

## Minutes of the Cabinet

### Lakeview Room, County Hall

Thursday, 26 October 2023, 10.00 am

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#### Present:

Cllr Simon Geraghty (Chairman), Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Marcus Hart (Vice Chairman), Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Steve Mackay, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Richard Morris and Cllr Tracey Onslow

#### Also attended:

Cllrs Mel Allcott and Matt Jenkins were also in attendance.

#### Available papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated); and
- B. The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 (previously circulated).

#### **2175 Apologies and Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 1)**

An apology was received from Cllr Mike Rouse.

Cllrs Marc Bayliss and Simon Geraghty declared interests in Agenda Item 5 as members of the Shrub Hill Board.

Cllrs Marcus Hart and Karen May declared interests in Agenda item 7 as members of the Joint Museums Committee.

#### **2176 Public Participation (Agenda item 2)**

None.

#### **2177 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting (Agenda item 3)**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **Thanks to Council staff**

The Leader of the Council thanked all those staff involved helping local residents in difficult circumstances during the recent flooding in the county. The Government had provided additional funding to support the work undertaken by the Council alongside district council partners to address flooding issues.

## **2178 The Healthy Worcestershire Programme (Agenda item 4)**

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being introduced the report and emphasised that the intention of the Healthy Worcestershire Programme was to engage with communities to undertake healthy activities, not to dictate to local residents. The Council had evaluated its offer to local communities and considered how it could enhance and build on what had already been achieved. The number of falls had increased year-on-year in the county and was too high. A key aspect of the Programme was to take action to reduce the number of falls.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care added that the number of people over the age of 65 living in the county had increased by 27% in the last 10 years which added a considerable demand on Adult Social Care Services. This Programme fitted in with the Council's prevention agenda, in particular the efforts being made to reduce the number of falls by elderly residents. It also linked in with the Get Safe initiative, particularly addressing the impact of fraud on the ability of elderly people to live independently for longer and being less reliant on council services. He expected local GPs to point people towards this service. The Programme also provided an add-on service to the work of community groups and the rehabilitation service. District councils had a key role in implementing this Programme on a local level. Grant funding would be made available from Public Health to support activities and groups within local areas. He considered the Programme to be a kind of village hall-based initiative.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were made:

- This Programme encouraged people to become active which would provide healthier outcomes for themselves as well as reducing the reliance on Council services as well as the health service
- It was vital that residents were made aware of the dangers, extent and impact of online fraud
- The Programme provided an enhanced integrated service for local residents, recognising the diverse nature of the county and that it was not possible to address all issues with one solution.
- The Programme encouraged engagement with local groups to enable the Council to make contact with hard-to-reach individuals and those that did not want to engage

- The approach to healthy living set out in the programme would help to reduce the current level of bed-blocking at hospitals caused by people who had been admitted as a result of a fall
- A councillor from outside the Cabinet queried the level of consultation with district councils and local groups. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being emphasised the importance of collaboration with district councils and local groups. Extensive and sensitive consultation had taken place and the Programme had been well-received. District councils would be at the centre of this ongoing piece of work. She also emphasised the need for programme to reach out to people who had not been engaging with the Council
- It was important to engage with parents to encourage the involvement of children and young people in order to shape lifestyles from an early age
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being commented that the Council needed to act as an enabler to change the way people looked at their lives and improve their well-being
- The Leader of the Council emphasised the important impact this Programme could have in addressing the number of falls and levels of social isolation. Increased exercise amongst the population would lead to improved strength and balance and thereby a reduction in the number of falls. It was vital that the Council engaged with local residents in order for the programme to succeed.

**Cabinet:**

- a) **Agreed the termination of funding for the current Lifestyle Service, PLUS Service, and Strong and Steady Service at the end of March 2024, enabling these budgets to be pooled to create a more integrated health improvement service commencing in April 2024;**
- b) **Authorised the Director of Public Health to procure a new service that provides an integrated health improvement programme aimed at enabling adults to stay active, healthy, socially connected, and safe from crime as they get older; and**
- c) **Authorised the Director of Public Health to enter into and execute, under seal as may be required, any contracts or ancillary documentation in relation to the award of the contract referred to in the recommendation above.**

## **2179 Shrub Hill Towns Fund Funding Agreement (Agenda item 5)**

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills introduced the report and commented that the Shrub Hill area was the largest unregenerated area of Worcester City. The plans for the redevelopment of Shrub Hill represented a significant outlay from the Government and the City Council and would act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the whole area. The Council had been working with colleagues from the City Council on a steering group to progress these plans.

The Leader of the Council stressed that this proposal was an important aspect of the Council's Corporate Plan. It was concerned with the regeneration of brownfield land and was the first part of the Council's commitment to a wider vision for the area.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were made:

- There were clear economic advantages of this project both in terms of the 400 jobs created but also the building of high-quality houses in the centre of the city
- The project would provide excellent connectivity which would be a tremendous draw to people wishing to live in or visit the area
- A member from outside the Cabinet queried the support provided to the small businesses that would be required to relocate as a result of this project. The Leader of the Council recognised that, as a result of the plans to regenerate the area, certain businesses would need to move. The Board had provided support to these businesses and helped find alternative locations
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills recognised that despite previous promises, this was the first significant investment that the city of Worcester had received from the Government in many years.

**Cabinet:**

- a) Noted the allocation of Towns Fund monies by Worcester City Council to the redevelopment of Isaac Maddox House and the creation of a new public realm connection to the City Centre;**
- b) Authorised the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the CMR for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills to enter into the proposed Funding Agreement to deliver the Towns Fund Shrub Hill projects;**
- c) Authorised the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure to obtain tenders for the works; and**
- d) 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.**

**2180 Treasury Management Mid-Year Update to 31 August 2023 (Agenda item 6)**

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and emphasised the Council's prudent and sensible approach to Treasury Management and the management of risk. The Council had adapted its approach to borrowing to reflect the current economic climate and market conditions. As a result, the Council had looked at increasing internal borrowing rather than external borrowing to avoid increasing the Council's long-term debt.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were made:

- Although the investment portfolio yield for the first 5 months of the year was 4.63% against benchmark, this had been counter-balanced by inflationary pressures and the increased cost of borrowing. The Council used AAA rated Money Market funds to maintain short term liquidity
- The majority of the Council's debt would be maturing within 10 years or over and given the expectation of a sustained period of higher interest rates, it left the Council in a satisfactory financial position
- In response to a query from a councillor from outside the Cabinet about how ESG considerations were integrated into the Council's approach to Treasury Management, the Leader of the Council explained that Treasury Management was concerned with short term loans usually from other local authorities or AAA rated lenders. The key aspect for the Council was to maintain liquidity so that the Council was able to access funds rather than achieving a return. The Council would not be prepared to risk that liquidity to meet ESG considerations. The Chief Financial Officer added that Treasury Management related to debt rather than investment. It involved short-term placement of money before those funds were utilised elsewhere. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care added that there were a limited number of banking institutions that had strong green credentials and these institutions tended to be A rated and therefore would not be considered suitable in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Policy.

**Cabinet:**

- a) Noted this report, recognising that the Council is operating within its approved Treasury Management Strategy; and**
- b) Endorsed the conclusions that the Treasury Management activities continue to be cost effective.**

## **2181      Worcestershire County Museum (Agenda item 7)**

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities introduced the report and commented that the Council's lease for Hartlebury Museum was due to end in February 2026. The Joint Museums Committee had agreed that the lease should be reviewed. The Museum had some valuable collections but was unable to put them fully on display because of restrictions associated with the buildings at Hartlebury Castle. The Council was working with the Hartlebury Trust to make Hartlebury Museum a tourist destination with a wider offer to attract visitors. If the Council decided to walk away from the site, there would be substantial costs. After considering a number of options, the Joint Museums Committee considered that it would be preferable to extend the lease and redevelop the existing buildings for the County Museum at Hartlebury Castle.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were made:

- It was important to build on and enhance the commercial activities that were already taking place at Hartlebury Museum

- The Leader of the Council commented that Hartlebury Castle was an important visitor destination/attraction. The Council needed to provide whatever support it could to improve the visitor offer especially given the potential for national funding. As part of this work, a clearer understanding of the travel options to the site needed to be developed.

**Cabinet:**

- a) **Noted the information regarding options for the future of Worcestershire County Museum;**
- b) **Approved the preferred option (option A) recommended by the Joint Museums Committee;**
- c) **Authorised the Strategic Director of People in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities to implement the approved option, including the negotiation of a new management agreement and the submission of a development phase application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund; and**
- d) **Authorised the Director of Commercial and Change to negotiate and implement a new lease.**

The meeting ended at 11.20am.

Chairman .....