

Cabinet
Friday, 1 July 2022, County Hall,
10.00 am

		Minutes
Present:		Cllr Simon Geraghty (Chairman), Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Marcus Hart (Vice Chairman), Cllr Karen May, Cllr Tracey Onslow and Cllr Mike Rouse
Also attended:		Cllr Steve Mackay
2099	Apologies and Declarations of Interest	<p>Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Richard Morris and Cllr Andy Roberts.</p> <p>Mike Rouse declared an interest with regard to Item 6, in that he was a trustee of the Shires Community Aid Network which may wish to apply for funding from the Household Support Fund at some point in the future.</p> <p>Marc Bayliss declared an interest in regard to Item 6 as Leader of Worcester City Council. Karen May declared an interest as Leader of Bromsgrove District Council.</p>
	Announcement	<p>Cabinet noted that the memorial service for Professor Michael Clarke was taking place on that afternoon and wished to acknowledge the great contribution he made to Worcestershire life in various roles.</p>
2100	Public Participation	None
2101	Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting	The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 May 2022, were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.
2102	Resources Report - Provisional Financial Results 2021/22	The Chairman introduced the Resources Report, beginning by thanking staff and Partners for achieving an excellent outturn. An enormous amount of work had taken place over the past year dealing with COVID on top of day to day work, so it was impressive to have an underspend of £1.336 million on the net budget of £352.5 million. The underspend will be put into the general fund. The Chairman wished to thank the government for the £70.4 million which was made available for COVID

funding.

Schools balances rose to a net surplus of £5.9 million, with 93 schools having a surplus, but there continued to be pressures in the higher needs block and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Government would continue to be lobbied about this area, which remained a national issue.

£17.9 million of COVID grants would be carried forward. It was proposed that there be increases to Earmarked Reserves to support the Economy, Tourism and the additional cost of waste disposal, as well as money for the financial risk reserve and Public Health. The spend on capital projects was £110.6 million with almost £90 million being carried over. Major projects included Hoobrook Island, Upton upon Severn and Malvern Technology Park.

The report was seconded, and Cabinet felt that the modest underspend showed good financial management. Adult Social Care was the largest part of the budget and was broadly at break-even, although there had been a £3.1million overspend in Learning Disabilities. There had been an underspend in some areas such as a number of Direct Payments which had not been claimed. It had been a difficult year due to COVID but the Government had given support by telling Local Councils that they should spend what was needed to deal with COVID.

The Chairman noted that the County worked as One Worcestershire and worked together with Communities to deal with the pandemic.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) endorsed financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2022 and the unaudited Annual Financial Report and Statement of Accounts 2021/22,**
- (b) approved the transfers to increase Earmarked reserves and general balances as detailed in paragraphs 39 to 48 of the agenda report,**
- (c) considered the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22 for comment before final approval is sought from the Audit and Governance Committee, and**
- (d) noted the use of COVID related grant**

funding from Central Government during 2021/22 and amounts carried forward at 31 March 2022.

2103 Local Government Ombudsman Report

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care apologised to the Worcestershire resident who had found it necessary to go to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman found the Council to be at fault due to taking too long to get payments to the individual, causing distress.

In response to the report and recommendations the Ombudsman was informed that an apology had been sent to the individual, an action plan had been put in place to ensure such a thing did not happen again and a new provider had already been commissioned. After conversations with the previous provider, it had been clarified that no other residents were in the same position. The Director for People confirmed that services would be kept under review going forward to ensure they were fit for purpose.

It was clarified that the Council were receptive to any comments or complaints about services as lessons could be learnt from them. The Public were urged to contact their Local Members, Member of Cabinet or Director if they had an issue with their services.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) considered and noted the recommendations of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report; and**
- b) endorsed the Action Plan in response to the Ombudsman's recommendations.**

2104 Household Support Fund

The Cabinet Member for Communities introduced the report and explained that the Household Support Fund was good news for residents as it was money cascading down from Government to the Council, with some being passed on to District Councils.

The fund had first been given in December 2020 and had been extended until 30 September 2022. In May 2022 a further extension was announced but the details of that extension had not yet been confirmed. For the previous fund guidance stated that 80% should be used for families, with the rest being used for those

in, or at risk of, poverty. For the new fund of £3.95 million, a third would have to be allocated to families, a third to pensioners and up to a third allocated to other vulnerable households.

£900,000 would be given to District Councils and the County Council would use funding to provide meals for Key Stage One pupils for the first two weeks of the school holidays. It was clarified that the funding had already been used for the Easter and half term holidays which had used up the total amount available. However, there was money available from the hardship fund and support could be gained through Here2Help or Ready, Steady, Worcestershire for the rest of the holidays.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care welcomed the change of emphasis to allocate more money to pensioners. It was pointed out that people may be able to get support from more than one category and on multiple occasions. He agreed that District Councils should receive some of the money as they worked at a more local level to the County Council. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Health and Well-being welcomed the help that the fund provided to address health disparities.

The Chairman commented that this fund provided a good example of the County Council working with the District Councils as One Worcestershire.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) **Endorsed the approach to the use of the Household Support Fund in 2022/23 as outlined in paragraph 18 of the agenda report; and**
- b) **Delegated the implementation of the delivery of the Household Support Fund, including the allocation of any extension to the grant within the terms applicable to it, to the Strategic Director of People in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities and in liaison with the Chief Finance Officer.**

The meeting ended at 10.35am

Chairman