract for a couple of years (due to end next year).
- It was confirmed that all of the Council's energy purchasing was green.

It was agreed that:

- The Board would be provided with a further update on the outstanding recommendations in due course.

- The Corporate and Communications Overview and Scrutiny Panel would continue to monitor the progress of the recommendations unless, due to capacity issues it needed to be referred back to the Board.

## **1207 Scrutiny Proposal: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**

The Board was asked to re-consider the Scrutiny Proposal for ‘Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)’ to ensure its current relevance, prior to the Task Group being re-commenced in the Autumn.

At its meeting on 10 December 2019, the Board approved the setting up of a Task Group. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this work was paused before the first meeting of the Task Group.

Accordingly, in July 2021, the Board agreed that the Scrutiny Task Group should be re-started in the Autumn 2021. As a first step, it was agreed that the scope would be reviewed to ensure it was still relevant.

The proposal was discussed and it was agreed that:

- Cllr Kyle Daisley would be the Lead Member of the Task Group
- The terms of reference would be amended slightly and would read: “To investigate access to and the availability of, appropriate mental health services for children and adolescents”
- The Voluntary and Community sector organisations would be added as possible interviewees
- Cllr Mike Rouse would be added to the list of Members interested in joining the Task Group.

## **1208 Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring**

The Board was asked to consider the feedback provided by Scrutiny Chairmen following the discussion of performance information for Quarter 1 (April to June 2021) and in-year budget monitoring information relating to Quarter 1 for 2021/22.

### Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

- The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) year-end position at Period 3 was a forecast overspend of £5.7m. The forecast deficit on the DSG for the end of 2021/22 was £15.7m and for 2022/23, £19.7m. The Council was lobbying for Government action on this situation.
- For the High Needs Block allocation, owing to some extra Government funding, the variance on overspend had been slightly reduced.

### Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel

- The forecast variance showed a £36k overspend.

- Members were reminded that some of the Directorate's savings targets had been delayed from last financial year.
- The Capital Programme was forecast to spend broadly in line with budget with a small movement into 2022/23.
- The Chairman also gave a brief update on the performance data reviewed by the Panel.

#### Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

As at Q1, the year end forecast for

- COACH was to broadly breakeven with a few minor variances within areas; and for
- Communities was a marginal overspend with minor variances.

The Chairman of this Panel suggested that for future meetings, Performance and In-Year Budget monitoring would appear first on the Agenda.

As the Chief Financial Officer was in attendance, the Board took the opportunity to discuss more generally the government grants that had been available through Covid.

## **1209 Member Update, Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan**

### Member Update

#### Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Alastair Adams)

A visit to the Energy from Waste Facility at Hartlebury on 2 November at 10am had been arranged for Panel Members.

#### Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) (Cllr Brandon Clayton)

At its recent meeting, HOSC discussed:

- Mental Health Services in Worcestershire
- Hospital at Home (Athelon Ward) – proposed consultation
- Update on Maternity Services

Due to its workload, the HOSC was having an additional meeting on 18 October to discuss:

- Strategy in respect of Community Ambulance Stations
- Primary care (GP) access

#### Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Kyle Daisley)

- The Panel was pleased to note the positive feedback to Worcestershire Children First from Ofsted letter and had thanked the Chief Executive and WCF colleagues for their work on the Family Front Door which had led to this.

- Home to School transport had been identified as an area which may require further Scrutiny. 2 Members of the Panel were carrying out some initial research before this could be determined and would report back to the Panel in due course.
- Permanent exclusion and alternative provision were being added to the Panel's Work Programme.

### OSPB

The Chairman of the Board provided a brief update on a recent meeting with the Leader and Chief Executive about the role of Scrutiny including attendance of Cabinet Members at Scrutiny meetings, policy development and timely reports. The Leader and Chief Exec would attend OSPB on an annual basis.

### Work Programme

Following Cllr Rouse's suggestion, it was agreed that the following would be added to the OSPB's Work Programme:

- The levelling up agenda and the impact on Worcestershire (including the Towns funding allocated to Worcester and Redditch); and
- Safety of Parks and open spaces (Crime and Disorder).

The meeting ended at 12.50 pm

Chairman .....