

Agenda

Council

Thursday, 10 November 2022, 10.00 am
County Hall, Worcester

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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, 10 November 2022, 10.00 am, County Hall, Worcester

Agenda and Summons

Councillors: Cllr Chris Rogers (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 Elizabeth Eyre, Cllr Andy Fry, 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 Steve Mackay, 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 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, Cllr Tom Wells and Vacancy

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 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 Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager in writing or by e-mail indicating both the nature and content of their proposed participation no later than 9.00am on the working day before the meeting (in this case Wednesday, 9 November 2022). 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.

3 Minutes

To approve as a correct record and authorise the signing of the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022 (previously circulated electronically).

4 Chairman's Announcements

To receive any announcements to be made by the Chairman.

5 Fire and Rescue Authority 1 - 6

To consider the annual report of the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority to be presented by Cllr Kit Taylor, Chairman and to receive answers to any questions asked about this report. It is planned that the Chief Fire Officer will attend the meeting.

6 Reports of Cabinet 7 - 20

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.

7 Notices of Motion 21 - 22

To receive the report of the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager on any Notices of Motion received by her.

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 Tuesday, 1 November 2022.

8 Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility 23 - 32

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

9 Question Time 33 - 36

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 Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager by noon on Tuesday, 1 November 2022 or*
- *If it relates to urgent business, the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager is notified at least half an hour before the start of the meeting and the Chairman agrees the matter is urgent'.*)

10 Reports of Committees 37 - 48

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) Planning and Regulatory 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.

Agenda produced and published by Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager, 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, 2 November 2022

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Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

2021/22 Annual Report to Worcestershire County Council

Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Councillor C A Taylor, from Worcestershire County Council, was elected as Chairman of the Authority and Councillor R Phillips, from Herefordshire Council, was elected as Vice-Chairman.

Appointment of Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Jonathon Pryce was appointed in April 2021. More recently Guy Palmer was appointed to Temporary Deputy Chief Fire Officer on the 1st August 2022, following the retirement of the previous post holder. Adrian Elliott was appointed Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer on the 1st May 2022. The long standing Treasurer and Director of Finance Martin Rehorn remains in post.

Organisational Change

The Service has published and aligned internal structures around the three core delivery strategies; **Response** – operational fire engines, **Protection** – legislative fire safety enforcement, and **Prevention** – our work in the communities to reduce fires and other emergencies.

These three core strategies are closely linked to mitigating risks highlighted in the Fire Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The core strategies developed last year are now well embedded and have been well received by the workforce, providing clarity of purpose and strategic direction for all. The Service is now currently realigning its internal structures to support this model, which also supports the current expectations of the Home Office led Inspectorate (HMICFRS), and are supported by key performance indicators reported on regularly.

Beneath the core strategies the Fire Authority has a range of enabling strategies and plans, such as ICT, Assets and People. One of the newer plans is the Environment Sustainability Plan 2021-25, which following a full assessment of the carbon impact of all our sites is now moving into a delivery phase whereby a number of investment areas will see our carbon footprint reduce over the next few years.

The Service has in the last year seen a rise in the amount of staff turnover in all areas mainly due to natural retirement of staff recruited in the late 1980's, and has therefore prioritised succession planning and recruitment drives. The Fire Authority has supported the Chief Fire Officer in a wide ranging 'Invest to Improve' programme which as an example, includes a dedicated and funded On-Call Firefighter marketing and recruitment team. On-Call Firefighters make up around 50% of the Fire Services employees which is around 400 people in total.

Working collaboratively with partners' continues to be a priority as part of the new Prevention strategy, for example the Service annually welcomes cohorts of school children to take part in the Dying to Drive Scheme and Young Citizens Challenge.

Cultural improvement, leadership and staff development are critical for the future management and leadership of the Service, and during the past 18 months the Service has been working with Trans2 (a specialist leadership company) to deliver training programmes, promoting self-awareness and positive leadership skills at all managerial levels.

The Service is also continually striving to recruit and retain staff from a range of backgrounds in order to broaden the diversity of its employees and become an employer of choice across both Counties. The most significant progress to date has been made in the recruitment and development of female staff. Internally there has been a focus on ensuring that all staff needs are being effectively met, ranging from facilitating staff consultative forums to improvements in staff welfare facilities, clothing and uniform. Additionally the Service is seeing a rise in the number of female staff applying internally and externally for progression through the organisation with more female middle and senior managers/officers than ever before.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

The HMICFRS visited the Service in April 2021 and conducted their inspection against three core pillars of Effectiveness, Efficiency and People. A full report of their findings was received in December 2021 and a full action plan against their recommendations has been created and approved by the Fire Authority in early 2022. The Service is working hard to close their recommended areas for improvement and is anticipating another full inspection in 2023/4, alongside all other Fire Services in England.

As part of the 2021 inspection, the Service unfortunately received a formal Cause of Concern in relation to its prevention activity, primarily as a result of a backlog of Home Safety Visits, due to the Covid pandemic and staffing issues. An action plan to show how the Service will discharge these concerns was provided to the Inspectorate by 31 August 2021 and all elements of the action plan were deemed to be completed by the Service earlier this year. The Service is awaiting a revisit to review progress against the Cause of Concern by HMICFRS, which has been deferred twice this year due to capacity issues within HMICFRS.

Strategic Alliance with Shropshire Fire Authority

The Strategic Fire Alliance between Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services continues to make progress, with replacement of our Fire Control / 999 mobilising functions being the key project that will form the focus of the Alliance plan moving forward and for the next few years. Specifications and tender documents are being prepared to ensure a resilient Command & Control function (taking into account the Grenfell Tower and Manchester Arena Inquiry recommendations).

The new mobilising system will be resilient across both Fire and Rescue Services and is likely to encompass a multi-million pound investment in a modern system to meet the demands of the future, embracing new, but tried and tested, technology where possible.

Fire Reform White Paper

The Government published its long awaited consultation paper 'Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service' in May 2022. This contains a number of proposals, broken down into three broad areas covering People, Professionalism and Governance. The White Paper was considered at the Fire Authority's meeting in June 2022 and a formal response was submitted with cross-party support.

The Fire Authority welcomed and supported a number of the White Paper's proposals, including:

- greater freedom for Chief Fire Officers to deploy resources to help address future threats beyond core Fire & Rescue duties (such as the response to the COVID pandemic).
- a review of current pay negotiation arrangements.
- introduction of a new mandatory leadership programme for senior managers.
- creation of a College of Fire & Rescue, along similar lines to the College of Policing, to drive standards, undertake research and provide operational guidance; and
- ensuring the operational independence of Chief Fire Officers.

However, there were a number of other proposals which the Fire Authority did not support:

- a proposal for minimum entry requirements for the UK Fire & Rescue Service, which could make it more difficult to recruit on-call firefighters in largely rural services such as Hereford & Worcester.
- the introduction of a statutory Code of Ethics for Fire & Rescue Services, on the basis that we already have an existing code issued by the Fire Standards Board and there is no need for this to be put on a statutory footing.
- a requirement for all staff to take a Fire & Rescue Service oath. The Authority viewed this as unnecessary and likely to be counter-productive in terms of both recruitment and industrial relations.
- a proposal for Chief Fire Officers to become corporate sole, like Chief Constables which is linked to the government's proposals in respect of governance (below).

In terms of governance, the White Paper sets out the government's view that responsibility for all Fire & Rescue Services in England should be transferred to a single elected individual – in the case of Hereford & Worcester that would most likely be the Police & Crime Commissioner. The Fire Authority has strongly disagreed with the government's premise that governance of Fire & Rescue Services is best undertaken by a single elected individual for two reasons:

- (i) Public accountability – The role of the Fire Authority is to ensure that the Fire & Rescue Service meets the needs of the local communities. Although Fire Authority members are not directly elected to that role, they are the elected representatives of those communities and their details are readily available on an Authority's website; they are far closer to the community and represent a much broader range of views than a single individual. Transferring responsibility for Fire & Rescue Service to a single individual creates a significant democratic deficit compared to multi-member committee based structures.

- (ii) Scrutiny & transparency – a Fire Authority meets in public, publishes agendas & reports and is accessible to the public. Decision making is open to scrutiny by the public, who can make representations and influence decisions, as well as by other members of the Authority from across the political spectrum. None of that is applicable to a PCC and there is currently little effective scrutiny of PCC decisions. In our view these issues are far more important to the public than whether or not they can name the members of the Fire Authority.

The Police and Fire & Rescue Services are distinctly different functions. The governance structures applicable to one are not necessarily appropriate to the other.

Property Update

It was previously reported that the Fire Authority entered into an agreement with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to deliver our property management functions as part of a joint property and estates team, as a result of the wind down of PPL. The new service became operational in April 2021 and is now well established and delivering against our planned property programme.

Major Projects:

Broadway Fire Station: Broadway is a single fire engine on-call station. It has been recognised for some time as being in a very poor state of repair and lacking the facilities necessary for a modern fire station. The existing site is constrained but, following several unsuccessful attempts to identify a suitable alternative location, the Fire Authority gave approval for the redevelopment of a new station on the existing site. A detailed planning application was submitted in May 2021 and planning approval has now been granted by the local authority. Evaluation of tenders and interviews with prospective contractors has taken place and a preferred contractor has been selected. Works are planned to commence on-site in November 2022.

Redditch Fire Station: The replacement of Redditch Fire Station has been part of the Authority's approved capital programme for several years. In collaboration with West Mercia Police, the Service has developed plans to provide a joint Fire and Police facility, building upon the concept of the Bromsgrove joint Fire-Police station. A detailed planning application was submitted in December 2021 and approved by Redditch Borough Council in June 2022. Interviews were held with four potential contractors in January 2022 via a construction procurement framework and the selected contractor is currently working with the design team to develop the detailed designs and specifications and prepare final project costs.

Hereford Fire Station: Following approval to progress the redevelopment of Hereford Fire Station at St Owen Street, a high-level feasibility options appraisal of the existing fire station site has been completed, along with a number of surveys of the site. The preferred option proposes a new four bay fire station with associated accommodation, improving access and egress from the site and enhancing car parking, to be rebuilt on the current site. Additional surveys and assessments have been completed during August 2022 and a formal planning application was submitted in September 2022.

North Herefordshire Strategic Training Facility: The Police and Crime Commissioner has given provisional agreement in writing to permit the use of the site and a legal agreement is currently being developed. Design proposals are progressing to provide a 'hot fire house' training facility along with proposals to potentially relocate Leominster fire station to the Police site by converting vacant space in the Police Station. The design team is completing final designs and surveys and are eager to submit a formal planning application in late October 2022.

Relocation of Training Centre, that is currently part of Droitwich Fire Station, to Wyre Forest Fire Station: Initial scoping works for the proposed requirements of a new Training Centre facility have been undertaken. A number of layout options have been received, and comments returned. The design team is now preparing final spatial layouts for further assessment and a cost feasibility study will be submitted for consideration by the end of 2022.

Planned and reactive property maintenance: General maintenance and building works continue across the Service's estate. Notably, the significant refurbishments of Pershore, Ledbury and Leominster fire stations have now been completed.

Notable Incidents

Since the beginning of the year the Service has attended four large building fires requiring 10 or more fire engines. These include building fires at Waldron Transport in Bromsgrove, Clean Services Laundry in Ross-on-Wye, Redhill Manufacturing in Redditch and four semi-detached houses in Buckfield Road, Leominster. In addition to these, the Service has also dealt with a large number of 'fires in the open' throughout the spring and summer months, in the dry weather. This resulted in more than a 220% increase in fires compared to last summer, many of which could be classified as 'wildfires'.

Of these wildfires, one fire on the Lickey Hills required over 15 pumping appliances plus a number of specialist appliances and officers and an attendance by the Service that extended over a number of days.

Protection (Fire Safety)

The Protection Department increased its establishment by two Fire Safety Inspectors. This increase ensures that an additional 200 commercial premises can be inspected every year as part of the Risk Based Inspection Programme. In addition, the new Inspectors provide resilience to meet the requirements of new Fire and Building Safety Acts.

Current and new Inspectors completed additional fire engineering and legal training as part of their continued professional development (CPD). The Service also successfully achieved corporate membership of the Institution of Fire Engineers, allowing Fire Safety Inspectors and managers to accredit their CPD through a nationally recognised organisation.

Operational personnel on fire stations are also being formally trained to carry out Fire Safety inspections of less complex buildings. This helps staff to increase their operational knowledge as well as promoting fire safety and increasing compliance.

Potential for Industrial Action and Pay Offer

At the time of writing of this report the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Executive have rejected a revised pay offer for operational Firefighters of 5%, but have given the membership an opportunity to vote upon whether to accept the offer or not. Should this ballot result in a rejection of the pay offer, then it is likely the FBU will then ballot for industrial action, which could lead to periods of strike action by some Firefighters in Herefordshire and Worcestershire beginning in late December 2022, at the earliest.

Whilst the Fire Authority has well developed and effective resilience plans in the event of industrial action, it is not possible to offer the same level of service to our communities during periods of industrial action by the FBU. It is very much hoped that the FBU membership will accept the current pay offer so that the threat of industrial action can be averted.

As with many public sector organisations the need for increased pay settlements this year will have a longer term impact on services and budgets in the future, and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is no exception. The current 5% offer is 3% above the budgeted affordable amount; therefore should this offer be accepted the Fire Authority will need to find efficiencies beyond 2024 to fund this.

Summary

The Service is currently in a healthy and productive state, with sound leadership, motivated and dedicated staff delivering well against their plans and providing our communities with a highly skilled, efficient and professional Fire and Rescue Service. The Fire Authority is also working well with engaged elected Committed Members, providing effective strategic oversight, scrutiny and support to officers.

**Cllr C A Taylor, Chairman and Cllr R Phillips, Vice-Chairman
Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority**

FURTHER INFORMATION is available in the Annual Service Plan and Annual Service Review 2011-22 on the Service's website at www.hwfire.org.uk/your-right-to-know/our-publications/

COUNCIL
10 NOVEMBER 2022**REPORT OF CABINET – MATTERS WHICH REQUIRE A
DECISION BY COUNCIL**

**Resources Report – Revenue Budget Monitoring – Month 4 (31
July) 2022/23****Recommendations**

1. **Cabinet recommends that Council approves the variations to the Capital Programme as detailed relating to:**

a) **the receipt of external funding for infrastructure schemes including Local Transport Capital and Major Road Network Fund for the A38 Improvement Scheme in Bromsgrove;**

b) **an increase in the Basic Needs Grant and other education and schools' grants; and**

c) **potential costs associated with a legal adjudication.**

2. Since the Draft Capital Programme was approved in February 2022, the Council has received various increases in external funding and Cabinet is recommending to Council an increase in the Capital Programme as detailed in the following paragraphs.

3. Following notification from the Department of Transport, the Council is expected to receive an additional £21.161 million for 2022/23 relating to Local Transport Capital. A similar amount has also been indicated for 2023/24 and 2024/25, meaning an increase to the capital programme of c£63.5 million over the three-year period.

4. On 8 August 2022 the Department for Transport announced £43 million will be invested into the Council's A38 improvement scheme in Bromsgrove as part of the Major Road Network Fund, subject to successful submission of the final business case. The money will help to tackle congestion, improve journeys and support thousands of new jobs and homes. Planned works will install new lanes at key junctions and widen the existing road, helping to improve traffic flow and reduce the threat of any unnecessary bottlenecks. These upgrades will take place on a 7.5-mile stretch of the route, between the M5 Junction 4 to the north and the A38/B4094 to the south.

5. Following notification from the Department for Education, the 2022/23 Basic Need Grant has increased by £0.525 million from the £7.57 million included in the Draft Capital Programme to £8.095 million. Funding for 2023/24 and 2024/25 has also been allocated at £7.128 million and £5.303 million respectively.

6. Other education and schools' grants have also been awarded, which are:

- £4.081 million for the Schools Condition Allocation
- £5.285 million relating to Higher Needs Provision Capital with an allocation of £5.422 million for 2023/24
- £0.703 million for the Devolved Formula Grant,
- £0.2 million for the Schools Nurseries Grant.
- £0.193 million for the "One Bedroom Project".

7. The Council is currently involved in a legal adjudication with one of its suppliers, with an anticipated payment of up to £3.9m being required should the ruling go against the Council. The Council is continuing to take legal advice, and should the Council be compelled to pay the stated sums, we expect to be able to recover some or all of this payment within this financial year. In the interim, a variation to the capital programme is required, funded from additional borrowing.

Kepax Bridge – Award of Construction Contract

Recommendation

8. Cabinet requests that Council approves amendments to the Capital Programme necessary to progress the Kepax Bridge scheme, including the virement of funds previously allocated as part of the approved Capital Programme along with additional sources of funding from Worcester City Council and the Towns Fund.

9. At its meeting on 18 March 2021 Cabinet welcomed the completion of the Business Case for construction of a footbridge across the River Severn in North Worcester and noted the allocation of a further £2.5 million towards the scheme from the Walking and Cycling Bridges fund and the award of £1 million from the Getting Building Fund. This brought the total approved funding to £5 million.

10. Since that Cabinet meeting, further work has been undertaken on the design of the scheme and a Target Price has been received from the Contractor, meaning that the full estimated cost of the scheme is now available. The cost of the scheme has increased due to a number of factors including the delay in receiving planning consent, changes in scope to include improvements to Horsford Road and a ramp to the Severn Way, changes in fuel costs and inflation in the construction sector which have been exacerbated by the War in Ukraine leading to increased steel and fuel costs.

11. Extensive work has been carried out to scrutinise the Contractor's Target Price and to ensure the most efficient construction programme.

12. Kepax Bridge received Planning Consent on 28 September 2021 and a number of enabling works have been carried out since that time including the removal of invasive species, and other vegetation on the bridge alignment.

13. Progress has been made on securing the necessary land agreements with the relevant landowners on either side of the River Severn, together with the other statutory consents necessary to progress the scheme.

14. Funding, sufficient to cover the remaining costs of the scheme, has now been identified from within the existing capital programme and from external funding from Worcester City and the Towns Fund.

15. The total estimated cost of the scheme is £15.9 million including expenditure already incurred but excluding any Quantitative Risk Assessment (QRA) allowance. Should there be a requirement for additional QRA expenditure, this will be funded from existing resources with the E&I Capital Programme and reported back via a subsequent Cabinet Resources report.

16. £5 million of this has already been allocated as part of the current approved Capital Programme of which £4 million was previously allocated from the Walking and Cycling Bridges fund and a contribution of £1 million from the Getting Building Fund. This now leaves a balance of £10.9 million to be funded. This can be funded from the existing approved E&I capital programme and external sources but will require reallocation of funding to cover the proposed increase.

17. This is proposed to be funded as follows, and Council is asked to approve the following additions, allocations and subsequent virements within the Capital Programme:

- £0.813m – external contribution from Worcester City Council
- £2.325m – external contribution from Worcester City Council via the Towns Fund
- £5m virement from the existing allocation in the Capital Programme to address inflationary pressures on Major Projects
- £0.410 million from the unallocated Public Realm existing capital programme
- £1.781 million from the Strategic Infrastructure existing capital programme
- a £0.571 million allocation from the Highways Capital Maintenance Budget

18. Cabinet has authorised the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills to award construction contracts and enter into any other such agreements as are necessary to progress delivery of the Kepax Bridge scheme, within the approved funding envelope.

Worcestershire Children and Young People's Plan

Recommendation

19. Cabinet recommends that the Children and Young People's Plan be adopted by the Council.

20. The Children & Young People's (CYP) Plan (attached as an Appendix) is a strategic document that underpins the all-age Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (HWS) and provides a framework for operational delivery of the Health & Wellbeing Board's (HWB) priorities for children and young people.

21. The CYP Plan is overseen by the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Board which is a sub-group of the Health & Wellbeing Board (HWB). The CYPSP brings together senior/strategic leaders to take a whole-system response to improving outcomes for children and young people. It reports twice annually to the HWB on activity and progress towards the CYP Plan outcomes.

22. As part of developing the Policy framework, the 2022/24 CYP Plan was endorsed by the HWB at its meeting on [24 May 2022](#) . The findings of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy consultation, which influences the CYP Plan, were further discussed and endorsed at a HWB private development session in June 2022. The CYP plan was considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) on 20 July 2022 and Cabinet has noted the comments from OSPB as part of its consideration of the Plan.

23. The Plan is a dynamic document and includes baseline data against which progress with the measures and key performance indicators can be tracked.

Councillor S E Geraghty
Chairman

Supporting Information

Appendix – Children & Young People's Plan

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager and Interim Monitoring Officer

Tel: 01905 846011

Email: sjones19@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

Agenda and reports for meetings of the Cabinet on 22 September and 27 October 2022:

[Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 22nd September, 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#) (minute 2118)

[Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 27th October, 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Worcestershire's Children and Young People's Plan

Priorities

2022 – 2024

The best start to life

Early help and support to parents through pregnancy and early years. Preventing risks escalating and needs becoming more complex requiring child protection and care.

Access to the Right Education, Health and Social Care Intervention

Inclusivity in mainstream schools; School sufficiency for children with SEN; Working with parents and carers; Quality and timeliness of assessments of EHCP to assess need and provide services.

Access to emotional health and wellbeing and mental health support

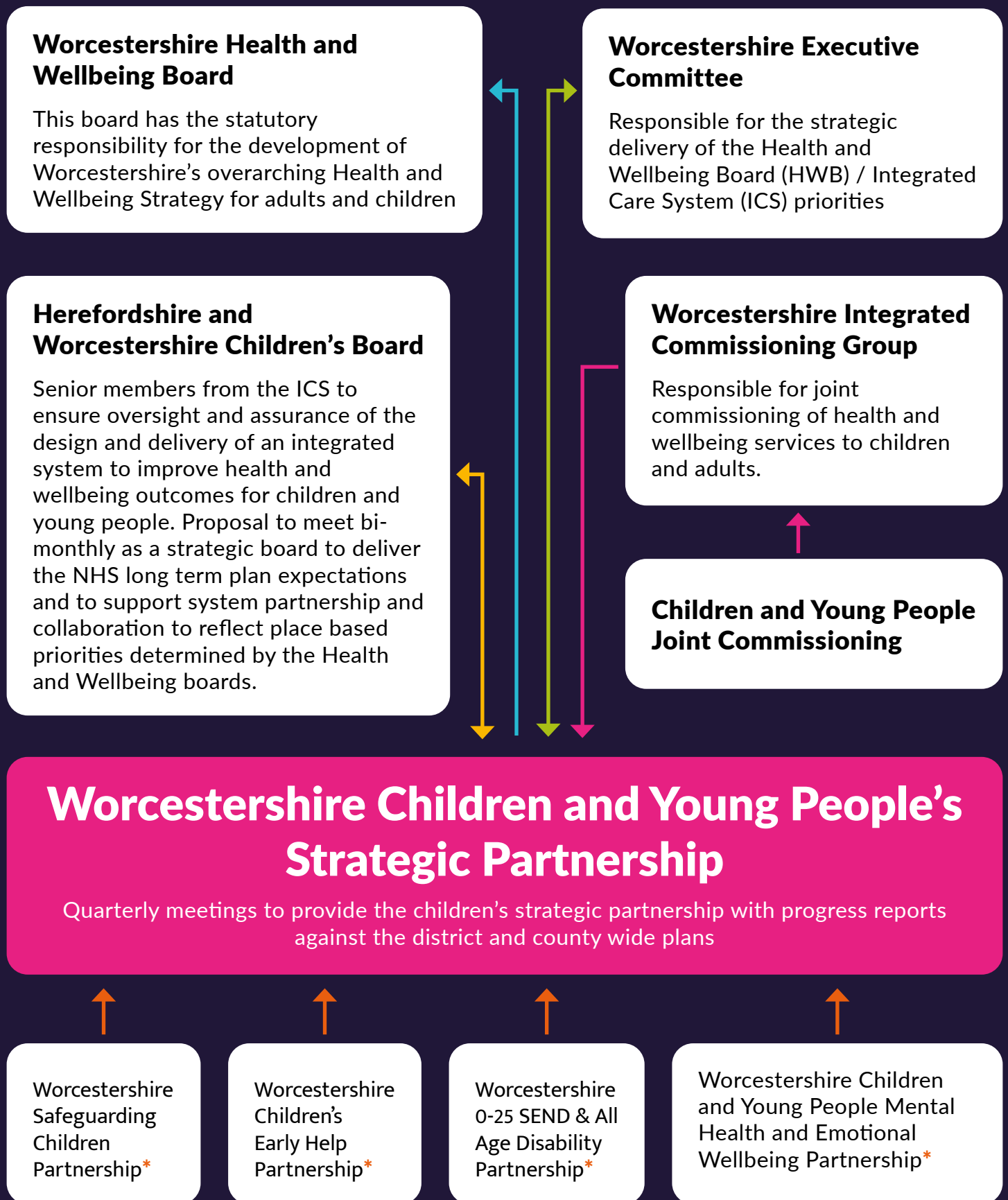
Interventions that promote and enable mental health stability for the individual parent and/or child

Working together to keep children safe from harm

Get Safe: Identify and support Children and young people at risk and experiencing criminal exploitation. QAPP: Multi-agency quality of practice and learning. Serious Case Reviews: Multi-agency learning



Governance - Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board



* These groups are county-wide partnerships responsible for the planning and delivery of services specific to the remit of the group. They are collectively responsible for the delivery of the Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) for Worcestershire. The CYPP is developed in conjunction with the agreed priorities of the Corporate Plan, Health & Wellbeing Board priorities and the Integrated Care System.

Measures and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Early Help Partnership

	Baseline April 2022		Progress Data
Children reach the expected level of development at their two-and-a-half-year review	Worcs 21/22: 87.6%	England 21/22: 81%	To be above the England Average
% take up of two-and-a-half-year review	Worcs 21/22: 71%	England 21/22: (NA)	To be above the England Average
Prevalence of Childhood obesity at Reception and Year 6	Worcs 20/21: NA	England 20/21 Reception: 14.4% Year 6: 25.5%	An improving trend against national data 2021/22: Available November 2022
School readiness – accessing 2ys early years setting	Worcs 75%	England 69%	To be above the England Average
Number of schools with an Early Help Offer	Worcs Maintained ALL Academy ALL Independent 5	England [if available]	100% of Schools in Worcestershire to have an Early Help Offer

Find out more online: [Worcestershire Early Help Strategy](#)

Children & Young People's Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Partnership

	Baseline April 2022		Progress Data
A reducing number of children and young people who require suitable alternative education arrangements to be made due to mental ill health preventing them from attending school	Worcs 21/22: 307	National data not available	An improving trend against base data
CYP absent from school for more than 50% of the available sessions (severe absence) due to mental ill health. Data to be provided where other health inequalities present	Worcs 21/22: 1426	England [if available]	An improving trend against base data
Health assessments for Children Looked After	Worcs 75.3%	England 2021: 91.00%	To be in line with England Average
Number of children and young people who have access to NHS mental health provision. This will include both early intervention and specialist support CAMHS.	Worcs 21-22: 3,338	HWICS monthly target 22-23: 9270	An improving trend against HWICS target
Children and Young People will experience a positive outcome from CAMHS interventions	National routine outcome measures are agreed but not yet reported		

Find out more online: [Herefordshire and Worcestershire Children and Young People \(CYP\) Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Local Transformation Plan 2021/22](#)

All Age Disability 0-25 Strategic Partnership

	Baseline April 2022		Progress Data
Increase the % of statutory advice reports for EHCNA that are submitted within 6 weeks of the request.	Worcs 2021/22: 55.1% annual average	England [if available]	An improving trend against base data and in line with Eng averages if available
Increase the % of children with an EHCP receiving education in mainstream schools	Worcs 2021: 30%	England [if available]	An improving trend against base data and in line with Eng averages if available
Increase the % of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks (minus exceptions)	Worcs 2021/22: 57.7%: annual average	England [if available]	An improving trend against base data and in line with Eng averages if available
Reduce the number of children placed in independent non-maintained schools	Worcs 2021: 7%	England [if available]	An improving trend against base data and in line with Eng averages if available

Find out more online: [Worcestershire SEND Accelerated Progress Plan \(APP\)](#)

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership

	Baseline April 2022		Progress Data
A reduced % of repeat Child Protection plans within 2 years	Worcs 21/22: 20.5%	England 2021: 22%	An improving trend against base data and above national averages
Timeliness in care proceedings against the 26 weeks target.	Worcs 21/22: 0%	England 21/22: 46 weeks	An improving trend against base data and above national averages

Find out more online: [Worcestershire Children & Young People's Plan 2022 - 2024](#)



At the heart of everything we do

COUNCIL

10 NOVEMBER 2022

REPORT OF CABINET - SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN

Open for Business

1. Cabinet established the Open for Business Board in 2013 as an internal mechanism to decide on County Council investment priorities and it provides governance and oversight of the relevant budget. Cabinet has taken the opportunity to review and agree the Terms of Reference for the Board to ensure they remain fit for purpose and aid sound decision making.

2. Cabinet also agreed funding for 3 specific projects recommended by the Open for Business Board:

- Visit Worcestershire – to improve visitor experience and marketing, provide support to the sector, build Worcestershire’s national and international profile and work with partners to create a common vision and brand;
- Workforce resilience – to support businesses around key recruitment needs and skills development, including apprenticeships, and
- Business Worcestershire – a programme focusing support on Start-up and High Growth, Net Zero/Decarbonisation, Innovation & Technology and Inward Investment.

DfE Multiply Programme

3. The Multiply Programme is a strand of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund designed as a core part of the Government’s Levelling Up mission and investment in adult skills. Its overall objective is to increase the levels of functional numeracy in the adult population in Worcestershire. The programme will support residents over 19 years old, who have not previously attained a GCSE Grade 4/C or a higher maths qualification, to either work towards a GCSE or equivalent, develop specific numeracy skills for their work or progression or simply refresh their skills to help them get on in life or work.

4. The County Council submitted an investment plan to the DfE in June. This outlines the interventions to be delivered over the 3- year lifetime of the programme, 2022-2025, along with information around the partners engaged, points of engagement, outcomes and the challenges in delivery.

5. Cabinet has endorsed the content of the Investment Plan and delegated implementation of it to the Strategic Director for People in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills.

Major Road Network Scheme Update

4. Cabinet has noted progress with a number of major road network schemes across the County and has allocated up to £0.360 million from the Strategic Infrastructure Fund revenue reserve in order to deliver the Outline Business Cases for these schemes.

5. The Council is developing strategic outline cases (SOC) for two major road network schemes within the county. These are the North West Worcestershire Corridor (NWWC) and the A44 / A4538 (Worcester to Evesham).

6. The NWWC corridor covers three roads, the A491, A450 and A456 in a broad corridor from M5 junction 4 at Wildmoor, Bromsgrove through Hagley, Blakedown and Kidderminster, including Mustow Green.

7. The A44 / A4538 route in south Worcestershire is a 24 km route from the A38/A4538 junction at Martin Hussingtree, continuing along the A4538 Pershore Lane, through the M5 junction 6 connecting with the A44/A4538/A422 junction. The route continues along the A44 through Pershore, connecting to the A46(T) in Evesham

8. These routes form part of the major road network in the county, linking the major settlements with the strategic road network including the M5 and the A46. Development is proposed in adopted and emerging local plans which will increase the use of these routes. The proposals in the strategic outline case are being developed to assist in mitigating this impact. Funding for the NWWC strategic outline case has been secured from Midlands Connect in recognition of the importance of the corridor.

Resources Report – Revenue Budget Monitoring – Month 4 (31 July) 2022/23

9. Cabinet has noted the forecast budget position at 31 July, approved the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) reserves, noted progress with savings plans approved by Council in February 2022, the financial impact and forecast for COVID-19 reserve funded expenditure, noted progress and commitments relating to the Open for Business Reserve, approved the use of various reserves, and noted the borrowing and lending transactions during 2021-22.

10. Overall, at 31 July the Council is forecasting an £8.281 million cost pressure without further action. This is reported after the delivery of savings and mitigations of over £15 million in year, a mixture of one-off and recurrent savings.

11. The majority of the overspend forecast is based on demand being faced within adults and children's social care and is a situation that could worsen as we progress through the year. Demand management and savings opportunities are being implemented within People Services; however significant cross council action is required to support the closure of the financial gap.

12. It is expected that all of the Covid General and Contain Outbreak Management Grants which were carried forward will be fully utilised in 2022/23.

13. A total of £13.292 million of Covid-19 related general grants were carried forward from 2021/22 into 2022/23. A plan to allocate the unspent grant has been prepared to support ongoing recovery across the Council's services in 2022/23. Cabinet has approved further allocations from this fund which include: additional costs associated

with Adult Social Care reviews delayed due to staff working on pandemic activities; support for additional costs arising from increase in Home to School and SEND transport; support for additional legal costs associated with childcare cases, education and adult care appeals and legal fees; improvements at Countryside Centres and Libraries and support for inflationary increases in services recovering from the impact of the pandemic such as transport.

14. The report included an annual report on Treasury Management which noted that The Council's treasury activities were managed successfully within the approved Prudential Indicator limits.

Relocation of Redditch Library

15. Cabinet has considered proposals for relocation of the library in Redditch as part of wider proposals for improving the public realm in Redditch Town Centre, funded from the Town Deal.

16. A business case for the Town Deal bids is being submitted to central government on 14 October with the outcome expected to be known by the end of 2022.

17. Cabinet has focused on the re-development of the current Redditch Library site which involves the demolition of the existing library building and the delivery of a new public square and associated commercial development. It is proposed that the library moves to a new 'public hub' at Redditch Town Hall.

18. The Council is working collaboratively with the Borough Council on the re-location of the existing Library into other suitable premises. To protect the County Council's interests, both commercially and in terms of service offer/statutory responsibilities it is proposed that the following requirements, with the three areas of commercial arrangements, service conditions and collaboration opportunities, are used with Redditch Borough Council to agree the re-location arrangements.

19. Cabinet has approved high level plans and requirements for the relocation of the Library, approved the commencement of formal public consultation on the proposed plans for the relocation and authorised officers to progress negotiations with Redditch Borough Council for the commercial arrangements for the proposed relocation. Cabinet will consider the outcome of the public consultation and negotiations in a report back in May 2023.

Worcestershire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032

20. Cabinet has ratified the Worcestershire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JLHWS) which had been approved by Health and Wellbeing Board on 27 September 2022. Following detailed consultation, the Health and Wellbeing Board agreed that the JLHWS would be developed with one priority of good mental health and wellbeing, supported by action on the wider determinants of good mental health: Healthy living at all ages; Safe, thriving and healthy homes, communities and places; and Quality local jobs and opportunities.

21. The JLHWS focuses on early intervention and prevention as well as focusing action on the wider determinants of health and tackling health inequalities through collective action and partnership working.

22. A range of outcomes and indicators will be used to measure the impact of this JLHWS. This will be a mix of local data, engagement, feedback and case studies. The framework will be monitored by the Health and Wellbeing Board and will continue to be updated to ensure it uses the most relevant and best quality data available. Cabinet has noted the arrangements for implementation and review of the Strategy.

Report of Pershore Area Review Consultation Findings and Recommendations

23. In September last year 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.

24. 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. A further 6% neither agreed nor disagreed.

25. Based on the consultation feedback and parental preferences, Cabinet agreed a commitment in principle to support a collective change of age range to align schools in the Pershore Education Planning Area (EPA) to a single, two-tier (primary and secondary) system of education. This is subject to funding being fully secured to ensure there is an agreed, clear and practical pathway for children to move on from each school affected by the change.

26. The Cabinet Member for Education has been delegated the decision to publish the statutory proposals for Abbey Park First and Middle School to change age ranges to a Primary School.

27. The aim to implement the changes with effect from September 2025, reflecting the desire of stakeholders to implement as soon as possible, is contingent on certain decisions being implemented in accordance with the timetable set out in the report to Cabinet.

Redditch Railway Station

28. At its meeting on 18 March 2021 Cabinet confirmed support for the redevelopment of the 'Railway Quarter' (Redditch Railway Station and surrounding area) as a Gamechanger 2 site and endorsed the acquisition of land required to deliver the Railway Quarter proposals.

29 The Redditch Town Centre Regeneration proposals acknowledge that the current Railway Station is an important gateway into Redditch Town Centre. However, in its current state it provides a poor first impression of Redditch for anyone arriving by train. An Options Appraisal for the first phase, Redditch Railway Station, was undertaken by the Design Team and the Preferred Option was presented to Cabinet.

30. Cabinet has noted the allocation of £10m funding for delivering Redditch Railway Station which exists within the Capital Programme. It has authorised the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the CMR for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills to enter into contracts for the construction of the works; and to carry out other actions to implement the project.

Treasury Management Mid-Year Update to 30 September 2022

31. Cabinet has considered the mid-year report to 30 September 2022 which was prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, and covered the following:

- An economic update for the first part of the 2022/23 financial year
- A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2022/23
- A review of the Council's borrowing strategy for 2022/23
- A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2022/23.

32. Cabinet has noted the report, recognising that the Council is operating within its approved Treasury Management Strategy; and endorsed the conclusions that the Treasury Management activities continue to be cost effective.

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and background papers for the meeting of the Cabinet held on 22 September and 27 October:

[Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 22nd September 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

[Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 27th October 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

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COUNCIL
10 NOVEMBER 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 – Free bus pass for Veterans and Service Personnel

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 Martin Allen, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Beverley Nielsen Cllr Matt Jenkins, and Cllr Natalie McVey:

“In the fortieth anniversary year of the Falklands Conflict, this Council seeks to do more than provide tacit support for Veterans and Service Personnel in this County, by taking steps actively to help them and make a positive difference to their lives in recognition of their service contributions. Accordingly, this Council calls on the Cabinet member to bring forward proposals for consideration as part of the 2024/25 draft budget process to provide a free bus pass to all Veterans and Service Personnel living within Worcestershire, based on the principles of the existing scheme for pensioners in the County (i.e. free travel on production of a valid identity card).”

Notice of Motion 2 – Cost-of-living crisis

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 Mel Allcott, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Luke Mallett, Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Josh Robinson, and Cllr Andy Fry:

“Council declares a cost-of-living crisis. It calls upon the Leader of the Council to give responsibility to a member of the Cabinet to coordinate the Council’s

response to the emergency, to prepare an action plan, provide updates, reports and consider solutions; to enable the authority to help provide support to Worcestershire residents, especially with issues surrounding low pay, child poverty, health inequities and the rising costs of food and fuel."

Notice of Motion 3 – Air Quality

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 Matt Jenkins, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Tom Wells, and Cllr Richard Udall:

"Poor air quality is a huge problem that the county has a large role in reducing. Transport is one of the primary causes of poor air quality and we, as the highways authority, have a leading responsibility to act in ways that improve air quality.

We call on the Cabinet Member with Responsibility to:

1. Make sure that Worcestershire County Council commits to taking an active leadership role in improving air quality and supporting the district councils.
2. Ensure impact assessments include the impact of our actions on air quality.
3. Work with WRS and City Councils/District Councils to encourage a collaborative review of best practices in terms of air quality prioritisation and improvement.
4. Work with partners to produce an updated Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan for Worcestershire and make this available ASAP.
5. The Air Quality Action Plan Steering Group for Worcestershire needs to be promoted and appointments clarified.

Have a regular review of the action plan, with a focus on the implementation of relevant proposals."

Contact Points

Contact Points for this report
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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.

COUNCIL
10 NOVEMBER 2022**REPORTS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH
RESPONSIBILITY – CABINET MEMBER WITH
RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITIES**

Introduction

1. It is my pleasure to submit my report as Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities to full Council on the work that has taken place in my areas of responsibility. The role of Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities is a cross-cutting one covering a hugely diverse range of services that benefit all Worcestershire residents no matter what their age or needs. Libraries, Museums, and Archaeology services support cultural life within the county and help us understand our long and diverse history, whilst Registration and Coroners services support people at some of their most important life events. Trading Standards provides wide-ranging protections that support all residents, especially those most vulnerable and honest businesses, as they tackle the rogues and criminals who would undermine fair trade, whilst Countryside and Green Spaces services help support and promote the wonderful environment where our residents live, work and play.

2. I have been delighted to get out and about visiting Libraries, museums and our Gypsy and Traveller Sites. So far, I have visited, Redditch, Rubery, Bromsgrove, Catshill, Wythall, Stourport, Bewdley, Hagley, Pershore, Evesham, Broadway, St Johns and Warndon Libraries. I have been to both the Commandery and our County Museum at Hartlebury Castle. I have also visited our Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Offerton Lane in Worcester and Watery Lane in Stourport.

3. It has been over two years since the last Cabinet Member's report and throughout that time we have seen unprecedented change to services due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. For many residents, the Council's range of community services provided a lifeline throughout this time, whether it was access to high quality greenspace to enjoy the outdoors through to access to the internet in our Libraries to tackling the Covid scams and rip-offs via Trading Standards. This report focuses on recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and I am pleased to report that there continues to be significant progress in all areas of my portfolio as we continue to provide high quality services, that are valued by Worcestershire's residents.

Libraries, including The Hive

4. A Library Strategy for Worcestershire was written in 2019/20 following formal public engagement, an LGA Library Peer Challenge and the creation of a Library Needs Assessment. The Strategy, which sets out a medium-term vision for the service and a context for future service transformation, received Cabinet approval in

December 2019 and a transformation programme was put in place to deliver both the ambitions of the strategy and outstanding MTFP efficiencies of £285k.

5. Libraries responded positively and flexibly to the Covid pandemic. A new Digital Library Hub was set up on library webpages within 3-4 weeks of the start of the first lockdown, providing new digital library services, accessible from home and aimed at addressing challenges posed by the pandemic. Many services, including weekly Bounce & Rhyme sessions for children, readers groups and coding clubs were moved online and new services were introduced including online Library Connect Bubbles, a Digital Champion call back service, business webinars and streamed cultural events. With restrictions on book borrowing in place, book funds were diverted to increase e book and e audiobook collections and subsequent increases in Worcestershire's digital library membership and e-issues outperformed national averages.

6. By engaging with staff and working closely with Health & Safety, libraries reopened after the first lockdown with minimum fuss and very little delay. Worcestershire's approach compared very favourably with the national picture where libraries in many authorities remained closed for computer access or fully closed for large parts of the pandemic. This recognised the significant role libraries' have in providing free access to computers and the internet for those without access at home.

7. During the pandemic take-up of digital library services increased substantially, with a 289% increase in digital membership, a 90% increase in issues of e books/magazines, a 91% increase in the use of online reference sources and over 16,000 attendances at online digital events and activities. E issues have remained at raised levels following the pandemic.

8. At the end of September 2022 library visits had recovered to 60% of pre-pandemic levels, with book issues at 84%, computer use at 46% and new library members at 131%. The number of library-based events and activities had recovered to 68% of pre-pandemic levels, with attendance at 72%. This compares favourably with national trends.

9. In October 2021 Worcestershire Libraries launched six new Business and IP centres at the county's six main district libraries (Bromsgrove, Malvern, Kidderminster, Redditch, Evesham and The Hive), increasing access to free or low-cost business resources and services at a local level with a focus on supporting business recovery and business start-up.

10. A successful Arts Council bid for Libraries Improvement Funding in February 2021 has provided £182,000 for investment in videoconferencing facilities in library meeting rooms to enhance the room hire offer and boost income generation; and in live streaming technology to support the development of libraries' digital service offer.

11. Following the lifting of stage 4 COVID restrictions in July 2021, plans were able to be progressed to implement 'Libraries Unlocked', a new open library service delivery model, at two early adopter libraries in Droitwich and Stourport. The new service went live on 6 June 22 and saw an 85% increase in opening hours at both libraries. Initial responses to the service have been positive with 600 customers signing up in the 1st week after go-live, rising to 1,733 on the 25 October 2022.

Archives & Archaeology

12. During the period 2019-20 to 2021-22 Worcestershire Archaeology, the commercial field archaeology service, secured over 300 commercial projects, including major development projects which contribute to the economic prosperity and growth of the county (Worcester 6 Business Park, West Worcester Urban Extension and South Worcester Urban Extension). Discoveries on these schemes have ranged from a 50,000 year old mammoth tusk, through early prehistoric cemeteries and occupation sites, to later prehistoric, Roman and medieval settlement sites and WW2 defensive features, all of which have contributed to the understanding of the rich and diverse heritage of Worcestershire and the West Midlands region.

13. Worcestershire Archaeology has also provided WCC with archaeological services on projects for the Worcester Southern Link Road, the A38 Upton Roundabout, the Kepax footbridge and the QinetiQ development, and is currently supporting the development of Hampton Bridge, Shrub Hill Quarter, and land at Pinvin amongst others, meeting objectives to build stronger relationships with the council's Property, Commercial and Highways teams and supporting them in efficiently and cost effectively delivering their projects.

14. The commercial archaeology service has built a sustainable business model over the three-year period, generating external revenue in excess of £4.65 million and successfully moving from a small operating deficit in 2019-20 to an operating surplus of over £90k in 2020-21 and over £100k in 2021-22. This has been achieved despite the disruption of the pandemic - demonstrating the strength of the construction sector and the resilience and sustainability of the business model in place.

15. The Historic Environment Record (HER) team have supported sustainable development across Worcestershire through the provision of advice for strategic and policy planning and development management for large-scale urban extensions and new settlements, such as Parkway, Throckmorton and Kidderminster East. The work of the team ensures that the county's heritage is a key part of creating a sense of place and pride in new communities.

16. The HER service also successfully bid for Lottery funding to implement the 'The Roots in Time' project; an 18-month programme of community excavation and activities on WCC land designated for new public woodland at Norton near Evesham. The project will ensure the preservation of nationally significant archaeology that lies within the site while creating a diverse landscape of new woodland, wildflower meadow and wetland with multiple environmental and ecological benefits.

17. In line with national guidance, Worcestershire Archives remained closed following the first lockdown; re-opening in August 2020, earlier than much of the sector. While there was a substantial reduction in face-to-face service provision, there was a 40% increase in online enquiries and continued demand for advanced document ordering. Heritage community engagement projects were also disrupted by the pandemic but have since successfully completed. These include a £70,000 Heritage Lottery funded project to restore market gardening hovels in the Vale of Evesham.

18. Following the removal of Covid restrictions a successful bid for heritage Covid recovery funding was successful to deliver popular Archaeology Quests across Worcestershire Libraries and to support local heritage organisations in partnership with Museums Worcestershire. A number of funded projects include funding from The Wellcome Trust to conserve and catalogue sources available for the study of medicine, health and welfare in Worcestershire and from National Manuscripts Conservation Trust to conserve and catalogue the county's collection of wills.

19. The Archive Service supported the Worcester City Charter 400 celebrations in 2021, providing documents for an exhibition at the Guildhall including the original James I Charter of 1621, normally held in archive strongrooms in the Hive. The Record Office also celebrated its 75th anniversary at The Hive in May 2022.

20. Following successful negotiations with Ancestry, work has continued throughout the pandemic, with some disruption, to make Worcestershire's Parish records available on the popular family history research service. Funding from the Ancestry deal has also supported the creation of a Digital Archivist post and the procurement of a Digital Archive Management System. The first records from Worcestershire went live in July 2022.

Museums Worcestershire

21. In 20-21, Covid lockdowns meant museums were only able to open for 125 days. Museums Worcestershire pivoted to new ways of working: digitally, commissioning and partnerships in communities, and through direct outreach - particularly working with those at risk of loneliness. Staff also supported other essential council services. Open whenever possible, the museums maximised opportunities to welcome visitors and participants using the valuable resource of museums' outdoor space. In 2021-22, volunteers contributed 1,958 hours to the museum service, service users showed a 14% improvement in wellbeing, and visitors to the museums brought £1,934,599 of secondary spend to Worcestershire businesses.

22. Museums Worcestershire continues to work with Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust on the presentation and development of Hartlebury Castle as a significant family and friends visitor destination for Worcestershire. Visitor numbers are now returning to 2019 levels, outperforming both national museums and regional attractions. Worcestershire County Museum at Hartlebury Castle has a particular strength in reminiscence, and opened a new 1950s Gallery in 2021 and a new fashion gallery in 2022. Additional grant funding has started further research into the County's internationally significant Gypsy Vardo collection.

23. The third phase of *Suitcase Stories*, an intergenerational project using reminiscence to support those living with dementia and their careers, was completed in December 2021. The three phases have reached over 1,000 participants and worked with 36 artists, using £200,000 of external funding. Results have been shared with over 300,000 heritage and social care professionals online. In addition, 5,876 children and adults participated in informal learning activities at the three museums and 8,062 students enjoyed formal learning opportunities in 21-22.

24. The museum service maintains its statutory duty under planning legislation as the depository for Worcestershire's archaeological record with an additional seven sites across the county deposited as a research resource in 21-22. Lending objects and exhibitions to other museums locally and nationally continues to raise

Worcestershire's profile across the UK: 76,059 people engaged with Worcester's and Worcestershire's collections at other venues in 2021-22.

Countryside Greenspace Team

25. Waseley Hills Country Park, Worcester Woods Country Park and St. Wulstan's Nature Reserve have once again retained the nationally recognised Green Flag Award; evidencing the high standard of management for visitors and the natural environment that is so highly value by our visitors, particularly during and following the Covid pandemic. A considerable amount of work across the service (22,800 hours per year) is delivered by over 430 volunteers such as Parish Tree Wardens, Countryside Sites Volunteers and Health Walks Leaders.

26. Visitor numbers to all of the County Council's country parks, nature reserves and picnic places increased dramatically during the Covid pandemic and the County Council took the decision to keep its countryside sites open during the first lockdown to allow people to access them for fresh air and physical and mental wellbeing.

27. Worcestershire Health Walks is delivered by the Countryside Greenspace Team and supported through funding from Public Health. Health Walks aim to improve the county's health and well-being by encouraging more people to become physically active through the simplest form of exercise, walking. There are over 1,100 registered walkers since the new Health Walks scheme launched in September 2021, with an average number of walkers per month at 2,300. Walks are led by trained volunteer Health Walks leaders, of which we have 185 across the County.

28. The Team continues to work, with Property Services, on the creation of several new woodland sites as part of the Queen's Green Canopy and the Council's target to plant 150,000 trees. The Netherton Lane site, alongside Blackstone Picnic Place at Bewdley, is complete, with 7,000 trees planted whilst planting will continue at New and Ashmore's Farms near Evesham, with a further 38,000 trees planted over the coming winter. Both sites are being developed as public greenspaces, to create a network of woodland, pollinator and wetland habitats, as well as interpretation about the landscape and historic environment.

Road Safety Education

29. The Road Safety Team is an accredited training provider for the delivery of the Bikeability National Standard of cycle training to Worcestershire schools. Bikeability is a practical training programme, which provides school children with a life skill and enables them to cycle confidently and competently on today's roads. In 2022-23 the team have around £170K Department for Transport funding, administered via the Bikeability Trust in order to train just over 5000 pupils across 3 core levels and some Bikeability Plus modules. A pool of 20-30 qualified and accredited zero hours Instructors delivers Bikeability for the team.

30. The Team currently covers 70% of Worcestershire Primary schools with Bikeability training. They have also delivered some successful projects with partners over the past year such as training a number of Worcester City Council staff who are using E bikes, training several families in a cycling scheme with Wychavon District Council who had funding via the Community Network Rail partnership and being involved in Bewdley Bike Week. A small number of adults have also received cycle training in the Wyre Forest area via a joint project with Public Health.

31. The Road Safety Team also offers road safety education and training to all Worcestershire pupils. This provides pupils with lifelong behaviours and attitudes for safe road use anywhere, at any time, on any journey. The education and training offer is complemented by the School Crossing Patrol service, which covers 34 crossing locations in Worcestershire serving 33 first, middle and primary schools.

Malvern Hills AONB Partnership Team

32. The County Council hosts the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Team which supports a multi-agency partnership overseeing the conservation and enhancement of this nationally designated landscape. The Partnership's work is wide-ranging, covering many issues of relevance to Worcestershire County Council as well as helping the Council to meet its statutory duties in relation to the AONB. Examples of work in the last 3 years include:

- Nature recovery – Key achievements include a citizen science project funded by the National Lottery (133 volunteers collecting almost 3,500 new wildlife records) and the development with all key partners of a Nature Recovery Plan for the AONB, gapping up over 20 traditional orchards, restoring hay meadows and bringing active management back to ancient woodlands.
- Supporting the community – the AONB Unit has provided financial support to approximately 45 community projects over the last 3 years, ranging from planting trees, conserving geology, promoting car sharing (and the use of electric cars and bicycles) to supporting a grassroots theatre company of able and less able actors to produce a film about the area.
- Planning and development – the team comments on approximately 70 planning applications per year with the aim of ensuring that new development does not damage the special qualities of the AONB.

Trading Standards & Animal Health services

33. The Trading Standards service discharges the County Council's statutory law enforcement duties in the areas of weights and measures, food and animal feed, product safety, animal health and fair trading. Their role is key in protecting the most vulnerable, ensuring a fair and safe trading environment for all. In the last financial year the team prevented or addressed at least £2.6M of consumer detriment with a budget of just over £870,000, around £3 per £1 spent. Government's latest consumer detriment estimate in 2022 states that the overall value of detriment nationally is £54Bn per annum.

34. Demands on the team during 2021/22 remained high, with almost 7500 consumer complaints either notified or referred from the Citizens Advice Consumer Service (CACS,) which acts as a front-door for most local trading standards services in England and Wales and almost 1000 referrals from other sources including local partners. Work must be prioritised and only a small proportion of the most serious of these matters are addressed directly. The bulk are used to direct the service's proactive activities through its intelligence-led approach.

35. Tackling illegal tobacco sales was a significant part of last year's work for the team aimed at ensuring the safety of communities and improving health and well-

being. Over 200,000 illegal cigarettes and 54.7kg of illegal hand rolling tobacco with a street value of over £131,500 were removed from the marketplace in 2021/22.

36. The team also returned to using minors to test controls to prevent the sale of age restricted products. The Council's statutory duties cover sales of many products including alcohol, tobacco, and vaping products, with corrosives and some beauty treatments being the latest additions. 5 sales, 3 of alcohol and 2 of vapes resulted from 36 attempts last year.

37. The team also had over 11,000 unsafe products removed from the marketplace last year, following samples which failed relevant tests. LED lights featured, and more recently chargers for re-chargeable batteries. Officers report that many of these products are available over the internet and it is difficult for consumers to see who they are buying from. Many of the products tested were delivered directly from the Far East, so services rely on the hosts of these websites removing the traders concerned to prevent on-going supply.

38. Tackling doorstep crime and supporting scam victims is also a major part of the team's work in helping to keep our communities safe. Last year 118 scam victims were approached with the aim of stopping them responding to scam telephone calls and mailings. Based on national averages for scam interventions, the team estimates the value of this work in reducing and preventing detriment exceeds £200,000. People are persuaded to stop responding and call blockers can be installed to cut off access for the scammers. The team also works with Adult Social Care colleagues to provide additional support for victims, who are usually elderly and isolated, to help provide them with the kind of social interactions that make their lives better and reduce the risk of becoming reliant on social care later in life.

39. Although the service is mainly focused on tackling crime, it does commit some resource to supporting businesses. Currently 9 businesses have signed up to Primary Authority agreements, which is a legal mechanism for businesses to be provided with assured advice on legal compliance matters from a single local authority. Business do have to pay for this service, but it is very popular with importers and multi-site retailers. During some of the routine work that the service continues to deliver, officers provided general advice and support. Some 26 businesses had to be provided with advice to ensure their compliance with food controls including allergen controls last year and our officers continue to work closely with their Environmental Health colleagues in WRS, who deal with food hygiene and can also provide support in this area.

40. Nationally last year was the worst year on record for avian influenza, with outbreaks continuing in various parts of the country throughout summer 2022. The Trading Standards team's focus is on commercial poultry and related activities, although small flocks kept in gardens by the public are also controlled by the legislation. Worcestershire has been lucky so far in terms of the impact on commercial bird flocks with only one official outbreak last year at a swan sanctuary that also kept poultry. Flocks of fewer than 50 birds do not need to be registered with the Ministry. The threat from other animal diseases remains, and the county remains a high-risk area for bovine tuberculosis, with regular on-farm testing required.

Registration Service and Coroner Service

41. The Registration service was significantly impacted throughout the COVID pandemic. For several months all birth registrations and marriage notices were

postponed so the service could deal with the 19% increase in the number of death registrations in the county. Specific COVID legislation introduced allowed for death registrations to be conducted via telephone. The legislation has now lapsed, and practice has returned to face-to-face registrations.

42. Since the relaxation of covid restrictions the service has focused effort on catching up with births and notices of marriage and civil partnerships. In June 2020, the service registered 1004 births, which is over double the average monthly birth registration figure. It has also been managing the pent-up demand for wedding and civil partnership ceremonies. From April to July 2022 the service performed 1029 ceremonies compared to 799 for same period in 2019 and 659 for same period last year.

43. During last year the service managed the change from marriage registers to an electronic register for all civil ceremonies as well as all church ceremonies. This involved closing down over 350 sets of registers and having them deposited in the County's vault. Guidance was provided to the clergy and work continues to support them in a very different way of working

44. The Coroner service, like many around the country, is dealing with a large backlog of inquest cases. During the pandemic facilities were made available to allow for hearings using Teams. This remains in place to allow those who may have difficulty travelling to continue using this facility, although face to face hearings have been reintroduced.

Resettlement Service including Homes for Ukraine

45. This service grows from strength to strength following the introduction of the two Afghan Resettlement programmes, the introduction of a bridging hotel for Afghan refugees as well as continuing to support the UK Resettlement programme. From September 2021 to date we have resettled 97 people into Worcestershire under the schemes. A further 14 are scheduled to arrive before the end of December 2022.

46. The Homes for Ukraine Scheme was announced in March 2022. This scheme focuses on households 'hosting' Ukrainian guests. Over 150,000 households nationally expressed an interest. As of 17 October 2022, within Worcestershire there are over 520 households hosting over 1200 Ukrainian guests. Over 35% of these guests are children. Managing this scheme has required a 'One Worcestershire' approach working closely with our District Council colleagues and support has ranged from carrying out checks, to providing adult learning, access to education, support to access employment, bus passes and information, advice and guidance.

Here2Help

47. Here2Help was initially developed as the council's response to the Covid pandemic. It provided signposting and support to those in need. From March 2020 to March 2022 there have been a total of 13,824 requests for help. The requests for support around food and supplies has remained consistently high throughout with the proportion of requests for Health & Medication was highest at the beginning of the pandemic, remaining the second highest category for most months in 2020/21, before reducing across 2021/22. The opposite was seen in the proportion of requests that included support around Business & Money Matters, which lowest

at the start of the pandemic, fluctuated month by month in 2020/21, and increased to become the one of the highest in most months during 2021/22.

48. Here2Help is now a well-established credible service with a good reputation in its response to Covid 19. Its primary focus is to enable people to live well in Worcestershire now and in the future; to help themselves through good quality information, advice and guidance and provide signposting to community support which focuses on prevention. Key areas of delivery are:-

- Developing the Community Service Directory to help enable residents to make their own choices and find their own solutions. The Directory aims to help people to connect with their communities and to provide information that is easily accessible. In March 2022, 334 organisations had registered to be publicly visible on the online Community Services Directory.
- Administering c.£12million of Winter Grant/Local Support Grant/Household Support Fund between December 2020 and October 2022. This funding has provided free meals to vulnerable families during holidays as well supporting people, including a focus on pensioners, with energy costs, food and water bills, as well as covering other essential household costs and housing costs in exceptional circumstances. In addition, funding was allocated to district councils to provide local support including council welfare assistance schemes and working with local voluntary sector partners. A further £3.95m will be administered by March 2023.
- Encouraging and enabling volunteering opportunities. Since the start of the Covid pandemic until the end of March 2022 just under 2500 offers of support from individuals came forward via Here2Help. The largest volume of offers of support came within the national lockdowns, but registrations continued outside of these periods. More than 16,000 hours of volunteer support have been provided across a variety of services including; 20 covid and flu vaccination clinics, support to individuals and group one off tasks. Safeguarding volunteers and those they are supporting is a priority and the service undertakes risk assessments for activities and DBS checks where certain activities are required i.e. handling money. The volunteering offer will continue to be strengthened through ongoing co-ordination and management, a joint council approach with other teams within the council and further developing strong relationships with the key volunteering leads across health and the voluntary and community sector.
- Crowdfunding. The council has directed just under £100k of support for community projects through a crowdfunding platform operated by Spacehive over the last two years. The funding has been pledged to 24 community projects across the county which has raised an additional £258k in match funding to enable the successful delivery of the local initiatives. Projects supported to date includes; vehicles for community transport schemes, community building improvements, local environmental improvement projects, skills projects and sports projects. The scheme will be continuing in the current financial year with one funding round to pledge to projects in the autumn.

49. Finally, I would like to place on record my thanks to all those involved in delivering the wider range of community services, including all the volunteers that have offered up their valuable time to help deliver services.

Marcus Hart

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities

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COUNCIL
10 NOVEMBER 2022**QUESTION TIME**

Question 1 – Dysgraphia

1. Cllr Richard Udall will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education:

"Dysgraphia is a neurological disorder of written expression that impairs writing ability and fine motor skills. It is a learning disability that affects children and adults and interferes with practically all aspects of the writing process, including spelling, legibility, word spacing and sizing, drawing and expression. However, its mostly untreated and very few people have heard of the condition and most schools do not test for it. Can the Cabinet Member confirm the state of awareness in Worcestershire schools, how many children have Dysgraphia in Worcestershire, how many children receive help with their learning because of Dysgraphia and what advice and support is on offer to Worcestershire schools to ensure awareness of the disorder is improved?"

Question 2 – Bromsgrove District Plan

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

"Is there anything from the Worcestershire County Council side that would be delaying the publication of the Bromsgrove district plan?"

Question 3 – School and College Transport

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

"Yet again there are problems with school and college transport this academic year and the complaints are pouring in. By October half term there were still 600 students at Worcester Sixth Form College who were awaiting bus passes, for example. In the meantime, parents who have already paid for these passes are having to buy ad hoc tickets for their children, which they are struggling to afford. There are also not enough buses so students are being left stranded at bus stops and unable to get into college to attend their classes.

What is the explanation for the County Council's failure to deliver on its statutory responsibility to enable children and young people to access an education and what plans are there to compensate families who are being left out of pocket?"

Question 4 – Household Support Fund

4. Cllr Dan Boatright will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities:

"I have received several queries about the Household Support Fund and the fact that people cannot obtain help because there is a waiting list after 2,300 families applied for help. Given that £900,000 was allocated in the first round, how much funding would have been needed to meet the demand of all applications? I have also been informed that in the first round of funding support through the Household Support Fund was fully allocated to residents in all categories except pensioners. Does the council know why the pensioner allocation remained unused?"

Question 5 – 144 and 144A bus services

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

"Can we have an update on the 144 and 144A bus services please?"

Question 6 – Temporary classrooms

6. Cllr Richard Udall will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education:

"How many Worcestershire Schools have temporary classrooms, how many temporary classrooms are used for education in Worcestershire schools and how many children, in a typical school week, receive lessons in a temporary classroom?"

Question 7 – Positive Activities for young people

7. Cllr Lynn Denham will ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being:

"I welcome the Worcestershire Joint Local Health & Wellbeing Strategy which Council has now adopted. I applaud the aspirations to improve health & wellbeing & reduce health inequalities. Given that it is reported that 80% of children & young people felt that Covid has had a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing & that the Health & Wellbeing Strategy aims to reduce crime & anti-social behaviour, does the Cabinet Member believe that the provision of Positive Activities for young people, which her department commissions is adequate to meet current need?"

Contact Points

Contact Points for this report
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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.

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

Internal Audit Progress Report

1. Internal Audit are working closely with operational service managers to ensure that audit actions are undertaken. For actions relating to limited assurance audits where a follow up audit is planned, actions are transferred to the new audit. For outstanding actions relating to schools, it has been agreed with the Schools Support Forum that a Letter of Concern will be issued when schools actions become outstanding when they reach 3-6 months. Two such letters have been issued to date.
2. There was a fraud investigation undertaken in the second quarter of 2022/2023. The outcome was that no further direct action was required, but further actions are continuing corporately. To further highlight the risk from potential frauds and scams staff training, awareness and education continues.
3. The grant certification work supports the Council in ensuring that money claimed from government agencies is correctly accounted for and Internal Audit work closely with operational teams to deliver this. Five grants have been certified as accurate to date.
4. Currently the Audit and Compliance Manager is overseeing the day-to-day operational aspects of the Internal Audit service with support from the Chief Internal Auditor of the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Services. This arrangement is set to continue until at least the end of the financial year. The Committee has noted the Internal Audit progress report.

Annual Governance Update

2. Overall, the actions set out in the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 Action Plan are on time and being progressed. There has been some delay arising from the recent departure of the Monitoring Officer. A large proportion of this work is due to be delivered in the final quarter of this financial year and as such this progress is broadly as expected and a further report will be brought to the December Committee. The Committee has noted the Annual Governance update. The Committee has invited the Monitoring Officer to attend the Committee meeting on 2 December to provide an update on the progress made updating the Constitution.

Statutory Accounts and Pension Fund 2021/22 – External Audit Update

3. The CIPFA Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee (LASAAC) has recently approved an update to the Accounting Code that will remove the requirement to report gross cost and accumulated depreciation. The Code Update is still subject to formal consideration by the Government's Financial Reporting Advisory Board, but it is anticipated that the update to the Code will be available during mid to late September. This should remove the auditors' concerns about reporting of gross book values and accumulated depreciation.

4. CIPFA has confirmed that it is now working with the Government and devolved administrations on a time limited statutory prescription (override) related to component derecognition. Whilst the Government's decision on this is still awaited, it is hoped that this will address auditors' concerns about the efficacy of net book values for infrastructure assets.

5. The remaining issue would then be the requirement to demonstrate the effectiveness of depreciation policies for infrastructure assets. If approved by the Financial Reporting Advisory Board, the statutory override will allow auditors (notwithstanding any other issues that arise from audit) to sign off accounts without qualifications. However, the anticipated update to the Code is still some weeks away.

6. An additional Committee meeting has been scheduled for 4 November to receive the External Audit Findings Report. This allows for publication of the audited statements by the 30 November statutory deadline.

7. The Committee has noted the update on Infrastructure Assets, and the impact on the 2021/22 Audit and Accounts timetable.

Risk Management Update

8. Risk Management is a key part of effective governance for the Council. The adoption of the new risk management system has expanded significantly across the organisation, which continues the Council's ambition for a strong risk management culture to be fully embedded.

9. Risk reporting is currently being reviewed to continue to enable both operational and strategic direction to the risk management process. The first 4 strategic areas currently being collated are:

- Harm – risk to a user or employee
- Service – risk to service delivery
- Finance – risk to financial stability and future sustainability; and
- the Nolan Principles / Corporate Governance – risk to the way we govern and take decisions throughout the organisation.

A framework is being trialled to ensure the relevant risks are clearly identified and appropriate mitigation strategies are in place.

10. An established Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG) has set the wider risk framework and has the responsibility of reviewing and challenging strategic risks monthly, supported by the specialist leads from all areas of the Council.

11. The new risk management system is now in place and has been adopted not only at directorate level but across 14 service areas and 34 operational risk registers giving a more accurate picture of risk. This new approach has increased the number of risks which are being operationally managed, giving improved information and a better understanding of the Council's wider risk profile.

12. The system allows for the review of Emerging or Future risks, as well as tracking golden threads, for example where risks around second jobs were identified in the People Directorate, corporate mitigations have been introduced to include declaring interests as part of the staff appraisal process.

13. Adult and Children's Services continue to be identified as potentially high risks related to the possible 'Harm' of a vulnerable person in the Council's care or to an employee. These risks are continually being mitigated daily through various actions and policies, as well as through regular case reviews and continuous learning and improvement.

14. An emerging operational risk relates to Workforce, where a number of service areas are reporting a higher risk than previously shown around recruitment and retention. The Risk Management team will continue to monitor all high and emerging risks to escalate any relevant matters through Directorate Leadership Teams and to Strategic Leadership Team to ensure a transparent overview of risk throughout the Council. The Risk Management team and CRMG, will be working collaboratively to ensure a consistent and informed risk process is fully embedded in the Council and will actively engage the Audit and Governance Committee in that process.

15. The Committee has identified further information that it would like included in future risk reports including progress on action taken against the top 6 risks, details of mitigation measures undertaken, and whether any measures were in place to introduce a "bottom up" approach to risk assessment. The Committee has agreed the Risk Management update. The Committee has requested that the Senior Leadership Team address the issue of risk management with greater urgency.

People Directorate – Debt Position Statement

16. The People Directorate is responsible for the collection of fees and charges in respect of Communities, Public Health and Adult Social Care (ACS). As at 31 July 2022, the total value outstanding was £18.7 million of which 60.7% was aged more than four months old. there is an upward trend in the value of debt with Adult Social Care debt increasing by 36% (to £15.2 million) and other service areas by 4% (to £5.0 million) as at 31 July 2022. This is despite the increasing focus and spend on debt collection in this area. Information from other authorities indicates the same trend.

17. Charges in respect of ASC are levied against commercial organisations, health authorities, local authorities and individuals. Individuals in receipt of social care provision are required to financially contribute towards their care based on their financial position. Care is procured by the Council and charges are invoiced monthly in arrears.

18. The value of charges raised for the 12 months up to 31 May 2022, collection rates for all residential and domiciliary customers is 84%. However, for those ASC clients (approximately 37%) who pay by Direct Debt, collection rates are significantly improved at 97%. For service users paying by an alternative method, the collection rates are less successful, with £4.6 million (23.3%) unpaid.

19. Legal action is currently being pursued in respect of 118 social care customers for debt value of £2.5 million, with £1.4 million of this value being over 12 months old. Work is ongoing to refer further cases (where possible) over 12 months old and these are being prioritised by value. There are also 1,149 customers in this category (i.e. debts over 12 months) with debts under £1,000 totalling £418k).

20. The Finance Operational Services (FOS) Debt and Legal Teams continue to chase debts outstanding. Given the scale of the task and the resource available, this is likely to take some considerable time. In light of the increasing debt levels, the FOS teams are considering a number of initiatives to improve client engagement and increase payment levels. The Council also has a longer-term debt that it recognises of £2.7 million (as at July 22) relating to Deferred Payment Agreements.

21. The Committee has asked for further information to be included in the report to the December Committee meeting including a breakdown of the level of debt between residential and domiciliary care, further detailed information on the recovery of debt and bad debt calculations, the mechanisms for charging for social care and what aspects of social care the Council can legally charge for, an overview of the People Directorate debt levels to include an indication of the direction of travel, and an indication on a monthly basis as to how the percentage on unpaid debt related to the level of charges originally raised by the Council. The Committee has noted the Debt Position Statement for the People Directorate.

Work Programme

22. The Committee has noted its work programme.

Cllr Nathan Desmond
Chairman

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager), 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 23 September 2022

[Agenda for Audit and Governance Committee on Friday, 23rd September, 2022, 10.30 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/2022/09/23/agenda-for-audit-and-governance-committee-on-friday-23rd-september-2022-10.30am/)

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COUNCIL

10 NOVEMBER 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 meetings on 29 September and the Board meeting on 5 October 2022.

Pension Investment Update

2. The Committee received an update on Fund performance from the Fund's Independent Investment Adviser. A market background update to the end of June 2022 was provided to add context to the relative performance and returns achieved by the Fund's investment managers. The Committee has noted the update on the investment managers placed 'on watch' by the PISC.

3. The Fund had an estimated funding level of 96% at the end of August 2022, which is a weighted average of all employers across the Fund. In the short term the turmoil in the financial markets, rising interest rates and inflation have raised concerns.

4. Over the longer term the investment strategy of the Fund is designed to ensure that the ability to pay pensions in the short, medium and long term is fully maintained. The Fund invests in a diversified range of assets that over time is anticipated to increase value and provide a secure flow of income to pay the pensions. The forthcoming asset allocation review will ensure that the investment strategy is adjusted to maintain the correct balance of assets between those that see a growth in value over time and those that generate a steady flow of income. The long-term strength of the asset base of the LGPS means that it is able to absorb short term challenges.

5. Equity Protection of approximately £1.1bn (including the Equity Protection valuation) was in place for the Fund's passive equity portfolios. Due to the downward trend of the market the opportunity has been taken to exit the protection completely and near enough break even. The situation continues to be monitored and the equity protection can be put back on if the opportunity arises. The Committee has noted the update on the current Equity Protection Strategy.

6. 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 Fund's behalf.

7. The U.K. Government has launched its consultation on Governance and Reporting of climate risks. The consultation will require Administering Authorities to consider and report against the four key areas of governance, strategy, risk management and metric and targets. The aim of the framework is to help the LGPS demonstrate how the consideration of climate change risks and opportunities are integrated into each Authority's entire decision-making process. The consultation closes on 24 November 2022 and regulations are expected to be in force by April 2023. The Fund is well placed to meet the key requirements as it has produced a Climate Risk Strategy and Taskforce for Climate-Related Financial Discussions report for the last 2 years. The Committee will continue to be updated on progress as the Fund works with LGPS Centrals Responsible Investment Realm and partner funds within the Pool to assess how to address the key requirements.

Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund Administration Budget Forecast Outturn 2022/23 and Updated Indicative Budget 2023/24 to 2025/26

8. In line with good governance practice, the Committee considers budget monitoring reports twice a year.

9. It has reviewed variations to the Pension Fund Administration Budget for 2022/23, including manager fees. The forecast outturn for the budget is estimated to be £21.648m compared to a budget of £21.015m, a difference of £0.633m. This is mainly due to a forecast overspend against the Investment Management fees budget of £0.646m. They are the largest proportion of the budget and largely depend on the value of assets being managed and investment return performance which depends on market conditions and transaction costs such as commission, tax and other expenses incurred.

10. The Fund's 'controllable' budget is showing a forecast small underspend.

11. Having reviewed the variations, the Committee has agreed to revise the Investment Managers Fees budget to the forecast outturn of £18,674,400 which results in an overall proposed budget for 2022/23 of £21,648.600.

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 at 26 August 2022.

13. The Committee asked that its thanks be recorded to all involved who had issued the 2022 annual benefit statements and newsletters on time.

Governance Update

14. The Committee has noted the Governance Update. The Committee has requested that the updated Business Plan and Risk Register are included in the agenda for the next Committee meeting. It has also asked that the pension administration structure be included in a future Committee report, together with an update on how it is proposed to fill vacancies.

Actuarial Valuation Update

15. Every three years, in line with legislation, the Fund Actuary carries out a full Actuarial valuation of the Fund to calculate how much employers in the scheme need to contribute going forward to ensure that its liabilities will be paid as they fall due.

16. The preliminary results of the valuation show that the Fund's funding level has increased from 91% funded at 31 March 2019 to 100% at 31 March 2022. The provisional individual employer funding results and proposed employer contribution rates for 2023/24 to 2025/26 were discussed with the major employers in September. Employers will be consulted on the continuing specific risk management/contribution rate stabilisation proposals which were introduced as part of the 2019 valuation. These will then be considered, and the final proposed actuarial valuation and Funding Strategy Statement (FSS) will be presented to the Committee in December 2022.

17. The Funding Strategy Statement sets out a clear and transparent funding strategy. This will be mindful of current inflation pressures and potential cashflow increases this will make on the Fund.

Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Central Update

18. The Committee has noted the LGPS Central Update. LGPS Central comprises the Worcestershire Pension Fund and eight other Local Authorities established as a collective investment vehicle. It has been in operation since 1 April 2018 and several local authorities have moved some of their existing asset allocations to be managed by the company.

19. The Committee has asked that a visit to the offices of the company in Wolverhampton is arranged for Committee members.

UK Stewardship Code 2021 Submission

20. 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, and a separate set of six Principles for service providers – investment consultants, proxy advisors, data providers and others.

21. The Worcestershire County Council Pension Fund is a signatory to the Code and submitted its 2021 application earlier this year and has received feedback that it has again been successful in continuing to meet the expected standard of reporting and will remain a signatory to the Code. The Committee specifically noted that 64 out of 189 qualifying organisations had not achieved accreditation.

22. In noting the successful application, the Committee asked that this achievement is included on the Pension Fund webpage and thanked all the officers involved in ensuring that the Fund continues to meet the requirements of the Scheme. The Committee recognises the enormous amount of work and time that this takes officers but feel that this is very important for governance that the Fund meets this standard.

Risk Register

23. In noting the August 2022 Risk Register the Committee drew attention to the cyber security top tips which have been issued to all Pensions Board and Committee members. There will be an update on cyber security to the next meeting of the Committee.

Training Update

24. The Committee has noted the Training Update.

Forward Plan

25. The Committee has approved the Forward Plan.

Hymans Review of the Fund's Investment Strategy (exempt item)

26. The Committee has noted the Fund's Investment Strategy review undertaken by Hymans Robertson LLP.

Cllr Elizabeth Eyre
Chairman

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report
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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) 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 13 October 2022:

[Agenda for Pensions Committee on Thursday, 13th October, 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

COUNCIL

10 NOVEMBER 2022

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

(c) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE PLANNING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

Applications

1. The Committee approved the following applications subject to detailed conditions:

- Proposed extraction of aggregates with restoration to agriculture and lake suitable for water sports on land at Ryall's Court, Ryall Court Lane, Ryall, Upton-Upon-Severn, Worcestershire
- Planning application made under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to not comply with conditions 3, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 49 and 53 of planning permission: 15/000013/CM "Proposed minerals extraction of about 1.4 Million tonnes of Sand and gravel and erection of a temporary wharf with progressive restoration to make a landscaped lake" to facilitate an alternative working scheme and progressive restoration scheme to agriculture and a lake suitable for water sports at Ryall North Quarry, land off Ryall Court Lane, Holly Green, Upton-Upon-Severn, Worcestershire
- Installation of a kiosk to house control equipment for sewage treatment upgrades and associated infrastructure (part-retrospective) at Alvechurch Sewage Treatment Works, Redditch Road, Alvechurch, Worcestershire
- Proposed extraction of sand and gravel with restoration using site derived and imported inert material to wetland, nature conservation and agriculture (cross-boundary application) on land at Bow Farm, Bow Lane, Ripple, Worcestershire.

2. The Committee is minded to grant approval for the proposed demolition of existing single storey temporary classroom block, erection of new replacement two-storey classroom building to accommodate 12 no. classrooms, 4 offices and ancillary space, and the relocation and reconfiguration of the existing car park provision at Wolverley CE Secondary School, Blakeshall Lane, Wolverley, Worcestershire subject to the application being referred to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021. If the Secretary of State does not wish to intervene, planning permission is granted, subject to conditions.

3. The Committee noted the Annual Review of activities carried out by the Council to manage and implement the Safety of Sports Grounds legislation.

4. Details of the above application can be found in the agenda papers for the Committee meetings held on 25 and 31 October 2022.

**Cllr Ian Hardiman
Chairman**

Contact Points

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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 meetings of the Planning and Regulatory Committee held on 25 and 31 October 2022.

[Agenda for Planning and Regulatory Committee on Tuesday, 25th October, 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

[Agenda for Planning and Regulatory Committee on Monday, 31st October, 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)