

Agenda

Council

Thursday, 19 May 2022, 10.00 am
County Hall, Worcester

This document can be provided in alternative formats such as Large Print, an audio recording or Braille; it can also be emailed as a Microsoft Word attachment. Please contact Democratic Services on telephone number 01905 846621 or by emailing democraticservices@worcestershire.gov.uk

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 3rd 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.

Thursday, 19 May 2022, 10.00 am, County Hall, Worcester

Agenda and Summons

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

1 Apologies and Declaration of Interests

To receive apologies and invite any councillor to declare any interest in any of the items on the agenda.

2 Chairman

To elect a Chairman of the Council to hold office until his or her successor becomes entitled to act.

3 Vice-Chairman

To appoint a Vice-Chairman of the Council to hold office until immediately after the election of a Chairman at the next Annual meeting of the Council.

4 Public Participation

To allow a member of the public to present a petition, or ask a question relating to the functions of the Council, or to make a comment on any matter on the agenda.

Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance in writing or by e-mail indicating both the nature and content of their proposed participation no later than 9.00am on the Monday before the meeting (in this case 16 May). Further details are available on the Council's website. Enquiries can also be made through the telephone number/e-mail address listed in this agenda and on the website.

5 Minutes

To approve as a correct record and authorise the signing of the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2022 (previously circulated electronically).

6 Chairman's Announcements

To receive any announcements to be made by the Chairman.

7 Reports of Cabinet 1 - 12

To consider the reports of the Cabinet and to receive answers to any questions asked on those reports as follows:

- a) Reports of Cabinet – Matters which require a decision; and
- b) Report of Cabinet – Summary of decisions taken.

8 Constitutional Matters 13 - 18

To consider a report on (a) Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, (b) Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Member Bodies, and (c) Council Meeting dates 2023.

9 Notices of Motion 19 - 22

To receive the report of the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance on any Notices of Motion received by him.

Councillors are asked to note that any Notices of Motion must be received by the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance no later than noon on 10 May.

10 Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility 23 - 36

To receive the report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Skills on current issues and proposed developments within his area of responsibility and to receive answers to any questions on the report.

11 Question Time 37 - 40

To receive answers to any questions asked by Councillors.

(Members are reminded of the timescale adopted by Council for notice of questions. A Councillor may only ask a question if:

- *It is delivered in writing to the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance by noon on 10 May or*
- *If it relates to urgent business, the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance is notified at least half an hour before the start of the meeting and the Chairman agrees the matter is urgent'.)*

12 Reports of Committees 41 - 54

To consider the reports of Committees and to receive answers to any questions asked on those reports as follows:

- a) Audit and Governance Committee;
- b) Pensions Committee; and
- c) Standards and Ethics Committee.

NOTES

- **Webcasting**

Members of the Council are reminded that meetings of the Council are Webcast on the Internet and will be stored electronically and accessible through the Council's Website. Members of the public are informed that if they attend this meeting their images and speech may be captured by the recording equipment used for the Webcast and may also be stored electronically and accessible through the Council's Website.

- **Catering Arrangements**

Lunch will be available for all Councillors at 1.00pm or thereabouts in the Lakeview Room.

- **Council Photograph**

Arrangements are being made for a photograph to be taken of the Council as a group. Details will be included in the Chairman's Announcements circulated in advance of the meeting. It is envisaged that the photograph will be taken during the lunch break.

Agenda produced and published by Abraham Ezekiel, Assistant Director for Legal and Governance County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP. The above reports and supporting information can be accessed via the Council's website at: www.worcestershire.gov.uk

To obtain further information or a paper copy of this agenda please contact Simon Lewis, Committee Officer by telephone on Worcester (01905) 846621 or slewis@worcestershire.gov.uk

Date of Issue: Wednesday, 11 May 2022

COUNCIL
19 MAY 2022**REPORT OF CABINET – MATTERS WHICH REQUIRE A
DECISION BY COUNCIL**

Corporate Plan 2022-27**Recommendation**

1. The Cabinet recommends that Council approves the refreshed Corporate Plan 2022-27, the four key priorities of Open for Business, Children and Families, the Environment and Health and Wellbeing and their respective performance measures.

2. Worcestershire County Council's Corporate Plan, 'Shaping Worcestershire's Future 2017-2022', is due to be refreshed. This document has provided a blueprint for the organisation, setting out the Council's core priorities and guiding how the organisation will operate, both internally and with partners across Worcestershire and beyond. It has focused work on four key priority areas:

- Open for Business
- Children and Families
- The Environment
- Health and Wellbeing

3. Through regular engagement with residents, business and partners, we know the four themes set out in the previous plan cover core responsibilities of the Council and the key areas that people want to see the Council deliver on, and we are committed to continue our strong progress against each area. As such, the Corporate Plan 2022-27 is a refresh of the previous plan, with these areas continuing to be the four pillars by which the Council does business.

4. On **Open for Business**, it is proposed to expand key strategic sites to deliver more highly skilled jobs and support further business expansion. Alongside this, the Council will continue to invest in unlocking growth at key transport sites including Shrub Hill and Redditch Railway Stations, support its partners and deliver further digital connectivity through the provision of gigabit broadband. The Council will also support its partners around plans for Future High Street Fund, Towns Fund and Levelling Up proposals.

5. The Council's continued investment into **Children and Families** will aim to see its children's services rated as 'Good', recognising the significant journey of improvement we have been on. The Council will continue to invest in its school estate, including the delivery of a new secondary school and extra places to keep pace with development.

6. We know our role is to help preserve and protect our **Environment** for future generations. The Council has now agreed a Net Zero plan which will focus efforts to reduce our environmental impact even further whilst still enabling us to deliver sustainable growth alongside maintaining top-quartile condition for our roads and pavements. We will continue to invest in environmental measures that protect our natural environment, enhance our biodiversity and reduce our carbon footprint.

7. Ensuring good **Health and Wellbeing** for our residents remains a key priority for the Council. We'll work ever more closely with residents and communities to encourage active lifestyles, enabling people to live longer, healthier and happier lives. Our work with the NHS and other care partners through the Integrated Care System will help co-ordinate our services and ensure residents receive the right care at the right time to meet their needs.

8. To deliver against our priorities, our journey to reshape our Council alongside our communities and with our partners continues. In response to the pandemic, we've truly become an innovative, forward-thinking and flexible organisation. We intend to continue to harness the benefits and efficiencies of working flexibly, reducing our footprint, and connecting our employees more closely with the communities and partners we work with.

9. We commit to working ever closer with our communities, to build local capacity and allow people to be supported in their area. We will expand our Here2Help programme to provide a single front door of advice and guidance for people, whilst working with voluntary and community groups to strengthen local support.

10. All of this work sits within our 'One Worcestershire' approach to co-ordinating work, investment and priorities across our county. We seek to adopt new ways of working, including co-location and shared service, to embrace a joined-up approach to service delivery that best meets local needs and removes barriers between organisations. We also communicate regularly with our partners in all things we do, to ensure our services do not simply move demand to another organisation – and instead we work together to resolve issues as 'One Worcestershire'.

11. The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board considered the draft Plan at its meeting on 26 April 2022 and comments from that meeting are appended to this report.

Mr S E Geraghty
Chairman

Appendix 1: [Draft Corporate Plan](#) presented to Cabinet on 21 April 2022

Appendix 2: Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board, 26 April 2022

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager

Tel: 01905 846011

Email: sjones19@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

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

[Agenda and reports for the Cabinet meeting 21 April 2022](#)

[Agenda for the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board 26 April 2022](#)

This page is intentionally left blank

Report from Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board to Council 19 May 2022

Corporate Plan – Scrutiny comments

At its meeting on 26 April, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) considered the refresh of the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27. The Board was grateful to the Leader and the Director for Commercial and Change for their attendance at the meeting and for answering the Board's questions.

The discussion at OSPB was wide ranging, but the Board wished to raise the following points with Council:

1. Whilst understanding that the Plan was a refresh, the Board was keen to encourage consultation with stakeholders at all opportunities and was pleased that a number of roadshows were going to be arranged in Worcestershire to share the priorities of the Plan with residents to gain their views.
2. The Board was pleased to note that the Council was working with partners on further plans for continued growth within Worcestershire, which included strategic investment sites.
3. Although Child and Adolescent Mental Health wasn't specified as an individual priority, it was incumbent in the Health and Wellbeing priority vision and objectives.
4. In response to the request for clarification that the measure relating to 'Our Children's Services rated Good by Ofsted' related to all Children's Services, the Leader confirmed that it was written with the four yearly Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care Services in mind. However, given the importance of all Children's Services being rated as 'Good' by Ofsted, further thought would be given to expanding the measure.
5. It was suggested that the Children and Families measure stating that at least four out of five schools should be rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted should be a more ambitious target.
6. It was agreed that consideration would be given to including a number against the measure relating to the '% of children getting their first preference school'.
7. Although it would have been good to have seen a separate priority for Adult Social Care rather than it being included as part of Health and Wellbeing priority, the focus on independent living was welcomed.
8. The Leader agreed to consider adding a separate reference in the Plan in respect of quality of life issues relating to crime and disorder matters such as reduction of hate crime, reduction of dependence on drugs and alcohol and support for victims and perpetrators of crime.

9. Consideration would be given to introducing an incentivised staff suggestion scheme for cost saving ideas.
10. It was suggested that '**How we will judge progress:**' (page 17 of the Agenda Report) should be replaced with '**How we will measure this:**' . This will provide consistency throughout the Report.
11. The Board would like to invite the Leader and Chief Executive to provide an annual update on the Corporate Plan (including risk analysis and delivery plans) .

COUNCIL
19 MAY 2022

REPORT OF CABINET - SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN

Worcestershire Response to the Invasion of Ukraine

1. Cabinet has considered a report setting out the response by the County Council and its partners to the invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent humanitarian impact.
2. The Home Secretary launched the Ukraine Family Scheme on 4 March, which will allow thousands of families to be reunited in the UK. Those joining family through this scheme will now be granted leave for three years. Successful applicants will be able to live, work and study in the UK and access public funds.
3. The Prime Minister also announced the Local Sponsorship Scheme for Ukrainians with no ties to the UK to be able to come here. Sponsors can offer housing to those escaping the conflict in Ukraine.
4. The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board has been updated on the County Council's approach.
5. Cabinet endorsed the joint 'One Worcestershire' approach to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, with the County and District Councils working together to co-ordinate a response. It also approved the Council's participation in the Ukraine Family Scheme and Local Sponsorship Scheme, agreed the Council use of its resources to help the co-ordination of efforts across the County including supporting the voluntary and local community response, and noted work being done to review existing contracts and to suspend any investments in Russia and Belarus.

Approval of Worcestershire Children First's Business Plan 2022-23

6. Cabinet has approved Worcestershire Children First's Business Plan for this financial year. The service delivery contract between the County Council and Worcestershire Children First (WCF) includes a requirement for WCF to produce a Business Plan each year.
7. The 2022/23 Business Plan has three principles: sustain and improve, innovate and invest in Children's services. The main priority is to sustain and improve on the significant achievements made since the County Council was rated as an inadequate authority in October 2016, continuing to evidence progress through key performance indicators, the Quality Assurance Programme and external inspection outcomes.
8. The Business Plan outlines a number of priorities for the year, including WCF Fostering Improvement Plan, SEND Accelerated Action Plan, implementation of the All-Age Disability Service and Early Help Family Hub & HAF Strategy.

9. The financial section of the Business Plan outlines the agreed contract sums. The 2022/23 gross cost is equivalent to the budget set by Council in February 2022.

Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy

10. The County Council commissioned the development of the first Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy (WRIS) in 2016. The strategy was intended to set the economic context for rail investment, inform the development of Local Transport Plan 4 and underpin the future pipeline of rail projects.

11. The 2016 WRIS has been updated to reflect the rail schemes which have been delivered, the review of Local Plans and Government changes, including the emerging concept of Great British Railways and the impact of Covid 19 on patterns of movement.

12. The updated and revised Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy (WRIS2) utilises the 2016 strategy, updating the baseline of the current rail situation in the County, scale of growth expected, and identifies gaps and solutions to achieve economic benefits and prioritise the investment to achieve maximum value for money.

13. The Strategy identifies a number of improvements including increasing connectivity, building new stations and better facilities in and around stations generally. These initiatives involve working with others to achieve what is set out in the Strategy.

14. Cabinet has authorised publication of the Strategy for engagement with the public and agreed the mechanism for final approval.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Update

15. Cabinet has noted progress implementing the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021 duties placed upon Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and the publication of a new Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-25.

16. Changes introduced by the Act include introducing a broader definition of Domestic Abuse, improvements to the criminal justice processes and a range of new duties (Part iv), for Tier 1 Local Authorities (in this case WCC), requiring the Authority to provide safe accommodation and support services for victims of Domestic Abuse and their families.

17. The Council has set up a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (DAPB) to oversee the responsibilities under the Act and it must consult in relation to various functions, including assessment of need for safe accommodation and support, publishing an associated Strategy, and commissioning the accommodation and services.

18. The new Worcestershire Strategy, like those in other Local Authority areas, goes beyond just the Part iv statutory requirements and builds upon the existing countywide partnership approach to prevent and tackle domestic abuse in all its forms. The four key principles in the Strategy are Prevention, Provision, Partnership and Pursue. It has been developed with partners and places victims and their families at the centre of the approach. Whilst the intention is for them to remain in their own homes, there is provision for quality accommodation where it is not safe to do so.

Adult Social Care – Annual Local Account 2021-22

19. Adult Social Care is required to publish an annual Local Account. This is a summary of activity, setting out priorities for the service, showing how it has improved, where it needs to do better and includes feedback from people who use its services. This promotes transparency, scrutiny and accountability to adult social care service users and the public, as recipients and funders of public sector services.

20. Cabinet has received and considered the Account and endorsed the improvements Adult Social Care made in 2021/2022.

Continuing Health Care Partnership Policy

21. Cabinet has approved a revised Continuing Health Care Partnership Policy. This sets out a partnership agreement with NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Herefordshire County Council and Worcestershire County Council in its approach for the delivery of NHS Continuing Health Services for the population for whom NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group ('the CCG') is the responsible commissioner. In October 2018 the National Framework for NHS Continuing Care and NHS-funded Nursing Care *Revised* (the 'Framework') set out the principles and processes relevant to NHS Continuing Healthcare and NHS-funded Nursing Care and therefore the policy required updating. Adult Social Care also commissioned an independent review of Continuing Health Care and S117 funding and as a result, key areas for improvement were identified.

22. The proposed Policy has no specific or immediate resource implications for the Council but will enable it to monitor performance closely through the Partnership Board in the future.

23. Where an adult has a primary health need, the NHS is responsible for commissioning a care package that meets the individual's health and social care needs. If a person's health is deteriorating rapidly, the individual should be considered for the CHC Fast-Track pathway so that appropriate care and support can be put in place by the NHS (fully funded and usually within 48 hours).

24. CHC assessments, including Fast Track, are completed by multidisciplinary teams to make a recommendation regarding eligibility for NHS Continuing Healthcare. A person with a primary health care need who has been deemed eligible for CHC/Fast Track will receive care and support services (for both health and social care needs) fully funded by the NHS.

25. The Policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of each organisation, including management of disputes, and will guide front line staff and senior officers in decision making in line with the Framework, setting out robust timescales.

Section 75 Agreement between Worcestershire County Council and Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG

26. Cabinet has endorsed the Section 75 document (S75), which is the funding agreement between Worcestershire County Council and the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (HWCCG) and sets out the management of services funded via the Better Care Fund.

27. The Agreement had not been reviewed fully for some time and it has now been extensively reviewed to prepare for the introduction of the Integrated Care System. It will need to be updated once the new Integrated Care System comes formally into being to ensure that the governance arrangements etc fit within the new regime.

Pershore Area Review Consultation Findings and Recommendations.

28. The Pershore Education Planning Area (EPA) incorporates part of the Wychavon district, made up predominantly of small rural villages. Until 2019, the education provision in this area has followed a three-tier journey, where pupils attend first schools from the ages of 4-9 (reception to year 4), transfer to middle schools at age 9-12 (year 5 to 7), and then transfer for a final time to high school at age 12 to complete their education (year 8 to year 13). A number of changes were agreed or proposed after this, which led to uncertainty and sustainability concerns across the EPA.

29. In September 2021, Cabinet approved pre-publication engagement with stakeholders on the proposal for a coordinated change of age range to align schools in the Pershore EPA to a single, two-tier (primary and secondary) system of education. Cabinet also supported Worcestershire Children First to continue to manage this change and coordinate the consultation with families, residents and other key stakeholders.

30. Overall, respondents were in support of the proposals, with 78% agreeing and 16% disagreeing on the proposals to convert to a single tier structure in Pershore. Overall, respondents supported the quickest timescale for changes to take place, although there was some variance between school responses, therefore the overall preference cannot be viewed in isolation or used to form recommendations.

31. Where local provision is organised in three-tiers and the aim is to move to a two-tier age range, the DfE expects Academy Trusts to engage with the local community at the earliest opportunity and to provide details in their application of how they will work with Local Authorities and, where the school is designated as having a religious character, the trustees of the school and the appropriate religious authority (in the case of church schools the Diocese or relevant diocesan board), to ensure the change is implemented in a coordinated way.

32. Approval will only be given, in this context, where the DfE is satisfied that a coordinated implementation plan is achievable and can be delivered before the new age range of the academy is operational.

33. Discussions following the conclusion of the consultation could not confirm that sufficient funding would be available for some capital works needed at both the Academy Trusts' and Local Authority maintained schools to enable the proposed changes to meet the earliest date for change to take place in a co-ordinated way.

34. Cabinet has therefore agreed a commitment in principle to support a collective change of age range to align schools in the Pershore Education Planning Area to a single, two-tier system of education, subject to funding being fully secured. Until a collective solution for funding is identified, Cabinet cannot take proposals for Local Authority Maintained schools forward, and officers are continuing to work with all partners to find a collective solution to fund the changes required. This means that changes are likely to be made from September 2025 at the earliest.

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager

Tel: 01905 846011

Email: sjones19@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:

Agenda and background papers for the meetings of the Cabinet held on 24 March and 21 April 2022.

[Browse meetings - Cabinet - Worcestershire County Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](https://modern.gov.co.uk/cabinet-meetings)

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL
19 MAY 2022**CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

(a) Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements**Recommendations****1. The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance recommends that the Council:**

- (a) considers whether to revise its Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements having regard to this report; and if so**
- (b) agrees the number and size of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board and Panels and proposed allocation of seats between the political Groups on those bodies, other committees and on Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority as set out in Appendix 1;**
- (c) appoints the individual members to those committees in accordance with the nominations from time to time of the respective political Groups in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and requires the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance to give effect to such wishes expressed by the political Groups;**
- (d) authorises the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance to settle any outstanding details relating to the political structures and to make changes as necessary to the Council's Constitution (Articles and Appendices) to give effect to the Council's decisions and any other revisions necessary to reflect needs or circumstances.**

2. The Council is responsible for establishing the political structures and establishing such Committees as it thinks fit to carry out the discharge of functions which are not the responsibility of the executive (Leader and Cabinet). Council also appoints and determines the size of Committees/Panels and allocates the seats on them between political Groups in accordance with the rules on political balance. Council also appoints the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of those bodies.

3. The Council's Corporate Plan is due to be approved on this Council agenda and this will confirm the Council's priorities. As the Council reaches the end of the first year of its current term and following consultation with the Leader and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board it is suggested that it is an opportune time to review arrangements for the Overview and Scrutiny function.

4. The Council's current model is an overarching co-ordinating Board, supported by Panels to consider specific areas of the Council's activity. The Council has previously agreed that the power to scrutinise health will be carried out by a specific Committee, the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and this is not proposed for change.

5. Looking across the workload of the scrutiny Panels, it has been suggested that the responsibilities covered by the Economy and Environment Panel are too broad to enable appropriate levels of support for, and scrutiny of, the key Council priorities in the Corporate Plan (Economy and the Environment). It is therefore proposed that the two elements are split, and a new Panel is created, one would cover the Economy, including strategic infrastructure, and the other the Environment. Their remits would be as follows:

Economy Panel

- Economy
- Workforce skills
- Strategic Infrastructure
- Broadband and communications

Environment Panel

- Environment including Net Zero plans
- Highways
- Flooding
- Waste

6. Recent reports into governance failings at local authorities have highlighted the importance of a robust scrutiny function. The proposal to create a new Panel will enable appropriate scrutiny focus to be given to these specific Council priorities.

7. If Council agrees to this change, the scrutiny Panels would be:

- Adult Care and Wellbeing
- Children and Families
- Corporate and Communities
- Economy
- Environment
- Health Overview and Scrutiny

The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board will be made up of the chairmen of each of the above Panels, the Lead member for Community Safety, the Vice-Chairman, and the Chairman.

8. The addition of an extra Panel requires the Council to review the political balance of its Committees. A suggested allocation of seats to meet the requirement for political balance is attached at Appendix. The only proposed changes are for the Overview and Scrutiny arrangements.

9. The Chairman of the additional Panel will be entitled to claim a Special Responsibility Allowance for the role in accordance with the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme.

(b) Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Member Bodies

Recommendation

10. The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance recommends that the Council appoints Members to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman roles in accordance with Appendix 2.

11. The Council needs to make the appointments to various chairmanships and vice-chairmanships of member bodies and of Lead Scrutiny Members. The nominations for a number of appointments are set out in Appendix 2 to this report, which will be circulated separately to the agenda.

(c) Council meeting dates 2023 - 24

Recommendation

12. The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance recommends that the Council approves its meetings for 2023 and early 2024 as follows:

2023

**12 January
16 February
18 May
13 July
14 September
9 November**

2024

**11 January
15 February
16 May**

13. County Council meeting dates are currently scheduled up to November 2022. To enable the 2023 meetings programme to be produced and help members plan their commitments, the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance suggests that further meetings of the Council are now scheduled for 2023 and through until the end of the next Municipal Year in 2024. In accordance with the usual practice and pattern of meetings, further meetings (Cabinet, Committees and Panels) will be arranged in the light of the Council dates and members notified in due course.

14. Members may wish to note that the remaining Council meetings this year are scheduled for 14 July, 8 September and 10 November 2022.

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

Abraham Ezekiel, Assistant Director for Legal and Governance

Tel: 01905 843287

Email: aezekiel@worcestershire.gov.uk

Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager

Tel: 01905 846011

Email: sjones19@worcestershire.gov.uk

Supporting information

Appendix 1 – Proposed political balance

Appendix 2 – nominations for Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees and Panels
(to follow)

Background Papers

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

19 May 2022

Political Structures - Proposed Allocation of Places

A - Committees

	TOTAL	CONSERVATIVE	UNITY	GREEN AND INDEPENDENT ALLIANCE
Planning & Regulatory Committee	15	12	2	1
Standards & Ethics Committee	8	6	1	1
Audit & Governance	8	7	1	0
Pensions Committee	5	4	1	0
Waste Credit Governance Committee	8	6	1	1
Appointments etc Panel	6	5	1	0
Scrutiny				
OSPB	9	7	1	1
HOSC	9	7	1	1
Adult Care and Well-being	9	7	1	1
Children & Families	9	7	1	1
Corporate and Communities	9	7	1	1
Economy	9	7	1	1
Environment	9	7	1	1
TOTAL	113	89	14	10

B - HEREFORD AND WORCESTER FIRE AUTHORITY

TOTAL	19	15	2	2
--------------	----	----	---	---

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL
19 MAY 2022**NOTICES OF MOTION**

Notices of Motion Received

1. The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance reports that he has received the following 3 Notices of Motion. The Constitution provides that any submitted motion must be moved and seconded at the meeting. Otherwise, unless postponed with the consent of the Council, it will be treated as withdrawn.
2. If a motion is in relation to the exercise of an executive function it will be referred to the Cabinet for decision (if applicable this will be indicated below). Otherwise the Council may decide itself to determine the Motion, or refer it to the Cabinet or another appropriate Committee for advice before determining it at the next available meeting.

Notice of Motion 1 – Equality Impact Assessments and the Council's obligations to people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010

3. **This motion is not in relation to the exercise of an executive function and the Council may decide to determine the Motion.**
4. Notice of Motion standing in the names of Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Dan Boatright, and Cllr Richard Udall:

“Council is concerned that the Equality Impact Assessments at Worcestershire County Council may not be sufficiently robust to meet our obligations to people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. We request the Cabinet Member with Responsibility to urgently review policies, procedures and processes, learning from best practice in other authorities, and to consider if he needs to bring a report back to Cabinet’.”

Notice of Motion 2 – Valuing and Encouraging Foster Carers

5. **This motion is not in relation to the exercise of an executive function and the Council may decide to determine the Motion.**
6. Notice of Motion standing in the names of Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Andy Roberts, and Cllr Emma Marshall:

“Foster Care Fortnight is between 10 to 23 May this year. The annual campaign aims to raise the profile of fostering and to show how foster care transforms lives. It is also the UK's biggest foster carer recruitment campaign.

Foster carers provide a safe, loving environment for vulnerable children. With their love and support, the children in their care quickly adapt and often thrive. Put simply, foster carers help to make a real difference to vulnerable children in society.

This motion seeks to get councillors (in their role of corporate parents) to help build the body of people who carry out this vital service.

Foster Care Fortnight is the UK's biggest foster care awareness raising campaign, delivered by leading fostering charity, The Fostering Network. Established for almost 20 years, the campaign showcases the commitment, passion, and dedication of foster carers. It also supports fostering services to highlight the need for more foster carers. Nationally, thousands of new foster families are needed every year to care for children, with the greatest need being for foster carers for older children, sibling groups, disabled children and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

It is proposed that Council agree that councillors make efforts, using their connections, network and social media, to engage with people in their division to emphasise the role of foster care, its importance and how they can make further enquiries.”

Notice of Motion 3 – Acknowledgement of Worcestershire’s Veterans and Service Personnel

7. This motion is not in relation to the exercise of an executive function and the Council may decide to determine the Motion.

8. Notice of Motion standing in the names of Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Josh Robinson, Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Luke Mallett, Cllr Natalie McVey, and Cllr Lynn Denham:

“As indicated by its active involvement with the Armed Forces Covenant, this Council acknowledges the service and sacrifice of Worcestershire’s Veterans and Service Personnel of Her Majesty’s Armed Forces.

In the fortieth anniversary year of the Falklands Conflict, this Council requests that the Chairman send to her Majesty the Queen, our grateful thanks, and good wishes to all Veterans and Service Personnel for their loyal service and dedication in protecting and upholding the values and traditions of our Country. This Council further acknowledges the great debt we all owe to these men and women, who step into danger when called upon to do so.”

Contact Points

Contact Points for this report

Simon Lewis, Committee Officer

Tel: 01905 846621

Email: slewis@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

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

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL
19 MAY 2022
REPORTS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH RESPONSIBILITY

Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Skills
Introduction

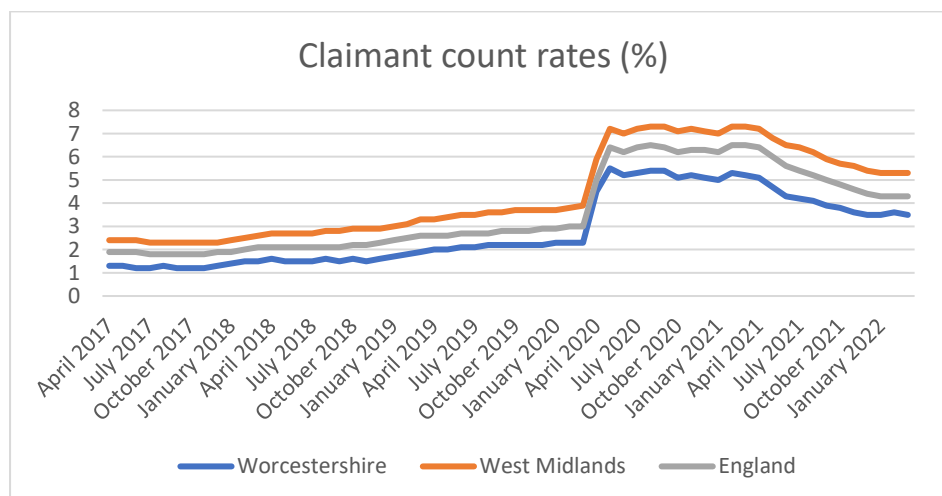
1. I am very pleased to present this report to Council on the work carried out in the areas of economy and skills over the last year.

The Worcestershire Economy:

2. Worcestershire's economy is predominately made up of micro businesses which have between 0-9 employees and account for 90.6% of the 29,210 businesses in the county. Businesses employing between 10-49 account for 7.7% of the total and medium (50-249) and large 250+ account for 1.4% and 0.4% respectively.

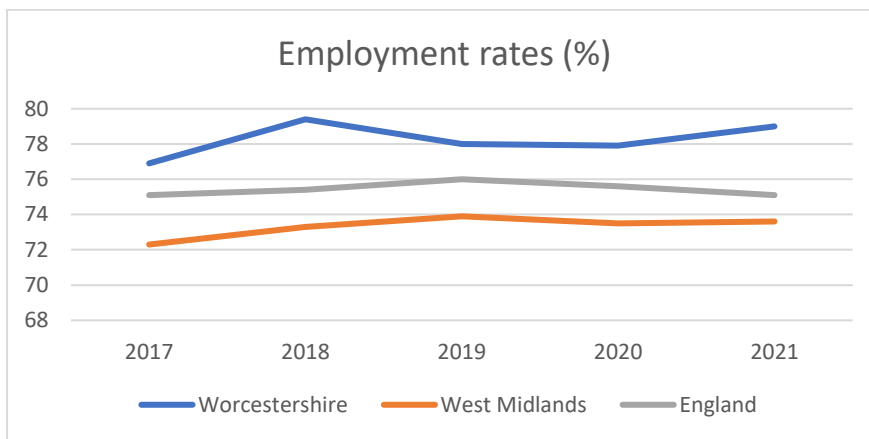
3. Based on the number of businesses, the top five sectors in the county are Business Administrations and Support Services; Professional, Scientific and Technical; Construction; Transport and storage and Manufacturing. Manufacturing businesses make up 5.8% of the total number of businesses in Worcestershire compared to an average of 4.98% in England.

4. Business survival rates in Worcestershire since 2016 have been consistently higher than the West Midlands regional average of 91.3% (2019) and the average in England of 88.2% (2019) at 95.1% in 2019, making Worcestershire a good place to start a business.

Claimant count


5. The claimant count figures remain lower in Worcestershire when compared to both the regional and national averages, with the claimant count for Worcestershire at March 2022 being 3.5% compared to an average in England of 4.3% and a West Midlands regional average of 5.3%. The county is also seeing a faster recovery as we move closer towards pre pandemic claimant count level of 2.3%.

6. This is supported by the increase in the employment rate in the county from 78% in 2019 to 79% in 2021, compared to the West Midlands employment rate of 73.6% which remains lower than the pre pandemic level of 73.9%. A similar position is evident from the average rates for England



Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP)

7. Worcestershire County Council is a key partner in the WLEP and also performs the role of accountable body. Worcestershire County Council's Corporate Plan is clearly aligned to the Plan for Growth (PfG), the economic strategy to 2040 and is committed to supporting the delivery of an **additional 25,000 jobs and increase in GVA by £2.9 billion by 2025, with targets set to 2030 and 2040.**

8. Over the last two years the Worcestershire LEP and the County Council have continued to co-invest in projects and deliver against the government programmes of Local Growth Fund and the Getting Building Fund.

9. The development of Worcestershire's PfG sets the strategic direction for skills, enterprise and infrastructure, and remains a core priority along with a strong focus on key sectors including agri-tech, advanced manufacturing, cyber security, defence, and IT, as well as recognising the cornerstone sectors of health and care, professional services and construction. The PfG was developed on five foundations:

- a) Ideas: innovative economy
- b) People: good jobs and greater earning power for all
- c) Infrastructure: upgrading infrastructure
- d) Business Environment: the best place to start and grow a business
- e) Places: prosperous communities across the UK.

The Worcestershire Growth Hub

10. The County Council has worked closely with partners to develop a sustainable partnership for Worcestershire's Growth Hub, formerly Worcestershire Business Central. The service is now co-located within Worcester City Council. The County Council has allocated three members of staff to the team.

11. The enhanced growth hub has continued to develop a proactive engagement strategy to ensure Worcestershire businesses are aware of the support available to them. This is done predominately through four Business Engagement Managers, focused on supporting business growth and the three key priority sectors identified in the Plan for Growth.

12. The website continues to have approx. 6,000 visits per month, and over the past 12 months the service has provided support to over 1,400 Worcestershire-based businesses, of which almost 600 businesses received in-depth support.

Business Support Programmes

13. A number of business support programmes have been developed and expanded over the last 12-24 months to meet the needs of the local economy and the views of local businesses have been key in the design of these programmes which include:

14. **Here2Help Business** – Worcestershire County Council has launched the new Here2Help Business Programme in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. A £4m programme designed to assist local businesses to recover, adapt, and support future resilience as lockdown measures reduced and the economy re-opened.

Here2Help Business performance:

- Managed and processed over 687 enquiries
- Assisted 171 Businesses through 1:1 specialist advice clinic
- Contracted over £4.1m in grant funds which has resulted in £5.4m of Private Sector match funding
- 249 new jobs have/will be created as a result of the grant funding
- 522 jobs safeguarded as a result of grant funding
- 47 new graduate placements created.

Worcestershire Innovation (WINN)

15. WINN promotes a culture of innovation across Worcestershire, bringing together a community of inspirational individuals and businesses with innovative ideas and projects. In line with its success, the Proof of Concept grants offered as part of the programme have now been fully allocated and these will have achieved the total of 80 outputs by the project completion date. Businesses supported through the initiative within the WINN to provide entrepreneurs with the advice and guidance to create new products have supported a total of 133 companies.

16. The 'Make it Happen' Challenge 2021 targeted the Worcestershire Innovation Community, bringing 'WINNING' ideas together with the help and professional advice of a value of £5k of support per business. This was funded by Worcestershire County Council through a variety grant support and expert advisors who sponsored the event. The challenge had two categories, one focusing on Health and Care, and

the other focusing on Science and Tech. Our winners have achieved some amazing business success with their sponsors, including a joint well-being event, held at The Fold, between WINN and the Health and Care winners NeuroHeadway/IndigoWell, focusing on the latest innovation and thinking in supporting wellbeing in the workplace.

17. Showcase videos featuring each of the winners journeys are available through various social media channels.

18. Betaden is Worcestershire's first dedicated tech accelerator for entrepreneurs and scale-up businesses at the forefront of testing and developing future technologies. Situated within the WLEP offices at Malvern Hills Science Park, BetaDen offers entrepreneurs, start-ups and scale up businesses a package consisting of free office space, mentorship from handpicked experts and a proof of concept grant. Cohort 5 have started on the programme, with plans for the recruitment of the final EU funded Cohort 6 readiness for an autumn start date. Key outputs from BeteDen thus far include:

- 10 new products delivered to market;
- 15 new products to founder/company, with 15 in the pipeline; and
- 3 new tenants at the Science Park & 30 jobs created.

19. **Enterprising Worcestershire Start Up Programme** - a comprehensive programme of support for pre-start and start-up businesses. The pre-start delivery incorporates a partnership with Worcestershire libraries to maximise the reach of a project to Worcestershire residents, and benefit from the Business & IP Centre support through the libraries. The Enrich project, also sits alongside these programmes to provide support for young entrepreneurs delivered in partnership with the University of Worcester. A total of 57 people to date have completed 12 hours support each through ERDF funding. Additional core funding has been allocated through WCC and the six district councils to support Business to Consumer businesses in the start-up phase, as these cannot be supported under EU funding rules.

20. For early-stage businesses, a successful business coaching programme is in full delivery, and has already supported 25 small businesses in the first phase, with provision in place to support a further 50 businesses. The high growth start-up programme is also available and will support a total 45 high growth businesses under 2 years old. A total of 60 start-up grants have so far been awarded totalling £328k; grants are available from £1k-£15k.

21. **Elevate** – Worcestershire County Council's Business Growth programme, launched in January 2020, now has a total of 130 businesses completed/enrolled on the programme and hitting the target client profile (of over 5+ employees). Delivery has included sector specific support - including digital manufacturing and supply chain support for manufacturing SMEs and scale-up support for businesses in the creative tech sector. From the support alone, over 30 jobs have been created (ahead of target at this stage of the programme). Customer feedback is excellent - 100% of surveyed businesses have said that they would recommend the support to others.

22. Businesses completing the support can apply for grant funding up to £10k for capital or revenue projects to implement actions within individually tailored business

plans. A total of 28 grant projects are underway directly funded through the Elevate programme. A significant number of clients from the early cohorts were funded through the Here2Help Business programme.

23. **Elevate Technology** - launched in October 2021, this new programme provides support to SMEs to adopt new, or maximise existing, digital tools and technologies within the business based on a bespoke digital roadmap. To date, 25 businesses are receiving support from digital technology specialists, with funding to support an additional 25 businesses secured.

24. The project is developing an online resource with guides, top tips, blogs, and case studies on growing your business through digital technologies. A tech showcase is also being planned for Autumn 2022.

Community Renewal Fund

25. Worcestershire County Council was successful in securing £2.7 million of the government's £220m Community Renewal Funding to support innovative projects across the County to take forward levelling up through projects to support local communities, businesses and young people across the county. The six locally-led projects across Worcestershire are already benefitting from the Community Renewal Fund to help level up and deliver carbon net zero initiatives. Projects include skills training and developing low carbon technology.

26. The programme started in December 2021, and the government has recently announced the programme will be extended from June 2022 to December 2022, to allow projects to meet important targets and outcomes both locally and nationally, and allow the learning from evaluations to inform future programmes such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

27. By December 2022, the Worcestershire programme will have supported 316 people who are economically inactive or unemployed, supported 35 people in employment into training and worked with over 5,000 young people improving their knowledge and skills in relation to enterprise. The programme will also provide a range of business support assistance to 156 business and support 68 organisations in the public, private and voluntary Sectors.

Project Name	Description of Activity
Made In Worcester Creative Collective	A private sector collaboration of independent film companies to provide immediate employment opportunities to support a thriving Film Industry sector. The project will generate and accelerate film production, upskill and reskill young people to develop a pool of creative and entrepreneurial talent.
Worcestershire Wellbeing and Jobs	Jobs and Wellbeing Clubs will offer information advice and guidance sessions, taster training courses, wellbeing activities and access to laptops and printers. 12 community partners are in place, delivering grass roots interventions to communities in Wyre Forest and Worcester. Beneficiaries are being supported to identify and overcome the barriers they face finding employment, gain a new

	qualification(s), increasing their self-confidence and improve their wellbeing.
Zero Carbon Ready Worcestershire / Wyre Forest	Pilot activities that are currently ineligible for funding from existing and previously available funding streams. Different types of intervention will be piloted and evaluated. Activities to be funded are: Net Zero Carbon Business Engagement, Decarbonisation Reviews, Business advice and grants. Some beneficiaries may benefit from more than one of these elements.
Betaden Tech Bootcamp Pilot	The Betaden Tech Bootcamp Pilot is a 90-day pilot version of the existing, highly successful, Betaden Technology Accelerator. It will provide the County with a pioneering initiative that could pave the way for new ideas and products with a carbon reduction focus. 21 businesses have already attended workshops, which had guest speakers from Vodafone and Siemens. The programme has recruited the cohort of six businesses for the Cleantech Bootcamp from 12 full applications.
Young Enterprise	Deliver a series of programmes working with both mainstream and SEND schools to deliver enterprise education, enabling enterprise skills development for young people at secondary schools, middle schools, special schools, colleges, youth and community hubs in Worcestershire.
Upskilling in Malvern Hills and Wychavon	This project seeks to develop the existing intelligence available on local skills needs within businesses across all sectors and deliver targeted support to improve outcomes. A survey of over 650 local businesses has taken place to identify skills gaps. The project is now providing support to business re skills development and graduate placements.

Visit Worcestershire

28. Worcestershire County Council took over the operational management of Visit Worcestershire in April 2020 at the start of the pandemic. The Visit England recognised our/the Destination Management Organisation function has evolved with renewed focus on co-ordinating improved brand awareness, visitor experience and providing tourism and hospitality businesses with a promotion body that they can engage with.

29. Since April 2020, the website has been developed to improve visitor experience, we have seen an increase in web traffic by 300%, with an average of 40,000 unique visitors viewing the site every month. Page views have increased from 1 to 4 pages per visit, which shows users are engaging with the content. The social media following has grown by 33% with a combined following of 34,000 across our platforms. Impressions reach around 250,000 per month. Visit Worcestershire has increased its communication channels to Instagram, with the audience growing from 120 in April 2020 to nearly 4,000 in April 2022 and a newly launched Tik-Tok account in March 2022.

30. Over 200 businesses joined us for our inaugural Tourism Awards in March this year, with the 100 applications being whittled down to 12 winners at the black-tie event held at Stanbrook Abbey. Three of our winning businesses have gone forward to the national finals which are taking place in Birmingham in June, putting Worcestershire on the national stage alongside areas such as Cornwall and Devon. The 2022/23 Tourism Awards are now open for applications until 29 July 2022.

31. Visit Worcestershire directly supported 123 businesses in 2021/22 with businesses taking part in webinars, face2face networking sessions, and bespoke account management support. This support continues to develop greater collaboration with the sector on joint promotion, exhibitions and the development of content promoting Worcestershire as a visitor destination.

32. The new summer campaign 'Make Worcestershire Part of your Story' launches in May 2022, with out of county advertising based around travel points in Birmingham including the M6 Starlight Boards, NEC and Railway Stations to link Worcestershire into the Commonwealth Games market. This is being supported by motorway service advertising, promotional guides and postcards in regional locations. Digital and social media advertising will run from May to August. The new 56 page guidebook is being circulated across the region to Tourism Information Centres, service stations and accommodation providers.

Skills and Investment

33. The work of the Skills and Investment team directly supports the Open for Business theme of the Corporate Plan and the economic priorities of the County Council, which is focused on improving skills levels in the county, development of a skilled workforce whilst supporting businesses to survive and grow following the pandemic.

34. Alongside this work the team supports the ambition to ensure all young people realise their potential and move successfully into employment whilst focusing on improving outcomes for our most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people.

35. The skills team group manager also acts as the statutory lead for young people Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) for the County Council.

36. As a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, many skills challenges have been accelerated, and the closure or limited access of physical spaces has had a detrimental effect on the ability of education providers to deliver learning and services such as careers advice. This is alongside a growing recruitment and skills challenge being faced in our SMEs driving wage rates to previously unseen levels within certain industries and sectors.

37. NEET levels in the County remain low, having seen a slight increase during the pandemic to just under 3% of the cohort of a school year group (each year 11). Services are working intensively with an extra 70 young people.

38. Businesses across Worcestershire continue to report skills deficits and challenges in recruiting staff, with the latest Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce report indicating 76% of respondents find it difficult to recruit staff and cite skills deficits most frequently in ICT, Higher Level ICT and technical

skills. Worcestershire County Council continues to work with the Training Providers Association to ensure provision of training course in these areas is increased

Local Skills Report

39. The Skills and Investment Team works with the Worcestershire LEP and the Group Manager, Judy Gibbs acts as the Director of Skills in the LEP, creating co-ordination of the vision and strategic approach to skills support in the County.

40. In February 2022, the Local Enterprise Partnership published the Local Skills Report for 2022, which sets the Skills and Training strategy from the evidence base of both data and stakeholder analysis for the County. This report informs the Department for Education of the aspirations and planned skills interventions for Worcestershire over the next 3-5 years.

Skills and Investment Team Programmes

41. Over the last twelve months, the team's programmes have been developed and expanded to meet the needs of the local residents and businesses within the funding envelope the team operates within.

Careers and Enterprise Company Programme

42. The Careers and Enterprise Company Programme works with 65 Education establishments, with cohorts of young people from Year 7 up to Year 13 across the county, to assist with the careers planning of young people. The County Council and the LEP work with the schools and colleges to influence young people to choose the skills and education pathways as needed by the employers within the county, whilst supporting our employers' future workforce ambitions.

43. The programme over the last year has been focused on recovery from the pandemic, which has been incredibly challenging for schools. The resulting impact being both a decline in the levels of employer encounters offered in education, but also a less informed information, advice and guidance service for young people which has significantly affected the landscape around post 16 destinations.

44. This year the programme has been returning to pre pandemic levels and the performance has returned to similar levels. Nationally, Worcestershire is regarded as an exemplar local area for careers education for young people.

Careers Worcestershire

45. Over the last twelve months, the brand of Careers Worcestershire has been used to support careers education for young people aged 16-24. The programme, launched in January 2022 has been designed to support over 1900 young people who are either NEET or at risk. The Countywide programme will work in education establishments and in communities working with seven education partners and supporting 850 young people into employment.

46. Alongside this, a bid has been submitted to Department of Work and Pensions for £130k annually, to support the creation of a physical drop-in space for 18–24 year-old claimants. If successful, this project would support up to 300 young people annually.

Worcestershire Apprenticeships

47. Apprenticeships have faced a challenging period over the last two years primarily as a result of the pandemic. Apprenticeship numbers stood at 3,490 in 2020/21 with significant drops in Under 19s engaging with the programme, down around 1,000 starts from pre pandemic levels. However, employer interest has recovered in 2021/22 with the introduction of Government incentives and vacancy levels are at an all-time high. More work is needed to influence young people and support employers to be able to undertake apprenticeships as a route to workforce planning.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Kickstart

48. As part of the HM Governments Plan for Jobs in 2020, DWP launched the Kickstart programme to support claimants aged 16-24 into 6 month paid placements free of charge to employers. Worcestershire County Council and Worcestershire LEP jointly took on the programme to become a gateway for Kickstart and support employers across the county to access placements. Despite a slow start from DWP in the programmes administration processes, the team placed 298 young people into employers and to date have had 75 move into full time employment within their respective companies.

Worcestershire Jobs

49. Launched in April 2021, Worcestershire Jobs supported residents to efficiently search and access vacancies, training, and apprenticeships in the county across online platforms bringing them all together into one place. To date the site has had 45,000 unique views with new easy access links to the County Council and NHS vacancies.

Learning Services

50. The Learning Services team in Skills and Investment delivers a number of Education and Skills Funding Agency contracts worth approximately £1.07m, which are subject to Ofsted inspection. The team delivers programmes of education including qualifications to vulnerable young people and adults 19+ through the Adult Learning Centre in Warndon and other community venues. The challenge of learning delivery in 2020-22 on a virtual basis has been significant, and the decision was taken over 2021/22 to utilise the time to restructure the service and to refocus the services to respond to the needs of residents moving out of the pandemic. To date this year the spend sits at approximately £600k with one term of activity remaining.

Digital Connectivity

Broadband

51. The third and final contract of the Superfast Worcestershire programme in partnership with Openreach completed deployment in June 2021. Since the programme began in 2013, the 'Superfast' (24Mbps+) coverage increased from the 69% of the county (only 44% for business premises), beyond the original 90% coverage aspirations to the 98.1% we see in May 2022 (UK average 97.4%). Other schemes and commercial solutions exist to support the remaining 2% without superfast speeds and efforts continue to bring greater full fibre and gigabit capable coverage across the county through a combination of commercial deployments and national and local government gap investment funding, as part of Project Gigabit.

52. When last reported (August 2020) Worcestershire's full fibre coverage was at 7.7%, just over half of the 14.4% UK figure; these figures now stand at 24% and 35%

respectively, with both numbers increasing monthly. Gigabit capable coverage stands at 46.9% in county and 67.8% across the UK.

53. Current 'take-up' of improved connectivity services where we have invested, remains above the national average and significantly above the initial take up expectation of just 20% for contract one. Since the last report, contract one 'take up' has increased from 73.5% to 84.5%, contract two 'take up' from 68% to 74.8% and contract three, which was not reported last time, stands at 56.9%. Higher than anticipated 'take up' ensures benefits are realised across the county and provides an opportunity for reinvestment into the programme through the 'claw-back' mechanisms within the contract as previously agreed by Worcestershire County Council Cabinet.

5G

54. Building on the work completed in the summer of 2020 of the Worcestershire 5G consortium, led by the County Council and Worcestershire LEP, further work has continued so the early achievements can be maximised for the benefit of the county and local business. An Open for Business supported project has helped to set up and establish a new entity 'nexGworx', incorporated in Spring 21, as a subsidiary to Malvern Hills Science Park, as well as providing funding to drive inward investment and support Business Development so the benefits of 5G can be accessed by local businesses and cohorts of the BetaDen project.

55. The two-year project 'West Mercia Rural 5G Connected Communities' has recently been extended to the end of June 2022, to allow for an increased period of use-case testing. Jointly funded by DCMS and private sector partners, led by Worcestershire County Council and supported by other public sector partners, the project has built and utilised 5G infrastructure in the vicinity of Tenbury Wells and Malvern to explore two research questions. First, how new operating models to deploy 5G in rural areas may work in practice; second, investigating how developing 5G technology may support new products, services and models in health and social care applications across rural areas.

Existing Mobile Communications Coverage

56. Following assessments, the quality of 2G, 3G and 4G in the county (2017 and 2019 studies), we have directed the initial phase of the industry and central government supported Shared Rural Network (SRN) to improve coverage to high volume but no coverage areas. Commercial deployments of 5G in parts of the county has taken place with more infrastructure planned as well as a series of announcements regarding the sunsetting of 2G and 3G networks by 2030. The team are talking to the industry to influence these investments across the county.

Employment sites

Worcester Six

57. Worcester Six is a 72-hectare (178 acre) site set immediately to the east of the M5 motorway at junction 6, Worcester Six is progressing into a prominent business site in Worcestershire. With current and future Worcester Six occupiers/investors including:

- Kimal
- Spire Healthcare
- Material Solutions (part of Siemens)

- Supersmart
- Kohler Mira
- Cornelius Drinks
- Victoria Carpets
- ZwickRoell
- IONOS

58. Worcestershire County Council continue to work with the developer, land owner and District Council colleagues to target employers to bring high value jobs to the county.

Redditch Gateway

59. The Redditch Gateway development is an exciting opportunity to build on the town's wealth of engineering and manufacturing expertise. The new development aims to promote and enhance supply chain links, and to further develop the skills of the local labour market. Redditch, Bromsgrove and Stratford upon Avon District and Borough Councils all approved the project in March 2018 with Outline Planning consent granted.

60. The appointed developer at Redditch Gateway has secured one large occupier, Amazon and is now seeking occupiers for the remaining available plots. Currently, there is an existing planning application submitted to Stratford Upon-Avon District Council for two speculative builds totalling 446ksqft. A decision on the planning application is expected in the summer of 2022. The overall scheme is set to deliver economic value to the area. Achieving an increase in economic growth and productivity, through the development of high-quality headquarters-style manufacturing facilities, the site provides an opportunity to transform the economy in the environs of Redditch and re-position the area as a location of choice for growing local companies and prospective inward investors.

Malvern Hills Science Park and Technology Park

61. Malvern Hills Science and Technology Park describes the combination of the Malvern Hills Science Park and land formerly part of the QinetiQ site. Malvern Hills Science Park (MHSP) has been developed over five phases and is currently accommodating over 30 technology-rich companies employing over 350 people. Phase 5 construction is now complete providing a further 17,000 sq. ft of Technology/R&D workspace for new and existing tenants to expand into, releasing space and to accommodate new businesses.

62. Worcestershire County Council, Malvern Hills District Council and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce are all major shareholders of MHSP and oversee its running and strategic direction.

63. Additional employment land adjacent to MHSP has been purchased by the County Council and enabling work is underway to develop up to 300,000 sq. ft of B1 (b) office and ancillary uses, to accommodate HQ, manufacturing, research and development and training facilities. This opportunity provided by this development land positions the Malvern site as a European Scale Science Park that in partnership with QinetiQ provides the ability to compete with truly international reach.

Shrubhill Quarter

64. Covering c.20ha the Shrub Hill Quarter in Worcester is a long-undervalued area with significant untapped potential. It has the capacity to create 500 new homes and c.5,000 new jobs with 80,000 sqm of office and workspace over the next 20-30 years. Government has committed c.£12m from different pots such as the Getting Building Funding, Brownfield Land Release Fund, Towns Fund. One of the most immediate opportunities is a project to bring one of the vacant buildings back to life as an enterprise centre – the idea is to use this as an early opportunity to activate the area and to start to draw in new types of business.

Development Management and Policy Planning

The Minerals Local Plan

65. The Minerals Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in December 2019. Due to delays caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, the hearing sessions for the Examination in Public were held virtually in November and December 2020, with the Independent Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State.

66. Following the hearing sessions, consultation on main modifications to the Plan was undertaken between August and October 2021, and the responses received provided to the Inspectors for their consideration. The Inspector's report was received by the Council on 1 April, and the plan will proceed to Cabinet and Council for a decision on adoption in Spring / Summer 2022.

67. Applications are under consideration for a total of approximately 5 million tonnes of sand and gravel extraction at three sites which are:

- Bow Farm near Ripple
- Lea Castle near Kidderminster

These applications are currently progressing through the development management prior to be determined by Planning and Regulatory Committee.

- And Pinches near Bromsgrove

68. A further application for 1.35 million tonnes of sand was approved for the Chadwick Lane, Bromsgrove in March 2021.

Development Management Team

69. The Development Management team discharge conditions on applications which have been granted planning permission to ensure compliance with all the requirements of the permission. Notable examples in this reporting period included Chadwick Lane minerals site, A38 / A4104 new roundabout and Kepax Bridge.

70. There continues to be a high level of enforcement activity across the county, with the officer responsible investigating cases at minerals and waste sites or unauthorised sites. Most of these are resolved through negotiation but on occasions further action is required.

71. Highways Development Management continue to input commentary on the highways impacts of applications to all 6 district councils; a total of over 3000 applications, including securing developer contributions to facilitate highways mitigations required to offset the impact of development.

Local Plans

72. We have continued to work with the Districts Councils as they review and update their Local Plans. This is a joint workstream between transport policy and strategy and policy planning. Current focus has been on the ongoing South Worcestershire Development Plan review and Wyre Forest Local Plan examination in public hearing session. We will continue to collaborate with the districts during the next year as their plans progress and to assist in developing evidence bases and infrastructure delivery plans.

Councillor Marc Bayliss
Cabinet Member for the Economy and Skills

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL
19 MAY 2022**QUESTION TIME**

Question 1 – Bromsgrove High Street

1. Cllr Josh Robinson will ask the Leader of the Council:

"Does Worcestershire County Council have pride in Bromsgrove High Street and the wider town centre?"

Question 2 – Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Tribunals

2. Cllr Dan Boatright will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education:

"Please can you inform me of how many (if any) judicial review proceedings (which relate to SEND or education matters more generally) Worcestershire County Council have been involved in each year for the past 5 years. Please indicate for each case, a brief outline of the matter and what the outcome was. Please indicate for each case the legal costs involved - internal legal costs plus any external legal costs."

Question 3 – Bus services in Worcestershire

3. Cllr Natalie McVey will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport:

"One in ten car journeys made today needs to be made by bus by 2030 if the UK is to remain on track for its net-zero goals, according to the independent Climate Change Committee.

Given the catastrophic failure of Worcestershire County Council to attract any government funding for bus travel in Worcestershire (notably along with other Shire Counties, as the government drastically diminished the total funding pot from £3bn to £1.2bn) can the Cabinet Member enlighten us as to what the 'Bus Back Better Plan B' for our county is?"

Question 4 – Malvern Hills College

4. Cllr Beverley Nielsen will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Skills:

"Recognising the support which the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Skills has provided the proposed bid to revive Malvern Hills College as an essential skills and training facility in Malvern Hills, when will the County Council consider this bid for support for the College's revival and could the Cabinet Member explain, more fully, the process for this support?"

Question 5 – Work on the A4440 Link Road

5. Cllr Matt Jenkins will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport:

"With the Three Counties Show and other major events taking place in Malvern Hills this summer what is Worcestershire County Council doing to assist the free flow of traffic this year? Could some explanation be given regarding delays to the A4440 link road works? Why is this taking so long?"

Question 6 – A4104, A38 and the Upton-upon-Severn Roundabout

6. Cllr Martin Allen will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport:

"During the last few weeks there have been a welcome influx of visitors into Upton for the marvellous folk festival and the following weekend to the equally popular Three Counties Show Ground. I would like to thank Cllr Amos and his staff for attempting to mitigate the worse of the traffic delays many experienced when visiting our county. Although delays are inevitable, would it not have been better to delay the start of the Upton roundabout until the Ketch roundabout had been completed?"

Question 7 – Street lighting repairs

7. Cllr Lynn Denham will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport:

"How many faulty street light repairs are still unresolved after six weeks since being first reported, data for last 4 years please?"

Question 8 – Availability of emergency contraception in Worcester

8. Cllr Richard Udall will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being:

"Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being comment upon the availability of emergency contraception in Worcester, especially at weekends and on Bank Holidays. What advice would she provide to individuals who cannot afford the cost of the private prescription of the Morning After Pill?"

Question 9 – A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme (BREP)

9. Cllr Josh Robinson will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport:

"Can we have an update on the A38 BREP scheme?"

Contact Points

Contact Points for this report

Simon Lewis, Committee Officer

Tel: 01905 846621

Email: slewis@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

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

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL
19 MAY 2022**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****(a) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

Internal Audit Progress Report

1. The audit plan includes 65 work items of which 12 relate to Fraud, 18 to Certification, 26 to Assurance, and 9 to Advisory. The current state of assurance and audit reports is that 12 are draft – engagement has not commenced, 11 are open – Terms of Reference issued / engagement in progress, and 12 are complete – fieldwork finished / report issued.
2. The grant certification work supports the Council in ensuring that money claimed from government agencies is correctly accounted for, and the Council works closely with operational teams to deliver this. 12 grants with a total value of £72.8m have been certified as accurate to date in this quarter. 5 grants are currently being audited with an income value to the Council of £2.0m and 1 grant is due to be audited March with an income value of £0.9m.
3. No new complaints or allegations of fraud or corruption have been received in this quarter. The Council continues to engage with the National Fraud Initiative programme, providing key data sets to the Cabinet Office to enable matches to be identified and investigated. The final remaining areas are being analysed and it is anticipated that all matches will be cleared by the deadline of 31 March 2022.
4. Audit actions are tracked, and regular contact is made with operational managers to follow up progress. For actions relating to limited assurance audits where a follow up audit is planned, actions are transferred to the new audit.
5. Internal Audit has identified recurring themes on the schools audits undertaken, the main ones being procurement and declarations of interest. A newsletter will be issued covering the themes identified to highlight areas of good practice. The Committee has requested that a report on the schools auditing processes be brought to the meeting of the Committee on 2 December 2022. The Committee has noted the Internal Audit progress report.

Statutory Accounts 2021/22 Progress, Accounting Policies and Estimates

6. The Financial Reporting team is on target with both the preparation work for the Statutory Accounts production and with responses to support external audit planning and initial risk assessment activity. The statutory deadline for the 2021/22 accounts process is 30 November 2022. A detailed closedown plan has been prepared ready for the accounts to be audited and for approval by the Audit and Governance Committee to order to meet the proposed deadline. Additionally, a draft set of accounts will be presented to the July Committee meeting. The Committee has noted the work in preparation for the 2021/22 Statutory Accounts.

7. The accounting policies are the principles, bases, conventions, rules and practices applied by the Council that specify how the financial effects of transactions and other events are reflected in the financial statements. Following a review, there are no changes proposed to the Council's accounting policies for 2021/22. The Committee has approved accounting policies for 2021/22.

8. The material accounting estimates which affect balances and transactions in the financial statements for the year ending 31 March 2022 have been identified by management as: valuation of land and buildings, depreciation and impairment, measurement of financial instruments and the valuation of defined benefit net pension fund liabilities. The Council's assessment of material accounting estimates in year includes consideration of the requirement for specialised skills and knowledge from management experts, e.g. asset valuations and investments, a review of the methods, models and assumptions used to inform the accounting estimates and consideration of the degree of estimation uncertainty relevant to each accounting estimate. The Committee has noted the management arrangements to identify and evaluate accounting estimates.

External Auditor – Auditor's Annual Report 2020/21

9. Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditor is responsible for producing an Annual Audit Report which brings together all aspects of external inspection work undertaken across the County Council including the audit work carried out on the accounts. The Annual Audit Report looks back over the 2020/21 year and summarises all of the reports and work the external auditors have undertaken and closes that year's audit. The Report includes the auditor's opinion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and opportunities for improvement.

10. Grant Thornton had found no significant weaknesses in the Council's Value for Money (VFM) assessment but has identified opportunities for improvement in Financial Sustainability, Governance and i economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Committee has noted the Annual Audit Report 2020/21.

Internal Audit Plan 2021 to 2022/23 – 2022/23 focus

11. In line with the 3-year Plan approved by the Committee in March 2020, the 2022/23 Internal Audit focus provides high level review areas for the year, with detailed plans for quarter 1. Resource requirement has been assessed against availability and the required level of coverage will be provided under current arrangements. The Plan will be continually reviewed against the risks of the Council and related organisations and updates will be provided to the Committee on a quarterly basis.

12. The Internal Audit Charter provides the mandate under which the Internal Audit team operates. It has been amended to include key performance indicators which have been developed and tested during 2021/22. These indicators will be reported to the Committee on a quarterly basis and will be a key tool for the Committee to monitor the activity of the team. The Committee has approved the Internal Audit Plan focus 2022/23 and Audit Charter.

13. The Committee has agreed that the relevant Strategic/Assistant Director be invited to attend the Committee where a failure to satisfactorily address outstanding audit actions has been identified.

Risk Management Report

14. The second phase of the Council's risk management plan is now complete with 19 risk registers uploaded onto Pentana risk management system, which encompasses 28 service areas. Risk managers have been supported to review, select, and assess the relevant risks for their areas. This enables evidence-based risks to be reviewed at either a Directorate or corporate level and allows for assessment across the 10 corporate risk objectives. The consistent design of the risk management framework allows for the introduction of key controls to mitigate multiple risks and identify areas where the individual management teams could introduce or strengthen controls.

15. At 23 February 2022, there were 1,322 risks recorded on the Pentana Risk system for the County Council with an additional 79 for Worcestershire Children First. This is currently the combined number of risks from 19 risk registers across 28 service areas for the 10 corporate objectives.

16. The key themes remain focused both on recruitment and the environment, particularly in light of current circumstances. These themes are being closely monitored to ensure all appropriate controls and mitigations are in place, and detailed work is being undertaken with officers in Human Resources to investigate these in detail for the workforce related risks. In addition, a fraud focus is being introduced to the risk registers to enable a consistent approach to the project and support the Council's aspiration to build a stronger anti-fraud culture. The Committee has noted the Risk Management report.

Finance Improvement Programme

17. The Finance Improvement Programme includes six projects aimed at releasing efficiencies in both Finance and other service areas, and facilitating 'self-serve' and 'automation': Accounts Payable; Income & Accounts Receivable; E5 and collaborative Planning; Financial Regulations; Revenue Budget Monitoring; and People. In addition, there is a seventh project that is part of a wider resources programme to review and improve the Council's Intranet as a single point of access and learning tool for users and managers. The key actions expected in this quarter related to the E5 Upgrade and draft Financial Regulations.

18. The Strategic Board took the decision to delay the upgrade of the E5 system until after the production of the accounts and between that time and the external audit commencing. A date has thus been agreed with the system supplier for 20/21 June 2022. This also enables time to rectify failures as well as managing the well-being of the team. A number of the developments across the other projects within the programme were dependent on the new functionality arising from the upgrade, as such the work programme for those areas is being revised.

19. The Chief Internal Auditor has drafted a number of proposed changes to the Financial Regulations. These are mainly cleansing changes as a fuller constitutional review has been delayed. This does though feed into work to be carried out in other projects within the programme, such as the debt strategy. It is still hoped that these changes can be considered at the July Council meeting. The Committee has noted the report and that further updates will be brought to the Committee meeting in September 2022.

Work Programme

20. The Committee has noted the work programme subject to a report on the schools auditing processes being brought to 2 December 2022 Committee meeting.

Laura Gretton
Vice-Chair

Contact Points

Contact Points for this report
Simon Lewis, Committee Officer
Tel: 01905 846621
Email: slewis@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:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 11 March 2022.

[Agenda for Audit and Governance Committee on Friday, 11th March, 2022, 10.30 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL
19 MAY 2022**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****(b) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE PENSIONS COMMITTEE**

Pension Board and Pension Investment Sub-Committee (PISC) Minutes

1. As set out in the Terms of Reference of the PISC, all decisions taken, and recommendations will be reported back to the next available ordinary meeting of the Pensions Committee in the form of the minutes of the PISC. In addition, the Pension Board has requested that their deliberations be reported to the Committee. The Committee noted the minutes of the PISC meeting on 3 March 2022 and the Board meeting on 7 March 2022.

LGPS Central Limited (LGPSC) Update

2. The PISC has agreed an investment of an indicative £30m per annum for the next 2 years into LGPSC infrastructure strategies subject to due diligence. The Fund is also in the process of transitioning around £200m into the LGPSC Global Sustainable Active Equity Fund for which LGPSC have appointed 3 managers with the Fund investing in 2 out of the 3 investment managers being Liontrust and Baillie Gifford.

3. The shareholders and company meeting took place on 22 February 2022 and the 8 partner funds, who have an equal shareholding, unanimously agreed the 2022/23 budget and business plan. The budget agreed for the financial year 2022/23 is £13.495m, compared to £12.355m in 2021/22, an increase of 9.2%. The costs of the company are shared out between the 8 partner funds based on a cost sharing model provided by LGPSC and agreed between the partner funds.

4. An interim Chief Legal Compliance and Risk Officer has been appointed and the recruitment process is now at the second stage of interviews for the permanent appointment to this post. LGPSC have also appointed a Communication Manager as well as a number of additional posts within the Responsible Investment and Environment team. The company have now moved into the new I9 building in Wolverhampton. The Committee has noted the LGPSC update.

Pension Investment Update

5. The Committee has noted the independent investment adviser's fund performance summary and market background. The Committee has noted the update on the investment managers placed 'on watch' by the PISC.

6. The Fund had an estimated funding level of 101% at the end of January 2022 and initial 2022 actuarial valuation discussions have begun with the actuary . However, the ongoing Ukrainian / Russian conflict has brought further significant volatility and this together with the continuing increases in inflation are most likely to impact on the overall funding levels over the next 3 to 6 months at least. At the time of writing this report, the Fund had less than 0.1% of its Fund value in Russian holdings and the PISC has agreed to disinvest in Russian holdings when it is able to do so. The Committee has noted the funding position compared to the investment performance.

7. Equity Protection is in place for the Fund's passive equity portfolios of approximately £1.1bn (including the Equity Protection valuation). The Eurostoxx50 (used as the measure for the Fund's European passive equities) Equity Protection was restructured on 24 March 2021. The FTSE (used as the measure for the Fund's UK passive equities) Equity Protection was restructured more recently on 16 September 2021, and the S&P500 (used as the measure for the Fund's US passive equities) Equity Protection was restructured on 29 December 2021. The level of protection still remains at 20% for any market downfall from the point at which the strategy is revised. The Committee has noted the update on the Equity Protection current static..

8. The Committee has noted the updates on Responsible Investment activities, Local Authorities Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF), Stewardship investment pooling, and the LGPSC report on the voting undertaken on the Funds behalf.

Investment Strategy Statement (ISS) and Climate Risk Strategy Update

9. The LGPS Investment Regulations that came into effect from 1 November 2016 required all funds to publish a new ISS by 1 April 2017. The Fund's 2017 ISS was designed in collaboration with the seven other partner funds within LGPSC to ensure a consistent approach to investment beliefs and responsible investment beliefs. Under Regulation 7(6) and (7), the ISS must be kept under review and revised from time to time and at least every three years. The 2021 ISS enhanced and strengthened the Fund's stewardship and responsible investment (RI) areas. The changes took into account the Fund's Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) audit, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) mapping exercise and the first (2020) Climate Risk Report. The key amendment for 2022 is the addition of SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production to the Fund's existing investment beliefs. The Committee has agreed the Fund's 2022 Investment Strategy Statement (ISS).

10. An ESG review workshop was held with members of the Committee on 2 February 2022 which reviewed progress against the Committee's ESG recommendations in March 2021. The Committee has noted the Fund's ESG review workshop on 2 February 2022 and has agreed the recommended outcomes set out below:

- Add SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production to the Fund's existing investment beliefs within the ISS
- Look to engage more with the wider members of the pension fund to get their views on ESG matters
- Explore and agree an internal climate target for the pension fund during 2022.
- Explore further social impact investments and whether they can deliver market-rate, risk-adjusted returns

11. The development of a separate Climate Change Risk Strategy reflects the potential material effect of climate change on the assets and liabilities of the Fund. This has been updated to take on board the outcome of the ESG review workshop. The Committee has agreed the Climate Change Risk Strategy. The Committee has noted the Fund's 2nd annual Climate Risk Report. The Committee also approved the Funds 2nd 'Task Force on Climate related Financial Disclosures' (TCFD) Report.

Business Plan

12. The Business Plan is reviewed and updated quarterly to deliver an extra management / governance tool to: help officers to manage the Fund's activities; and assist the Pensions Committee to ensure the ongoing management and development of the Fund is in line with longer term policy, objectives and strategy. The Committee has noted the Worcestershire Pension Fund (WPF) Business Plan as at 22 February 2022 and the Fund's achievements in the 2021 / 2022 LGPS year.

Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund Administration Budget 2022/23

13. The Committee has approved the Fund's budget that includes investment management fees and totals £21.015m for 2022/23. This represents an increase of £2.629m (12.5%) from the original 2021/22 budget. The largest proportion of the budget (£18.029m) is allocated to investment managers' fees. These largely depend on the value of assets being managed and investment performance which in turn depends on market conditions. They also include fees for Equity Protection and compliance with the Cost Transparency Code initiative.

14. The Committee has noted the indicative budget allocations for 2023/24 and 2024/25. The Committee has noted that variations against budget will be monitored. The Committee has granted delegated authority to the Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee to approve variations of up to £0.5m.

Review of Training Policy and Programme

15. The Committee has noted the Fund's Training Policy and Programme also known as the Skills & Knowledge Framework.

Risk Register

16. No new risks have been identified and no residual risk scores have been increased or reduced following the quarterly review of the Risk Register. Mitigating actions have been updated for new measures and previous measures that have been completed / developed further / have changed timelines. The Committee has noted the 22 February 2022 Worcestershire Pension Fund Risk Register.

Pension Administration Strategy (PAS) including Policy Statement on Communications

17. The PAS sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Fund and its employers. No comments were received from the Fund's employers on the proposed changes being introduced by the 2022 PAS. After the consultation the following wording was added to section 4 of the Fund's Policy Statement on Communications, specifically committing the

Fund to provide information about the Fund's approach to responsible investment / ESG (environmental, social and governance) / climate change issues: '(including information about the Fund's approach to responsible investment / ESG / climate changes issues)'. The key areas of proposed change are:

- Adding a responsibility for us to maintain our signatory status to the UK Stewardship Code 2020.
- Adding a responsibility for employers to familiarise themselves with investment pots and the arrangements for ceasing participation in the Fund.
- Adding references to employers being required to notify us specifically about address changes to their responsibilities regarding notifying us about changes in member circumstances.
- Adding a responsibility for employers to consider ill health liability insurance.

18. The Committee has approved the proposed changes to the existing April 2021 Worcestershire Pension Fund (WPF) Pension Administration Strategy (PAS) including the WPF Policy Statement on Communications.

Funding Strategy Statement (FSS)

19. The LGPS regulations require the Fund to have an FSS and to keep it under review. The FSS sets out how each Fund employer's pension liabilities are to be met going forward.

20. In order to gain assurance that the Fund has a solid appeal process in place for employers challenging Deferred Debt Arrangements (DDA) / exit credits, independent legal counsel was sought from Addleshaw Goddard on the Fund's existing FSS, the Fund's Statement of Policy on its Discretions as an administering authority, the Fund's Appeals form, and the Fund's Making a formal representation for an exit credit payment document. The Fund's actuary, Mercer, was then asked to review Addleshaw Goddard's counsel. The outcome of the review was included in the final version of the FSS which was then sent out to employers for consultation, and no comments were received on the proposed changes.

21. The key changes to the 2021 FSS related to employers leaving the Fund and reviewing employer contributions between actuarial valuations. The Committee has agreed the February 2022 Funding Strategy Statement.

Government Actuary Department (GAD) Pension Review Update

22. In addition to the actuarial valuation carried out the by the Fund's Actuary, under the Public Service Pensions Act 2013, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is required to commission a "Section 13" valuation which will look at the 2019 valuation results for LGPS funds and check whether, in their opinion, the various funds have carried out their valuations in relation to 4 key areas: compliance, consistency, solvency, and long-term cost efficiency.

23. The Section 13 valuation is carried out by GAD who produce a report which analyses each of the 88 LGPS fund's valuation results from 2019. GAD have highlighted the progress made against the 2016 recommendations. GAD assessment was a positive outcome for the Fund, as all the assessments were green for the three tests around solvency and for the five tests on long-term cost efficiency (Deficit Recovery Period,

Required Return, Repayment Shortfall, Return Scope and Deficit Recovery Plan). The Committee has noted GAD's review.

Governance Review and Update

24. In line with good practice, officers have reviewed the existing Governance Policy Statement and prepared a draft Governance Policy Statement February 2022. The changes proposed to the existing Governance Policy Statement relate to updated pension scheme numbers; Government Departments; policy reference documents; document links; job titles; representation on the LGPSC Joint Committee; and other minor textual amendments. As these changes are not significant, they will not need to be referred to Council for approval.

25. Reviews of the terms of reference (TOR) for the Pension Board, Pensions Committee and Pension Investment Sub Committee were undertaken in February 2022. As a result, the Pension Board's TOR will need to be updated to make reference to 'The Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2016' as well as some other minor textual changes. The Pensions Committee and PISC TOR will also need to be amended to reflect the changes made to the proposed draft Governance Policy Statement February 2022. As these changes are not significant, they will not need to be referred to Council for approval.

26. The Committee has approved the Governance Review and Update, in particular noting the changes to the Fund's Governance Policy Statement and the TOR for the Pension Board, Pensions Committee and PISC.

UK Stewardship Code Updated 2021 Draft Submission

27. The UK Stewardship Code 2020 ('the Code') sets high expectations for how investors, and those that support them, invest, and manage money on behalf of UK savers and pensioners, and how this leads to sustainable benefits for the economy, the environment and society. It is a set of 12 Principles for asset owners and asset managers. There is also a separate set of six Principles for service providers – investment consultants, proxy advisors, data providers and others.

28. The Fund was successful in achieving signatory status to the Code, something which 64 organisations out of 189 organisations (made up of 147 asset managers, 28 asset owners including pension funds and insurers, and 14 service providers including data and information providers and investment consultants) applying to the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) did not achieve.

29. The Fund's draft (the next submission is due on the 30 April 2022) Code submission for the period 1 January – 31 December 2021 addresses the improvement areas identified by the FRC that would be required to retain Code signatory status. The Committee has noted the draft submission and agreed that the final version be circulated to members of the Committee for information.

30. The Committee has granted delegated authority to the Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee to approve the final version of the submission. The Committee has agreed that an update report be presented to its meeting on 28 June 2022.

Forward Plan

25. The Committee has approved the Forward Plan.

Cllr Adrian Hardman
Vice-Chairman

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report
Simon Lewis, Committee Officer
Tel: 01905 846621
Email: slewis@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:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Pensions Committee held on 23 March 2022
[Agenda for Pensions Committee on Wednesday, 23rd March, 2022, 2.00 pm -
Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

COUNCIL
19 MAY 2022

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

(c) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Local Government Association Member Code of Conduct

1. The Local Government Association (LGA) has developed a model Code of Conduct as part of its work in supporting the sector to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance. This was offered as a template for councils to adopt as a whole and/or with local amendments.
2. Since consideration of the model code by this Committee in October 2021, the Monitoring Officers from the District Councils and Fire Authority have met to consider the views from each Council, and prepared a draft Code based on the LGA Code for consideration. The aim is to continue to use a Code of Conduct which is the same across the County and District Councils and the Fire Authority. The main points of difference in the LGA Code from the current Code are:
 - More detailed explanation of the requirements of each element of the Code. The Committee had previously supported this as being helpful to Councillors and members of the public
 - A requirement to register 'Other' interests. For example where a Councillor holds an unpaid directorship or is in a position of control with a charity. Currently there is no requirement to register such interests
 - The 10 general principles of public life are retained, the LGA Code has seven
 - Inclusion of best practice recommendations at Appendix C.
3. The Committee has deferred consideration of the item to a future Committee meeting to allow more time to receive feedback about the outcome of consideration of the proposed Code of Conduct by Worcestershire district councils, and subject to a briefing being arranged on the revised Code for all members of the Council.

Recruitment of Independent Member

4. The constitution sets out that the Committee should have 3 non-voting independent members upon it in addition to the elected members. Independent Member Cliff Slade resigned from the role earlier this year, so there is a need to appoint a 3rd (who cannot be an elected member or an officer of the Council).
5. The Committee has authorised the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to finalise the detailed arrangements for the appointment of the independent member by the Committee

based on the previous recruitment approach and making use of relevant social media.

Cllr Bob Brookes
Chairman

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

Simon Lewis, Committee Officer

Tel: 01905 846621

Email: slewis@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:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee held on 20 October 2021.

[Agenda for Standards and Ethics Committee on Wednesday, 27th April, 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)