

Minutes of the Council

County Hall, Worcester

Thursday, 14 July 2022, 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Chris Rogers (Chairman), Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Alan Amos, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr David Chambers, Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, Cllr Matt Dormer, Cllr Elizabeth Eyre, Cllr Simon Geraghty, Cllr Laura Gretton, Cllr Karen Hanks, Cllr Ian Hardiman, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Marcus Hart, Cllr Bill Hopkins, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Adrian Kriss, Cllr Steve Mackay, Cllr Luke Mallett, Cllr Emma Marshall, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Tony Miller, 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 David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Kit Taylor, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Shirley Webb and Cllr Tom Wells

Available papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. 9 questions submitted to the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (previously circulated); and
- C. The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2022 (previously circulated).

2362 Apologies and Declaration of Interests (Agenda item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Salman Akbar, Brandon Clayton, Aled Evans, Peter Griffiths, Paul Harrison, Aled Luckman, Jo Monk, Craig Warhurst.

2363 Public Participation (Agenda item 2)

Dr David Nicholl asked a question about traffic issues in Stoke Prior.

Elena Round asked a question about Education Health Care Plans.

The Chairman thanked Dr David Nicholl and Elana Round for their contributions and said they would receive a written response from the relevant Cabinet Member.

2364 Minutes (Agenda item 3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2022 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2365 Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 4)

Noted.

2366 Reports of Cabinet - Matters requiring a decision by Council - Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan (Agenda item 5 (a))

Council considered the Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills introduced the report and commented that the Council had been working off saved policies from the 1997 Minerals Local Plan. This new Plan had been subject to extensive rounds of consultation with the public as well as an Examination in Public conducted by a Government inspector and had been found to be sound. Approval of the main modifications to the Plan was required. These modifications did not significantly alter the Plan. However, the Council had no option other than to accept these modifications or would be required to draw up and consult on a fresh plan. There was a statutory requirement for the Council to adopt a Minerals Local Plan to ensure a steady supply of minerals to meet local and national demand, the bulk of which being sand and gravel. The Plan had been subject to scrutiny at OSPB and Cabinet and no substantive matters had been identified. The details of the sites for extraction would be subject to consultation and adoption by Council at a later date.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were raised:

- Along with sand and gravel, the mineral working in the county also provided a supply of brick clay, silica sand, brine, building stone, crushed rock and coal
- There was a perception among some local residents that the wording of the Plan was skewed in favour of developers
- Silica dust was known to cause incurable cancer and the report stated that minerals development could result in negative impacts on health and well-being of local residents as a result of changes to the environment and amenity impact. Mental and physical health could be impacted with vulnerable groups being particularly at risk. The report also referred to the harm of air pollutants to human health. The report set out a number of safeguards but the 200 metres buffer zone to the nearest residential properties which had been in the existing plan had

been omitted and ought to be reinstated. It was therefore requested that consideration of the Plan be deferred to enable Cabinet to revisit this particular issue

- Dust emissions from mineral working could travel as far as 500 metres in certain weather conditions. The re-introduction of the 200 metre buffer zone would be an important modification to the Plan and would give some protection to local residents
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills considered that a balanced approach had been adopted in the Plan that met the needs of developers, residents and business. Policy 28 of the Plan concerned amenity and required any proposed minerals development to demonstrate that throughout its lifetime, taking into account the cumulative effects of multiple impacts of the site or number of sites, the proposed development would not cause unacceptable harm to sensitive receptors from a number of factors including dust. He considered that this gave the necessary level of protection to neighbouring residential properties.

On a named vote RESOLVED that the Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan and Policies Map be adopted, with the main modifications recommended by the Inspectors and the additional modifications which are necessary to clarify the plan, but which do not materially affect its policies.

Those in favour of the motion were: Cllr Chris Rogers, Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Allan Amos, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr David Chambers, Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, Cllr Elizabeth Eyre, Cllr Simon Geraghty, Cllr Laura Gretton, Cllr Karen Hanks, Cllr Ian Hardiman, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Marcus Hart, Cllr Bill Hopkins, Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Adrian Kriss, Cllr Steve Mackay, Cllr Emma Marshall, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Tony Miller, Cllr Dan Morehead, Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Tony Muir, Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cllr Scott Richardson Brown, Cllr Andy Roberts, Cllr Linda Robinson, Cllr David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Kit Taylor, and Cllr Shirley Webb. (36)

Those against the motion were: Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Luke Mallett, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Josh Robinson, Cllr Richard Udall, and Cllr Tom Wells. (11).

2367 Reports of Cabinet - Summary of Decisions Taken (Agenda item 5(b))

The Leader of the Council reported the following topics and questions were answered on them:

- Worcestershire Adults Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2020/21
- Resources Report – Provisional Financial Results 2021-22
- Local Government Ombudsman Report
- Household Support Fund.

2368 Constitutional Matters (Agenda item 6)

(a) Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care System Update

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being introduced the report and commented that a refresh of the membership of the Health and Well-being Board was required as a result of changes made to legislation as Clinical Care Group were being replaced by the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board as well as the establishment of the Integrated Partnership Assembly. The Terms of Reference of the Integrated Partnership Assembly would be reported to the September 2022 Cabinet meeting. The Health and Well-being Strategy would have an integral role within the Integrated Care Strategy (ICS). She thanked all residents who had responded to the consultation on the proposed strategy. The key aspect of the review was to prevent people entering the system in the first place and enable better quality of life through living at home with longer with better outcomes. District councils were important partners and would now have voting rights on the Board. The LEP, voluntary and community and Social Enterprise Alliance had also been invited to be members of the Board. She set out the aims of and the approach to be taken by the Board.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were made:

- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care commented that the proposals would lead to a more community-led NHS in the county with a focus on prevention. The ICS working with the NHS would remove the carer/provider split that currently existed with equal partnership arrangements on the Board. He welcomed the introduction of district councils to the Board because in order to manage a prevention-focused approach, the provision of housing was a key element for health. The Council would be focusing on how prevention could be achieved with key decisions being made by the frontline workforce. The ICS would provide opportunities to work on shared priorities. The current focus on acute hospital provision was not working
- This approach had potential to work but there were remained significant cultural and financial differences to overcome between social care, local government and the NHS
- The work of the district councils had a significant impact on the health of local residents and therefore their inclusion on the Health and Well-being Board was welcomed.

RESOLVED: that

- (a) the revised terms of reference for the Health and Wellbeing Board as attached at the appendix to the report be approved; and**
- (b) the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance be authorised to update the constitution accordingly.**

(b) Approval of extension of time for non-attendance at meetings

Council considered the approval of extension of time for non-attendance at meetings for Councillor Jack Satterthwaite.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were made:

- Unfortunately, there were occasions when poor health impacted on the ability of a councillor to undertake their role and it was necessary to allow time for them to recover. Cllr Satterthwaite was recovering from his illness and it was hoped that he would be able to attend meetings soon
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being wished Cllr Satterthwaite a speedy recovery.

RESOLVED that the extension of the period of non-attendance at Council meetings by Councillor Jack Satterthwaite by 6 months, or until the conclusion of the period of his ill health, whichever is the shortest be approved.

2369 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 1 - Universal free bus travel for all residents in Worcestershire (Agenda item 7)

The Motion was withdrawn by the signatories in advance of the meeting.

2370 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 2 - CPR Training (Agenda item 7)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Cllr David Chambers, Cllr Linda Robinson, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr Adrian Kriss, Cllr Peter Griffiths, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr Matt Dormer, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Shirley Webb, Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Alistair Adams, Cllr Marcus Hart, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Allah Ditta, Cllr Craig Warhurst, Cllr Alan Amos, and Cllr Steve Mackay.

The motion was moved by Cllr David Chambers and seconded by Cllr Linda Robinson who both spoke in favour of it.

The following amendment was moved by Cllr Luke Mallett and seconded by Cllr Richard Udall:

“This Council recognises and values the work undertaken by various bodies to promote CPR Training throughout Worcestershire and the resulting outcomes in saving the lives of many people of all ages.

This Council resolves to call upon the relevant Cabinet Members with Responsibility to work with relevant agencies and partners and our own officers to support and encourage all schools in Worcestershire with year 7 and above, to offer CPR training programmes in their areas.

Council recognises the involvement of members in supporting local CPR training initiatives, providing equipment, such as defibrillators and resuscitation dolls and, indeed, pump prime funding volunteer community first response schemes, via the Divisional Fund.

Council asks the Cabinet Member with Responsibility to work with partners to audit the availability of CPR training and defibrillators across the County and to bring a report back to Cabinet as to how funding could be provided to help us save more Worcestershire lives from being cut short.

The Council requests the relevant Cabinet Members with Responsibility update Members following the conclusion of this work.”

The mover and seconder of the motion accepted the amendment. Members spoke in favour of the amendment with the following points being made:

- If all cardiac arrests took place in hospitals then the survival rate would be much higher. Of the 30k cardiac arrests that took place out of hospital (often at home), only 10% of patients survived. If a defibrillator was not available then the practice of CPR was the next best option to treat a cardiac arrest. A mass CPR training programme across the county would be welcomed. Initially, CPR training should be introduced in schools to all students in year 7 and above. The public might feel anxious about undertaking CPR believing that the patient was being hurt but doing nothing was far worse
- If this country adopted a joined-up approach to life saving as had been adopted by countries such as Norway, Sweden and New Zealand, 5k lives could be saved every year. Effective CPR nearly doubled the survival rate of patients. All councillors had a role in encouraging town and parish councils to offer their support for the programme of training. The training programme could also be offered to all Council officers and members
- The British Heart Foundation had indicated that just 22% of the population would be confident enough to use a defibrillator. CPR training therefore needed to be made compulsory in the school curriculum to ensure that knowledge was retained and shared. Councillors had a role to play in spreading the word through for example social media
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education commented that as the Council did not set the curriculum and many schools were academies, it was not possible to enforce the addition of CPR training to the curriculum. However, she would liaise with headteachers through school visits, headteacher briefings and the Worcestershire Schools Forum meetings to get the message across. Under DfE guidance, there was an expectation that pupils should be taught how to treat common injuries and undertake life-saving skills including CPR and defibrillator use. In response to a survey, 18 of 49 schools had indicated that they did provide CPR training and 8 would be commencing this year. Those schools that had not responded to the survey would be chased up. It

was also important to teach people to remain calm in the event of an emergency. She would report back on training opportunities for staff

- There was an opportunity for the Council to act in a more strategic way not only in relation to CPR training but also in respect of defibrillator use and community first response. This strategic approach should start with an audit of the actions already being undertaken and understanding where gaps in provision existed and where additional funding could be deployed if needed
- CPR gave patients a chance of survival until the emergency services arrived or early defibrillation was exercised
- It was important that the public were made aware of the locality of the nearest defibrillator
- The voluntary organisations that undertook CPR training were thanked for their efforts
- The only concern relating to the amendment to the motion was understanding the cost of the proposed audit work
- The pressures being placed on schools should be borne in mind and any time, money or training that could assist schools in the provision of training would be welcomed
- Consideration should be given to the role of the fire brigade in implementing the motion, for example at an accident scene.

On being put to a vote, the amendment was carried and put as the substantive motion which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED “This Council recognises and values the work undertaken by various bodies to promote CPR Training throughout Worcestershire and the resulting outcomes in saving the lives of many people of all ages.

This Council resolves to call upon the relevant Cabinet Members with Responsibility to work with relevant agencies and partners and our own officers to support and encourage all schools in Worcestershire with year 7 and above, to offer CPR training programmes in their areas.

Council recognises the involvement of members in supporting local CPR training initiatives, providing equipment, such as defibrillators and resuscitation dolls and, indeed, pump prime funding volunteer community first response schemes, via the Divisional Fund.

Council asks the Cabinet Member with Responsibility to work with partners to audit the availability of CPR training and defibrillators across the County and to bring a report back to Cabinet as to how funding could be provided to help us save more Worcestershire lives from being cut short.

The Council requests the relevant Cabinet Members with Responsibility update Members following the conclusion of this work.”

2371 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 3 - Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (Agenda item 7)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Matt Jenkins and Cllr Tom Wells.

The motion was moved by Cllr Beverley Nielsen and seconded by Cllr Matt Jenkins who both spoke in favour of it, and Council agreed to deal with it on the day.

The following amendment was moved by Cllr Mike Rouse and seconded by Cllr Marc Bayliss:

“This Council recognises the current Government's stated aim to increase journeys in towns and cities to be cycled or walked by 2030 to help lower congestion. Council commits to working closely with District, Borough and City Councils across Worcestershire in pursuing Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, through pro-active dialogue and engagement with bid submissions, match funding where appropriate and backed by a strong business case. Council reaffirms its commitment to providing the travelling public with safe, affordable and reasonable choices about how they move to provide residents with the confidence to make informed and well-supported choices.”

The mover and seconder of the motion accepted the amendment. Members spoke in favour of the amendment with the following points being made:

- The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans provided an opportunity to introduce a mode shift in travel to enable bikes or by e-bikes to replace a percentage of car trips similar to the approach taken in the Netherlands. If more could be invested in travel for the least affluent members of society then it could have an impact on obesity levels. Public Health England had suggested that the NHS could save £17bn as a result of the health benefits associated with active travel. Active travel could help improve air quality in Worcestershire. There were opportunities for cost benefit improvements from reduced costs relating to the lack of equality, physical inactivity, greenhouse gas emissions and the impact of traffic noise which according to the Cabinet Office was costing between £38-49 bn a year. Bid writing, match-funding and identified goals in developing local cycling and walking infrastructure plans would be welcomed
- Electric bikes had a key role in increasing active travel because they were able to replace car travel for many journeys, opening up longer distances. However, the Council had a poor reputation in respect of active travel and had failed to receive Government funding. Much could be learned from the approach taken in the Netherlands which had separated cycle paths, protected junctions, ample cycle parking, 20mph speed limits in urban areas and shorter and more direct cycle routes. A dedicated active travel budget, engagement with user groups, and partnership working was key. A change of mind set towards active travel which gave people a choice was vital

- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport commented that the Council did have a good and improving record on providing cycling and walking infrastructure. It was important that the public had a module choice of active travel and the freedom to choose how they wished to travel. However, there was limited road space and sometimes space needed to be reallocated to facilitate that choice. The Council was dedicated to providing the public with safe, affordable and reasoned choices as to how they wished to travel around the county. The Council was a pro-active travel authority
- It was disappointing that the target in the original motion that half of all journeys in towns and cities to be cycled or walked by 2030 to help lower congestion, had been removed in the amendment to the motion
- Concern was expressed about the fragmentation of strategic cycle routes whereby certain key elements of cycling infrastructure had not been joined up
- There was a block to the progress of active travel caused by the militancy of certain user groups. A “share with care” mindset needed to be adopted by all concerned
- Education was important to engender confidence amongst less experienced cyclists. It was therefore suggested that a programme of Bikeability sessions be introduced for adults, with a particular focus on e-bikes
- Good progress had been made to improve walking and cycling routes in the county but more needed to be done. However, schemes to improve the network were costly and it was important to look at more cost-effective ways of providing the necessary infrastructure
- The Netherlands had different infrastructure to this country with predominately flat, wide-open spaces and therefore a different approach needed to be adopted which examined each new individual scheme to establish what could be done to provide better infrastructure for cycling as well as other forms of transport
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills commented that active travel should not just be dominated by the cycling lobby and other forms of transport such as walking should be accommodated. There was a danger that the pursuit of the provision of high specification active travel infrastructure would be expensive thereby limiting the amount of overall infrastructure that could be provided within budgets. There should be a focus on sharing road space and respecting all users of that space with more funding for education campaigns and work with the police on enforcement
- Although the “share with care” approach would be welcomed, there would continue to be a need for segregation of road users where appropriate
- The provision of more dedicated cycleways for school children would be welcomed.

On being put to a vote, the amendment was carried and put as the substantive motion which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED “This Council recognises the current Government's stated aim to increase journeys in towns and cities to be cycled or walked by

2030 to help lower congestion. Council commits to working closely with District, Borough and City Councils across Worcestershire in pursuing Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, through pro-active dialogue and engagement with bid submissions, match funding where appropriate and backed by a strong business case. Council reaffirms its commitment to providing the travelling public with safe, affordable and reasonable choices about how they move to provide residents with the confidence to make informed and well-supported choices.”

2372 Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication (Agenda item 8)

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication presented his report to Council which covered various topics.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication answered a broad range of questions from members.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication for his report.

2373 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23 (Agenda item 9)

The Council considered the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were raised:

- The Chairman of the OSPB thanked officers and members for their work in supporting the scrutiny process. The work programme was a flexible document and subject to change during the year. Scrutiny would have a key role in policy development and quality assurance. Scrutiny was very much concerned with outcomes on investment. HOSC was now meeting on a monthly basis and it was important that the health service was held to account for their actions
- The Vice-Chairman of OSPB commented that the programme included a greater focus on policy development. He drew particular attention to the scrutiny work in relation to nationally important issue such as the adult patient discharge service and the flexibility that allowed the scrutiny work on the support provided for Ukrainian refugees
- It was requested that the delivery of the EV charging points be prioritised in the work programme
- In response to the issues experienced recently in Telford, it was requested that the Children’s Panel consider, as a priority, the impact of missing children and the associated dangers of sexual abuse in the county.

RESOLVED that the 2022/23 Scrutiny Work Programme be endorsed.

2374 Question Time (Agenda item 10)

Nine questions had been received by the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance and had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The answers to all the questions are attached in the Appendix

2375 Reports of Committees - Pensions Committee (Agenda item 11 (a))

The Council received the report of the Pensions Committee containing a summary of the decisions taken.

2376 Reports of Committees - Planning and Regulatory Committee (Agenda item 11 (b))

The Council received the report of the Planning and Regulatory Committee containing a summary of the decisions taken.

The meeting was adjourned from 11.30am to 11.45am and 1pm to 1.45pm and ended at 2.15pm.

Chairman

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COUNCIL 14 JULY 2022 - AGENDA ITEM 10 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below.

QUESTION 1 – Cllr Josh Robinson asked Cllr Mike Rouse:

“What is being done to remove the weeds that are blighting our pavements and roads? Year after year the weeds are just left and no one seems to be taking responsibility for it.”

Answer

I'd like to thank Councillor Robinson for his question about weeds on the public highway.

Bromsgrove, Worcester City, Malvern Hills and Wyre Forest districts are treated on our behalf by a specialist weed spraying company. These specialists are scheduled to carry out this task three times from Spring to Autumn. They use a systemic total herbicide, classed as a bio formulation. A systemic herbicide is activated by spraying the foliage of the plant; the active ingredient is then drawn into the root system and kills the plant from the root upwards. The majority of our network is treated using a state of the art ride on machine that calculates the position and size of the plant using chlorophyll sensor technology which spot treats individual weeds, ensuring that only the minimal amount of herbicide is used. Any other weeds that are not accessible by the machine are treated using a traditional lance. Following this treatment the weed will die back and be removed by the district council when sweeping. Due to restrictions on herbicide use we are not able to blanket spray a footway, channel or road with a residual herbicide that would kill any germinating seeds or new growth. For information, Bromsgrove area was treated between 31 March and the 11 April. Lickey End and Barnt Green were treated 5 and 6 May. We are starting our second treatment mid-June and expect to be in Bromsgrove by early July and he would confirm whether or not that had taken place.

The central reservation of urban dual carriageways can be particularly difficult to both treat with a herbicide and for the district to sweep. This is due to the fact that disruptive and expensive lane closures are required to safeguard any operatives. We are aware that there is a weed issue along the A38 in Bromsgrove and are working with the district council to address this.

If there is a specific location where weeds are an issue we would be happy to investigate growth and compare it to when it was treated and report back to Cllr Robinson.

Supplementary question

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport confirmed that Cllr Robinson would be provided with evidence that the roads in Bromsgrove had been treated and updates on any work undertaken in the future.

QUESTION 2 – Cllr Martin Allen asked Cllr Mike Rouse:

“Last year Cllr Amos gave me an undertaking in this chamber to instruct a full speed review of the roads from the M50 to the Ketch Roundabout on the A38 and then in another council meeting, from Baughton Hill to Tunnel Hill once the new A38/A4104 Roundabout is completed. Will the next incumbent confirm that he will honour this undertaking?”

Answer

Thank you for your question for Council regarding this speed limit issue. Steps have already been taken to investigate and assess current speed limits along these routes through accident analysis and speed and volume surveys. The A4104, in the immediate vicinity of the A38 junction roundabout has been assessed and speed limit TRO proposals are currently being processed. The proposed roundabout will be greatly beneficial in reducing congestion, at this junction, and will also serve to reduce through speeds on the A38 (currently the priority route). Following the completion of this major scheme final surveys will be carried out covering the A38 SLR-M50 and the A4104 Pershore to A449, the full route will be reviewed to ensure the consistency of approach to speed management. A report will be produced and WCC will work in partnership with West Mercia Police in formulating the next steps for speed management on these routes based on the evidence collated.

Supplementary question

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport undertook to meet Cllr Martin Allen at Holly Green on the A4104 to assess the issues experienced by local residents

QUESTION 3 – Cllr Matt Jenkins asked Cllr Marcus Hart:

"With the Council currently planning to only provide meal vouchers for struggling families for the first two weeks of the summer school holiday, can I ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility to review this decision and look at ways to fund meal vouchers for the whole of the summer holidays?"

Answer

Many thanks for your question to Council.

The Council is effectively passporting a Government grant onto itself. The Government had given the Council strict criteria as to how that money must be spent. It needed to be divvied up on a third for pensioners, a third for children and families and a third for vulnerable families basis. Therefore, the quantum of cash that the Council has was about £1m which will feed the 15k pupils on free school meals due to financial eligibility across the county, providing meal vouchers across the first two weeks of the summer holidays. The Household Activities Fund will be able to support those who still need assistance. Individual district councils were also allocating money.

Supplementary question

Would the Council be able to assist district councils in providing the necessary funding to provide meals to vulnerable families across the whole of the summer holidays? The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities responded that the Council would continue to work with district councils. The Government had allocated funding of 500k to district councils through the Council Tax Hardship Formula to support communities. The holiday activities and food programme would enable eligible children and families to access free food and activities throughout the whole holiday period.

QUESTION 4 – Cllr Lynn Denham asked Cllr Mike Rouse:

"I was interested in a Tweet from Redditch cops (the Twitter handle for the police Safer Neighbourhood Teams for Redditch) on the 23 June about patrol of Ipsley Street bus lane in Redditch. . 'Five vehicles were given firm words of advice for contravening the Bus/Taxi lane'. This appears to be a very different practice to the bus lane in Lowesmoor in my

Rainbow Hill division. Here the County Council has installed CCTV and issues enforcement fines to any contravening vehicles. Could the Cabinet Member tell me how much income has been collected from fines as a result of enforcement since the camera was installed?"

Answer

In general with regard to the comparisons, the people of Redditch have huge respect for the custom-built bus road that was installed as part of the new town development which was very clear and excellently designed. Contraventions are extremely low level by the nature of the design.

The camera enforcement of Lowesmoor bus lane was implemented in support of First Bus who identified the high contravention rate of this bus lane as directly affecting the ability to run a reliable and efficient cross city service. This bus lane was identified as the priority location for intervention with respect to provision of bus priority. It was really vital that that point was emphasised because that is what bus operators were currently telling us is important in safeguarding the future of bus services. There was also an air quality and pollution angle to it which is why we do not allow taxis to use the route for instance. Following the camera enforcement the contravention rate has fallen from 4200 per month prior to enforcement to 820 for June 2022.

The gross income from bus lane enforcement was £475,000 last year, however, there are significant costs associated with the scheme including:-

- Camera rental
- Contractor costs for the management of the back office enforcement process including finance systems and legal requirements
- DVLA fees
- Adjudication fees
- HM Courts and Justice fees
- WCC staff resource costs for management of the scheme

Any future camera enforcement proposals must have a carefully considered business case to ensure the scheme does not result in net loss to WCC, the Lowesmoor scheme did break even after its first year. There is a small net surplus (quite variable) that is reinvested into the traffic management service for improvements to the network.

Supplementary question

It was queried why Worcester taxi firms could not have the same right of access to bus lanes as Redditch taxi drivers. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport commented that it was important that any change to access rights was not detrimental to bus services. He would review the specific arrangements for access to the bus lane in Lowesmoor, Worcester to see if it could be opened for use by taxis.

QUESTION 5 – Cllr Beverley Nielsen asked Cllr Marc Bayliss:

"Following the answer gratefully received at our last Council from the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills, enlightening us that the works on the Southern Link Road would be completed 'this summer', I would be grateful if he could share with me and residents desperate to see the completion of these works, what is his definition of 'summer'....? Can we expect works to be completed this month, in July, or next month in August, or is he referring to the technical definition of the end of summer being 23 September, or might it mean the start of September commonly referred to by Climatologists as the end of summer? Whichever month or date it is, it cannot come soon enough for those many thousands of residents and business people who regularly commute from

Malvern, Powick, Callow End and Welland, north and south along the M5 to their workplaces, who will breathe a great sigh of relief once these are indeed finally completed.”

Answer

I would like to thank Councillor Nielsen for her question which is very timely. I am expecting the Southern Link Road to begin progressively opening in phases commencing in the next few weeks. We will be opening the road in phases to enable drivers to get used to the new layout and to allow the technical team to carry out the final safety review which can only be carried out as it opens to traffic. I am advised that the phased opening will take around two weeks to implement. I will leave Councillor Nielsen to decide which definition of summer August falls within.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind colleagues why we have undertaken this major feat of civil engineering. The Southern Link Road is one of the county's most important strategic routes and it was suffering on a daily basis from severe congestion leading to extended journey times and poor journey time reliability resulting in drivers sitting in traffic or finding alternative routes through residential areas and the city centre.

The scheme has included the installation of three miles of new road, provided increased capacity at the Norton, Ketch and Powick roundabouts and entailed the construction of a new bridge over the River Severn and a new Viaduct over Powick Hams. In addition to this there have been three new bridges and an underpass constructed for pedestrians and cyclists, together with a new widened shared-use path along Temeside Way. The Battenhall Railway Bridge has been extended, a farm access bridge has been replaced, two pedestrian crossings have been improved and street lighting has been upgraded. During the work the team has ensured archaeological remains relating to the Battle of Worcester have been carefully recorded and environmental benefits have been maximised, for example, a wetland area has been created that is already being used by local wildlife.

Yes schemes of this kind take a long time, yes they are disruptive but it is essential that if we are to keep our roads and economy moving we have the courage to put our money where our mouth is and deliver on these major infrastructure schemes.

Supplementary question

It was queried whether there would be a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of the Southern Link Road and how the news of the opening would be communicated to residents. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills responded that he was not aware of a ribbon-cutting ceremony being arranged. A press release had been issued last week. The public would be kept informed on progress.

QUESTION 6 – Cllr Richard Udall asked Cllr Mike Rouse:

"Can the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport confirm he would be willing to investigate new and imaginative ways to cut pollution and congestion caused by delivery vehicles in Worcester City Centre?"

Draft Answer

Pollution and congestion in Worcester City Centre comes from a number of different sources, of which delivery vehicles are just one. We are working in a number of different ways to address these issues.

The Worcester City Traffic Regulation Order currently restricts loading and waiting in the city centre from 10am -18:00 to assist in reducing traffic congestion in the City Centre.

The completion of Southern Link Road dualling in summer 2022, offers an alternative to travel through the city centre and has been designed to deliver more reliable journey times than other routes through the City Centre. Alongside the Southern Link road dualling, we have also invested in improvements to the walking and cycling route along with the highway and provided three new bridges for walking and cycling, Broomhall Way Bridge, Hams Way Bridge and Crookbarrow Way bridge.

We are developing and delivering walking and cycling routes in the City, in collaboration with the City Council. These include Kepax Bridge an active travel link to the north of the city crossing the river Severn and allowing for both recreational and commuting opportunities linking the east and west banks, and linking into the city centre. This builds on the early success of Diglis Bridge, now an established and popular route for pedestrians and cyclists alike. Further routes are being delivered to link to Ketch, along Duck Brook, improvements to the canal towpath (already a popular leisure route) and links from Ronkswood to the hospital and employment sites at Warndon. Routes are being funded through the City's Towns Fund.

We are including extensions of active travel routes to Kempsey and Powick in the Levelling Up Fund round 2 bid to be submitted to Government as part of the regeneration of Shrub Hill Railway Station.

We have invested in rail, promoting modal shift and travel choice as outlined in points mentioned above, in addition to the full review of public transport currently being undertaken to enhance the provision of bus services across Worcestershire.

Supplementary question

The Cabinet Member undertook to investigate the possibility of relaxing the prohibition of cycling in Worcester City Centre to allow access by officially licensed cargo bike operators.

QUESTION 7 – Cllr Martin Allen asked Cllr Mike Rouse:

"The Hanley Road in Upton continues to flood each year. Despite my asking for a meeting with Council Officers and members of Upton Town Council and myself, nothing has been arranged. Will the Cabinet Member with Responsibility ensure a meeting takes place in Upton within the next two months with all parties to discuss the way forward and explain to the Town Council the obstacles that make solving this problem difficult and what this council intends to do to find a solution?"

Answer

The flood risk management team confirms that we will arrange the called-for meeting within the next two months.

Supplementary question

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport agreed to meet Cllr Martin Allen at Hanbury Road, Upton alongside the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment and a representative of Upton Town Council to look at the possibility of the creation of a community liaison group and to discuss possible solutions for the flooding experienced in the area.

QUESTION 8 – Cllr Josh Robinson asked Cllr Mike Rouse:

"Do you agree with me that if this Council puts in infrastructure on a road to reduce the speed of vehicles to 20mph, that it makes no sense that we cannot reduce the speed limit to 20mph due to our current policy?"

Answer

20 mph limits that have traffic calming features are referred to as 20 mph zones. The presence of the features distinguishes them from sign-only 20 mph speed limits.

Both types are mandatory i.e., supported by a legal Order which can be enforced by the police but, whereas zones have been in use for many years and there are numerous examples across Worcestershire, sign-only 20 limits are a relatively recent innovation.

Where a residential or urban area has the national default speed limit of 30mph but due to the environment and design most drivers are travelling at speeds below 24mph, the introduction of 20mph signs and the legal order required is considered to be a cosmetic traffic management measure with no positive impact or outcome and very poor value for money. This is evidenced by a number of trials and schemes:-

WCC conducted a trial in Rubery where a 20mph speed limit was introduced across several estate roads. The results indicate that a significant reduction in vehicle speeds has not been achieved and accident levels remain virtually static in the area. The benefits from introduction of this 20 mph sign only pilot scheme have not been realized.

In Brighton, a 20mph zone was implemented, without traffic calming features across approximately a quarter of the city. This cost approximately £330,000 (2013 prices). The results were not satisfactory, and Brighton and Hove City Council decided to implement additional traffic calming measures to increase compliance, significantly increasing the total cost of the scheme.

Bath and North-East Somerset Council implemented seven 20mph signed zones across the City of Bath at a cost of more than £870,000. The monitoring report indicated a very poor result in relation to speed reduction and that the number of serious casualty accidents rose. It concluded that *“Overall, the speed limit programme in B&NES seems to have provided little in the way of persuasive argument for continuing the programme into the future. e) Indeed, the rise in casualty numbers and severity as per the national trend (albeit with relatively small numbers in B&NES) would suggest against further expansion of area based schemes.”*

On this basis WCC policy is:-

- To consider 20mph speed limits in association with physical traffic calming where there is evidence that the scheme will reduce casualty accidents
- To consider **Advisory** 20mph signs outside schools
- To ensure the design of new developments for residential and urban shared use areas are such that traffic speeds are 20mph or below but retain the national default speed limit

Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) published their Speed Management Policy Position in March 2022 in which they recommend that the Government....'must monitor the success and effectiveness of a change in national speed limit to 20mph in Wales and Scottish Border. The results of these trials should be used to inform any future decision on the reduction in the default speed limit to 20mph for the rest of the UK'

WCC will await the decision from Government on a change to the default speed limit for residential and urban areas.

QUESTION 9 – Cllr Richard Udall asked Cllr Mike Rouse:

"Can the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport make a statement on how the Council can continue to support the bus travelling public who use the 31 and 31A bus routes in Worcester?"

Answer

Thank you for providing me with an opportunity to update the chamber on this service, but as he will be aware from the OSPB session where we looked at bus services this service is one of many that require our urgent attention and interventions.

As he will be aware, the Bus Travel team in the council is currently working closely with operators, in order to determine the commerciality of the bus network in Worcestershire as part of our commitment to review the overarching network.

He may well be aware that we are presently committing support for the 31 and 31A, which we have recently extended until the end of October 2022. Further discussions about additional support are ongoing.

The network review is a significant piece of work as part of this, and will inform our options, financial implications and next steps.

I want to put on clear record that the current situation regarding bus travel is unsustainable and unacceptable. The travelling public of Worcestershire deserve and demand better, and that is why it is our ongoing aspiration to deliver fit for purpose bus services for the residents of Worcestershire by turning to innovative solutions and committing to our new statutory enhanced partnership. We are fully committed to review, enhance and secure bus travel for our residents whether they use the 31 and 31A or any of the other services in the network.

He will appreciate there is a lot of detail to work through, especially down to individual service level and I will be happy to provide him with updates as we make progress.

Supplementary question

What measures and resources could be provided to ensure that public awareness of timetables, routes and the costs of bus travel? The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport responded that it was important to positively promote bus services. The Council had written to concessionary bus users to remind them to use their concessionary pass. All councillors had a responsibility to promote the use of bus travel through social media or whatever means possible.

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