

COUNCIL
15 SEPTEMBER 2016**REPORTS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH RESPONSIBILITY**

(a) Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families**Introduction**

1. I am pleased to present to Council my first report as Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families.
2. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the service and commitment my predecessor, Councillor John Campion, gave to championing young people's causes in the county during his tenure as Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR). I am sure that Councillor Campion will take his commitment to improving outcomes for our young people and their families into his new role as Police and Crime Commissioner and I look forward to continuing to work with him.
3. Huge challenges face Children's Services across the country and Worcestershire is not immune from those challenges with increasing demand for social care services. We have seen improvement and good levels of performance in some areas of the service and we still have challenges to meet in others, but I have consistently seen a service that is committed to the task of continuing to transform the services we deliver to improve the outcomes for our young people and their families.
4. The past year has seen a change of political and managerial leadership, which has the potential to unsettle the improvement journey. However, as the new Cabinet Member with Responsibility with a new permanent Director there is a positive opportunity to set out a clear vision grounded in what makes a difference to children and families, preventing crisis, building resilience, working as part of the broader public sector to achieve our ambitions for the future. The voice of the child and young person is at the heart of all that the service does whilst we work hard to improve outcomes.

Education and Skills

5. The relationship between the Council and its schools and settings has for a time been changing, as we move towards greater local autonomy through initiatives such as the growth of academies. We are at a particularly important stage in this at the present time, in the light of current and proposed Government changes to educational provision.
6. Central to this is the publication earlier this year of the Government's White Paper '*Educational Excellence Everywhere*'. This paper sets out the Government's plan to deliver the priorities within the DfE's Education Strategy Overview 2015-20. This is based on supported autonomy, aligning funding, control, responsibility and accountability as close to the front line as possible. It encompasses changes to financing of schools, to curriculum, and assessment.

7. The White Paper clarifies the future role of the Council in its work with schools and settings. Principally, the Council will retain its role in terms of pupil place planning, with the duty to ensure that all pupils have access to a quality school place. We retain an overview of pupils with special educational needs and, through the statutory post of Virtual Headteacher, oversight of the educational performance of our looked after children. Wider than this, the Council maintains the role as acting as champion for children and families.

8. *'Educational Excellence Everywhere'* clarifies that the Council will no longer have a direct role in school improvement, and that this responsibility will lie with the office of the Regional Schools Commissioner, which is a post reporting to the DfE. As a Council we need to decide how best to implement national policy with a local focus that ensures we strive for educational excellence for all our learners.

9. The Government is currently undertaking a national review of further education in England. This is being undertaken on a regional basis, the review for Worcestershire and the Marches being completed in March this year. The outcomes for Worcestershire of this review have not led to significant changes, largely due to the work that has already taken place in the county, for example through the creation of a merged Heart of Worcestershire College. The review did not undertake an analysis of post-16 provision in our schools.

10. Finally, the Government has recently published another education-focussed White Paper, this time on a post-16 skills plan. The aim of this White Paper is to re-assess the provision of technical and vocational education post-16, and will be a topic for discussion in the next year.

11. We are proud of our schools, and currently have nearly nine out of ten of our schools and early years' settings judged by Ofsted as being good or outstanding. This means that, wherever a young person is educated in Worcestershire, there is excellent provision that will give them the right start in life and equip them with skills and knowledge for the future. Such a high profile of success, as good as anywhere else in the West Midlands, gives our young people increasingly high aspirations for their future.

12. Key Stage 2 results have been published and, while we do not yet have information for our statistical neighbours, we do have some national comparators. Assessment at the end of Key Stage 2 has changed from this year. There are no longer the national curriculum levels that we have had in the past. Pupils are now assessed according to whether or not they have met the 'expected standard' in reading, maths and writing, the last of these being assessed by teachers while the others are through external examinations. The key benchmark for a school is the proportion of learners meeting the expected standard in reading, maths and writing combined. It is not possible to compare results in these assessments with last year, but we can compare ourselves this year against national figures. In Worcestershire, 48.3% of pupils reached the expected standard, compared with 53% nationally. While there have been challenges regarding the nature of the assessments (outcomes are much lower than last year), the fact remains that outcomes in Worcestershire are lower than recorded nationally. As stated in the last CMR report, outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 remain a key concern for the Council.

13. This year sees the first in a series of revisions to assessment at the end of Key Stage 4, and is the last year of the familiar 'A*-G' grading system at GCSE. From next summer, students will receive a number rather than letter outcome, ranging from 1 to 9

with grade 1 being the highest. It will also see the removal of continual assessment, with outcomes being based on final examinations at the end of Year 11.

14. For this summer, students have received grades based on the A*-G system, but the way in which aggregated results are reported has changed. The previous measure of the proportion of students attaining at least five grades A*-C is no longer applicable. The Government has introduced four performance measures, which are measured at individual school level then reported to the DfE. While there is no requirement for a council to report on the performance of all its schools, in Worcestershire we remain committed to improving outcomes and monitor schools' performance closely.

15. The principal measure of performance is now 'Progress 8'. This measures the amount of progress made from the end of Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 4 for all pupils in a school, and compares it against students in similar schools throughout the country. The measure is taken for a student's best eight results, and is reported in aggregated form for a school – individual students do not receive their own Progress 8 score. A score of +1.0 means that, on average, students in a school have performed a whole GCSE grade better than could be expected given their starting point at end of Key Stage 2. Similarly, -1.0 means a whole grade lower than should be expected. The Government has introduced a new floor standard based on Progress 8 measures, replacing the old measure of the proportion of students gaining at least 5 good GCSE grades. From this year, a school is judged to be below the floor standard if its Progress 8 measure is -0.5 or below.

16. The second measure is Attainment 8, which simply records attainment rather than progress. The third is the percentage of students attaining at least a grade C in English and maths, and the final measure is the percentage of students attaining the English Baccalaureate (C+ in English, maths, a science subject, a humanities subject and a language).

17. Results at present are provisional, and we do not as yet have national comparisons. Headlines nationally have reported a drop in overall standards this year, and a decrease in the proportion of entries attaining an A*. I am pleased to report that, on first indications, outcomes for Worcestershire schools appear to have at least held, and possibly improved upon, last year's figures. Our provisional Progress 8 figure is +0.29. While we have nothing against which to compare this, it indicates that overall students have made more progress in secondary education than expected. The Attainment 8 figure is 5.22 – last year nationally this was 4.88, although the figure was not officially used in 2015. 64.1% of students in Worcestershire schools are reported to have gained at least a grade C in both English and maths. This compares with 60.7% last year for Worcestershire, and 57.1% nationally. Finally, the proportion of students attaining the EBacc has remained stable at just under 25%. This is in line with national figures from last year, and indicates that this measure is considered by schools to be the least important of the measure – in 2016 only 40% of students in Worcestershire entered subjects that constituted a full EBacc.

18. 'A' level results. At this level there are many ways of reporting outcomes, and to date we do not have detailed comparisons for statistical neighbours or for national performance. Initial figures indicate that 85% of learners in our schools attained three 'A' level passes, compared to 74% last year. The average points score per student, and per entry, has also increased slightly. A concern is that the proportion of learners attaining the highest grades (measured as at least AAB) is below last year, and is likely to be below national average. It should be noted that these figures are for learners in

our schools. We do not yet have information from our colleges, where approximately 50% of 'A' levels are sat.

19. Our other key area of challenge is the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. This is principally pupils eligible for pupil premium, and those children looked after by the Council. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in Worcestershire remains greater than for many of our statistical neighbours, and the national average. This will continue to be a focus for our service.

20. From October 2015 the majority of our learner services were, as planned, commissioned to Babcock – trading in Worcestershire as Babcock Prime. This is a five-year contract, and so we are nearing the end of the first year of the contract.

21. The core commissioning team within Education and Skills is now in place in order to monitor and challenge the effectiveness of the contract, which is to deliver services on Worcestershire's behalf. A full suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is in place with regular monitoring on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis. The contract is monitored under strict and rigorous performance management processes, involving weekly, monthly and quarterly assessments. We are approaching our first annual review meeting.

22. During this year the commissioning team has taken on all commissioned activity from within Education and Skills, for example by undertaking a review of Alternative Provision in the county.

23. As mentioned in last year's report, September 2014 saw the introduction of reforms for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) intended to make the provision of services for pupils with SEND more targeted, timely, and give greater ownership to young people and parents. This year has seen the embedding of these reforms, and the introduction of a framework for the inspection of services for SEND learners by Ofsted. This inspection is now live, and so we can expect an Ofsted inspection of our services at any time.

24. In Worcestershire the proportion of pupils with a Statement of Educational Needs or Education Health and Care Plan stands at 2.9%. The figure nationally remains at 2.8%. In the last academic year we received 447 requests for assessment, a rise of 64% on the previous year and an overall rise of 260% since 2012/13. We are currently addressing the challenge of 19-25 provision within the county by working with Special Schools and supporting plans to open provision for these young people in their own locality. Chadsgrove will be the first to offer 19-25 provision in September 2016.

25. The role of the Virtual School now sits within Education and Skills, having previously been a part of the Social Care Team. The current Virtual Head took up the post in mid-February. The Virtual Head has supported and challenged schools, Alternative Providers and other agencies to champion our Looked After Children alongside preventing exclusions, appropriate school placements and re-integration. The Virtual Head has carried out a quality control exercise on current PEPs (Personal Educational Plans) in the summer term to identify strengths and areas of development to establish a baseline and training need analysis.

26. We have raised, and will continue to raise, the profile of the Virtual Head within the service. Educational outcomes for our Looked After Children remain poor, and we all

have a responsibility to work to improve them. In 2015, only 15% of Year 11 Looked After Children attained the benchmark of five good GCSE grades. To say that this is in line with national average is not acceptable – it remains that more than four in five of our Looked After Children did not attain the expected benchmark at the end of Year 11.

27. The responsibility to provide places for all our learners remains a duty of the Council, and this has been another busy year for the planning team in Education and Skills. Demographic growth in the primary phase is likely to peak in 2016 with numbers forecast to reduce over the next few years. Numbers are likely to rise in the secondary phase from this point forward. Initially we are able to meet this growth from within existing surplus places and planned increases but pressure in parts of the county for additional places will exist from 2020 forward. In Bromsgrove, pressure on middle school places is likely to come earlier, with additional capacity needed from 2019. Pressure on the capital programme remains high with a need to put in additional places prior to confirmation of Basic Need funding from the DfE or the receipt of Section 106 funding as a result of housing developments.

28. Increased places as a result of housing are forecast, especially in the south of the county, as they are furthest forward with their development plan. In the primary sector agreements have been reached for two new primary schools, from 2020 based on current planned housing growth, in the south of the county. A new first school in Redditch is at an early stage of discussions. These will be Free Schools. Secondary numbers are currently planned to be met by expansions of existing schools.

29. The wider impact of potential change of age ranges from schools remains a high priority. We are working closely with schools to try and identify pyramid-wide solutions to any proposed changes. The Council does not receive any funding for such changes so is not in a position to fund any capital works. A policy on when the Council will carry out consultations on changes on behalf of maintained schools will go to Cabinet in October.

30. Last year the Business and Investment Team transferred into the Children's Services Directorate, and currently sits within the Education and Skills portfolio. This provides essential links with Open for Business and in particular the future development of skills that can equip our learners to compete in an ever more competitive and changing labour market. Detail of the Open for Business work, for example the Connecting Schools and Business programme, and our application for a University Technical College, were included in the report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure at the last meeting of Council in July.

31. Finally, the Government remains committed to introducing Fairer Funding for Schools, High Needs (HN) and Early Years (EY). This is to be based upon schools' and children's actual needs, rather than simply on historic levels of funding.

32. Stage 1 consultation for Schools and HN in March and April 2016 was met with an overwhelmingly positive response. Publication of the Government's full response to the Stage 1 and proposals for the Stage 2 will be available when Parliament returns in the autumn. This will be a full consultation with final decisions early in the New Year, and the new system will apply from 2018-19 not 2017-18 as initially intended.

Early Help and Prevention

33. Addressing the causes of problems rather than the symptoms by strengthening help to families at an early stage continues to remain a key priority for the Council and the service. Since the beginning of my tenure as Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families the focus on Early Help and Prevention has been two fold; firstly the implementation of the all-age prevention policy agreed by Cabinet in November last year which includes commissioning a new prevention service for 0-19s and secondly confirming proposals for how we can continue to use children's centre buildings as important community resources.

34. Underpinning the need to re-focus our early help and prevention services is the need to reduce demand on our higher-cost social care services. The Public Health completed Early Help Needs Assessment also highlighted consistently stubborn poor outcomes around school readiness for the under 5s as well as a high prevalence of emotional health and wellbeing needs and speech and language issues. Outcomes are poorest in areas of significant disadvantage and the inequalities gap between the richest and poorest is still too great.

35. To address these issues efforts have focused on introducing a new service that brings together a number of existing functions to be **single contact route into targeted and support services** for children and families – this service is referred to as the Family Front Door. The service works with our key partners to share information at the earliest opportunity in the most effective way. It also focuses on doing more work with children and families 'upfront' before entry into social care. This service was officially launched at the beginning of July, so it is still early days in measuring success. However, early indications are positive – for example the benefits of forging excellent working relationship with the Police has resulted in Police contacts into the Family Front Door reducing by over 30%.

36. Helping vulnerable children, families and individuals who are at risk/have poor outcomes is **everybody's business** and ensuring everyone plays the full part across the whole system underpins the implementation of the Family Front Door as well as the Connecting Families initiative that launched in Redditch earlier this year. The team of workers in Redditch are working with over 300 families and they continue to explore and test out new ways of working to best meet families' needs. Data is being captured to demonstrate impact including cost benefits to the public sector.

37. However, re-focusing early help and prevention services isn't without its challenges. It is well documented that the Council has a significant financial challenge and this means that there will be less money available for these services in the future. I continue to remain committed to our original ambition of implementing a new 0-19 prevention service (Starting Well), as agreed by Cabinet in November 2015 and June this year, as this is the right thing to do to improve outcomes for children and families. In practice, this will mean that some current services will stop or have to be delivered in a very different way. Working as one with the Public Health Directorate, work is progressing with existing providers to develop these new ways of working, making sure that money is used in the most effective way and there is continued focus on improving outcomes for children, with more focus on supporting those in greatest need.

38. One way of delivering services in a different way is how we use our children's centre buildings, which leads me on to the second area of focus. I want to re-iterate that children's centres are not a building-focussed service; it is about improving outcomes for

young children and their families and reducing inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers – this underpins the vision of the new prevention approach.

39. Unlike other councils we remain committed to using these purpose-built buildings to help give every child the best start in life. Therefore we are not closing any of our centres, but we are proposing to use 18 of them in a different way. The impact of these decisions will increase early years' education and childcare provision for young children in at least 11 buildings along with increased use across a wider range of providers in the majority of buildings. There will however be changes to what is delivered in these buildings and services that families currently access may stop, be delivered differently or elsewhere. We will continue to work with residents, and providers to explore and implement new ways of working that focus on meeting need and sustaining well used and valued provision.

Children's Social Care

40. The number of children who are looked after has stabilised during this year, standing at 705 in August (it was 722 at the beginning of the year). The number of children with a child protection plan has steadily decreased over the course of the year, from 483 at the turn of the year to 401 in August. Our aim remains to reduce the total number of Looked After Children whilst ensuring that when it is in the best interests for the child or young person we act swiftly and appropriately to remove them from that family setting.

41. Senior management capacity continues to be split between two interim Assistant Directors, one for Safeguarding Services and the second for Provider Services to provide oversight and drive improved performance practice within the services. A permanent Assistant Director for Safeguarding Services has been appointed and is due to start in the autumn, which will bring fresh external expertise and stability. Further expertise has been brought in to support our Ofsted preparation and progress the implementation of the back to basics improvement plan.

42. Attracting and appointing staff remains a significant challenge, which is a picture reflected in councils across the country. Whilst there have been targeted recruitment campaigns to attract both newly qualified and experienced social workers, there is still a significant reliance on agency workers to ensure a safe service is maintained. Recruitment is only one half of the story as retention is pivotal in growing a stable and effective workforce, particularly in ensuring we retain those newly qualified social workers we are investing time and effort to support and nurture towards maturity. Key to this is creating the conditions that make staff want to stay: manageable caseloads, support, competitive salaries and opportunities for professional development. Currently only 76% of the social care workforce are permanent. This leads to high usage of agency staff which inevitably reduces consistency of social worker for children and young people. Focus on workforce development, culture and support is a key priority for the Directorate to ensure that staff are able to provide the right service at the right time for those children and young people in need.

43. Evidence from the peer review that took place in 2015, combined with feedback from social care staff has challenged the principle of creating a system that allowed for one social worker to hold a case from referral through to closure or permanency. The peer review identified the need to clarify and improve access into the service as well as focusing on performance as part of a 'Back to Basics' programme for social work. The

Family Front Door activity includes social workers making decisions about levels of need and delivering intensive eight-week packages of support to families with a view to close as many families as appropriate without the need for longer term social care input by the safeguarding locality teams. This means that work is underway to re-shape locality teams as the work they are required to undertake has changed, to focus only on intervention. This work is designed to ensure that staff will have manageable caseloads which is crucial to ensure quality work can be undertaken.

44. Monthly Improvement Boards continue to take place, led by the Chief Executive with myself and key senior officers included. The remit of the Board is to improve performance and practice standards in social care and provide the corporate support required to enable this to happen. Whilst we have seen some areas of improvement there are still areas where improvement has not been seen or embedded, which requires continued focus e.g. young people with a pathway plan remains unacceptably low at 40%. I remain focused on ensuring that the plans to improve the practice of our social care service to enable better outcomes for all our vulnerable children and young people are delivered. I am also committed to ensuring that this is achieved in the most cost effective way possible to the Council.

45. The placements strategy is starting to see some real progress in line with the financial recovery plan. We are seeing the cost per placement fall and a tighter grip on overall placement spend. Currently the demand for placements is being managed effectively ensuring both cost effective and good quality provision.

46. There are rigorous processes in place through a Resource Panel that has been strengthened in its remit and function and now makes decisions on all placements and their associated cost. This has been important in ensuring a clear, accountable and robust process to ensure the right children come into care and the right placement option is secured in terms of both quality and cost.

47. There have been a number of initiatives and developments to support and manage the placements budget. The edge of care service, which now sits within the Family Front Door, has been implemented and has also contributed to stopping the sharp rise in Looked After Children by giving targeted and intensive support to children and families to help keep families together at home.

Provider Services

48. The Provider Service covers a wide range of service areas, which include Fostering and Kinship, Adoption, Children's Residential Care, Specialist Support Services – supervised contact, the Integrated Service for Looked After Children (ISL), Outreach and Post 16 accommodation and the Care Leavers Service.

49. The development and growth of in-house provision is a key strand to the placements strategy, on average across all placements our in-house placements are £23,000 cheaper per annum compared to the average external agency placement. The average in-house non-related foster carer placement is significantly more cost-effective than an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA). The Fostering Service have continued with their recruitment activity and at the same time have developed capacity within the Service to manage the increase in enquires and approvals. The total number of households approved for 2014/15 was 44. Recruitment was down on last year's total of due to a focus on more difficult to place children including those for teenagers, sibling

groups and children with disabilities. 53% of all fostered children are placed within our Fostering and Kinship Service.

50. £1m of capital funding was allocated to develop 17 in-house Supported Living Placements; these are all now operational. One of new children's homes is currently being used as a short break home for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, which is seeing success in keeping children at home and preventing them from being looked after by the Council. All of the Children's Homes have kept an Ofsted rating of *Good* or *Outstanding*, this helps to assure not just the cost of the provision but also the quality of what we provide as a council to our most vulnerable children and young people.

51. Adoption performance continues to be strong in Worcestershire. We were one of the 10 councils that have shown an improvement over a three-year period for the average time between when a child enters care and moves in with their adoptive family. Worcestershire's figures include the legacy cohort. The Council continues to be ambitious in terms of adoption for children over 5, sibling groups and those with additional needs. In response to the Government's regionalisation of adoption agenda we are working in partnership with Adoption Central England (ACE) which includes Solihull, Coventry, and Warwickshire. The scope of this work is to develop a more detailed business case for a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). The conflict between Government pressure to increase the number and pace of adoptions and the reality of a decreasing number of Placement Orders being granted by the courts is still an issue we are having to manage.

52. Our Health and Well-Being Team have continued to provide invaluable support to children, families, carers and placements. The roll out of the Nurturing Attachment Groups to foster carers and residential staff has been key in supporting carers to understand children and young people's needs and support the stability of placements and prevent breakdowns. Two additional psychology posts are soon to be funded through the social care therapy budget, Child and Adolescence Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the Placement Plus intensive fostering scheme.

Financial Summary

53. The total net budget for Children, Families and Communities for 2016/17 is £84.8m which is approximately 26% of the Council's net budget. However the Community Services element of this is £7.6m, so after deducting this amount it gives a total for the Children and Young People's Portfolio of £77.2m (24% of the net Council budget).

54. The savings target relevant to this portfolio for 2016/17 is £5.9m and all planned savings are expected to be delivered by the end of the year.

55. Alongside the requirement for the service to make savings, the Council acknowledged the need to increase the budget for children's placements by £4.5m in 2016/17, which is planned to reduce to a recurrent value of £3m from 2017/18 onwards. The number of Looked After Children has stabilised over the first few months of the year and initial indications are that the placement budget will break even this year.

56. However this is a volatile area of the budget and this continues to be managed closely as the average additional cost for one internal fostering placement is about

£25,000, for one external fostering placement it is about £42,000, but this could rise to approximately £200,000 if a child needs an external residential placement for a whole year. The Council has developed a number of internal alternatives over the last 12 months to reduce the reliance on expensive external provision and will continue to develop these whilst the need arises.

Conclusion

57. In summary, I believe Children and Families Services are well placed to meet the many challenges that face our young people in the county. We are developing a strong and committed staff group that wants to do their best for our young people, but we are not there yet. Recruiting and retaining the right staff is a key priority for the year ahead and significant focus is required to achieve a stable workforce. My challenge is to ensure that the directorate and the Council provide them with the tools and environment to do that.

58. The rising numbers and costs associated with social care remains a key priority for the directorate and the Council, and is receiving a huge amount of corporate support and attention. Financial progress in this respect has been very positive over the last year but continued attention is required to ensure this is sustainable.

59. Finally, I would like to place on record my thanks to Catherine Driscoll, the Leadership Team and all the staff within Children Services. They do their roles in difficult circumstances, often having to engage with families at a time of extreme crisis. The challenges that remain are huge, but I believe with the right support they are able to meet them to give the best outcomes for our young people and the tax payers.

Marc Bayliss

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families

(b) Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment

INTRODUCTION

60. It is my pleasure as Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Environment to submit my report to Council on the work that has taken place in my areas of responsibility within the last year.

61. The role of CMR for Environment is a crosscutting one covering a number of service areas. The Environment remains one of the Council's Corporate Priorities and I believe it is an essential resource for economic prosperity and social well-being of residents and visitors alike.

WASTE DISPOSAL

62. **Local Authority Collected Waste:** I continue to work with colleagues from both Herefordshire Council and the Worcestershire District Councils and I chair the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Strategic Waste Management Members' Board, consisting of senior members and officers.

63. The "Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy" review was adopted by all partners in August 2011. An overview of the targets is shown below. It should be noted that kilograms of residual waste per household had consistently been reducing, but are now starting to rise again. Despite this rise we have exceeded our target for 2015 and continue to work with partners to achieve targets for 2020.

Table1. Kg of Residual Household Waste per household (NI191)

| Authority | 2000 | 2015/16 Provisional performance | 2015 Target | 2020 Target |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--|------------------------|------------------------|
| Herefordshire Council | 1,077 | 559 | 700 | 592 |
| Worcestershire County Council | 1,075 | 626 | 699 | 591 |

64. **Waste Prevention:** The "Lets Waste Less" website continues to be well used by residents and is a valuable resource for advice. The Herefordshire & Worcestershire Facebook pages for composting and "Love Food Hate Waste" continue to grow with nearly 1,000 people liking the pages last year.

65. Our main focus continues to be to encourage food waste prevention, which is a significant portion of the residual waste stream. Between February and August 2015 a "Love Food Hate Waste" campaign was run in Wychavon. Activities included door knocking, cookery demonstrations, leaflet distribution, work with schools, posters on refuse vehicles and bus and radio adverts. Analysis showed an increase in the awareness of the "Love Food Hate Waste" campaign, with 46% of respondents to a survey saying their behaviour relating to food waste had changed.

66. Our contractor Severn Waste appointed a Waste Education Officer in September 2015 who has progressively improved the Education Room at EnviroSort. She has

commenced work with schools and other interested groups, arranging visits to the facility for residents to see the recycling process at first hand. A new Waste Champion programme is also being undertaken to recruit volunteers to work across all areas of waste prevention. These new volunteers should be out assisting residents by early 2017.

67. **Reuse:** We continue to work with third sector reuse organisations and have updated our online communications to promote all partners. Reuse partnerships operate at eight Household Recycling Centres across Worcestershire where charities collect furniture, bicycles and household items, which divert material away from landfill and helps people set up a new home. More than 55 tonnes of materials were sent for reuse in 2015/16.

68. **Recycling and Composting:** Recycling has increased in 2015/16, but at 41.1% remains below our 2015/16 target. The main reason for this is the lack of recycling opportunities for timber, which is now sent for energy production as biomass fuel counting as recovery. We are continually working with partners to increase performance in this area. We continue to supply composting bins at much reduced prices direct to residents through our partnership with Straight. Sales remain fairly consistent with more emphasis being placed on food digesters, which are proving to be a popular way of removing food waste from the waste stream. Our Master Composters volunteers promote the scheme in the local community and in schools.

69. The **EnviroSort** plant at Norton processed more than 75,000 tonnes of commingled recyclate last year. Severn Waste obtained planning permission to extend the operating and maintenance hours at the facility to maximise operational flexibility and it has installed glass breakers to improve the quality of material output. A fire suppression system has been installed to reduce the risk of building and plant damage in the event of a fire.

70. More than 6,000 tonnes of waste arising from the District Councils' road sweepings have been recycled at a facility in Wolverhampton.

71. Our Household Recycling Centres have maintained their performance recovering value from more than 72% of the material delivered to them. The new Household Recycling Centre in Tenbury Wells was completed on time. I had the pleasure of opening the new facility, together with Tenbury Town Councillors, on 25 February 2016.

72. **Energy Recovery:** Recovery of value from waste is still below our 78% target, but has shown a slight increase in performance since last year and now stands at 50.4%. Once operational in 2017, **Envirecover**, our new Energy from Waste plant will provide a step change in recovery performance meaning that we will be able to deliver our target performance level from 2017/18. Work continues towards the delivery of **Envirecover**, at the Hartlebury Trading Estate and it remains on schedule to be fully operational in spring 2017. Building construction is nearing completion with outstanding work being on site roads and building services. The new plant will receive up to 200,000 tonnes of residual waste from across Herefordshire and Worcestershire each year and generate a net power output of 16.5 MW enough to power a town the size of Kidderminster.

73. Installation of the processing equipment is complete and commissioning has commenced and the grid connection to enable the export of electricity has been completed and powered up. Planning conditions continue to be discharged as required by the local Planning Authority. Over the last year a number of members from both

counties have visited the site, including the Worcestershire Cabinet and both Chief Executives.

74. The Community Liaison Group for **EnviRecover** continues to meet regularly. This is made up of representatives from local parish councils and local county and district council members. The contractor (Mercia Waste) has dedicated pages on its website to keep residents up to date including time-lapse video footage. News bulletins are circulated by email and letters have been delivered to local residents explaining the commissioning process.

75. **Safe Disposal to Landfill:** The Pollution Control Team continues to monitor the closed landfill sites in Worcestershire and carry out, or commission, any necessary remedial works. During 2015/16 they commissioned the installation of three new boreholes at both the Hanbury Wharf and Shirley Quarry landfill sites. These were required to further the understanding of the site and assess the risk of migrating landfill gas.

76. The Team also carried out improvement works on the gas abstraction systems at Hartlebury and Hanbury, increasing their efficiency. New reed beds at Shirley Quarry will rectify the high levels of dissolved iron although discharges from the site have remained within consent limits.

FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

77. **Local Flood Risk Management Strategy:** Following extensive statutory stakeholder and public consultation and Cabinet approval, the Strategy has been completed. Its accompanying action plan published in September 2016 will guide and describe the efforts of the County Council and its partners over the next six years.

78. **Statutory Planning Application Consultation Role:** During the last 12 months Flood Risk Management Officers have scrutinised and commented on the drainage plans of over 140 major planning applications. Along with pre-application discussions with developers, the comments help to ensure that the developments have appropriate sustainable drainage in order that there is minimal risk of them flooding from surface water and of causing flooding elsewhere.

79. **Neighbourhood Area Plans:** Flood Risk Management Officers have liaised with a number of Worcestershire communities to ensure that flooding is properly taken into account by their emerging Neighbourhood Area Plans.

80. **Flood Alleviation and Drainage Schemes:** A range of flood alleviation and highway drainage schemes have been completed or worked on over the last 12 months, reducing the risk of flooding to a significant number of homes, businesses and pieces of critical infrastructure. Schemes have been completed at locations including; Norton, Hagley, Spetchley, Kempsey, Wick, Bromsgrove, Redditch, Kidderminster, Tenbury, Worcester, Broadway, Upton Snodsbury, Crophorne, Malvern, Kemerton, Westmancote, Broad Marston, Ryall, Dunhampstead.

81. In addition, larger scale highway flood adaptation schemes have been completed at Wood Norton and Powick and preparations are well underway for schemes at Craycombe, Pershore, New Road in Worcester and Upton-upon-Severn.

82. Community Engagement: The new Community Engagement Officer, employed via the National Flood Forum, has successfully audited and engaged with a number of existing community flood groups throughout the county. In addition they have begun discussions with a number of new potential flood groups and started preparation for an annual community flood forum and a community liaison group to feed into the Worcestershire Land Drainage Group.

83. Highway Drainage: The huge network of highway drainage infrastructure has continued to be maintained and improved during the last 12 months including a very significant number of inspections, investigations, surveys and small scale improvement schemes. A particularly intensive and widespread programme of emergency maintenance took place in response to the surface water flooding in March 2016. This was the largest surface water flood event since 2007 and the drainage network coped extremely well.

84. Land Drainage: The district council land drainage partnerships have continued to successfully deliver the roles delegated to them by the County Council under the Water Act, most notably ensuring that the extensive network of smaller watercourses and drainage ditches in Worcestershire is properly maintained by riparian owners.

85. Natural Flood Alleviation Solutions: Natural solutions are increasingly being deployed to hold back and slow down water upstream of flooding hotspots and also to get it quickly and safely away downstream. This includes both smaller scale local methods such as the creation of attenuation basins, soakaways and headland vegetation strips and larger, wider scale catchment-wide land management changes.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

86. The County Council continues to be a leading member of the Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership (LNP), providing the secretariat, which enables the LNP to function, and leading on a number of projects. There have been three principle areas of focus for our work:

87. Vale of Evesham Landscape Partnership: A £3 million bid has been made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a landscape partnership programme focussing on the unique landscape, biodiversity and built heritage of the Vale. The programme was developed in partnership with Environment Agency, Wychavon District Council, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and Transition Evesham Vale amongst others, and submitted to Heritage Lottery in May 2016. We expect a decision on the application in the autumn.

88. EUSiF: Work has commenced on the development of a LNP partnership bid for EU funding which is focussed on the water environment. The bid includes work to improve access to and awareness of local rivers using the “Love Your Rivers” approach pioneered in Telford, a scheme visited by both the Director John Hobbs and myself. Proposals are to improve the management of surface water through the creation of exemplar schemes and enhancement to flood plains. Work on the bid commenced in spring 2016.

89. Pollinators: Following the adoption of the Council motion to become a pollinator friendly county, work has been underway through the LNP to collate information on all the different projects across the county. These include the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's facilitation fund for on-farm projects and verge management projects in towns. The

County Council is specifically working with Kemerton Conservation Trust on a project to improve the species mix of road verges in the county, and Malvern Hills AONB are undertaking a survey of verges in their area with a view to an enhancement project.

90. **Green infrastructure:** Green infrastructure continues to be a focus for our work, particularly on development sites. During 2015/16 we have worked closely with the developers of Worcester Six to ensure that green infrastructure is integrated into the development, including the enhancement of the wet grassland and ancient woodland on site. A drainage strategy has been developed which diverts flows to the wet grassland, and improves the quality of the stream through the sites, through re-naturalisation.

91. The Team in partnership with council colleagues have developed a green infrastructure approach for the Worcestershire Parkway railway station. The proposal incorporates the site's rich biodiversity into the development and showcases the positive use of sustainable drainage.

92. **The South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP):** The SWDP was adopted in February 2016 and includes a strong policy on green infrastructure which was suggested by the County Council which requires up to 40% on large developments.

93. In 2015 the County Council became the Lead Local Flood Authority and become a statutory consultee on local flood risk. We have commented on over 194 major planning applications across the county, and are developing a series of additional guidance documents to enhance sustainable drainage systems, and enhance their quality. On many developments sites, sustainable drainage will form a critical part of the green infrastructure and we are working on opportunities to deliver this jointly and ensure that scheme designs enhance biodiversity, water quality and amenity.

94. **Worcestershire Habitat Inventory:** We have led the development of this resource which provides information on habitats in the county and can be used for a range of projects including funding applications, neighbourhood planning and comments on planning applications. It is also one of our key evidence bases for the emerging minerals local plan, and the review of the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan. The resource is now being finalised, and will be on our website later this year.

95. We have been undertaking a trial project to assist communities on the development of neighbourhood plans, offering advice on of historic environment and flooding with colleagues from other teams. The trial has been recognised by the Department of Communities and Local Government who supported it financially as part of their capacity building on neighbourhood planning.

96. **The Minerals Local Plan:** Development has continued in 2015/16 with a focus on restoration and inclusion of green infrastructure in minerals proposals, linked to the landscape character, biodiversity, hydrology and historic environment. The plan is due to be consulted on in late 2016.

97. **The Renewable Energy Strategy:** This was adopted in November 2015 and guides our approach to the development of renewable energy in the county at all scales, with the aim of increasing renewable energy generation, securing income from energy generation, improving energy security and reducing carbon emissions.

SUSTAINABILITY

98. **Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy:** The Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy sets a target to reduce the county's emissions by 30% by 2020 (from 2005 levels), to build Worcestershire's low carbon economy, reduce fuel poverty and improve the county's resilience to extreme weather. The Strategy is coordinated by the County Council and includes businesses, community groups and public sector organisations working together. The latest data released shows the county's per capita emissions decreased by 26% from 2005 to 2014. I chair the Corporate Sustainability Group that oversees this work.

99. **WCC Carbon Management Plan:** In April 2011 the County Council made a commitment to reduce CO₂ emissions from its own operations by 30% by March 2016. Activity has focused on reducing emissions from buildings, street lighting, vehicle fleet, staff mileage and outsourced services such as highways and waste disposal. Successful projects to reduce CO₂ emissions include: Replacement of street lights with LEDs and part-night switch off. Implementation of a £2.3m "Energy Efficiency Spend to Save" fund including insulation, efficient lighting, voltage optimisation and installation of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) panels. A total of 108 Spend to Save projects are now complete. (£52,815 income was generated from solar PV projects on Council properties in 2015).

100. **Better Use of Property Asset Rationalisation Programme:** Projects included the installation of Automated Meter Reading (AMR) with staff training. Staff Sustainability Champions scheme and communications around sustainability and energy efficiency. Energy efficiency improvements in IT infrastructure and reduction in staff business mileage.

101. **Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC):** the County Council is a participant in this mandatory Government carbon reduction scheme. In 2015/16, the Council emitted 15,658 tonnes of CO₂ under the CRC and had to pay £252,094 for our CRC allowances (at £16.10 per tonne). This is a 12% decrease in emissions from the previous year. This is in major part due to the reduction in electricity consumption across the Council's street lighting portfolio. The County Council was assessed by an external auditor in June 2016 and passed as a national exemplar.

102. **Warmer Worcestershire:** the County Council coordinates the Warmer Worcestershire Network, which aims to reduce fuel poverty and improve the energy efficiency of homes in the county. It includes district councils, Age UK, Act on Energy and the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service. The Network is currently writing a fuel poverty plan for Worcestershire, which will focus activity to tackle fuel poverty for the benefit of individuals' health, in line with NICE guidance quality standards. Fuel poverty in Worcestershire has reduced slightly to 10.8% (2014), from 11.2% (2013).

103. **Boilers on Prescription:** The Warmer Worcestershire network is currently delivering a £180,000 "boilers on prescription" programme funding replacement heating systems to low income households where a resident has a long-term health condition that can be made worse by living in cold, damp conditions. This programme will run until March 2017. Funding has been provided by Public Health and National Energy Action – NEA.

104. **Green Deal Communities Fund:** In 2014 the County Council successfully bid for £3.6m from the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to subsidise solid wall insulation across the county. The project is being delivered in partnership with district councils and Act on Energy. The installations are expected to save households around £250 per year and reduce CO₂ emissions by an average of 27 tonnes over the lifetime of the project.

105. **Electric Vehicle Fleet:** the County Council has invested in two electric pool cars and an electric van. These will replace existing vehicles and help to lower emissions from fleet transport. The vehicles have council livery and promote the fact that they are 100% electric.

106. **Electric Vehicle Chargepoints:** Chargepoints are now on a membership scheme as well as pay-as-you-go option, which makes it cheaper for regular users. Use has more than doubled since November 2015 and there have been more than 260 different users. The County Council is continuing to explore innovative ways to promote the chargepoints and encourage electric vehicle ownership.

107. **Eco-Schools:** the County Council continues to maintain its place as the national leader with 92% of its state schools registered as Eco-schools. The number of Worcestershire schools with the top Eco schools Green Flag award has increased from 41 to 46. The County Council also coordinates a group of eight mentor schools that provide support to other Worcestershire schools.

108. **Heat Networks:** the County Council has been heavily involved in a project led by Wychavon District Council to investigate the potential for district heat networks in the county. The final report is due to be published in October 2016. A stakeholder event was held in July and was attended by members (including myself), officers and key local organisations and companies. There is significant potential for district heat networks in Worcestershire and consideration is being given to funding specific feasibility studies.

109. **The Business Energy Efficiency Programme:** Funding approval is expected from the Department of Communities and Local Government for a Business Energy Efficiency Programme for small and medium size businesses which will include free reviews and grants of £2,000 to £20,000 to help fund energy efficiency. The County Council will act as the lead organisation for the project, which also covers Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin. The programme follows on from the successful Resource Efficient Worcestershire programme, for which I chaired the Board. This programme helped businesses reduce energy costs by up to 35%.

110. **Worcestershire Energy Efficiency Supply Chain:** Utilising Department of Energy and Climate Change funding from the Green Deal Communities Programme support has been provided to energy efficiency installers, advisors and others in the environmental technologies sector within Worcestershire.

111. **Funding:** The Sustainability Team brought in £2m external funding from European and Central Government sources last year. They have continued to advertise their work to residents and businesses and have started a new Twitter account (@sustainableworc).

112. **Sustainability West Midlands:** I remain on the Board of Sustainability West Midlands to represent local government in the region and remind them that the West Midlands is much wider than the Greater Birmingham conurbation.

113. **Growing Worcestershire:** This voluntary network is dedicated to showing the importance of locally grown food to the county. Last year it established a gleaning network using food from farms, which would otherwise go to waste and a Big Lottery Funded project, called “Worcestershire Food Links”, which has produced an online directory of food growers, producers and retailers in the county.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

114. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Director of Economy and Infrastructure and the relevant heads of service, managers and staff across the Council for their commitment and work over the past 12 months.

Anthony Blagg

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment