

Minutes of the Council

County Hall, Worcester

Thursday, 13 July 2023, 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Kyle Daisley (Chairman), Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Salman Akbar, Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Alan Amos (Vice Chairman), Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Dan Boatright-Greene, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr David Chambers, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, 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 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 Josh Robinson, Cllr Linda Robinson, Cllr Chris Rogers, Cllr David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Kit Taylor, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Malcolm Victory, Cllr Craig Warhurst, Cllr Shirley Webb and Cllr Tom Wells

Available papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. 7 questions submitted to the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (previously circulated); and
- C. The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2023 (previously circulated).

2449 Apologies and Declaration of Interests (Agenda item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Martin Allen, Brandon Clayton, Matt Dormer, Luke Mallett, and Andy Roberts.

2450 Public Participation (Agenda item 2)

Viv Moss presented a petition and a dossier of photographs and videos and asked a question concerning flooding issues on Walcot Lane and ford, Drakes Broughton, Pershore.

Mark Redfern asked a question about safeguarding vulnerable road users along Walcot Lane, Drakes Broughton, Pershore.

Bill Houle asked a question on behalf of the “Stop the Quarry Action Group” requesting the omission of Lea Castle Farm from the “Preferred Options” draft of the Mineral Site Allocations Development Plan.

The Chairman thanked Viv, Mark and Bill for their contribution and said they would receive a written response from the relevant Cabinet Member.

2451 Minutes (Agenda item 3)

RESOLVED that subject to Cllr Salman Akbar being added to the list of attendees, the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2452 Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 4)

Noted.

2453 Reports of Cabinet - Summary of decisions taken (Agenda item 5)

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

- Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2021-2022
- Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Training and Automated External Defibrillators (AED) across the County
- Developer Funded Highways Infrastructure Scrutiny Report
- Consultation outcome in relation to charging for care and support
- Resources Report – Provisional Financial Results 2022/23
- Transfer of coroners officers to Worcestershire County Council.

2454 Constitutional Matters - Council meeting dates 2024-25 (Agenda item 6)

County Council meeting dates were currently scheduled up to November May 2024. To enable the future meetings programme to be produced and help members plan their commitments, the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance suggested that further meetings of the Council were now scheduled for 2024 and through until the end of the next Municipal Year in 2025. In accordance with the usual practice and pattern of meetings, further meetings (Cabinet, Committees and Panels) would be arranged in the light of the Council dates and members notified in due course.

RESOLVED that the Council approves its meetings for 2024 and early 2025 as follows:

2024

11 July
12 September
7 November

2025

9 January
13 February
22 May (a week later than normal for the election)

2455 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 1 - Local Farmers (Agenda item 7)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Cllrs Mel Allcott, Richard Udall, Dan Boatright-Greene, and Luke Mallett.

The motion was moved by Cllr Richard Udall and seconded by Cllr Mel Allcott who both spoke in favour of it, and Council agreed to deal with it on the day.

The following amendment was moved by Cllr Adam Kent and seconded by Cllr Marc Bayliss:

“Worcestershire County Council recognises and notes the huge contribution made by our local farmers to the Worcestershire economy and its rural communities. Council calls upon the Cabinet Members Responsible to continue to work with our partners, interested parties and the NFU considering:

- How Worcestershire County Council can develop stronger partnerships with our arable, livestock, and dairy farmers in order to enhance our magnificent countryside. How the Council can support farmers, by being sympathetic to diversification opportunities and promotion of local produce.*
- How to support our local farmers to market their produce to local events and organisations.*
- Ways to encourage residents, where possible, to shop locally, taking advantage of home-grown, affordable and nutritious food, both plant and meat based thus reducing food miles to our plates and boosting the local economy.*
- How as a council we can continue to support the Council's County Farms estate, encouraging training and skills in farming and rural industries on our estates.”*

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

- Council should recognise the huge contribution of local farmers to the local and rural community. Supporting all farmers and growers was essential to the local economy and good for the environment. There were small things that could be done like supporting seasonal produce for Worcestershire events and promoting its use by local residents including local plant-based products. The sector had been left too long to the vagaries of the free market and needed intervention from national and local government. The Council should use its estates to promote the Council's values and principles, to promote the local economy and new businesses, rural trades and industries especially for young people
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication commented that the motion as amended solidified and reinforced this Council's commitment to the farming community. The Council continued to work with farmers and held regular meetings with representatives of the NFU
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for the Environment commented that he had regular contact with the farming community and tenant farmers. There were a number of examples of partnership working. For example, the Council worked with partner organisations including farming and agriculture representatives on the Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership to develop areas of the county. This work included the sharing of grant-funded opportunities. In addition, the Council had been working with partner organisations on the Natural Networks Programme to deliver biodiversity enhancements across the county
- The Council needed to encourage real diversification in farming and help farmers to move to a lower emission approach to farming away from dairy and livestock production
- It was not possible to support the motion as amended as it encouraged dairy and intensive animal agriculture
- It was disappointing that the amendment removed the request for a Cabinet Member report as well as the requirement to use the Council's influence with tenants to ensure decent pay and conditions for their employees
- The Council had held meetings with the National Trust, the local NFU and local farmers as part of the Eight Hills Regional Park Project which aimed at providing a financial advantage to farmers to allow access to their land to people who would not usually be able to
- It was insulting to suggest that farmers did not ensure the best working conditions for their employees
- Local farmers were operating in very challenging circumstances with concerns over mental health and social isolation. The rural economy was dependent on local farmers.
- Farming had become a very competitive, mechanised industry. Pockets of land became unviable and therefore needed to be sold from time-to-time.

On a named vote the substantive motion was agreed.

RESOLVED: “Worcestershire County Council recognises and notes the huge contribution made by our local farmers to the Worcestershire economy and its rural communities. Council calls upon the Cabinet Members Responsible to continue to work with our partners, interested parties and the NFU considering:

- How Worcestershire County Council can develop stronger partnerships with our arable, livestock, and dairy farmers in order to enhance our magnificent countryside. How the Council can support farmers, by being sympathetic to diversification opportunities and promotion of local produce.
- How to support our local farmers to market their produce to local events and organisations.
- Ways to encourage residents, where possible, to shop locally, taking advantage of home-grown, affordable and nutritious food, both plant and meat based thus reducing food miles to our plates and boosting the local economy.
- How as a council we can continue to support the Council's County Farms estate, encouraging training and skills in farming and rural industries on our estates."

Those in favour of the motion were: Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Allan Amos, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Dan Boatright-Greene, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr David Chambers, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, 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 Emma Marshall, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Tony Miller, Cllr Jo Monk, Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Tony Muir, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cllr Scott Richardson Brown, Cllr Josh Robinson, Cllr Linda Robinson, Cllr Chris Rogers, Cllr David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Kit Taylor, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Malcolm Victory, Cllr Craig Warhurst, Cllr Shirley Webb, and Cllr Tom Wells. (49)

Those abstaining were: Cllr Natalie McVey (1)

2456 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 2 - Worcestershire Pride (Agenda item 7)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Cllrs Mel Allcott, Richard Udall, Dan Boatright-Greene and Luke Mallett.

The motion was moved by Cllr Dan Boatright-Greene and seconded by Cllr Lynn Denham, who both spoke in favour of it, and Council agreed to deal with it on the day.

The following amendment was moved by Cllr Marcus Hart and seconded by Cllr Emma Marshall:

“Council sends its support and greetings to Worcestershire Pride and the wider Worcestershire LGBTQIA+ community.

Worcestershire Pride is due to take place on Saturday 15th July, in Worcester City Centre.

Council also notes that a number of Pride events are held in other places across Worcestershire.

Council calls upon the Leader of the Council to request that the Cabinet Member for Communities investigate how even more support can be provided for Pride events in Worcestershire.

Council agrees that the Cabinet Member for Communities in their Cabinet role is the best person to champion this.

Council also agrees that the Cabinet Member for Communities should ensure that Worcestershire County Council works with all community groups and embraces diversity.”

Those in favour of the amendment commented:

- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities commented that the amendment recognised the value of pride events across the whole of the county, not just Worcester City. The Council should celebrate the progress made in supporting the LGBTQIA+ community over recent decades. As a general rule, this Council did not have member champions especially in this case as the role of championing the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community rested with him as the relevant Cabinet Member. The county had a very diverse community and it was important that this Council was inclusive and respected all members of the community
- The Pride event in Redditch helped to bring the local community together to show the progress made in supporting the LGBTQIA+ community, and that residents had more in common than divided them. The event had the added benefit of supporting local businesses in the town centre
- All members of the Council were diversity champions under the Equalities Act therefore a separate member champion was not necessary. The position with regard to the Armed Forces Member Champion was different as different parties held different political stances
- Any concerns about the quality of Equality Impact Statements should be raised with relevant officers

- The Council should champion all sections of the community as a whole, not certain sections in isolation
- As much as gender equality of representation on the Cabinet should be encouraged, it was important that the best person was appointed to the role irrespective of gender

Those against the amendment commented:

- Although significant progress had been made in this country with respect to attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community, it was still important as a liberal country to promote Pride events. This Council should lead the way by providing support for local Worcestershire pride events
- The Council had focussed on mental health as a key health and well-being priority. It was clear that the discrimination towards certain members of society had a severe impact on mental health
- It was important to take proactive measures to support the LGBTQIA+ community and the appointment of an equality and diversity champion would be an important step forward in providing that support
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities should not stand alone as the diversity champion. A separate member champion would provide support, assistance and enable co-operation with other councillors similar to that provided by the Armed Forces Champion
- The inadequacy of the Equality Impact assessments set out in committee reports indicated that cabinet members had not fully embraced their role as member champions for diversity
- The Council should look at best practice elsewhere for example at Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority where the role of member champion had been successfully introduced
- To show the Council's commitment to equality and diversity, the membership of the Cabinet should reflect the diverse nature of the community it served, particularly in terms of establishing a gender balance amongst its membership
- Treating people the same was not equality. Recognising that people were different, understanding those differences and addressing them in proportion was the key issue. A member champion from outside the Cabinet would be in a better position to progress this important issue.

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

The mover of the original motion summed up the debate by commenting that he would support the substantive motion but it was disappointing that a member champion from outside the Cabinet was not being adopted by the Council. He was not in favour of power being concentrated in one councillor. Speakers in the debate appeared to confuse equality with equity. Different groups in society did not necessarily want to be treated the same as everyone else and adjustments sometimes had to be made to address different needs. However he welcomed the support provided for Worcestershire Pride events.

On a named vote the substantive motion was agreed.

RESOLVED “Council sends its support and greetings to Worcestershire Pride and the wider Worcestershire LGBTQIA+ community.

Worcestershire Pride is due to take place on Saturday 15th July, in Worcester City Centre.

Council also notes that a number of Pride events are held in other places across Worcestershire.

Council calls upon the Leader of the Council to request that the Cabinet Member for Communities investigate how even more support can be provided for Pride events in Worcestershire.

Council agrees that the Cabinet Member for Communities in their Cabinet role is the best person to champion this.

Council also agrees that the Cabinet Member for Communities should ensure that Worcestershire County Council works with all community groups and embraces diversity.”

Those in favour of the motion were: Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Salman Akbar, Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Allan Amos, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Dan Boatright-Greene, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr David Chambers, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, 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 Adrian Kriss, Cllr Steve Mackay, Cllr Emma Marshall, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Tony Miller, Cllr Jo Monk, Cllr Dan Morehead, Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cllr Scott Richardson Brown, Cllr Josh Robinson, Cllr Linda Robinson, Cllr Chris Rogers, Cllr David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Kit Taylor, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Malcolm Victory, Cllr Craig Warhurst, Cllr Shirley Webb, and Cllr Tom Wells. (49)

2457 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 3 - LTP5 member engagement (Agenda item 7)

There was insufficient time to consider this motion.

2458 Reports of the Cabinet Members with Responsibility - Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being (Agenda item 8(a))

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being presented her report to Council which covered various topics. In particular, she thanked representatives of the voluntary sector and NHS for their support.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being answered a broad range of questions from members.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being for her report.

**2459 Reports of the Cabinet Members with Responsibility -
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport (Agenda item
8(b))**

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport presented his report to Council which covered various topics.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport answered a broad range of questions from members.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport for his report.

2460 Question Time (Agenda item 9)

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

**2461 Reports of Committees - Audit and Governance Committee
(Agenda item 10 (a))**

The Chairman of the Committee introduced the report and commented that the Council's draft Statutory Accounts had been published by the statutory deadline of 31 May 2023. Only a small number of top tier authorities had had their accounts signed off in time. The finance team were working with Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditor to ensure that the final accounts were signed off by the statutory deadline of 30 September 2023.

The Council received the report of the Audit and Governance Committee containing a summary of the decisions taken.

**2462 Reports of Committees - Pensions Committee (Agenda item
10 (b))**

The Chairman of the Committee introduced the report and commented that the draft Pension Fund Statutory Accounts had been published by the statutory deadline of 31 May 2023. She highlighted the Fund's excellent governance arrangements through the Stewardship Code, that the Fund was 96% funded, and that the Chief Executive of the LGPS Central had resigned and a replacement was being sought.

She recognised the dedicated service of Amanda Lewis, who would be retiring from her position of Membership Manager in October 2023 after over 30 years' service.

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

The meeting ended at 1.30pm.

Chairman

COUNCIL 13 JULY 2023 - AGENDA ITEM 9 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below. Questions 1 and 5 were not asked on the day.

QUESTION 1 – Cllr Martin Allen asked Cllr Mike Rouse:

"The main road through Pershore has for some time now had a speed limit set to 20mph. Does the Cabinet Member with Responsibility and officers consider this to be a successful change or a failure?"

Answer

Pershore has had a 20mph speed set since 31 Oct 2008

Given that there has been no difference in the collision and casualty rates for this section of road following the introduction of the 20mph limit it is difficult to claim either success or failure from a strategic perspective. Therefore, I cannot provide an answer in the terms he has requested from my position and would have to defer to local opinion.

QUESTION 2 – Cllr Natalie McVey asked Cllr Andy Roberts:

"Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility tell me how many unaccompanied child refugees are currently being accommodated in Worcestershire?"

Answer

The number of children accommodated who are unaccompanied changes week to week. Some children arrive through the National Transfer scheme and others turn up in our area having made, what on the face of it appears to be, their own journey. Others have been subsequently identified as having been placed incorrectly by the home office in Adult refugee hotels in our area.

As at end June 23 our data showed:

- UASC in our care on 30/06/2023 73
- UASC Care Leavers on 30/06/2023 100

And the following were new entrants in year:

- UASC new entries 2023/24 to date 8
- UASC new entries 2022/23 80

Supplementary question

The details of the information sharing protocol with district councils was queried specifically with regard to councillors' role as Corporate Parents? The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education responded that Corporate Parenting Board members received data about the numbers of Children who were looked after in each District and received reports about UASC. There were named representatives from each district council on the Corporate Parenting Board.

There was no separate information sharing protocol regarding UASC or Corporate Parenting. Data was anonymised and case information was shared with appropriate consents and on a need-to-know basis.

QUESTION 3 – Cllr Richard Udall asked Cllr Marcus Hart:

"Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility confirm the plans and processes for the introduction of Libraires Unlocked at St John's Library? Can he confirm the timescales involved and the process for consultation which will take place with employees, volunteers, user groups and the general public?"

Answer

The County Council has reinvested a £150k as a result of the decision of the administration of Worcester City Council to remove the funding for the library in St John's. The library in St John's is under no threat from this administration and will expand.

He anticipated after full engagement with staff and we have to go through a process of implementation including full engagement with our service users, local residents and customers (with engagement sessions over the next 3+ months), by the end of the calendar year everything will be in place to expand and enhance the wonderful library at St John's to ensure that we are able to give an even greater library offer than we do already.

Supplementary question

Cllr Udall indicated that he had received a petition signed by 1,100 local residents opposing the changes to St John's library. He requested that the Cabinet Member met with Friends of St John's Library, attended a public meeting and kept an open mind on the issue. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities responded that he had confidence in the library staff and management team's ability to deal with the operational issues. Two members of staff would be retained at the library on 37 hour and 24-hour contracts. The introduction of Libraires Unlocked formed part of the Council's policy to expand library provision. He highlighted the positive response from library users in Stourport and Droitwich to the introduction of this scheme.

QUESTION 4 – Cllr Matt Jenkins asked Cllr Richard Morris:

"Does the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment agree with me that limiting global warming to 1.5C will require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society?"

Answer

This global issue requires concerted action at all levels: international, national, local and individual. At COP 21, (Paris Agreement), 196 Nations and the EU committed to drawing up plans to cut emissions in order to limit global warming to 1.5oC. It's fair to say some countries are further forward than others in delivering on these commitments.

Nevertheless, we all have a responsibility, and we all need to look at what we can do. The County Council (as do all local authorities) has its own role to play and has set targets for carbon reduction from its own operations, (90% reduction in emissions from our buildings, fleet & street lighting by 2025/26 and net zero for all emissions by 2050).

No doubt Cllr Jenkins is aware of the work the Council has been undertaking on this for many years:

as well as cutting our own emissions, we are working with partners to deliver the Worcestershire Energy Strategy (target to halve county emissions by 2030) and are helping businesses and residents to cut their emissions and save money, supporting the

enhancement of local biodiversity etc.... You may know that the Council has recently been recognised for our work with the award of Council of the Year at the Regional Energy Efficiency Awards as well as being shortlisted in the LGC Awards for our work supporting local business.

Supplementary question

It was queried whether the carbon literacy training received by officers could be made available to members. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment responded that training for members would be looked at as part of the work of the MAG on carbon reduction and biodiversity. It was important that this training was made appropriate to the needs of members.

QUESTION 5 – Cllr Beverley Nielsen asked Cllr Mike Rouse:

"We welcome and fully support the rollout of Demand Response Transport (DRT) to Malvern Hills. How will the Council continue to improve this initiative and take any learning into further schemes? For example, do we feel our tendering and implementation approach enabled the optimum collaborative approach with the local community transport charities involved?"

Answer

With both Bromsgrove and now Malvern, we are understanding how DRT can be operated within the County. It is important that DRT is developed so that it can support both urban and rural communities by working in parallel with more traditional fixed bus services. As we have a vast amount of data from those that use or attempt to use the DRT services, we are able to learn and adapt the current schemes as well as develop future schemes with this improved understanding on what works.

A robust and fair tendering exercise was undertaken to award the contract and we do have two community transport operators who are operating one of the Malvern DRT vehicles. This allows us to understand how we can support these types of schemes in undertaking DRT services and how it can integrate with the valuable services that these operators provide.

QUESTION 6 – Cllr Richard Udall asked Cllr Mike Rouse:

"Worcester City recently won a purple flag award for its night time economy, rewarding entertainment venues in the city centre and encouraging greater public participation in a safe, flourishing and inclusive sector of the local economy. Is the Cabinet Member with Responsibility aware that little or no public transport provision exists in Worcester which can support the growing night-time economy in the city? No busses from most parts of my Division exist after 6:30pm. Making it difficult for people to gain employment in the sector, to visit the city centre and to get home safely.

The lack of public transport is holding back the success of the night-time economy and is causing harm to the entertainment and leisure industry. Can he consider a full review of support to night time public transport provision within the city, with the aim of attempting to improve provision?"

Answer

Can I thank Councillor Udall for his question. The bus industry in Worcester has seen a decline with a reduction in passenger numbers post pandemic and more recently with above inflation increases in fuel and driver wages. Worcestershire has invested in our bus

network to ensure that we can continue to provide bus services across the county, often seen as a lifeline to people in urban/rural areas.

It is fantastic news that Worcester City received the Purple Flag accreditation, recognising it as an area of excellence during the evening and we will continue to work with bus operators to create new opportunities to grow our public transport network and benefit our economy. The new Worcestershire Enhanced Partnership with operators will ensure that we continue to listen to our residents to meet their needs, but also to understand demand and to ensure that we direct our resources to the right place.

An additional £1.43m funding will be available from BSIP+ funding and this will enable us to demonstrate our commitment to improving public transport across the county, to improve journey times, increase reliability, and improve information to passengers.

The provision of additional public transport at night in Worcester City is something that we will continue to review.

Supplementary question

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport agreed to meet Cllr Richard Udall and the representatives of the Worcester Bid Purple Flag Scheme to discuss how public transport could be improved to support the night time economy in Worcester.

QUESTION 7 – Cllr Matt Jenkins asked Cllr Mike Rouse:

"Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport confirm what the Council's policy is for introducing low traffic neighbourhoods?"

Answer

Whilst a number of councils introduced LTNs during the pandemic, with the support of funding from Active Travel England through the (then) Emergency Active Travel Fund, a number of schemes have been met with significant local opposition and/or were ineffective, and were removed as a response. One of the issues raised is the increased emissions at the boundary roads for an LTN for instance as drivers seek to avoid the zones by driving around them rather than abandoning the motor car for their journey. Figures from Islington, for example, have shown that the number of vehicles using the Blackstock Road, where there is a Primary School, has increased by 7,000 per day.

I note with interest the recent remarks by the Secretary of State for Transport regarding LTNs. I draw particular attention to his concerns that LTNs have radicalised groups of people against cyclists and risk increasing tensions between different road users. One LTN in London, for instance, resembled a scene from an apocalyptic film when local residents torched the infrastructure. As Cabinet Member, I will not take actions that could lead to similar outcomes here in Worcestershire.

LTNs are not the panacea some think they are, and that is perhaps why Whitehall is no longer going to fund any of them. WCC has been investing in a range of approaches to provide for travel choice, including investing in walking and cycling routes either through upgrades to existing provision to shared surfaces for walkers and cyclists, or completely new active travel routes, installing additional crossings for pedestrian and cyclists, dropped kerbs across the county. In specific locations, linked to new cycle routes, speed limits have been reduced to facilitate active travel.

We have a plan for investing further in active travel over the coming years, highlights include the delivery of Kepax and Hampton Bridges, delivery of the routes funded through

the Towns Fund and Levelling Up in Wyre Forest and Worcester City, in partnership with the districts, a project focussed on removal of barriers in the City which restrict cycling and pedestrians with buggies, pushchairs etc and the development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for the major settlements.

My focus as Cabinet Member, and the focus of this Council, is the development of schemes that deliver progress on our modal shift aims, without removing the reasonable choices that thousands of our residents make every day to help them get to work and keep our local economy growing. I will not extinguish the freedom of men and women across this county to choose how they move, but I will support them to make positive choices – and anyone who is serious about real long term modal shift should realise that communist-style diktaks are not the way to achieve lasting behavioural change.

Supplementary question

It was queried whether the Cabinet Member would give consideration to a request from a local councillor to introduce a low traffic neighbourhood? The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport responded that a policy of low traffic neighbourhoods would not be rolled out across Worcestershire. He would look at any issues or concerns raised by local councillors in their division on a case-by-case basis.

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