

# Agenda

## Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Thursday, 11 March 2021, 10.00 am**

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 [You Tube Channel](#)

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.

**All County Councillors are invited to attend and participate**

## 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

## Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Thursday, 11 March 2021, 10.00 am, Online only

### Membership

#### Councillors:

Mr A D Kent (Chairman), Mrs E B Tucker (Vice Chairman), Mr G R Brookes, Mr K D Daisley, Mrs A T Hingley, Mr R J Morris, Prof J W Raine, Ms C M Stalker and Mr A Stafford

### Agenda

Item No	Subject	Page No
1	<b>Apologies and Welcome</b>	
2	<b>Declarations of Interest and of any Party Whip</b>	
3	<b>Public Participation</b> <i>Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance in writing or by e-mail indicating the nature and content of their proposed participation no later than 9.00am on the working day before the meeting (in this case 10 March 2021). Enquiries can be made through the telephone number/e-mail address below.</i>	
4	<b>Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	
5	<b>Worcestershire Apprenticeship Strategy 2020-23</b>	1 - 36
6	<b>Performance Monitoring of Comments, Compliments and Complaints</b>	37 - 52
7	<b>Member Case Management System</b>	53 - 58
8	<b>Work Programme 2020/21</b>	59 - 62

Agenda produced and published by the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP. To obtain further information or hard copies of this agenda, please contact Samantha Morris 01905 844963 or Alison Spall 01905 846607, email: [scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk)

All the above reports and supporting information can be accessed via the Council's website at [here](#)

Date of Issue: Wednesday, 3 March 2021

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**CORPORATE AND COMMUNITIES  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
11 MARCH 2021****WORCESTERSHIRE APPRENTICESHIP STRATEGY 2020-23**

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**Summary**

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning, the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change and the Assistant Director for Human Resources, Organisational Development and Engagement have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on the detail and implementation of the Council's Apprenticeship Strategy.

**Background**

2. Consideration of the Apprenticeship Strategy is included in the Panel's Work Programme and this opportunity is welcomed to be able to fully brief the Panel on the aims and scope of the Apprenticeship Strategy and the progress on delivery to date.

3. The Apprenticeship Strategy was agreed in February 2020 and embeds a strategic approach to how the Council attracts, retains and develops its workforce to meet the communities' needs, both now and in the future. Apprenticeships are a vital aspect of the Council's workforce strategy with the Council having responsibility to create apprenticeship opportunities both as an employer and as a strategic leader.

**Issues for the Panel to consider**

4. A presentation setting out an update on the Apprenticeship Strategy is attached at Appendix 1.

5. The Worcestershire Apprenticeship Strategy 2020-23, including appendices, is included as Appendix 2 and provides detailed background information for the Panel.

**Purpose of the Meeting**

6. The Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Consider the report, presentation and strategy
- Consider the update provided and determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny; and
- Agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning.

**Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 - Presentation – Apprenticeships Update

Appendix 2 - Worcestershire Apprenticeship Strategy 2020-23 (available electronically)

## **Contact Point**

Alyson Grice/Alison Spall, Overview and Scrutiny Officers, (01905 844962/846607)  
Email: [scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk)

## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director of Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)

# **Corporate & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Panel 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

## **Apprenticeships update**

**Richard Taylor - Assistant Director for HR, OD & Engagement**

**Peter Little - Head of Learning & Organisational Development (Interim)**

**Sarah-Jayne Foster – L&D Manager**

# Overview

- New Apprenticeship Strategy agreed February 2020
- Embedding a strategic approach to how we attract, retain and develop our workforce to meet our communities' needs, both now and in the future, is a vital aspect of our future workforce strategy.
- Apprenticeships are an integral part of this and can make a positive contribution by creating opportunities for people to develop, and by providing a framework for the workforce, of all ages, to undertake relevant qualifications, helping to raise skills, performance and aspirations.
- Worcestershire County Council, along with other public-sector organisations, has a responsibility in helping to create these opportunities both as an employer and as a strategic leader.
- Our strategy includes Apprenticeships and Traineeships

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# What is an Apprenticeship

- The Apprenticeships & Vocational Qualifications team is responsible for creating and embedding apprenticeships in Worcestershire.
- Apprenticeships are available to anyone wishing to train in a specific job role.
- Apprenticeship learners need to be in paid employment to be eligible for the programme and will be required to stay on the programme and in employment for at least 12 months.
- Apprentices spend 80% of their time in the work setting and 20% of their time as “off the job” learning.

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Apprenticeships provide for:

- Professional Qualifications available to all employees at all levels of the organisation
- Learning on the job
- Centrally funded programmes via the levy
- New talent entrance pathway to the organisation
- Programmes relevant to the work the employee undertakes
- Greater opportunities to upskill our workforce as part of a clear career pathway

# What is a Traineeship

- The 16-19 NEET prevention Team is responsible for creating and embedding traineeships in Worcestershire.
- Traineeships are education and training programmes with work experience for young people whose preference is to find a job or apprenticeship but who lack the skills, experience and behaviours sought by employers.
- Unlike an apprenticeship, a traineeship is a programme of learning and skills development aimed at developing employability skills. It is not a job.
- Page 6 Traineeships are suitable for:
  - anyone not currently in employment and have little work experience, but who are focused on work or the prospect of it.
  - are age 16 to 24 and qualified up to and including a full Level 3
  - individuals who providers and employers believe they have a reasonable chance of being ready for an apprenticeship or other employment within 6 months of completing a traineeship

# Capacity

- There are two schemes for training and supporting our apprentices:
  - Employer provider status
  - External provider status
- For Employer Provider status, we train, support and assess the apprentices and it means we can tailor the programme and course content to make it more WCC/WCF relevant.
- The levy can be used to pay for assessors and therefore there is no cost for recruiting additional staff.
- Where we are not able to deliver the apprenticeship ourselves, we use approved external apprenticeship providers. In these cases, we pass the levy directly to outsourced training providers.

# Enhanced Activity since 2020

- New Apprenticeship Strategy approved by SLT in February 2020
- Main focus in 2020 was to:
  - Commence reducing levy underspend (at the time c.£70,000/month)
  - Increase organisational awareness and appetite for apprenticeships and traineeships through 3 week communication campaign
  - Support managers to understand the benefits and responsibilities for apprenticeships & traineeships
  - Introduce Levy transfer policy to help boost local economy through apprenticeships
  - Care Leavers:
    - Developed Social Value policy to encourage businesses in our supply chain to take on Care Leavers as apprentices or undertaking traineeships
    - Created internal task force with sole focus of supporting Care Leavers into work or skills programmes via apprenticeships or traineeships
    - Ensured our Levy transfer policy criteria requires businesses to create apprenticeship opportunities with added social value for disadvantaged groups. For example, Care leavers; young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET); individuals with disabilities; long term unemployed

# Care Leavers Support

## Work Experience

- Recruitment team created the work experience placements programme for Care Leavers. Working with the Care Leavers Team, the team seek opportunities internally and externally.
- Resulted in 28 placements, ranging from 1 hour taster sessions to six week long placements.
- The team also created two “takeover days” for care leavers (via “who cares we care” & “Speak out”) seeking out Care Leavers’ views on subject topics. IT was the preferred route and so coding exercises were undertaken within the business, as well as a CV & interview skills day.

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## Other activity

- All current vacancies within WCC and WCF are now shared with the WCF care leavers team for onward discussions with Care Leavers. Any care leaver who applies and meets the minimum criteria are offered an interview.
- Regular attendance at The Skills Show in order to promote careers within local government and apprenticeship opportunities for Care Leavers and all young people.
- References provided for future employment for Care Leavers based on their time representing the young peoples panel

# Challenges – New Recruits

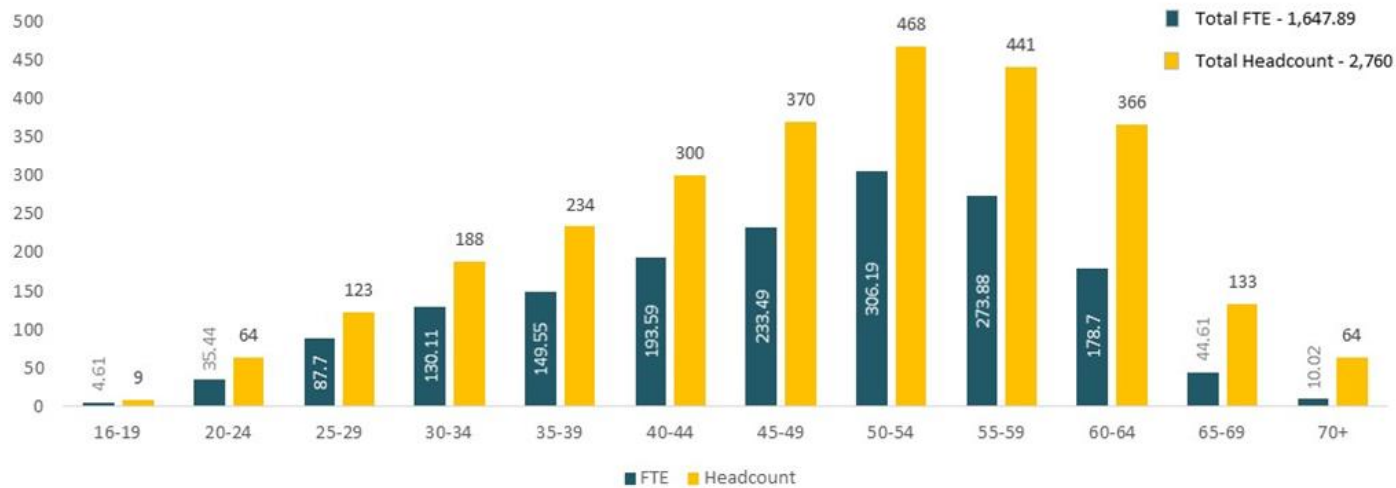
## New Recruits

- Activity in 2020 was centred around increasing awareness and appetite for apprenticeships across WCC and WCF, increasing development, increasing levy spend resulting in a 40% reduction in the monthly levy being returned to central government.
- Whilst we are delighted to have recruited 25 brand new entrants into apprenticeship programmes, this is now our area of biggest challenge.

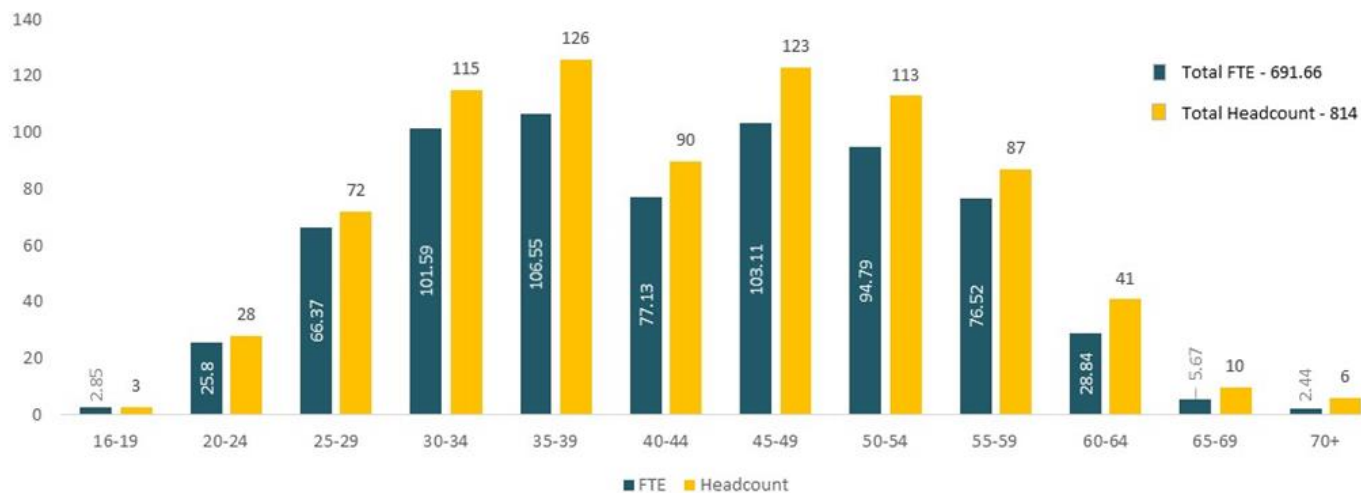
## Workforce Succession Planning

- The next slide shows the age profile of both WCC and WCF.
  - 48% of staff today are aged 50+
  - 8% of staff today are less than 30 years old
  - 36% of people in WCC (18% for WCF) could, in theory, choose to retire at any moment (aged 55 or over).
- Apprenticeships for people leaving full time education, at either 16, 18 or 21, will be an invaluable source talent and future pipeline. We need the organisation to embrace taking on more people at these levels and training and developing them through Apprenticeship Programmes, rather than solely relying on established or experienced staff.

Worcestershire County Council - Age Bands  
(Excluding WCF)



WCF - Age Bands



# Attracting New Apprentices

- The Apprenticeships Team, under normal circumstances, attend the Annual Skills Show which is attended by over 7,000 young people each year.
- We have direct links with the 16-18 NEET Prevention service, who work directly with young people and those on traineeships.
- We are able to upload job vacancies directly on to the “Recruit an Apprenticeship website, which is actively promoted in schools and colleges, and nationally by the ESFA and central government.
- As part of our consultancy and support offered to managers thinking about recruiting, we discuss the benefits of recruiting an apprentice instead of a person with existing skills and qualifications.
- We also discuss the benefits of apprenticeships generally, including the value of recruiting a young person/care leaver.



# New Hire Incentive

- New incentive launched on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020 with the aim of encouraging businesses to hire new apprenticeships. This is a temporary incentive, running until 31 March 2021.
- This is for new employees only. Money is separate from the levy and can be used in any number of ways to support the recruitment, for example offsetting salary costs and funding travel passes/rail cards etc.

There are 2 brackets for newly recruited apprentices:

- For those aged 16 to 24 we can claim £2,000
- For those aged 25 and over, we can claim £1,500
- The payment is made in 2 equal instalments for each apprentice. (90 days and 365 days)
- We have been having conversations with business managers around this incentive to assist and encourage take up. We have so far claimed for 6 payments under this scheme and are awaiting apprentice details to be confirmed for other new recruits which we will then be eligible to claim for.

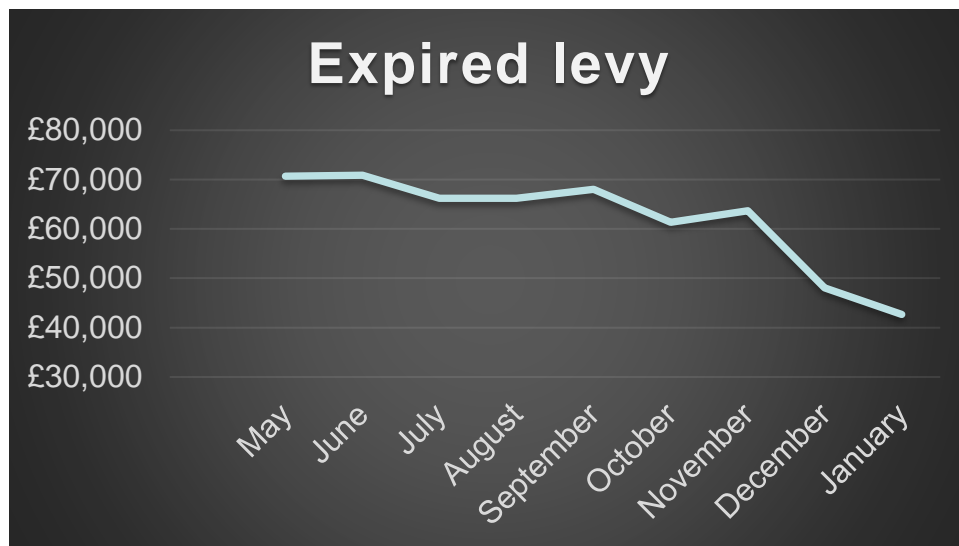
# Current Position

- We currently have 146 apprenticeships on programme throughout WCF & WCC:
  - 98 in our core business areas
  - 48 within schools
- As a result of our summer communications campaign, we have seen the following take up of traineeships and apprenticeships
  - 5 new traineeships commenced in September 2020. Whilst none are care leavers, all were at risk of becoming NEET
  - 35 new apprenticeships (internal and external) signed up and starting throughout 2021
  - Schools new sign ups are slower this academic year as their focus has been gearing up for return of children and remote learning however there are still several lines of enquiry

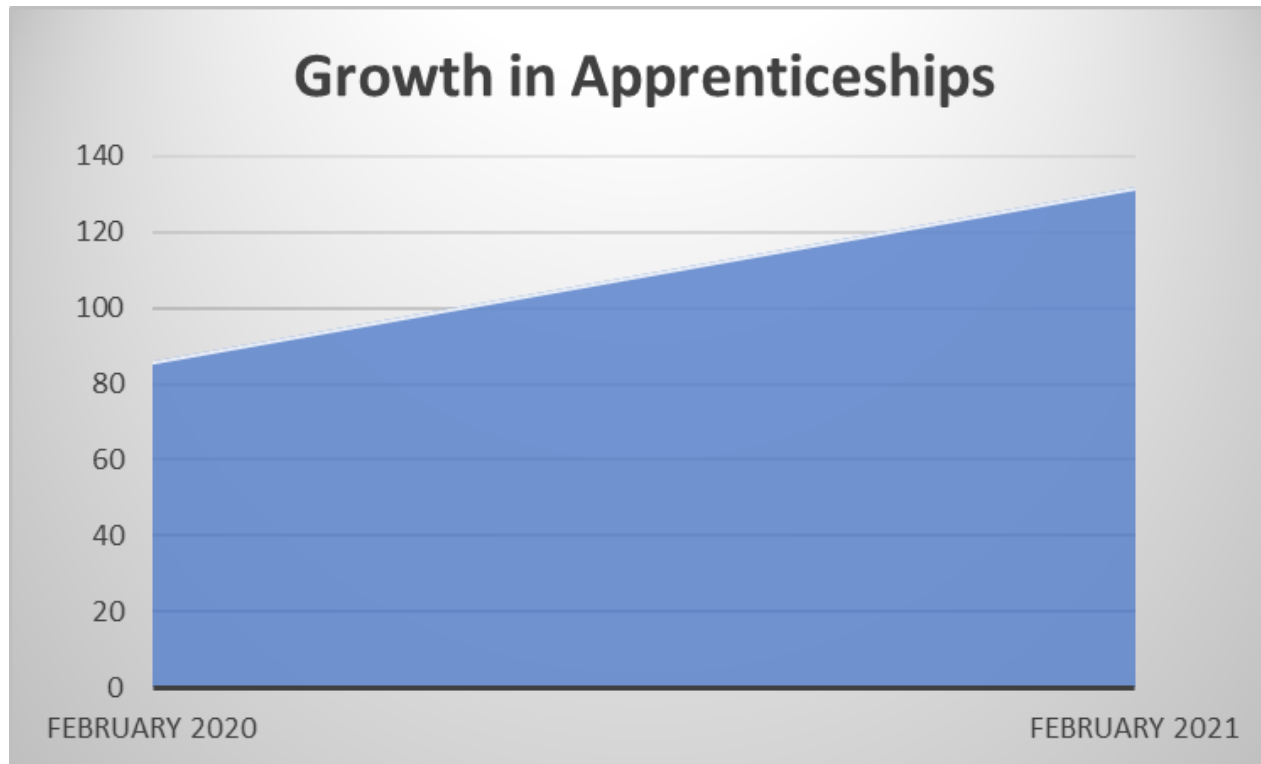
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# Apprenticeship Levy

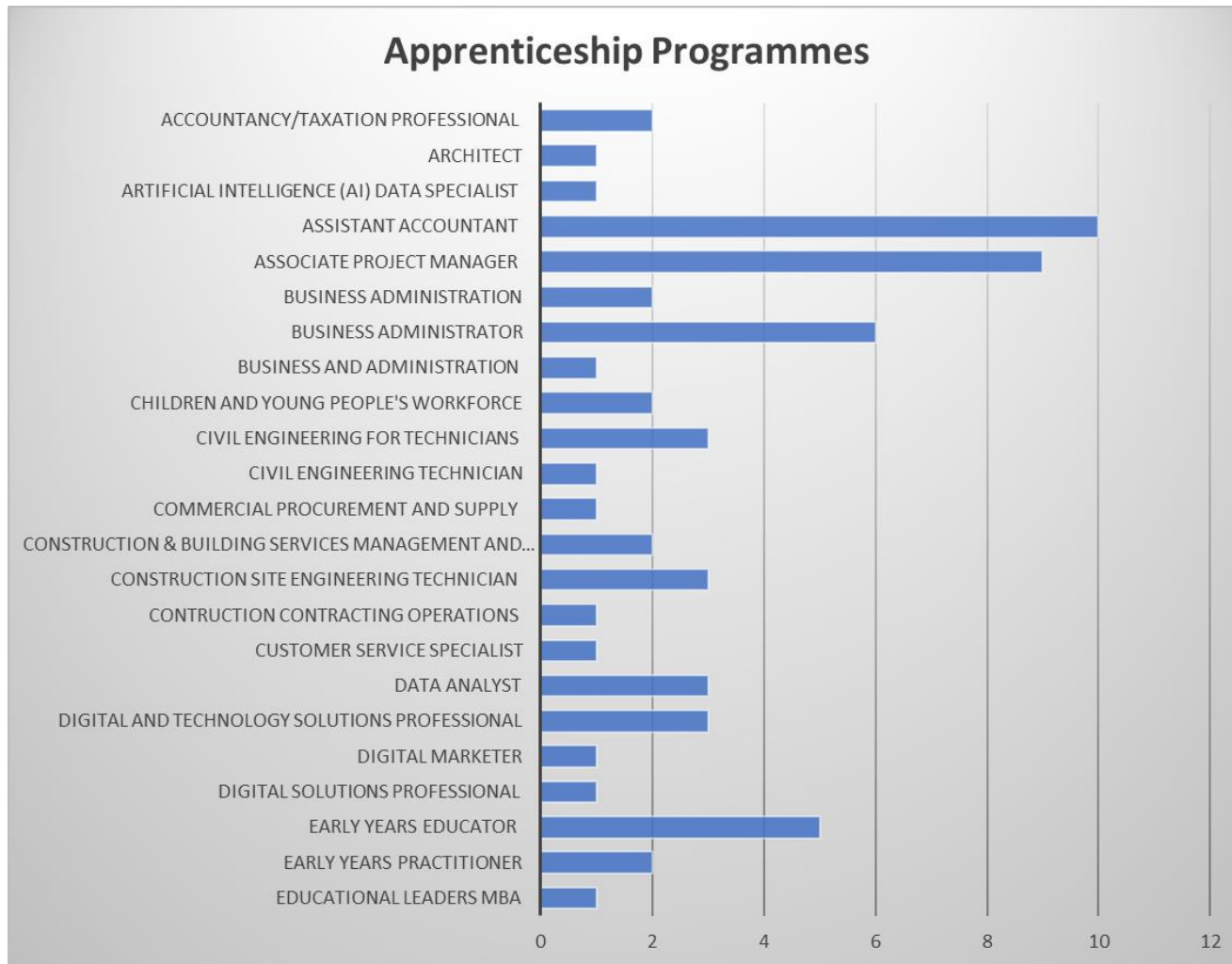
- The Levy can only be spent on the apprenticeship training programme itself. It cannot be used to fund or part fund salaries, travel expenses, meals whilst learning or any other costs.
  - Our current levy fund balance is £1,692,300. We have two years to spend the contributions apportioned to the fund before they expire and are returned to central government.
  - Expenditure against the fund occurs monthly and our current spend is ~£41,000pm.
- Page 15
- Since we introduced our Apprenticeship Strategy and ran our communication campaign last summer, we have reduced the amount of levy sent back to Central Government by 40%.



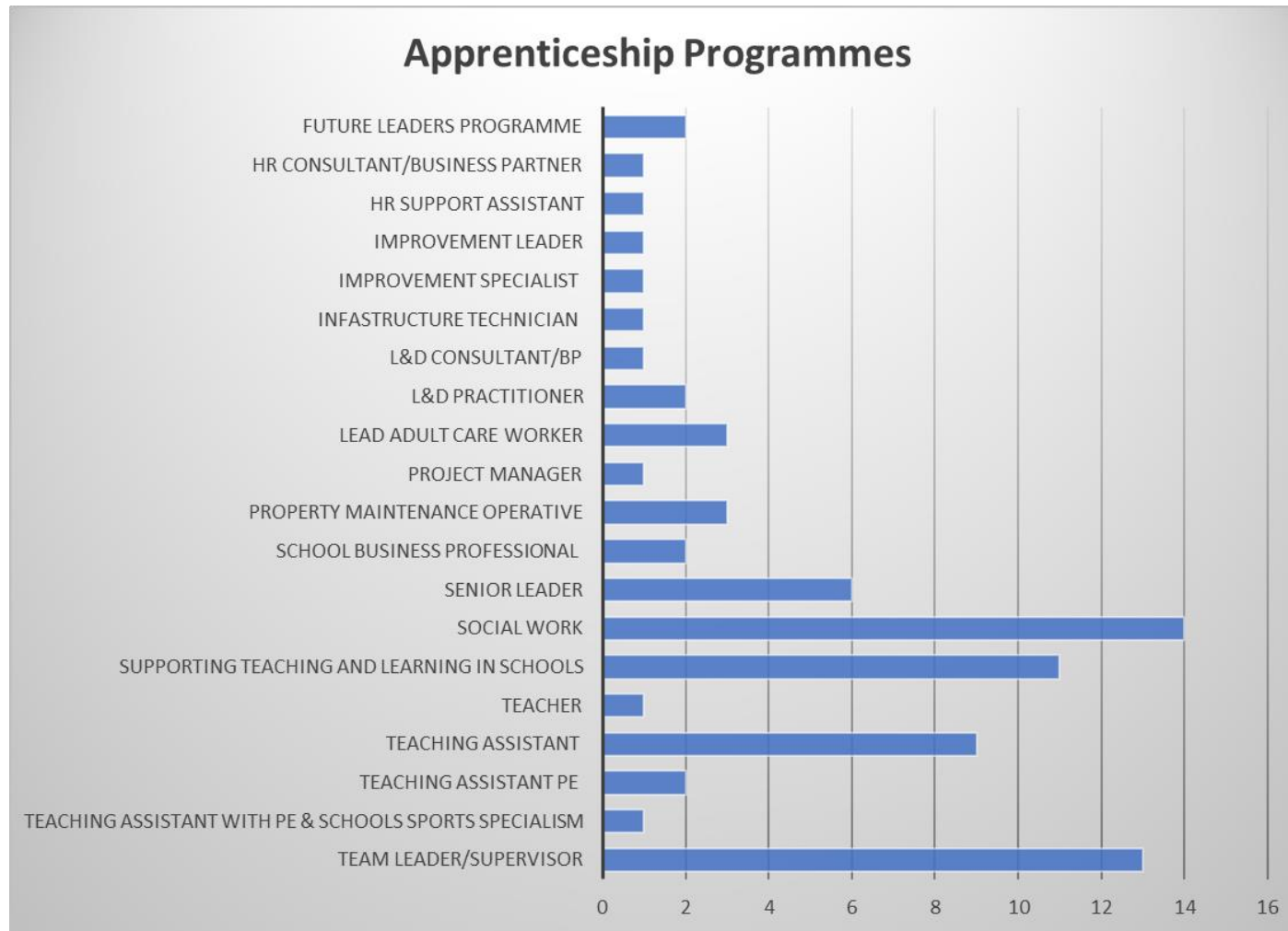
# Current Cohort data



# Current Cohort data cont...

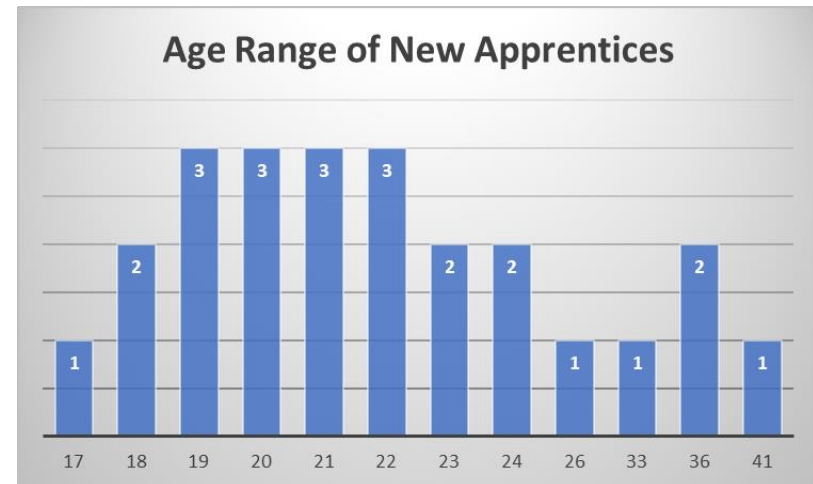
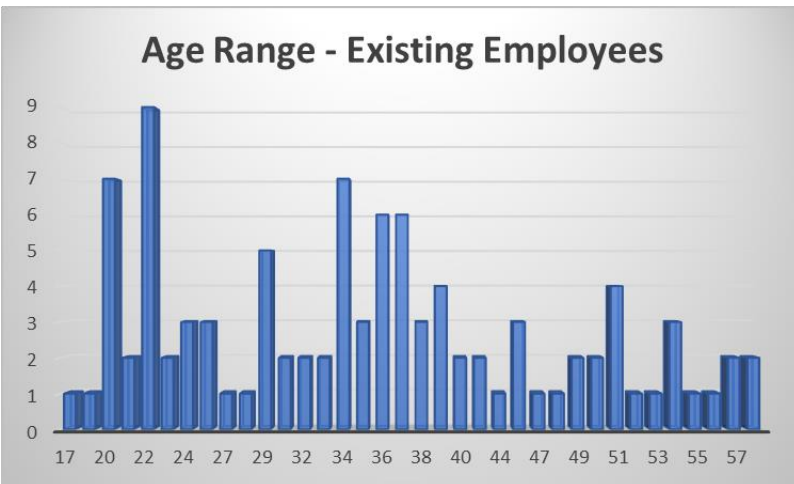
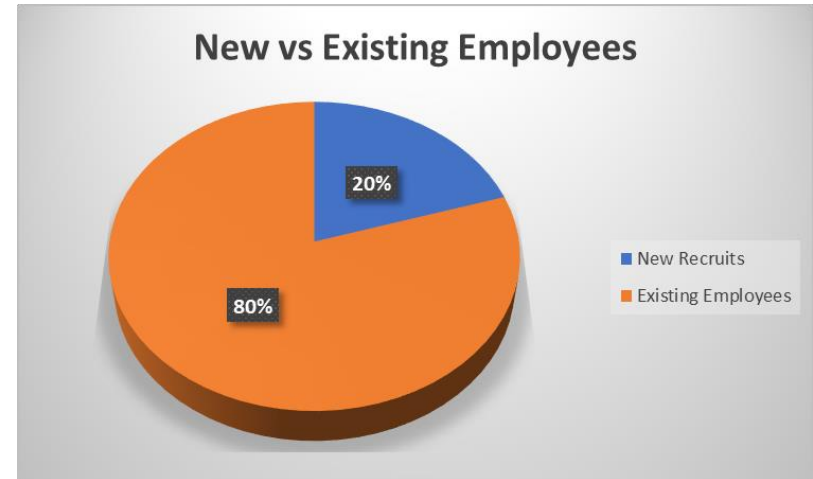
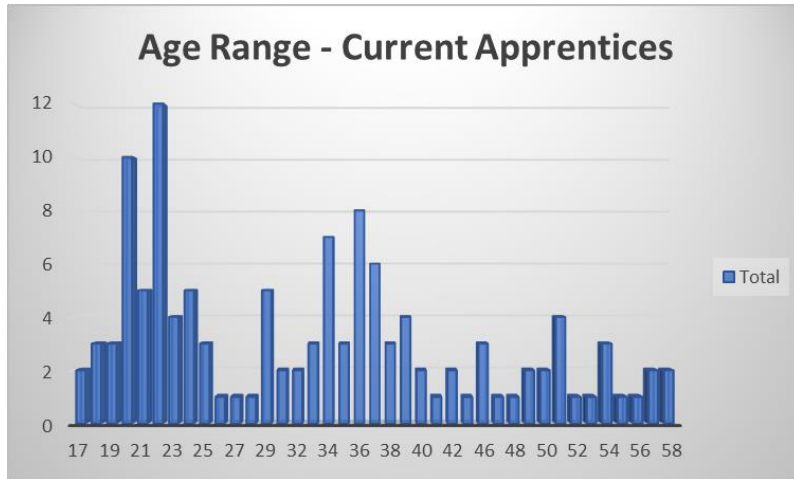


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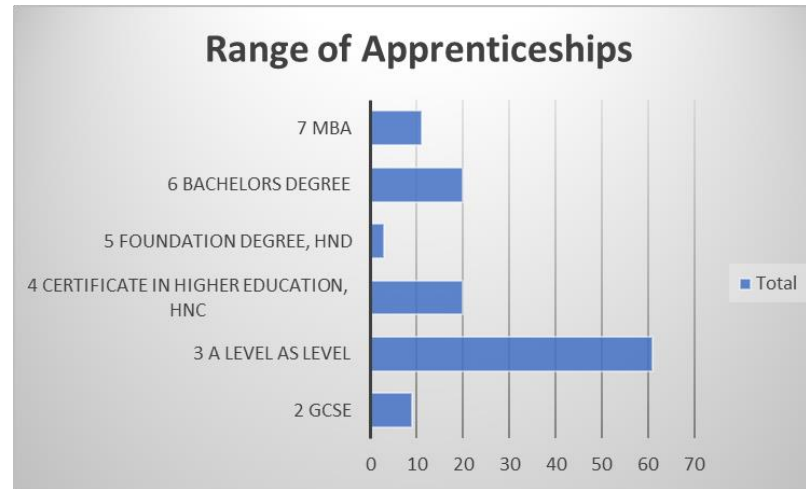


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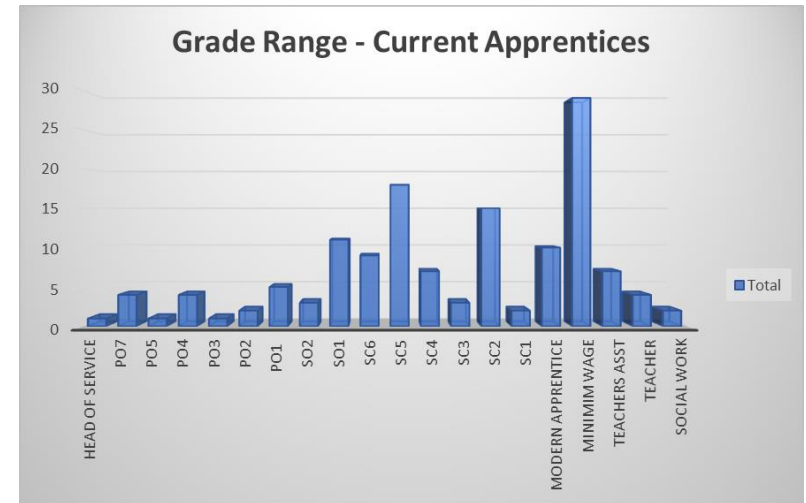
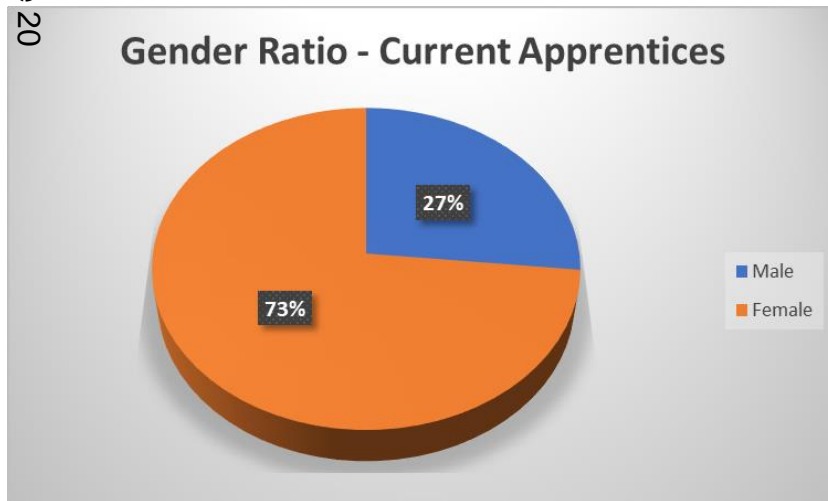
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# Current Cohort data

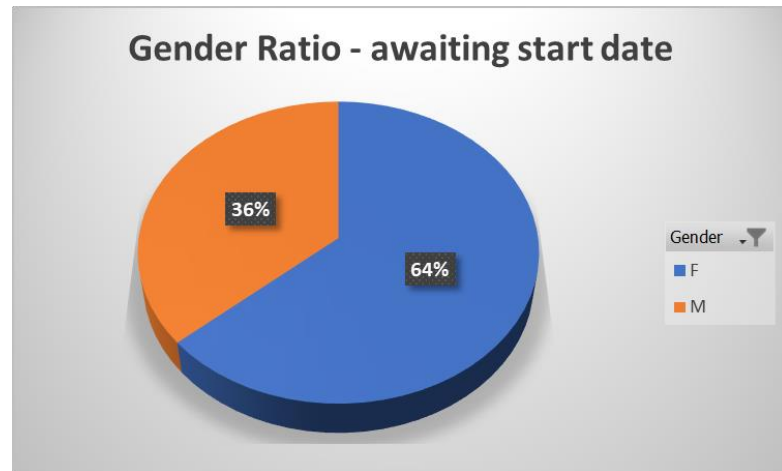
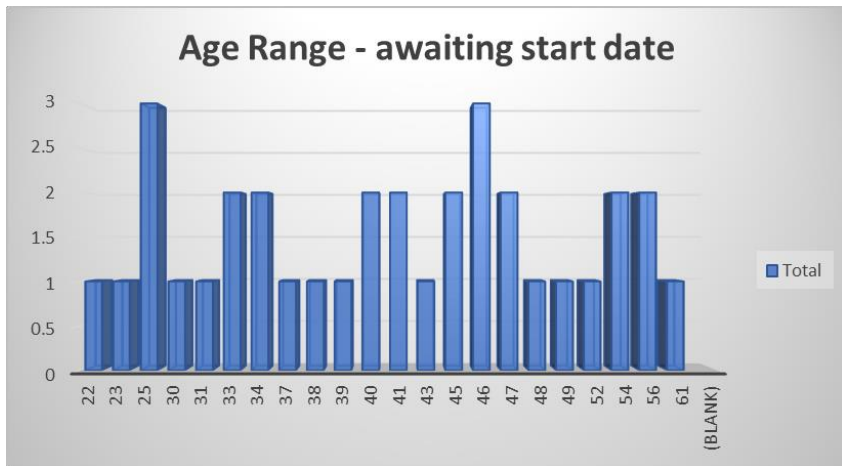


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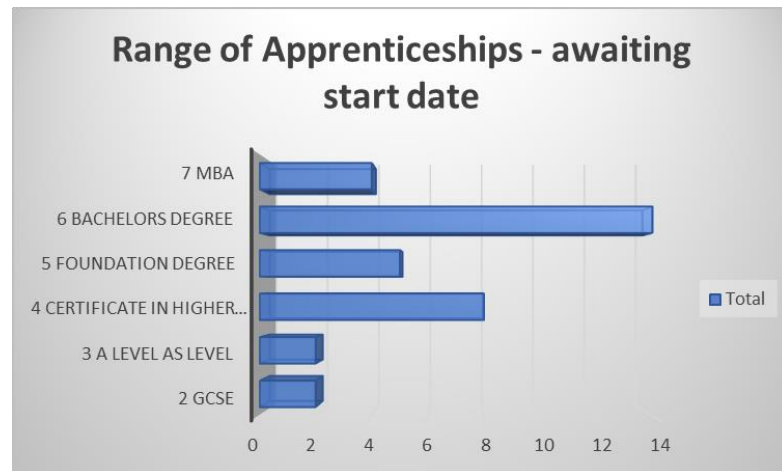




# Future cohort data (awaiting start date)



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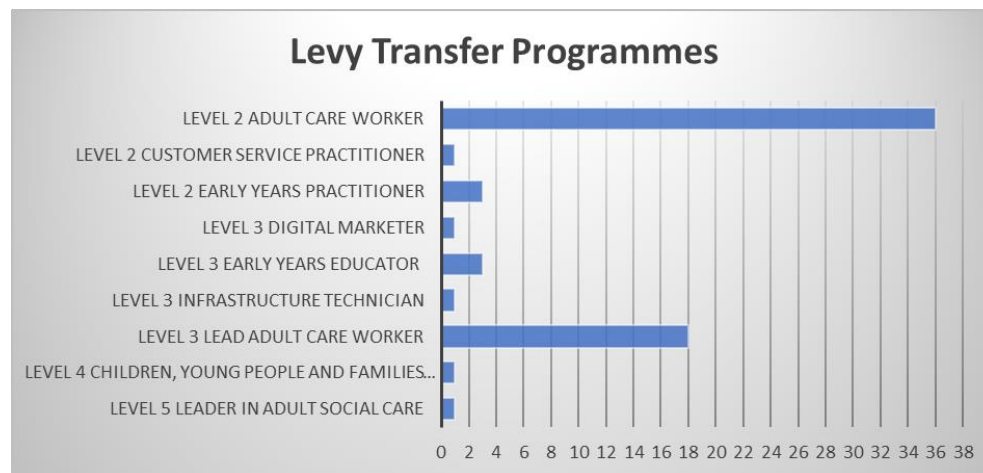
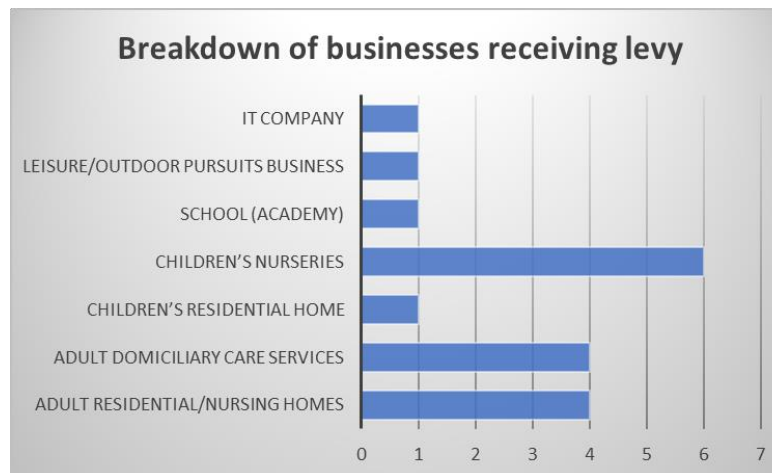
# Helping the local economy

Towards the end of 2020, we instigated a local levy transfer policy, making the most of the allowable transfer of up to 25% of our levy. Our self imposed rules stipulate receiving employers should be:

- Organisations based in Worcestershire serving Worcestershire residents
- Paying Worcestershire Council Tax
- Voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations in Worcestershire serving Worcestershire residents
- Organisations whose application aligns and supports Worcestershire's Growth agenda, as per the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan
- Using a Worcestershire Based Training Provider when delivering the apprenticeship programme

To date, this financial year, **we have transferred £204,500 to 18 local businesses to fund 65 apprenticeships** to support local businesses and the local economy

# Helping the local economy



# Helping the local economy

<https://bromsgrovestandard.co.uk/news/more-than-140k-handed-to-local-businesses-by-worcestershire-county-council-during-the-pandemic-27924/>

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23<sup>rd</sup> Feb, 2021

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**Train the Trainer Courses - For Your Care Home Staff**  
Meets CQC Standards. Train the Trainer Courses For Your Care Home Staff.  
flexabee.co.uk

**More than £140k handed to local businesses by Worcestershire County Council during the pandemic**

**THE CEDARS**  
— NURSING HOME —  
Original Management Team Return to The Cedars

This month, the Cedars Nursing Home has changed its management team and will be returning to the ethos that so many Redditch residents have experience over the years. Compassion, care community.

It is a worrying time to find a residential home but The Cedars offers the highest standards of nursing and emotional care for our residents and their families.

At the moment our priority is to keep

# Future Action

- Given the aforementioned 2020 activity, we feel we have now created a stronger and more receptive learning environment within WCC and WCF and as such the business will be more ready to provide a positive learning experience for new entrant Apprentices.
- Done this way, our Apprentices will be best placed to have the greatest support and opportunities to succeed.
- Support will be provided for managers who manage apprentices.
- All request to recruit forms (with the exception of social workers) will be diverted to the Apprenticeship team to see if we can support apprenticeships and/or care leavers before being allowed to continue with the recruitment process
- The Apprenticeship Strategy will be a major part of our future Workforce Strategy (Scheduled for launch April 2021).

# Future areas of consideration

- Barriers are continuing to be removed to allow and encourage education leavers into WCF & WCC, however we cannot create the opportunities. This needs to be done by managers/services.
  - We need continued focus from the Care Leaver team to encourage more Care Leavers to apply for available apprenticeships.
  - We need the support from the businesses (WCF and WCC) to make positions available for education leavers moving into Apprenticeships.
- Page 26
- As an organisation we could consider having a proportionate number of apprentices in each directorate based on headcount and therefore the percentage of levy they contribute and attract.
- Create Apprentice champions - Each business should be encouraged to nominate Apprentice Champions, who would work in conjunction with the central apprenticeship team to resolve any concerns/issues and help promote the benefits of apprentices with recruiting managers in the business.

# QUESTIONS

?

# Supporting Slides

## Contents:

- 1) Myth versus Fact
- 2) Testimonials



# Myth vs Fact

The EFSA (Education Skills Funding Agency), the government department responsible for apprenticeships (part of the DfE), produced some common myths and answers, see below.

## **“My apprentice will spend a lot of time away from the workplace”**

- Apprenticeships are about upskilling an individual. Reaching occupational competency takes time. Many employers and apprentices have praised the positive effect off-the-job training has on their productivity and apprentices feel valued by the significant investment in their training.
- Off-the-job training must be away from the apprentice’s normal working duties and must teach new knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to their specific apprenticeship.
- It can be delivered flexibly, for example, as a part of each day, one day per week, one week out of five or as block release.

You may already have existing training programmes or materials you can use to deliver elements of the apprentice’s off-the-job training.

## **“Off-the-job training must be delivered by a provider in a classroom, at an external location”**

- This is not true. Off-the-job training can be delivered in a flexible way. This can be at the apprentice’s usual place of work, or at an external location. It can include for example, the teaching of theory, practical training and writing assignments.
- Providers have developed a range of delivery styles to suit employer and apprentice needs. Employers should work with them to decide when and where off-the-job training should take place and who is best placed to deliver it.

## **“I need to document all of the apprentice’s off-the-job training”**

- A commitment statement must be in place from the beginning of the apprenticeship, setting out the training content an apprentice will receive, and which elements count towards the off-the-job training. The apprentice’s evidence pack needs to demonstrate what training has been delivered against the commitment statement.

# Myth vs Fact cont...

EFSA (Education Skills Funding Agency). They are the government department responsible for apprenticeships (part of the DfE) produced some common myths and answers, see below

## **“English and maths counts towards the 20% requirement for off-the-job training”**

- This is not true: English and maths does not count towards the 20% off-the-job training.
- Apprenticeships are about developing occupational competency and they are designed on the basis that the apprentice already has the required level (level 2) of English and maths. Training for English and maths must be on top of the 20% off-the-job training requirement.

## **“Off-the-job training can be done in the apprentice’s own time”**

An apprenticeship is a work-based programme so all off-the-job training must take place within the apprentice’s paid contracted hours. If planned off-the-job training is unable to take place, it must be rearranged. Apprentices may choose to spend additional time training outside paid hours, but this must not be required to complete the apprenticeship.

## **“Apprenticeships are for those who didn’t get good exam results”**

- Apprenticeship opportunities can be very competitive so employers will be looking to employ the best candidates. In addition, individuals choosing to study an apprenticeship are expected to manage both working and studying a qualification so need to be ambitious and have the desire to develop the skills to succeed.

## **“You can’t go to university if you study an Apprenticeship”**

- Similarly to GCSEs and A-Levels, apprenticeship qualifications attract UCAS points that can be used to access various university level programmes. You can also progress through the apprenticeship route with higher and degree level apprenticeships available.

# Myth vs Fact cont...

EFSA (Education Skills Funding Agency). They are the government department responsible for apprenticeships (part of the DfE) produced some common myths and answers, see below

## **“Apprentices have few career progression opportunities”**

- The majority of apprentices in work felt that their apprenticeship had had a positive impact on their career and 36% of higher apprentices report getting a promotion after completing their apprenticeship.

## **“Apprenticeships are only for young people”**

- Apprenticeships are open to anyone over the age of 16. There is no upper age limit.

## **“An Apprenticeship won't pay me enough”**

There is a minimum apprenticeship wage that all employers must pay apprentices. However, Worcestershire County Council aims to pay Age-Related National Minimum Wage, for newly recruited apprentices. Existing employees retain their current terms and conditions.

# Testimonials

## My Apprenticeship Journey- Case Study 1

I started out applying for apprenticeships after completing my higher certificate in Equine and being unable to find an appropriate job for my lifestyle. I first found an apprenticeship in Business administration as I found this would be a good starting point for me to go into a new area of work for me. While doing my level 3 in administrative operations with the council I spent my first year working in education commissioning, and, my second year working within the children missing education team which is data driven. These two roles gave me a breadth of understanding within the Childrens sector and allowed me to find what I wanted to do going forward.

On passing my apprenticeship with distinction grades I was offered another position in the council in the area I had interest after being given some opportunity as an administrator to provide support in projects. After interview I was given the role as an associate project manager for in the transformation and change team, alongside this I will be doing my level 4 project manager apprenticeship qualification with HOW college and my APM Qualifications.

I have been in the role for 6 months now based with the Worcestershire Children First buy back team due to my understanding of children's, gained in my two years in my previous apprenticeship, I offer project support and project management to the projects within the SEND programme of work. In addition to this I have completed my foundation certification in Prince2 through the council which is an industry recognised project management qualification.

Overall, my experience with apprenticeships has been great. I don't believe I would be on the track to the career I want by now if it wasn't for the opportunity of an apprenticeship. I spent months after coming out of higher education not being able to find jobs as I didn't have the experience, and, the apprenticeship programme has allowed me to gain that experience and professional qualifications that will help me get better positions in the future.

I would recommend apprenticeships to anyone that needs help getting the job they want, even if you don't start out where you want to be, by the end you could have gained a lot of knowledge of the areas you want to be in and develop your skills and C.V while doing so.

# Testimonials

## Case Study 2

Worcestershire County Council offered me the opportunity to start an apprenticeship in business administration two years ago. Since then I have moved into the finance department to begin an accounting career. The apprenticeship enabled me to identify my strengths, interests and develop my professional self.

I believe apprenticeships are by far the best investment a young person can make today – all training is paid for by your employer and you get paid whilst you learn. This combination enables you to progress yourself as a professional without going into any debt or feeling that you have not received relevant experience alongside your academic work.

I was placed in a job role that enabled me to have access to a wide range of duties. Being able to try everything from finance to marketing let me hone an idea for my future career so that I was ready to make that second step. Business administration is so varied it offers great pathways to many different professions and on top of this it enables you to see how organisations operate from the ground up.

Worcestershire County Council as an employer has a highly structured apprenticeship scheme. Access to online learning, college teaching, qualifications and a supportive in-house apprenticeship team mean you can be assured of your support throughout the process. I've always felt supported as there is an active approach to helping you progress your career internally after your apprenticeship comes to an end and you will be guided through the next pathway to your future career.

During my time at Worcestershire County Council I was working alongside other apprentices in similar roles which enabled us to support each other and share experiences. The Council encourages co-operation between apprentices, and it is excellent in that it has multiple apprentices on each intake which enables a group bond and further enhances your support network. The Council also offered a mentor in my roles to get help and guidance from a more senior position in the department you are placed within.

I'm delighted that they took me on as it has suited my learning style because I enjoy combining academic work with practical experience which has given me clear vision for the future, and I look forward to success within Worcestershire County Council.

# Testimonials

## Case Study 3

I joined Worcestershire County Council in September 2018 as a Business Administration Apprentice. As I was coming to the end of the apprenticeship, there was a time of uncertainty about the future. I expressed an interest in learning and development and I was then lucky enough to be offered an amazing opportunity to work in the Learning and Development (L&D) Team and carry out an L&D Practitioner Apprenticeship.

Page 34

I cannot be more grateful for this opportunity; I have thoroughly enjoyed every moment and I am gaining knowledge and skills and learning new things every day. I also have an amazing and approachable manager who is a great role model. She is really supportive in helping me develop and provides me with as many opportunities as possible.

I have also been lucky enough to have a great mentor with a wealth of experience and skills who has given me lots of knowledge to aid my personal development. He has given me the confidence to do things which are out of my comfort zone which has helped me to grow as a person.

I am really optimistic for my future and looking forward to continuing to learn and grow. I couldn't recommend apprenticeships at Worcestershire County Council highly enough.

# Testimonials

## Case Study 4

I originally joined Worcestershire County Council as a Business Administration Apprentice in September 2018. I previously studied at Worcester Sixth Form College, completing a BTEC Level three Diploma in Business Studies, I quickly identified that working for a public facing organisation was a route that greatly interested me.

I had a very successful two years in my Business Administration role, working closely with the team to deliver high quality careers advice and guidance to our young people of Worcestershire. I also got involved in organising large events such as the Worcestershire Skills Show and the annual Apprenticeship Awards. I was awarded a Distinction grade in my Apprenticeship. Unfortunately, on completion I discovered my job role was coming to an end.

The Apprenticeship / Human Resource team identified the possibility of a job opportunity. After telephone interviews and further conversations with the Head of Human Resources, they assured me that with my current skills set I could take on an entirely new career in a different direction to what I had originally planned.

I have now progressed onto becoming a Trainee Instructional Designer working in the IT and Digital, Learning and Development Team at Worcestershire County Council. As part of my current job role, I am involved in a variety of different work projects, which include designing, creating and implementing different training materials and resources that will be beneficial to colleagues within the organisation. An example of this being the creation of various instructional guides, which support a variety of processes within Microsoft Teams that can be used to benefit the organisation on a large scale. I have also supported a colleague to deliver a staff briefing held by the Chief Executive, which was broadcasted using Microsoft Teams Live Events to update the entire workforce on important updates.

I have an excellent mentor, who is supporting me to grow my potential and to develop skills which will enable me to climb and progress further up the career ladder.

I am proud to be part of an organisation that sees the importance of visions and values and the collaborative approach which inspires you to reach your full potential. I am also thankful to the HR team for taking the time to invest in me and making me feel so positive and enthused about my experience to date. I am excited to continue my council journey and seeing what the future holds!

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## **CORPORATE & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 11 MARCH 2021**

### **PERFORMANCE MONITORING OF COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS**

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#### **Summary**

1. The Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel have requested a detailed report into the declining performance of Stage 2 Children's Social Care complaints completed inside 65 days and Stage 2 Corporate complaints in 25 days.
2. In addition, the Panel has requested an explanation about the 2019/20 Annual Letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) where concerns were raised.
3. This Report gives an overview of the current position of the Consumer Relations Unit (CRU) including performance across all areas, details of compliments received, recent changes and future developments. The plans in place to improve performance are included in this report for Members consideration.
4. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Transformation and Commissioning and the Complaints Manager have been invited to the meeting.

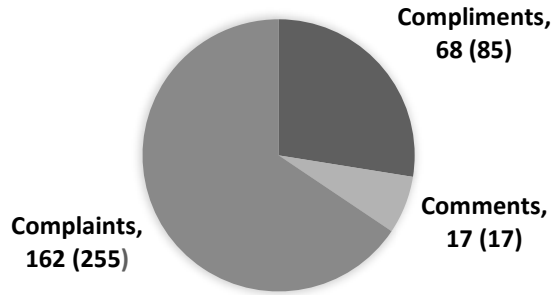
#### **Background**

5. The Panel has previously received a detailed report setting out the 3 different representation procedures that Worcestershire County Council (the Council) follows for Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care and Corporate (which includes all other Council services).
6. In addition to these 3 procedures, the Council are also subject to the complaints process of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) service.
7. The Panel also monitors several Performance Indicators in respect of Stage 2 investigations for Corporate and Children's Social Care complaints.

#### **2019/20 Statistics**

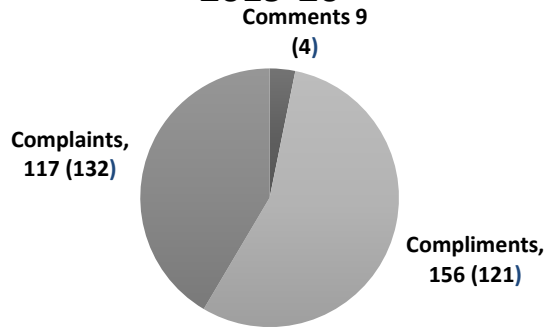
8. The tables below show the 2019/20 Statistics (with comparison to 2018/19 (in brackets)) for statutory Children's Social Care, Statutory Adult Social Care and Corporate complaints, compliments, and comments.

### STATUTORY CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

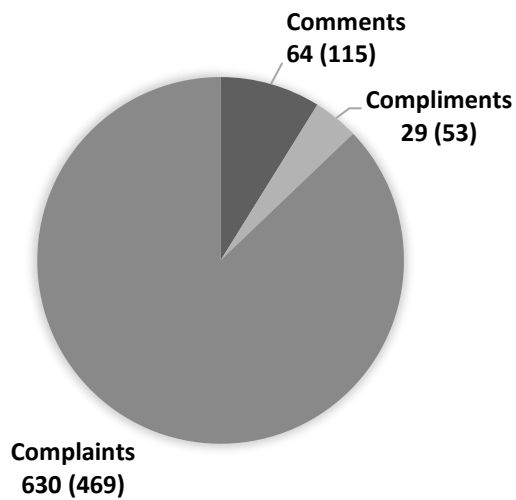


### STATUTORY ADULT SOCIAL CARE

2019-20



### CORPORATE 2019-20



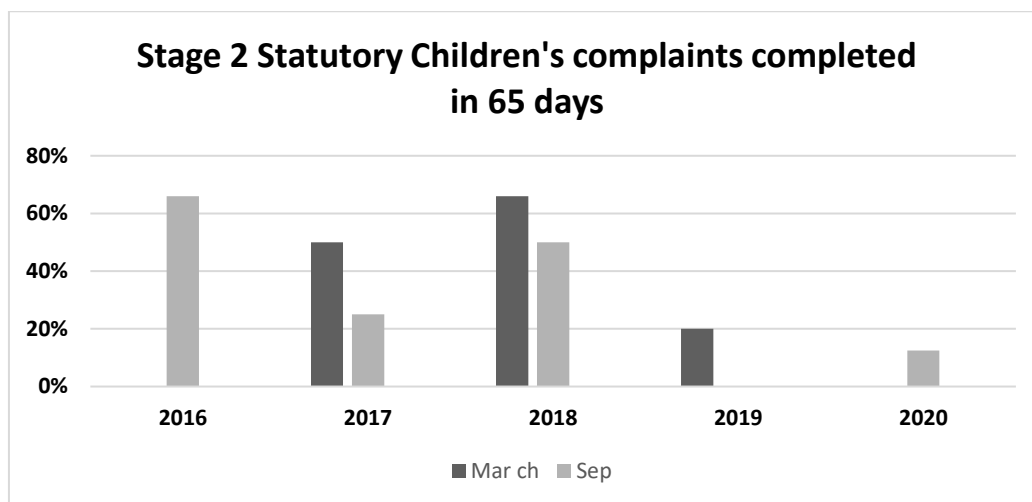
## 2020/21 Half Year statistics

9. An early look at the emerging figures for 2020/21 suggests that there will be fewer complaints, compliments and comments in Corporate representations. Half year figures are 183, 9 and 21 respectively.

10. Due to the impact of COVID-19 neither Adult nor Children's Social Care were accepting complaints during the first quarter of the current year (except for safeguarding matters), therefore the full year's numbers may show a greater variation. However, at the half year stage it seems likely that Children's and Adult Social Care will be similar to or slightly lower than the 2019/20 figures. Children's are 70 complaints, 21 compliments and 1 comment and Adults are 45 complaints, 69 compliments and 7 comments.

## Quarterly Performance Monitoring

11. The Panel receives a quarterly performance monitoring report which includes performance indicators (PI's) for Compliments received, Stage 2 Children's Social Care complaints completed inside 65 days and Stage 2 Corporate complaints in 25 days. The PI's relating to the time taken to complete Stage 2 complaint investigations under the Statutory Children's Social Care process and those under the Corporate process where complaints consistently show an underperformance. The figures are as follows:



NB. At September 2019 and March 2020 none of the Stage 2 complaints were completed in 65 days.

## Stage 2 Statutory Children's Complaints Performance

12. The 65 working days to complete a Stage 2 investigation is set by the legislation. It was acknowledged on introduction that this was a tight timescale and the Council is aware that most authorities struggle to meet it (eg Gloucestershire's last available report stated that this was achieved in only 40% of cases).

13. In addition to an Investigator, the legislation also requires the appointment of an Independent Person for complaints made by or on behalf of a young person or where the complaint is about the service to that young person. This increases the cost and in

2019/20 the total cost of Investigating Officers and Independent Persons was circa £50,000 for 31 investigations. There are not enough Investigators and Independent Persons to be able to allocate cases straight away and in some cases this has meant a wait of 6 weeks until a case can begin investigation – and this counts towards the time elapsed. In 2020/21 the average cost of a Stage 2 investigation (requiring an Independent Person) was £2020.

14. In 2019, a recruitment campaign was undertaken to increase the pool of Independent Investigators and Independent Persons. Since January 2020, following the new recruits training and induction, there are now 9 Investigators and 3 Independent Persons able to do Stage 2 Children's Social Care investigations. A further recruitment campaign is planned for 2021, which should hopefully improve the time taken to complete Stage 2 investigations.

15. The response time by Worcestershire Children First (WCF) at Stage 1 has improved and there has been a slight reduction in the number of cases progressing to Stage 2 since 2018/19. This would suggest increased satisfaction with the process, however, there is not a matching improvement at Stage 2. In 2018/19, 65% of Stage 2 investigations exceeded the 65-day limit and in 2019/20 it was 100%.

16. The CRU is currently under-resourced. The Consumer Relations Officer (CRO) responsible for Children's Social Care is on maternity leave until February 2022 and recruitment for that position is under way.

17. The impact of COVID-19 has necessitated changes in working practices which is also impacting on the CRU's ability to conduct investigations within timescales. Complainants are currently advised that the usual timescales cannot be applied due to Covid restrictions.

18. Independent Investigators and Independent Persons need to study the social care records of complainants and due to security restrictions, this cannot be done from their own homes. Therefore, since March 2020 Investigators have been reliant on CRU staff doing the file read and supplying them with the necessary documents, given the restrictions preventing them accessing County Hall.

19. In addition, interviews with complainants at the current time need to be carried out remotely by Teams, Zoom, telephone or in some cases by written exchange. Making arrangements for this can slow the process down considerably. Imposing a 5 working day, time limit for agreement by the interviewee to their interview notes is currently being considered, with a presumption of agreement, if no response is received.

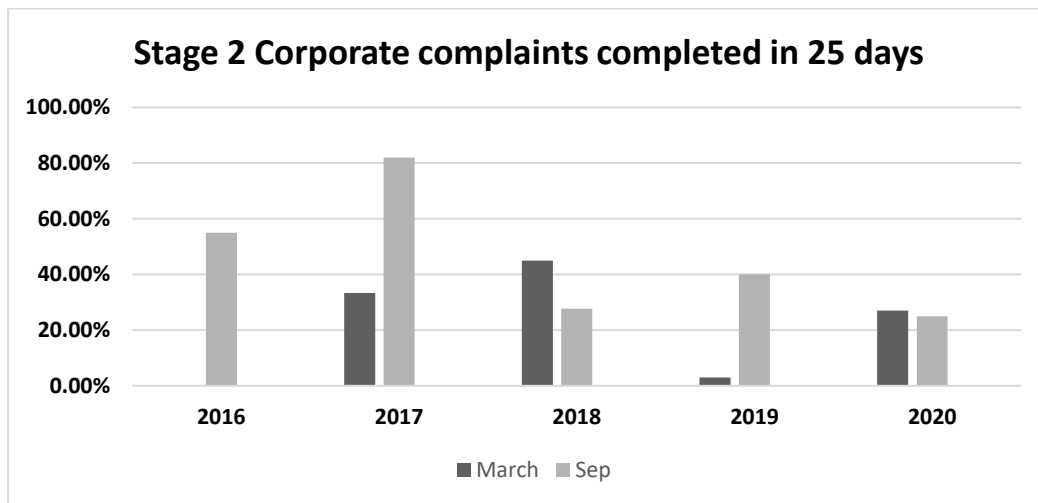
20. As part of the contract for a Stage 2 investigation, the CRU not only states the timescale, but require the Investigator to give a progress report every 2 weeks and to seek advance consent to both exceed the timescale and exceed 35 hours investigating.

21. The legislation allows the Council to offer complainants asking for a Stage 2 investigation the opportunity to participate in a Conflict Resolution meeting instead. If this is successful, then the process stops. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, then they can still proceed to a formal Stage 2 investigation. However, these meetings increase demand on officer resources in the service at a senior level, as they require a senior manager to represent WCF as they must be in a position to offer appropriate

resolution. When they have been conducted in the past, they have proved largely successful, where the follow up action is prompt.

22. The CRU has committed considerable investment in a new customer management database system. This was rolled out at the beginning of 2021 and whilst there are still some development issues, it is hoped that an improvement in complaints handling and performance management information will shortly be seen.

## Stage 2 Corporate Complaints



23. The 25 working days to complete a Stage 2 investigation was set by the Council many years ago when less complaints were received (ie 388 in 2016/17 compared to 630 in 2019/20).

24. Benchmarking is very difficult for complaints data and although all local authorities must follow the same national regulations for statutory children's and adults' complaints, they may apply their own complaints procedures for corporate complaints. This means that handling practice can vary significantly between authorities and comparison is therefore difficult. Anecdotal evidence from the West Midlands Complaints Officers Group (which the Council is part of) suggests all authorities are facing the same challenges and seeing increased pressures upon their complaints teams and processes. Data provided for participating local authorities on the Local Government Association's information system measures the number of formal complaints received per quarter and has shown a trend for increasing complaint numbers. The Neighbouring County Councils timescales vary between 25, 30 and 35 days. The Strategic Directorate for People (PD) have set themselves a timescale of 35 days for Adult Social Care investigations.

25. To undertake Corporate Stage 2 investigations the CRU, uses Independent Investigators. In 2019/20 the total cost of Investigating Officers was almost £40,000 covering 35 investigations. In 2020/21 the average cost of a Stage 2 investigation was £1077. Following the recruitment campaign detailed in paragraph 14 above, there are now 11 Investigators able to do Corporate Stage 2 investigations. Due to the limited number of Investigators the CRU finds it has to wait to allocate a case sometimes up to 6 weeks which impacts on the time elapsed

26. The overall response time at Stage 1 of the process has improved and there has been a slight reduction in the number of cases progressing to Stage 2 since 2018/19, which could suggest increased satisfaction with the process. However, there is not a matching improvement at Stage 2. In 2018/19 66% of Stage 2 investigations exceeded the 25-day limit and in 2019/20 it was 80%.

27. Economy & Infrastructure (E&I) and WCF account for the most Stage 2 complaints. Compliance with the 25-day timescale has varied over the last 6 quarters from none in time to 100% compliance for E&I and from 20% to 100% in time for WCF.

28. The CRU tracks the progress of complaints for E&I and is currently looking to do this for the Special Education Needs element of WCF complaints. The CRO for Corporate complaints also has regular scheduled meetings with E&I officers to monitor Stage 1 progress to try and reduce the time taken and therefore improve satisfaction with that part of the process.

29. Due to the rising number of complaints and the limited availability of Investigators, the CRU is now more rigorous about refusing progression to Stage 2 (this is at the Unit's discretion). However, the Unit's reasons for refusal have to be clearly justified and the complainant has the right to take their complaint to the Ombudsman, who may ask the CRU to carry out Stage 2 or may investigate the complaint themselves.

30. As mentioned in paragraph 17 above, the impact of COVID-19 on working practices is also impacting on the Unit's ability to conduct investigations within timescale. Imposing a 5 working day time limit for agreement by the interviewee to their interview notes, with a presumption of agreement if no response is received, is being considered.

31. As part of the contract for a Stage 2 investigation, the CRU not only states the timescale but requires the Investigator to give a progress report every 2 weeks, to seek advance consent to exceed the timescale and exceed 35 hours investigating. Strengthening this requirement is being considered.

## **Compliments**

32. Compliments are an important element of the representations process; they give the necessary balance to the feedback on service provision and enable good practice to be shared and appreciated. A compliment is logged if it is more than just a thank you, it must identify exceptional service. Therefore, the Directorate may have more examples that they share with their staff. The CRU records all compliments received from external sources and individuals independent of the authority. Compliments are logged and the individual congratulated on their good practice. Social Care service users are particularly encouraged to offer positive feedback, as well as negative. Compliments are less driven by policy decisions and service changes than complaints are; they are almost always prompted by an individual's performance.

33. Over a 5-year period corporate compliments have decreased, Children's Social Care compliments are slowly increasing, and Adult Social Care compliments have shown a more significant increase. Some examples of compliments received are contained in Appendix 1

## Action being taken to improve performance

34. The action being taken to improve the performance relating to Stage 2 Children's Social Care complaints completed inside 65 days and Stage 2 corporate complaints in 25 days is:

- A recruitment campaign to increase the pool of Independent Investigators and Independent Persons able to do Stage 2 Children's Social Care investigations and Stage 2 Corporate Investigations will be carried out in 2021. This should improve the time taken to complete Stage 2 investigations and improve performance.
- Recruitment for maternity cover for the CRO for Children's Social Care which is under way.
- Consideration of imposing a 5 working day time limit for agreement by the interviewee to their interview notes is currently being considered, with a presumption of agreement if no response is received.
- The use of Conflict Resolution meetings where it is more appropriate will be explored for Children's Social care and is already being explored for Adult Social Care complaint investigations.
- As part of the contract for a Stage 2 investigation, the CRU not only states the timescale but requires the Investigator to give a progress report every 2 weeks, to seek advance consent to exceed the timescale and advance consent to exceed 35 hours investigating. Strengthening this requirement is being considered.

## 2019/20 Annual Letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO)

35. In the Ombudsman's Annual Letter (attached at Appendix 2), he raised concern at delays in the Council providing information and that his Investigators were having to seek clarification because the Council's responses were insufficient. He also commented that, in some cases, the Council had taken too long to implement agreed recommendations. In one case the delay was such that he took the unusual step of threatening to issue a witness summons to obtain the information requested. In three separate cases recommendations were not implemented within the agreed timeframe. The Council were asked to reflect on this and take steps to improve its liaison with the LGO's office.

36. The data quoted is as provided by the LGO. The LGO will not enter a dialogue with authorities about discrepancies but does accept that their data will not match that recorded by local authorities. This is so in Worcestershire's case where the Council recorded 37 complaints made to the LGO and 29 determinations.

37. A comparison of Worcestershire's performance in context of neighbouring authorities for the 3 specific areas that the Ombudsman concentrated on is detailed in Appendix 3.

38. Since the LGO Annual letter the Council has put in place a number of measures to improve performance and communication with the Ombudsman service:

- All investigation inquiries are now copied to the appropriate Assistant Director/Service Manager so that they can ensure a timely provision of information and compliance with recommendations.
- PD have created and maintain a spreadsheet to track LGO investigations and required actions and ensure they are meeting the necessary timescales

## **Purpose of the Meeting**

39. The Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Consider the information provided in the report.
- Determine any comments the Panel would wish to make to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning.
- Agree whether any further Scrutiny is required at this stage.

## **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 – Compliments received

Appendix 2 – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual letter July 2020

Link to Ombudsman website - [www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/worcestershire-county-council/statistics](http://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/worcestershire-county-council/statistics)

Appendix 3 – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman - a comparison of the performance of Worcestershire County Council to neighbouring authorities

## **Contact Points**

Annette Stock, Complaints Manager

Tel 10905 846640 Email: [astock@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:astock@worcestershire.gov.uk)

Alyson Grice/Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Officers

Tel: 01905 844962/844963 Email: [scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk)

## **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:

[Corporate and Communities O&S Panel 10 December 2019, Agenda and Minutes](#)

[Corporate and Communities O&S Panel 24 January 2020, Agenda and Minutes](#)

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)



## Compliments Received

### Worcestershire Children First

- From a parent to the social worker:  
*"You have easily been the most dedicated, determined, hardworking and thoughtful Social Worker we have experienced. You are always willing and able to push the people that need to be pushed and not let obstacles of any kind get in the way of ensuring [REDACTED] has his needs met with whatever resources you can muster."*
- From a parent about a social worker:  
*"Nothing she could do better she is just perfect. She is a caring person who cares for everyone. He wants her to be a part of his life after he leaves care as she has been for his brothers She puts 100% into everything she does. He feels more than very lucky that she is his social worker She has changed his life all of his life. He used to be [REDACTED] but now he is just doing what he needs to do and he feels most of this is down to her."*
- From a parent about a social worker:  
*"My experience with [REDACTED] has been brilliant, my daughter was on a care order just short of 2 years and in that time [REDACTED] has been very supportive but also professional where everything has been really positive and a little concern raised and she was very firm with getting the concern dealt with but was supportive with me and reassured me at the same time what was nice for me as I tend to panic about most things."*
- From parents and the court:  
*"It's been a sensitive case and the parents thanked [REDACTED] for being very professional towards them and kind. The Guardian recognised it and the Judge also personally spoke to and thanked [REDACTED] for her role and she conducted it."*

### People Directorate

- From a service user about a Social Worker:  
*"Just wanted to thank you so much for all your really excellent support over these few years. It's been so appreciated over what's been a really difficult and challenging transitional period of my life. It's been really great to meet you and I wanted to wish you best of luck with the future"*
- From a person supported by Urgent Promoting Independence Service:  
*You organised 'Urgent Promoting Independence' to help me. I had never expected all the wonderful help I have received from them. The carers who came in to get me washed and dressed and downstairs each morning and back into bed in the evening were all kind, polite and cheerful, very helpful, who treated me as a friend rather than a patient"*

- From the wife of a service user:  
*"We are very pleased with the support given to us when my husband was in Evesham Hospital. Our Support Worker was great, nothing was too much trouble and she was so helpful to us both, she went the extra mile, we cannot thank her enough."*
- From a partner to a Team Manager:  
*"I need to write to say how brilliant my social worker has been. As soon as the decision was made for my partner to go into permanent care, everything was sorted really quickly."*
- From a parent about a Social Worker:  
*"Since taking over my son's case the Social Worker has supported and tried to sort out so many problems. She is so patient with us no matter how frustrating the situations have been."*
- From a son about a Social Worker:  
*"During what has been a very stressful and emotional time my mother has been treated with respect and compassion. I have been kept in the loop throughout the entire experience. The Social Worker was instrumental in making the move from one home to another so smooth."*

## **Corporate Services**

- From a resident to Street Lighting:  
*"I read about your plan to install bat-friendly street lighting. I would like to compliment you on your decision to consider our ecosystem as a priority. I hope that your efforts to help bats will lead to a strong trend to reduce light pollution everywhere. You are to be commended for your thoughtfulness"*
- To the Registration Service:  
*"Thank you very much for making our Wedding Day very special. You were professional and made the ceremony truly memorable, helping to put us at ease"*
- For the Library Service:  
*"I was unable to renew a library book as it had been reserved. I went into Malvern library today and spoke to P who then tried to find another copy of the book at other libraries. As it was Wednesday some of the libraries were closed but he persevered and eventually found one that could release their copy to satisfy the reservation and allow me to renew my copy. I am very impressed with P's handling of the matter and was pleasantly surprised. Please convey my appreciation to him on an excellent job"*
- To Waste Services:  
*"Just wanted to say that we are very impressed by the service offered by the Recycling centre in Malvern. The staff are always friendly and keep the place very clean and tidy. Special thanks to the member of staff who kept all the cars moving efficiently during our visit around midday yesterday. Well done all!"*

22 July 2020

*By email*

Mr Robinson  
Head of Paid Service  
Worcestershire County Council

Dear Mr Robinson

### **Annual Review letter 2020**

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about your authority for the year ending 31 March 2020. Given the exceptional pressures under which local authorities have been working over recent months, I thought carefully about whether it was still appropriate to send you this annual update. However, now, more than ever, I believe that it is essential that the public experience of local services is at the heart of our thinking. So, I hope that this feedback, which provides unique insight into the lived experience of your Council's services, will be useful as you continue to deal with the current situation and plan for the future.

### **Complaint statistics**

This year, we continue to place our focus on the outcomes of complaints and what can be learned from them. We want to provide you with the most insightful information we can and have made several changes over recent years to improve the data we capture and report. We focus our statistics on these three key areas:

**Complaints upheld** - We uphold complaints when we find some form of fault in an authority's actions, including where the authority accepted fault before we investigated. A focus on how often things go wrong, rather than simple volumes of complaints provides a clearer indicator of performance.

**Compliance with recommendations** - We recommend ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice. Our recommendations try to put people back in the position they were before the fault and we monitor authorities to ensure they comply with our recommendations. Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An authority with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.

**Satisfactory remedies provided by the authority** - We want to encourage the early resolution of complaints and to credit authorities that have a positive and open approach to resolving complaints. We recognise cases where an authority has taken steps to put things

right before the complaint came to us. The authority upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your authority with similar types of authorities to work out an average level of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

This data will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), along with a copy of this letter on 29 July 2020, and our Review of Local Government Complaints. For further information on how to interpret our statistics, please visit our [website](#).

This year, I issued a public report about your Council's failure to provide education to a child with Special Educational Needs, to challenge their informal exclusion from school, or to update their Education Health and Care Plan. The Council's corporate complaints policy also lacked information about timescales and was unclear about how complaints would be progressed.

The Council agreed to the recommendations made, including agreeing to pay the child's mother £4,200 for lost education, to remind officers of the Council's duties to children out of school, and to review its corporate complaints policy. I was pleased to see that your Council promptly provided my office with evidence to show that it took all the actions it agreed to.

In last year's letter, I raised my concerns with your Council's failure to provide my staff with the information they need during investigations. I also commented that, in some cases, your Council had taken too long to implement agreed recommendations. Unfortunately, this year has seen a repeat of these issues with my investigators reporting delays in providing information or having to seek clarification because responses are insufficient. In one case the delays were such that we took the unusual step of threatening to issue a witness summons to obtain the information requested. In three separate cases recommendations were not implemented within the agreed timeframe. You should be aware that the actions you agree to take, and your performance in implementing them, are reported publicly on our website, so are likely to generate increased public and media scrutiny in future.

Delay by the Council adds to the frustration experienced by complainants and can cause further avoidable distress and uncertainty. I ask the Council to reflect on this and take steps to improve its liaison with my office.

### **Resources to help you get it right**

There are a range of resources available that can support you to place the learning from complaints, about your authority and others, at the heart of your system of corporate governance. [Your council's performance](#) launched last year and puts our data and information about councils in one place. Again, the emphasis is on learning, not numbers. You can find the decisions we have made, public reports we have issued, and the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

I would encourage you to share the tool with colleagues and elected members; the information can provide valuable insights into service areas, early warning signs of problems and is a key source of information for governance, audit, risk and scrutiny functions.

Earlier this year, we held our link officer seminars in London, Bristol, Leeds and Birmingham. Attended by 178 delegates from 143 local authorities, we focused on maximising the impact of complaints, making sure the right person is involved with complaints at the right time, and how to overcome common challenges.

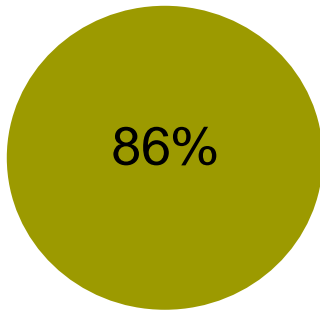
We have a well-established and successful training programme supporting local authorities and independent care providers to help improve local complaint handling. During the year, we delivered 118 courses, training more than 1,400 people. This is 47 more courses than we delivered last year and included more training to adult social care providers than ever before. To find out more visit [www.lgo.org.uk/training](http://www.lgo.org.uk/training).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M King', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael King  
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman  
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

### Complaints upheld



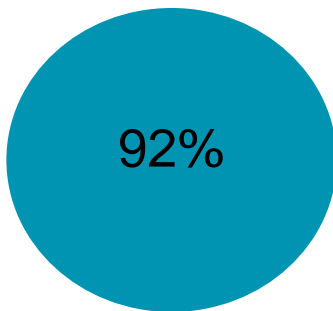
**86%** of complaints we investigated were upheld.

This compares to an average of **66%** in similar authorities.

**19**  
upheld decisions

Statistics are based on a total of 22 detailed investigations for the period between 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

### Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations



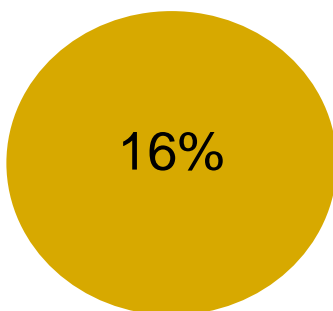
In **92%** of cases we were satisfied the authority had successfully implemented our recommendations.

This compares to an average of **100%** in similar authorities.

Statistics are based on a total of 12 compliance outcomes for the period between 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

- Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An authority with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.

### Satisfactory remedies provided by the authority



In **16%** of upheld cases we found the authority had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

This compares to an average of **9%** in similar authorities.

**3**  
satisfactory remedy decisions

Statistics are based on a total of 22 detailed investigations for the period between 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

## Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO)

### A Comparison of the performance of Worcestershire County Council to neighbouring authorities

#### **Complaints Upheld – 66% average in similar authorities**

Shropshire had 11 upheld decisions which was 41% of those the LGO investigated  
 Gloucestershire had 12 upheld decisions which was 52% of those the LGO investigated  
 Herefordshire had 15 upheld decisions which was 71% of those the LGO investigated  
 Warwickshire had 6 upheld decisions which was 75% of those the LGO investigated  
 Birmingham has 119 upheld decisions which was 78% of those the LGO investigated  
**Worcestershire had 19 upheld cases which was 86% of those the LGO investigated**

The LGO made additional findings in 8 cases he upheld and in a further 7 upheld cases he disagreed with Worcestershire's findings not to uphold a complaint and determined in the complainant's favour. It is difficult to see how we can improve our performance in this category unless we adopt a less stringent and more empathetic approach in investigating complaints

#### **Compliance with LGO recommendations – 100% average in similar authorities**

Birmingham had 100% compliance based on 114 cases  
 Shropshire had 100% compliance based on 12 cases  
 Herefordshire had 100% compliance based on 11 cases  
 Gloucestershire had 100% compliance based on 7 cases  
 Warwickshire had 100% compliance based on 6 cases  
**Worcestershire had 92% compliance based on 12 cases**

There was in fact just 1 case in which we did not comply with the LGO recommendations in a timely manner and it was an Adult Social Care case (and is the one referred to in the LGO's Annual Letter). The complaint had also involved the NHS Trust and we delayed some remedial actions while waiting on a response from them. In addition, the Assistant Director genuinely believed that the LGO had agreed to a delay in delivering the agreed recommendations.

#### **Satisfactory remedies provided by the authority – 9% average in similar authorities**

Gloucestershire did not provide a satisfactory remedy before determination by the LGO in any of the cases investigated  
 Warwickshire did not provide a satisfactory remedy before determination by the LGO in any of the cases investigated  
 Birmingham provided a satisfactory remedy before determination by the LGO in 4% of the cases investigated  
 Shropshire provided a satisfactory remedy before determination by the LGO in 9% of the cases investigated  
 Herefordshire provided a satisfactory remedy before determination by the LGO in 13% of the cases investigated  
**Worcestershire provided a satisfactory remedy before determination by the LGO in 16% of the cases investigated.**

Of the 29 cases determined by the LGO on the CRU records, 24 of them had already been put through a complaint procedure by this Council. In the case of a Children's Social Care complaint that would have meant 3 stages of complaint investigation, including an Independent Review Panel. Worcestershire are performing above the average in the measure of satisfactory remedy provided by the authority before determination by the LGO.

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## **CORPORATE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 11 MARCH 2021**

### **MEMBER CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

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#### **Summary**

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning (CMR) and the Assistant Director for Information Technology and Digital have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on the Member Case Management System (Members Portal) development.

#### **Background**

2. Currently, there is not a consistent system in place to manage Member queries to Service Area managers. Members make an enquiry by emailing a known contact in a Service Area and do not have oversight of how a query is progressing and in several cases no reply has been received to the query.

3. Therefore, a new Member Query Case Management System is being developed that will provide Members with:

- An on-line form to log an enquiry regarding a Service Area detailing the name and contact information for the member, details of the enquiry and the facility to upload any supporting documents as required
- An on-line Dashboard to view all their submitted enquiries, review the status of queries, responses to queries, check reply deadlines and request updates on queries
- Member enquiry co-ordinators will be able to:
  - View all new Member Queries, the details of the query and the documents uploaded with the query.
  - Assign the query to the appropriate lead officer and additional officers across the organisation as required.
  - Contact and co-ordinate responses to a query from relevant managers and Council officers.
  - Monitor and manage response times for each query effectively to make sure they are responded to within the required time limit.

4. The Member Query Case Management system will be developed on the Council's low code platform Outsystems at no additional cost. Outsystems was the preferred technology option as it will enable Officers to rapidly develop the system and seamlessly integrate with other systems, for example, School Transport, Customer Services and Highways reporting. Ultimately providing a single front door for members to manage their enquiries.

5. Meetings have been scheduled with business leads to define processing times and Service Level agreements. Once they have been collectively agreed they will be automated within the new system.

6. Appendix A shows Mock-ups to illustrate the look, feel and functionality of the proposed Member Case Management System

## Progress

Date	Activity
<b>December 2020</b>	Member Portal Survey sent to all Councillors
<b>December 2020</b>	Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager onboarded as Business Owner for the project.
<b>December 2020</b>	Information Access Coordinator (IAC) / Corporate Information Governance Group (CIGG) Report developed.
<b>13 January 2021</b>	Member Portal Workshop held with Member Support Team, to go through the team's requirements for the Member Portal
<b>03 February 2021</b>	Requirements gathering meeting with business stakeholders, identified by the Member Support Team.
<b>February 2021</b>	Further meetings with other identified business stakeholders to be set up, during February 2021, when their availability permits, currently unavailable as dealing with emergencies in the County.
<b>05 February 2021</b>	Survey returns have been analysed and themes identified.
<b>05 February 2021</b>	Initial system design mock-ups drafted
<b>08 February 2021</b>	Member Portal – Member Workshop to Feedback to Members on the insights and information derived from the Survey. Review of the initial system design mock-ups for the Member Portal enquiry system for further feedback and comments before system development begins
<b>16 February 2021</b>	Discussion held with member support team and other potential co-ordinators.

## Timeline for implementation

Date	Activity
<b>25 February 2021</b>	Phase 1 - Development kick off meeting.
<b>1 March 2021</b>	Sprint 1 - Build commencement to include member enquiry form, member dashboard to view and manage enquiries. Officer dashboard for enquiry administration.
<b>22/23 March 2021</b>	Sprint 1 - Formal demonstrations take place with key stakeholders.
<b>24 March 2021</b>	Sprint 2 - Complete build of portal with member enquiry form, member dashboard to view and manage enquiries. Officer dashboard for enquiry administration. Including feedback.
<b>12/13 April 2021</b>	Sprint 2 - Formal demonstrations take place with key stakeholders
<b>14 April 2021</b>	Sprint 3 – Final build to include sprint 2 feedback
<b>26 April 2021</b>	Phase 1 go-live

7. Going forward, the Panel should note that:

- The forthcoming County Council elections may impact on the availability of Members to engage with the demonstrations and the go-live date at the end of April.
- Following the implementation of Phase 1, a post implementation review will be undertaken, and requirements gathered for further development of the Members Portal.

### **Purpose of the Meeting**

8. Following discussion of the information provided, the Scrutiny Panel is asked to

- a. Consider the Council's progress with the development of the Members Case Management System.
- b. Determine any comments it wishes to make to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning.
- c. Agree whether any further Scrutiny is required at this stage.

### **Supporting Information**

- Appendix 1 – Mock-ups to illustrate the look, feel and functionality of the proposed Member Case Management System

### **Contact Points**

Sandra Taylor, Assistant Director of IT and Digital  
Telephone: +44 1905 845447 Email: [staylor12@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:staylor12@worcestershire.gov.uk)

Alyson Grice/Alison Spall, Overview and Scrutiny Officers  
Tel: 01905 844962/846607 Email: [scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk)

### **Background Papers**

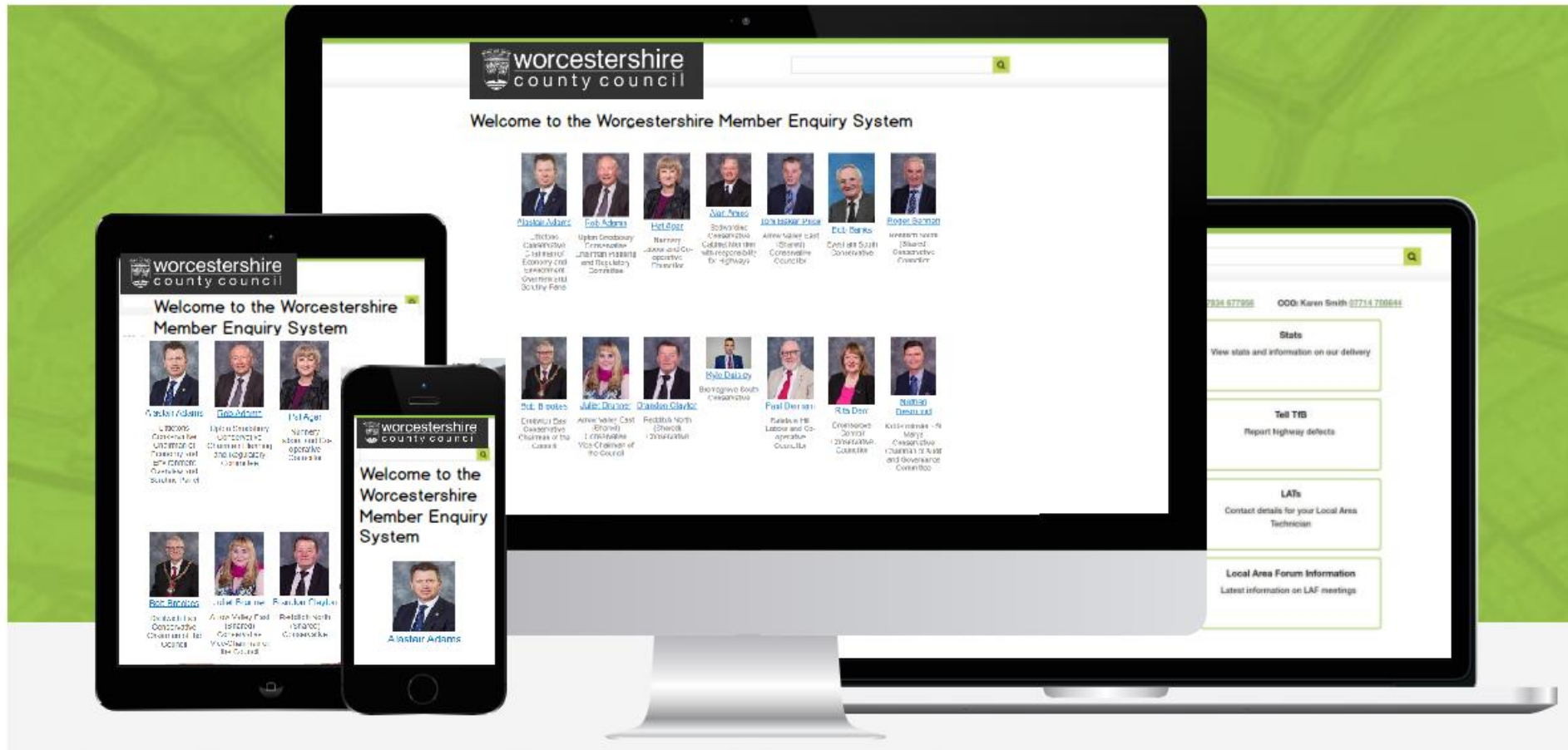
In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

[Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel 17 June 2020, Agenda and Minutes](#)

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)

## AGENDA ITEM 7


Appendix A: Mock-ups to illustrate the look, feel and functionality of the proposed Member Case Management System.






# Worcestershire County Council

## Login

 Sign in to your account

Email or Username and Password 


Email or Username


Password

Keep me logged in

[Login](#)

[Forgotten your password? Reset it here](#)

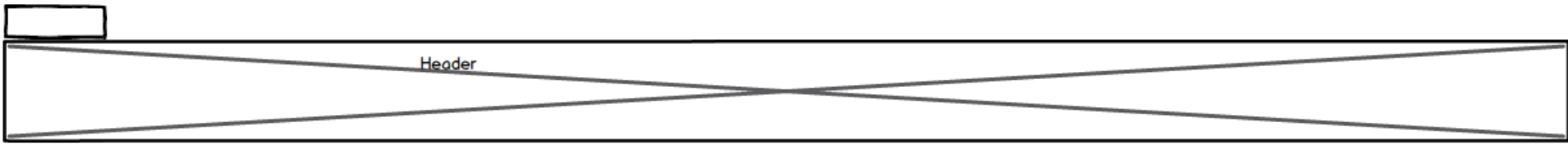
 Sign in to your account

Single Sign-on 

This application supports single sign-on authentication

Click below to authenticate using your system login credentials

[Single Sign-on Login](#)



## Member Queries Dashboard

Query Type

Service Area

Directorate

Case Id #

Surname

Email

District

Apply Filter    Reset    Export

31 New ▼	2 In Progress	0 Completed
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Id	Name	Enquiry Type	Preferred Contact Method	Service Area	Date Time Created	Request Status	
840	Mickey Mouse	Complaint	Email mmouse@worcestershire.gov.uk	Highways	09/01/2021 09:56:37	New	<input type="button" value="Edit Details"/> <input type="button" value="Update Status"/>



## **CORPORATE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 11 MARCH 2021**

### **WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21**

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#### **Summary**

1. From time to time the Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel will review its work programme and consider which issues should be investigated as a priority.

#### **Background**

2. Worcestershire County Council has a rolling annual Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny. The suggested 2020/21 Work Programme has been developed by taking into account issues still to be completed from 2019/20, the views of Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members and the findings of the budget scrutiny process.
3. Suggested issues have been prioritised using scrutiny feasibility criteria in order to ensure that topics are selected subjectively and the 'added value' of a review is considered right from the beginning.
4. The Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel is responsible for scrutiny of:
  - Commissioning, contracts and commerce and ensuring the corporate commissioning cycle works well
  - Transformation
  - Finance
  - Localism and Communities
  - Organisation and employees
5. The current Work Programme was agreed by Council on 10 September 2020.

#### **Dates of Future Meetings**

- 20 July 2021 at 10am
- 24 September 2021 at 10am
- 8 November 2021 at 2pm

## Purpose of the Meeting

6. The Panel is asked to:

- Consider the 2020/21 Work Programme (attached at Appendix 1) and agree whether it would like to make any amendments so that the topics listed will be as relevant as possible to the new Panel membership following the County Council elections.
- Forward the agreed Work Programme to the OSPB on 17 March 2021.
- Retain the flexibility to take into account any urgent issues which may arise.

## Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2020/21

## Contact Points

Alyson Grice and Alison Spall, Overview and Scrutiny Officers, Tel: 01905 844962/846607 Email: [scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk)

## Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director Legal and Governance), the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- [Agenda and Minutes of Council 10 September 2020](#)
- [Agenda and Minutes of OSPB 22 July 2020](#)

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)



## APPENDIX 1

### 2020-21 Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme

Date of meeting	Issue for Scrutiny	Date of last report	Notes/Follow up action
<b>11 March 2021</b>	Apprenticeship Strategy		Apprenticeships were referred to in Care Work as a Career Task Group Jan 2020
	Performance Monitoring of Comments, Compliments and Complaints	10 December 2019 24 January 2020	
	Member Case Management System	17 June 2020	
<b>20 July 2021</b>	Councillors Divisional Funding Scheme	21 July 2020	
	Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring (Q4 and financial outturn)		
<b>24 September 2021</b>	Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring (Q1/period 3)		
<b>8 November 2021</b>	Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring (Q2/period 6)		

#### Possible Future Items

TBC	Future of Here2Help Service	16 June 2020 (as part of COVID Update) 18 November 2020	
TBC	Corporate Re-design Programme Update	18 November 2020	
TBC	Adult Education service – revenue raised and how it is being utilised		
TBC	County Hall – is it fit for purpose? Value for Money? Usage?		

**Standing Items**

Jan/March/July/ Sept/Nov	Performance Management Budget Scrutiny		
Annually	Councillors Divisional Funding Scheme Worcestershire County Council Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 Policy (RIPA)		