

## Minutes of the Council

**Wyre Forest District Council offices, Finepoint Way,**

**Kidderminster, Worcs DY11 7WF**

**Thursday, 14 September 2023, 10.00 am**

---

### **Present:**

Cllr Kyle Daisley (Chairman), Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Alan Amos (Vice Chairman), Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Dan Boatright-Greene, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr David Chambers, Cllr Brandon Clayton, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, Cllr Matt Dormer, Cllr Elizabeth Eyre, Cllr Andy Fry, Cllr Simon Geraghty, 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 Steve Mackay, Cllr Karen May, 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 Chris Rogers, Cllr David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Kit Taylor, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Malcolm Victory, Cllr Shirley Webb and Cllr Tom Wells

### **Available papers**

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. 8 questions submitted to the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (previously circulated); and
- C. The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 (previously circulated).

### **Tributes to Cllr Andy Roberts**

A Minute's silence was held and tributes paid to Cllr Andy Roberts who had sadly passed away.

## **2463 Apologies and Declaration of Interests (Agenda item 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Salman Akbar, Martin Allen, Aled Luckman, Luke Mallett, Emma Marshall, Natalie McVey, Linda Robinson, Craig Warhurst.

Cllr Andy Fry declared an interest in Agenda item 5 (b) Reports of Cabinet - Summary of Decisions Taken - Relocation of Redditch Library - Public Consultation Results.

Cllr Dan Boatright-Greene declared interests in Agenda item 9 – Question Time – Question 5 as a governor of a county-nominated school and the Virtual School.

## **2464 Public Participation (Agenda item 2)**

Sarah Jaffray asked a question about the impact of the access to and from the Beacon Heights development on St Andrews Road, Thurlstane Road and predominantly Court Road, Malvern.

Melissa Poulton asked a question about Active Travel.

Carolyn Withington presented a petition concerned with reducing the volume, speed and size of vehicles and non-residential use of Court Road, Malvern.

The Chairman thanked Sarah, Melissa and Carolyn for their contribution and said they would receive a written response from the relevant Cabinet Member.

## **2465 Minutes (Agenda item 3)**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **2466 Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 4)**

Noted.

## **2467 Reports of Cabinet Matters requiring a decision by Council - 2022-23 Treasury Management Annual Report (Agenda item 5 (a))**

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and commented that it was in line with CIPFA best practice for the Treasury Management Annual Report to be reported to Council. The Annual Report had also been considered by Cabinet and the Audit and Governance Committee. He drew members attention to the Capital Financing Requirement, external borrowing and the associated costs as well as the interest received on investments set out in the report.

**RESOLVED** that the 2022-23 Treasury Management Annual Report in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy be noted.

## **2468 Reports of Cabinet - Summary of Decisions Taken (Agenda item 5(b))**

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

- Adult Social Care - Local Account 2022-23
- Relocation of Redditch Library - Public Consultation Results.

## **2469 Electoral Boundaries Review (Agenda item 6)**

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and commented that officers had consulted and engaged with all members of the Council in relation to the Council's submission to the Electoral Boundary Commission. He drew members' attention to two minor amendments to the submission:

- Page 49 headed Worcester City Summary – The fifth paragraph down mentioned the Ward of St Peter and should read the Ward of Battenhall
- Page 69 – The report should state “move in” not “move out” 375 electors and instead of “from Bewdley” it should state “to Bewdley”.

The total number of 57 councillors previously suggested by the Council had been approved by the Commission as the guiding number albeit the Commission could still alter it slightly.

He paid tribute to the work of the staff in Legal and Democratic Services who had worked hard with members to help formulate the proposals being put before Council. The Council's proposals would be submitted to the Boundary Commission but that did not preclude councillors from submitting their own views either individually, as part of the community or through parishes. The Commission would listen to all views before submitting their own conclusions which were expected in early 2024. A report would be brought to Council at that point.

In the ensuing debate, the electoral services staff were thanked for their work in undertaking the review. There was a culture of identity especially amongst neighbouring parish councils that needed to be recognised in the Review, for example the move of the parish of Hill and Moor out of the Pershore Division would have major impact locally as well as weakening the voice of local people in the Pershore Division.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- a) The draft response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) initial consultation be approved; and**
- b) The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Leaders of the political groups, to submit the response to the LGBCE.**

Two abstentions were recorded during the vote.

## **2470 Constitutional Matters - Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Member Bodies (Agenda item 7)**

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Steve Mackay to the position of Cabinet Member for Children and Families.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and commented that following the very sad passing of Cllr Andy Roberts and the appointment of Cllr Steve Mackay, there was a necessity to make changes to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- a) **Cllr David Chambers be appointed as Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Cllr David Ross be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel; and**
- b) **Cllr David Chambers be appointed as a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board.**

## **2471 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 1 - LTP5 member engagement (Agenda item 8)**

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

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

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

*“Agreement has already been reached with the Chair of the Environment O&S Scrutiny Panel that LTP5 will be on their workplan. However, it is important that members are actively involved in the preparation of Local Transport Plan 5, rather than scrutinising the final version.*

*Hence, Council proposes the following approach is taken:*

1. *Engagement with local members during the consultation process and the formulations of LTP5 is undertaken by the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel, providing transparency of the emerging document for members and to ensure their views can feed into this strategy during development and be actively considered during drafting.*

2. *Following the examples of many other LTPs, Worcestershire should actively promote walking, cycling and public transport as part of a holistic transport mix which balances the needs of the economy, society and the environment.”*

Those in favour of the amendment commented:

- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills commented that the Council would continue to promote all modes of transport recognising the balance between protecting the environment but allowing people freedom to travel. He envisaged that the banning of cars would not be included in LTP5 guidance. He noted the unpopularity with the public of proposals elsewhere in the country to limit private car use. It was not appropriate to compare transport issues in a rural county such as Worcestershire with large metropolitan cities
- It was important to provide links between the bus and rail network to ensure that people were able to move around the county on bicycles using public transport
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport reiterated that the Council had no intention of restricting the freedom of choice of local residents to move around. The original motion made no reference to engagement with district councils and the local community. Worcester City Council had made no attempt to engage the County Council when developing the Worcester City Plan and Transport Strategy. This Council had established a number of means to engage different aspects of the local community including disabled users. The extra funding provided by the Government for Active Travel had not prevented an increase in the number of vehicles on the road. It was important to specifically address issues where and when they occurred. This Council had provided major funding support to ensure that bus services continued to operate in the county. Overview and Scrutiny was the most appropriate route for these issues to be addressed.

Those against the amendment commented:

- Although the involvement of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the holistic approach to transport was welcomed, it was disappointing that the amendment had removed the reference to Government targets. There remained issues with the poor level of bus service provision in the county especially in the evenings and on weekends
- Listening and engaging with communities provided a much more robust view of the transport issues experienced by local residents. Restricting consideration of this issue to Overview and Scrutiny Panel limited the number of councillors who could participate in the discussion. Worcester City Council had approved the Worcester City Plan and Transport Strategy and it was commended to this Council
- LTP5 was a core document and it was important that district councils were able to hit the targets set out in it. It was disappointing that modal shift targets had not been included in the amendment because it was

difficult to see how the Council could meet the Government's Active Travel targets by 2030

- The current car-dominated society impacted negatively on the balance of environment, economy and society. Research had shown that an increase in Active Travel benefited the economy.

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

In the ensuing debate, it was commented that the idea of a holistic transport mix was welcomed but the Government targets should be met.

The mover of the original motion summed up the debate by commenting that in order to reach the Government targets, it would take decades of planning. An integrated approach to transport needed to be undertaken to address the year-on-year increase in car-usage.

**On being put to the vote the substantive motion was agreed unanimously.**

**RESOLVED:** "Agreement has already been reached with the Chair of the Environment O&S Scrutiny Panel that LTP5 will be on their workplan. However, it is important that members are actively involved in the preparation of Local Transport Plan 5, rather than scrutinising the final version.

Hence, Council proposes the following approach is taken:

1. **Engagement with local members during the consultation process and the formulations of LTP5 is undertaken by the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel, providing transparency of the emerging document for members and to ensure their views can feed into this strategy during development and be actively considered during drafting.**
2. **Following the examples of many other LTPs, Worcestershire should actively promote walking, cycling and public transport as part of a holistic transport mix which balances the needs of the economy, society and the environment."**

## **2472 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 2 - Staffing at libraries (Agenda item 8)**

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

The motion was moved by Cllr Richard Udall and seconded by Cllr Andy Fry, 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 Tracey Onslow:

*“Council welcomes the roll out of Libraries Unlocked, which will allow residents to access libraries for extended hours. However, libraries will still need librarians. Council calls upon the Cabinet Member with Responsibility to ensure all Libraries have a minimum of six staffed hours Monday to Saturday, which will allow the libraries to continue to remain as a community hub and as a staffed resource.”*

Those in favour of the amendment commented:

- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities commented that St John’s Library currently had 48 opening hours a week. Under Libraries Unlocked that would increase to 72 opening hours a week. As a result, access to the community would be increasing in every library in the county. Libraries Unlocked had opened in Stourport and Droitwich and received positive feedback from local residents. Where residents worked full-time and had a busy Saturday, the only time available to visit the library was the evening. Under Libraries Unlocked the community hub aspect would be expanded and allow more time for lonely residents to go to the library. There would be a reduction in staffing hours but there would remain provision in the day for staff to deal with queries. All 21 libraries had been kept open. This approach had been adopted after extensive research and consultation and had been based on a needs-led approach. It was not discriminatory against any library users. He thanked the volunteers for their work in helping to support library provision in the county
- In response to a point of clarification, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities confirmed that the amendment referred to six staff hours from Monday to Saturday, not daily as stated in the original motion
- The amendment meant that the libraries would have extended hours for use by the community. The Council was keen to improve and extend the library service to improve access to the local community
- The Droitwich Library had become more popular since the introduction of the Libraries Unlocked scheme. It opened up libraries to younger members of the community, for example through an outreach youth provision. The library was open until 8pm at night which provided extended provision for local residents
- In total, there would be 141 manned hours of library provision across the City of Worcester allowing significant opportunity for residents to access their local library. Libraries Unlocked was just another example of customer self-service, an approach that was being successfully introduced across all sectors
- Libraries Unlocked enabled the Council to make far better use of its assets than had been previously possible
- Libraries Unlocked had been adopted with great success in a number of different locations in the UK and abroad. Feedback had shown that many users preferred not to have staff on call in the library

- Libraries Unlocked was an important way of establishing new ways of working that reflected the needs of local residents especially out of hours opening.

Those against the amendment commented:

- Library staff were absolutely critical for the creation of a community hub. The support of staff was particularly crucial for people with disabilities. Libraries Unlocked excluded those vulnerable members of society most in need of staff support. Libraries Unlocked was concerned with saving money, particularly in relation to staffing levels
- It was requested that the mover and seconder of the amendment accept that the word “daily” be included after the word “Saturday” because the intention of the original motion was clearly not to reduce staffing hours. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities responded that he could not accept the revised wording and would not alter the amendment
- There would be cuts made to staffing hours as a result of the Libraries Unlocked scheme which would have a negative impact on the ability of disabled users to access library provision.

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

An amendment to the Substantive Motion was moved by Cllr Lynn Denham and seconded by Cllr Richard Udall to insert the word “daily” after the word “Saturday”. The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance advised that under Standing Order 19.6, an amendment had to be relevant to the Motion and refer the motion to Cabinet or Committees (which was not the case), to leave out words and insert or add others which was being requested in this case. This amendment did not negate the substantive motion because it referred to opening hours for libraries and therefore the amendment was acceptable from a constitutional point of view.

Those in favour of the amendment commented:

- The omission of the word “daily” from the original motion was an oversight. The intention of the motion and this amendment was to allow libraries to remain open with six staffed hours daily Monday to Saturday. The aim of the amendment was to maximise the help provided by staff to residents at libraries, not to minimise it.

Those against the amendment commented:

- The amendment sought to extend the working hours beyond the current levels and therefore had budgetary implications. In addition, it had not been included in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. It could have a potential unforeseen impact on library provision in rural areas
- The current approach to Libraries Unlocked had been determined by operational need and following consultation. It was not appropriate to change policy at this late stage



- Certain more rural areas of the county had to rely on the mobile library or the excellent online library system so an extra staffed hours was of no use for rural communities.

On being put to a vote, the amendment to the substantive motion was lost.

**On being put to the vote the substantive motion was agreed.**

**RESOLVED:** “Council welcomes the roll out of Libraries Unlocked, which will allow residents to access libraries for extended hours. However, libraries will still need librarians. Council calls upon the Cabinet Member with Responsibility to ensure all Libraries have a minimum of six staffed hours Monday to Saturday, which will allow the libraries to continue to remain as a community hub and as a staffed resource.”

**2473 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 3 - Rail ticket office closures (Agenda item 8)**

There was insufficient time to consider this motion.

**2474 Question Time (Agenda item 9)**

Eight questions had been received by the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance and had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The answers to seven questions were provided at the meeting. Question three was withdrawn by the questioner at the meeting. The answers to all the other questions are attached in the Appendix.

**2475 Reports of Committees - Audit and Governance Committee (Agenda item 10)**

The Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee expressed his gratitude to the Strategic Director of People, the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure, the Chief Financial Officer and the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services for attending the meeting in July to assist the Committee with its deliberations.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 12.45pm

Chairman .....



## COUNCIL 14 SEPTEMBER 2023 - AGENDA ITEM 9 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below. Questions 3 was withdrawn by Cllr Mel Allcott.

**QUESTION 1** – Cllr Josh Robinson will ask Cllr Mike Rouse:

*“After years of trying to find ownership details for the wall on the steps leading up to St Johns Church in Bromsgrove, can the Cabinet Member assure me that everything is being done to resolve this issue?”*

### **Answer**

This issue has been investigated many times in the past and the Council are satisfied that neither boundary wall is the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council.

Officers have visited the location and tried to contact the owner. I understand that the local district council has now made contact.

### Supplementary question

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport agreed to take a constructive role in any discussions regarding the opening up of the steps leading up to St Johns Church in Bromsgrove and attend meetings about the issue.

**QUESTION 2** – Cllr Lynn Denham will ask Cllr Marcus Hart:

*“In the government’s Spring 2023 budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced he was providing an additional £33m over the next 3 years to increase the service provided to veterans, including support for those with serious physical injury resulting from their service and increasing the availability of veteran housing. It seems that the initial tranche of £10m for this financial year has been used to fund grants via the Armed Forces Covenant Trust for homeless veterans. None of the successful bids have any connection with Worcestershire.*

*This Council facilitates Worcestershire’s Armed Forces Covenant. What is being done to ensure that Worcestershire veterans get a fair share of government funding in 2024 and beyond?”*

### **Answer**

We welcome the announcement that the Office of Veteran Affairs has secured an additional 33 million to support our veterans and we look forward to seeing how The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust plan to develop their grant programmes in response to this additional funding. It is anticipated that they will align closely to the Government’s Veteran Strategy Action Plan and will call upon organisations such as the NHS, local authorities, other public bodies and the charitable sector, to deliver positive change for veterans. Worcestershire’s Armed Forces Covenant Partnership, Chaired by Cllr Richard Morris, is working hard with its stakeholders to seek changes to policy and practice as well as actively improving services in Worcestershire to make sure veterans and families have the support they need. And although Worcestershire did not benefit from the initial tranche of funding to support homeless veterans, a number of military charities working in Worcestershire have already

been awarded Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust funding for other projects, either directly or part of a regional grant portfolio. We are committed, through Worcestershire's Armed Forces Covenant Partnership to ensure that future funding programmes will be promoted, supported and encouraged to ensure Worcestershire gets its fair share. Worcestershire County Council continues to fund a dedicated Armed Forces Covenant Officer, shared with Herefordshire Council, to ensure those organisations have a good understanding of future funding opportunities together with statistical and local evidence of need.

#### Supplementary question

What processes were in place to ensure that the Council received its fair share of Government funding? The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities responded that the Council would continue to work with Stepway and other charities to put together bids that would find favour with the Covenant Trust Fund.

**QUESTION 3** - was withdrawn by the questioner at Council.

**QUESTION 4** – Cllr Richard Udall will ask Cllr Karen May:

*"Around 253,000 people in Worcestershire are supplied with artificially fluoridated water. However, this does not include any of Worcester, Pershore, most of the Wyre Forest District or areas west of the River Severn. Does she agree with me that fluoridated water is one of the most significant public health measures of the late twentieth century. Will she give a commitment to explore the expansion of fluoridation to all remaining parts of Worcestershire?"*

#### **Answer**

I am glad to see local Councillors supporting water fluoridation, especially for those areas in the county with a higher risk of poor oral health.

The Oral Health Foundation states that this is "the single most effective public health measure for reducing oral health inequalities and tooth decay rates, especially amongst children".

Provisions of the Health and Care Act 2022 have transferred the power to vary water fluoridation schemes to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Dr Lisa McNally, Director of Public Health is liaising with NHS England Midlands' Consultant in Dental Public Health and the Department for Health and Social Care regarding the expansion of fluoridation in Worcestershire. We will ensure we keep Councillors briefed on progress.

Finally, to note that Public Health Worcestershire is doing a lot of work to promote oral health, including:

- distributing almost 50,000 adult toothbrushing packs to vulnerable groups in the community via various agencies, charities, and community groups;
- rolling out the Supervised Toothbrushing Scheme, providing a toolkit for staff in early years settings, teaching children to brush their teeth from a young age and encouraging home brushing;
- distributing Junior Toothbrushing Packs to every child at their 12-month Health Visitor checks; and
- training the wider workforce, including the Starting Well Partnership and Care Homes, on the key oral health messages.

#### Supplementary question

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being agreed that a report on Fluoridated water would be brought to a future meeting of Cabinet.

#### **QUESTION 5** – Cllr Dan Boatright-Greene will ask Cllr Adam Kent:

*"The BBC reported on 4 September 2023 that 38% of the state schools in England and Wales are past their estimated design life. Are Worcestershire schools in line with this estimate and if so, what is the plan to rectify this?"*

#### **Answer**

The Council is responsible for Community, Voluntary Controlled and Foundation Schools. Schools do not have a designated design life as typically they comprise a number of buildings of different types, constructed at different times and have had elements renewed over their life.

Regular condition surveys are undertaken from which the identified recommended works are prioritised in the annual capital programme.

The Council is not responsible for Academies, Voluntary Aided and Independent school buildings and does not hold information relating to these.

#### Supplementary question

In response to a concern about the costs associated with the maintenance of school buildings, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication undertook to investigate any concerns raised by councillors about maintenance issues in schools on a needs basis.

#### **QUESTION 6** – Cllr Josh Robinson will ask Cllr Mike Rouse:

*"Bant Mill Road and Old Station Road become like a car park around school drop off times for Bromsgrove School, this has been a constant issue for local residents who cannot at time get off or onto their drives, would the Cabinet Member be willing to meet with me on site to see the issue first hand and see what more we can do to resolve it?"*

#### **Answer**

It is important to recognise that the congestion issues we are discussing occur for a limited period during weekdays, essentially amounting to a small fraction of the entire week. Moreover, it primarily affects those who have chosen to reside near a school, a decision that naturally comes with its share of challenges, including the one in question.

I must emphasise that our primary responsibility as the council is to facilitate the safe and smooth operation of school drop-off and pick-up times, focusing on the safety of the students.

Moreover, while the individual concerns of residents are noted, it is essential to retain a broader perspective that considers the overall well-being and functionality of the community as a whole. Implementing stringent restrictions through Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) not only presents a significant financial burden on the council but may lead to further complications, including the displacement of traffic to neighbouring areas, creating a cycle of issues that could potentially be more problematic than the existing situation.

I would urge residents to exhibit understanding and patience, given that this inconvenience lasts for a short duration. Meanwhile, parents and guardians who are causing obstructions

should also take this as a reminder to be more considerate and adhere to the community principles of respect and cooperation.

Applying for the location to become a School Street site is a potential avenue to explore. However, he and residents must be aware that this would entail road closures during specific times, hindering their access even more.

I encourage constructive dialogue and community-led initiatives that foster a harmonious living environment for all. Given the councillor's experience and understanding of his constituency, I am confident that he is more than capable of orchestrating a meeting with all relevant parties to address this issue directly, a proactive approach that many members in this chamber have successfully undertaken in their respective divisions when faced with similar issues.

#### Supplementary question

In response to a request, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport suggested that it might be preferable for Cllr Robinson to meet with local stakeholders to find an appropriate solution rather than involve the Cabinet Member.

#### **QUESTION 7** – Cllr Mel Allcott will ask Cllr Mike Rouse:

*"I understand Kepax bridge is scheduled to be completed December 2025. The nearby river footpath WR-810 in Claines has been closed for 2 ½ years. At a prior Council meeting, on the back of a highways general update, I asked Cllr Alan Amos (whilst Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) if funding could be provided to reopen the footpath and this was declined. I am now asking Cllr Mike Rouse (as Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) if funding can be provided, to ensure this much loved, very popular and previously frequently used river footpath can be reopened, in conjunction with the opening of Kepax Bridge, for the benefit of residents, visitors, tourism and the local economy?"*

#### **Answer**

I thank Councillor Allcott for her question. Just before I respond to her substantive point regarding the public right of way, I should just point out that Kepax Bridge is due to open by the end of 2024 rather than December 2025 as stated in her question.

As Cllr Alcott is aware the path has been closed on safety grounds due to a collapse of the riverbank. Due to the difficult access and sensitive nature of the site the cost of reinstating the river bank has been estimated to be between approx. £0.5M to £1m so isn't considered feasible. Officers are still engaged with the relevant landowners and hope to avoid the path being permanently closed.

#### Supplementary question

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport agreed to meet Cllr Mel Allcott to discuss whether any progress could be made opening up footpath WR-810 in Claines.

#### **QUESTION 8** – Cllr Richard Udall will ask Cllr Tracey Onslow:

*"The west side of Worcester has five primary schools and one high school. Two of the primary schools are faith schools. The expected population growth of the area may indicate the number of schools and existing school places maybe inadequate. The infrastructure of some existing schools may also be questionable and may now require new investment. What plans does the Cabinet Member have for possible new schools or the expansion or improvements to existing schools which could accommodate such changes in demand?"*

## Answer

The West Worcester Urban Expansion (WWUE) site of 2,000+ new dwellings sits in the catchment areas of Broadheath CE Primary School at primary phase and Christopher Whitehead Language College and The Chantry High School Martley at Secondary phase.

Pupil projections indicate that the developments for the WWUE as submitted, will impact on pupil numbers within the area. A proposed site has been identified for a new two form entry (60 place per year group) primary and nursery school which is currently being planned to open in September 2028 (subject to build out and occupation rates). In the meantime, pupil forecasts indicate that primary schools within 2 miles of the development will be able to mitigate the places required ahead of the new primary school opening.

The County Council are seeking the costs on a cost per dwelling basis from the developer(s) from the Temple Laugherne site (whole of the West Worcester Urban Extension) towards the provision of secondary infrastructure (expansions) at Christopher Whitehead Language College and The Chantry High School, Martley. We are currently seeking updates on the build out and occupation rates and this will then inform when and where the secondary provision will be required.

Where Academy Schools require capital maintenance to address condition needs, to keep buildings safe and in good working order, they can apply for [Condition Improvement Funding \(CIF\)](#) in an annual bidding round.

### Supplementary question

In response a concern about the impact that building a new high school would have on the existing schools in St John's, Worcester, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education commented that consultation would take place on the building of any new school and existing provision would be taken into account when a decision was made.

This page is intentionally left blank