

Minutes of the Cabinet

County Hall

Thursday, 8 December 2022, 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Simon Geraghty (Chairman), Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Marcus Hart (Vice Chairman), Cllr Karen May, Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cllr Andy Roberts and Cllr Mike Rouse

Also attended:

Cllrs Mel Allcott, Matt Jenkins and Kit Taylor

2128 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies had been received from Cllr Adam Kent.

Cllr Simon Geraghty declared an interest in Item 4, A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme, as he was a member of the Midlands Connect Board.

2129 Public Participation

Isabelle Michel addressed the Cabinet, explaining that more than 250 people had signed a petition regarding road safety around St Georges Catholic Primary School. The petition stated "Parents of St George's Catholic School and local residents demand Worcestershire County Council to ACT NOW for the sake of our children and their right to be able to travel safely to school. We demand new bollards to restrict access up Thorneloe Walk and the removal of Thorneloe Walk from satnav directions to stop vans and lorries getting stuck."

A letter from the Head Teacher of St George's detailing the road safety concerns was read to Cabinet.

The Leader thanked Ms Michel for addressing Cabinet and assured her that she would receive a response in due course.

2130 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2022 were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

Cabinet Thursday, 8 December 2022

2131 A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills introduced the report and explained that it was good news that substantial resources were being used to improve the infrastructure around the A38, which was an important strategic corridor that was key for employment and housing. The A38 already had congestion and with the development in the area the route needed to be made sustainable.

Some parts of the scheme had already been completed, but a full business case needed to be completed to secure £43.17 million from the Department for Transport (DfT) for Phase 3. The scheme would see a mix of highway and active travel improvements. The County Council had forward funded some of the work but would get that money back from the DfT and Section 106 money. The benefits of Phase 3 would be delivered within the existing financial envelope, but more funding would be required to progress with Phase 4.

The scheme would deliver substantial improvements for the area. Public engagement events had taken place to listen to concerns of local residents and changes had been made to the plans as a result.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- The investment in the Bromsgrove area was welcomed, as although it was recognised that the economy of the area was doing well, congestion was a problem, which in turn affected air quality. However, it was asked that the CMR look again at School Lane and an assessment take place regarding a temporary closure.
- Cabinet found it reassuring to hear the benefits around active travel and the benefits for bus transport.
- A Member from outside the Cabinet confirmed that School Lane was a problem and believed traffic would be pushed to the Alcester Road, which would not be able to cope. It was also pointed out that Stoke Road was used as a rat run and residents did not support the walking and cycling proposals around New Road. Widening the pavement on New Road would turn the road into a single track, which was a bad idea as the area was getting more popular. He was also disappointed that the consultation took place during the school holidays so none of the three local schools were able to contribute.
- A Cabinet Member reported that following conversations with local residents at the Bromsgrove roadshow, he realised that doing nothing was not an option and improvement work needed to go ahead, but it was not the solution to all of Bromsgrove's traffic issues and the Council would continue to listen to residents.
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility replied that extensive consultation had taken place over time. They could not solve everything

but the actions would help and they would listen to issues from residents. A commitment had been given that work to model the closure of school lane would take place.

The Chairman believed the work needed to take place. He paid tribute to Sajid Javid for lobbying for the funding for the work to be done.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) noted the overall concept of the A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme (BREP) and progress made to date;**
- (b) noted and endorsed the changes to the proposals during the development of the Full Business Case;**
- (c) approved the further development of the Full Business Case (FBC) and submission to the Department of Transport (DfT) during 2022/23;**
- (d) delegated approval of the final wording of the FBC to the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills; and**
- (e) supported the ongoing stakeholder engagement and management exercises with National Highways, DfT and statutory stakeholders as required to finalise the Full Business Case.**

2132 Fair Funding for Schools 2023-24 - National and Local Funding Arrangements for Schools

The Cabinet Member for Education introduced the report and highlighted the increased amount of money that schools would receive in 2023/24.

Schools would be receiving the highest investment in education in history with Local Authorities getting an extra £400million for high needs budgets and there would be a 5% increase per head of school age population compared to the current year. Worcestershire schools were also getting an additional £4.68 million to help with energy costs.

Various comments were made:

- More money had been promised for education in the Autumn Statement and the Government was fulfilling its promise with the additional funding for schools. Schools were still facing inflationary, wage and energy price pressures but per pupil funding was increasing year on year.
- Schools were better off than they were last year. Cabinet were pleased to see money being given to schools for energy efficiency and West Mercia Energy had seen a decrease in energy usage by schools but more energy efficiency measures could be taken. Many schools were

still buying energy through West Mercia Energy which had a price cap in place.

- It was noted that Recommendation e mentioned details given in paragraph 34 when it should state paragraph 35.
- A Member from outside the Cabinet queried why the Education Policy Institute were stating that the current funding formula had led to national cuts of around £40,000 for the average Primary School and as much as £210,000 for the average secondary school and schools were concerned about potential staffing cuts. It was replied that the Government were rebalancing funding so at national level the best funded schools were seeing reductions in their funding. Levelling up in funding was taking place. Some other authorities were also having to spend more on energy costs than they did in Worcestershire.
- The Chairman felt that Government Policy on education was spot on as it involved the future of the Country.

The Cabinet Member thanked colleagues in the Education department for their work on the successful Pershore bid and re-iterated that the funding for next year was the largest real term investment education had ever had.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) noted the Department for Education policy for school and Local Authority funding for 2023-24 detailed in Appendix 1;**
- (b) noted the involvement of the Worcestershire Schools Forum members and schools during the engagement process;**
- (c) noted the views of the Worcestershire Schools Forum on the Local Schools Funding Formula issues for 2023-24 and other matters which are outlined in Appendix 2;**
- (d) approved the Local Schools Funding Formula for Worcestershire mainstream schools from April 2023 to apply for 2023-24 and other matters as detailed in paragraphs 34 to 44, to include the DfE Minimum Funding Levels (MFL's) for Primary £4,405; Key Stage 3 £5,503; Key Stage 4 £6,033; Secondary £5,715 having regard to feedback from schools and the views of the Worcestershire Schools Forum in Appendix 2, to be based as far as is practicable and affordable upon the Department for Education (DfE) National Funding Formula (NFF) parameters; and**
- (e) authorised the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education to make the required submission to the national executive body, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) by 20 January 2023 for the approved Local Schools Funding Formula for 2023-24 taking account of any impact and change on the approved units of resource, Minimum Funding Guarantee and capping arrangements in paragraph 35 as a consequence of the October 2022 census and other 2022 data changes and the final 2023-24 Dedicated School**

Grant (DSG).

2133 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring

The Leader who was also Cabinet Member for finance gave an overview of the report. There were pressures in demand led services in Children's and Adult's Social Care. Home to school transport had also seen an increase in demand and those areas along with the general inflationary pressures meant the Council had a budget forecast of £13.1 million overspend.

The Leader thanked the Government for promising more money for Adult Social Care and he looked forward to finding out the details of the Government settlement. There was relentless pressure on the Council for placements but the most vulnerable needed to have support. Reserves would be utilised to protect against shocks but the ongoing nature of the pressure was recognised. Managers were being asked to take in-year action and actively manage their budgets and £7.5million of £8million worth of savings had been identified. The significant programme of necessary capital infrastructure improvements would continue.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care explained that Adult Social Care operated within a strict regulatory regime but problems had been caused as some people who had not engaged with Council Services during COVID were now doing so and demand had increased, including more services for younger adults; some providers had attempted to raise prices, and staff shortages had led to increased costs.

Mitigation was being taken, and in the budget a great deal of new money had been put into domestic care provision. Mental health services were facing huge demand but the Integrated Care System was allowing better partnership working with health colleagues. It was hoped that the anticipated additional money from the Government could stabilise the system.

The Chairman confirmed that most councils were facing similar pressures. The Council would not stop delivering services and meeting the needs of the vulnerable but there was a limit to what could be provided.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) Noted the budget forecast as at 31 October 2022, which is a net overspend position, before action, of £13.1 million;**
- (b) Noted the actions being taken by directorates to mitigate expenditure where possible to support the current forecast overspend position;**
- (c) Noted the current position relating to the capital programme;**
- (d) Noted the current forecast spend relating to Covid related grants including the extension to the Household Support Fund; and**
- (e) Approved the use of reserves and transfers between reserves to**

help mitigate in-year pressures, as set out at paragraph 66.

The meeting ended at 11.05 am

Chairman