

COUNCIL 12 SEPTEMBER 2019 - AGENDA ITEM 10 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below.

QUESTION 1 – Mr T Baker-Price will ask Lucy Hodgson:

"Could the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities please update this Council on the progress of the members advisory group for archives?"

Answer

Thank you for the question from Mr Baker-Price. I would take the opportunity to thank him and the other members of the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS) Member Advisory Group (MAG) for their continued support and insight.

The Group has now met three times and is considering a range of issues, including:

- The ability to deliver increased income targets
- Other local authority archive business models
- Existing archive operations and the ability to recover cost / charge fees to existing and new clients
- Examine the pricing / fee structure of existing arrangements and services
- Identification of potential new markets
- Identify the HR, IT and Financial support required to support increasing complex, dynamic activity associated with County Council trading services

MAG, working with relevant officers of WAAS has looked at the re-structure of the organisation after the reduction of the budget from 2019 /20 and considered the scope of activity offered by WAAS and understand the very real opportunities and challenges the service faces.

MAG have discussed and advised on proposals for increasing income from the existing archive and suggested that charging appropriate external bodies for the storage of their archives is a priority.

MAG have supported the procurement and ongoing negotiations with a marketing leading organisation looking to commercialise part of the historic archive, activity intended to greatly increase the presence of Worcestershire archives in the digital archive market on the best commercial terms. I will happily comment further once commercial negotiations have concluded. Importantly the MAG is increasingly confident that Worcestershire will be able to retain Archive Accreditation status when this is reviewed in 2019/20.

There is one issue though, I did write to Group Leaders inviting members to join the MAG. Mr Lunn is a member of the MAG but there has been no interest from the other parties. There is still work to be done and I would welcome any new members who come forward from these Groups.

QUESTION 2 – Mr P Middlebrough will ask Tony Miller:

"At Upton upon Severn Town Council meeting on 20 July, Town Council members expressed concern at the number of vehicles running their engines when stationary in the town and even when offloading material at the recycling centre in Hanley Road carpark, on the grounds that it produces unnecessary carbon emissions."

In the spirit of this council's pledge made this May, to work with partners across the county, such as town and parish councils to make Worcestershire County Council in all areas where it is directly responsible, carbon neutral by 2050, will the Cabinet Member heed these important suggestions by:

- *Introducing signs at recycling centres asking drivers to switch off their engines when offloading;*
- *Consider signage along the main streets in Upton upon Severn asking drivers to switch off their engines when stationary, as a forerunner to schemes elsewhere in the county."*

Answer

Mr Middleborough's suggestion has been discussed with our Household Recycling Centre contractors and, rather than 'clutter' the relatively small site further with additional signage which may not be heeded, the contractor has agreed to ask their staff to approach site users who leave their engines running whilst offloading their vehicle, to request that they turn their engine off. They have agreed to try this, not just at Upton, but across all of Worcestershire and Herefordshire's seventeen Household Recycling Centres. This approach will be monitored.

Regarding installing signage along main roads in Upton; as Upton upon Severn centre is a Conservation Area, street clutter from lines, signs, bollards etc. is required to be kept to an absolute minimum. Additional signage warning drivers about idling would contribute to visual street clutter, as these signs would need to be fixed to new poles in the streetscape. It is suggested instead that, as queuing traffic in Upton is often associated with events, it may be appropriate to request event management companies to place temporary signs on the highway approaches to Upton when the town is hosting events, to encourage visiting traffic not to idle when queuing to access/egress the festival sites.

It was an offence to leave a parked vehicle with the engine running and therefore they are breaking the law by doing that but that did not always stop them. He would be pleased to speak to Upton Town Council if so requested.

Supplementary question

Mr Middlebrough emphasised the importance of responding enthusiastically to requests from partner organisations such as town councils to reduce carbon emissions. He would arrange a meeting with representatives of Upton Town Council accordingly.

QUESTION 3 – Mrs F M Oborski will ask Tony Miller:

"Could the relevant Cabinet Member inform me what steps the County Council takes to ensure that all recycled materials received by WCC and the companies who receive these materials "further down the line":

- 1.treat all such products in an ecologically and environmentally appropriate manner; and*
- 2.avoid export of these products to 3rd World Countries?"*

Answer

In 2018/19 Worcestershire's residents placed more than 58,000 tonnes of paper, glass, metal and plastics in their recycling bins, which were sent to the Council's sorting facility (EnviroSort) at Norton. The treatment of recyclables separated at Norton, as with any other product, is subject to market conditions. Currently all of this material is either sent to Material Reclamation Facilities (MRFs) for further sorting or to facilities for cleaning and processing into a form that is suitable for selling on to a company to make a new product. Currently all of these facilities, directly supplied with material from EnviroSort are located within the United Kingdom (UK). Staff from the Council have visited EnviroSort, the MRFs and these other processing facilities directly supplied with material from EnviroSort, to

ensure that they have the relevant permissions and licences in place. Where materials are sent from these facilities is monitored by the Environment Agency (EA).

We audit all the materials we collect after we have followed that material to its final destination that we deal with. The material is then continued to be monitored by the EA so it is not only ourselves that monitor the path of the material we collect. I can confirm that this County Council does not send anything that we collect to any other countries, to any illegal processing plants. Unfortunately there are collection companies that do not follow and are not registered. These companies are very difficult to track down. We do have, at the moment, a case going through the courts which will be dealt with appropriately. As far as the County Council is concerned we do follow and we do track materials that we pick up and we follow that and it all goes to licenced premises where it can be dealt with in the appropriate manner. We should be responsible for what we collect but we must also tell our residents that when they have anything collected from their house that they should make that person collecting the waste is registered and the waste goes to an appropriate plant.

Supplementary question

In response to a concern about the collection of household waste by unregistered private collection companies, the Cabinet Member emphasised that the collection of waste was the responsibility of district councils. He would check whether the guidance leaflet provided to district councils for circulation to households included advice about the use of private waste operators.

QUESTION 4 – Mr A D Kent will ask John Smith:

“The MMR vaccine is a combined vaccine which prevents against Measles Mumps and Rubella diseases.

Many parents have stopped their children being vaccinated with MMR which has seen a significant and dangerous increase in mumps and measles cases in England.

Can I ask the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-Being what steps can be taken in Worcestershire to ensure all those who have not been vaccinated receive information on how to access the vaccine and the clear benefits?”

Answer

Thank you Mr Kent for your question, to which I am pleased to respond.

Vaccination is one of the best Public Health interventions to avoid disease and to prevent harm. The MMR vaccination is as you mention a combined vaccination which is given in 2 doses - the first dose at 12-13 months, and the second dose at 3 years and 4 months as part of the universal childhood vaccination programme.

Since the introduction of the measles vaccine in 1968 it is estimated that 20 million cases and 4,500 deaths have been averted in the UK. To achieve and maintain elimination the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends aiming for 95% uptake with two doses of MMR by 5 years of age. Current UK performance for the second dose is sub-optimal at 88%.

In Worcestershire we have maintained good uptake rates for MMR vaccination well above the England average, with coverage for the first dose having increased significantly since 2012/13 and remaining stable over the last 2 years with current uptake of 97.3%. This is significantly better than the England average and is above the target of 95%. The uptake for 2 doses has increased significantly since 2012/13 and has remained stable over the last 2 years with current uptake of 92.2%. This is significantly better than England but is below the target of 95%.

Steps that can be taken

MMR vaccination is part of the standard child health immunisation programme. Parents receive direct reminders when these vaccinations are due, and it is recorded in the health visitors log book (red book). Health visitors do 5 universal visits for all children in Worcestershire and check and promote vaccination at all visits.

Anyone who has not had two MMR vaccinations can present themselves to their general practice to receive these vaccinations. This is particularly important for people travelling to Europe who have not been fully vaccinated due to a large ongoing outbreak there. It is also important for university students who may not have had their universal vaccinations due to the observed decline in vaccinations post the publication of the discredited Andrew Wakefield study in 1998.

QUESTION 5 – Mr R C Lunn will ask Alan Amos:

"Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility explain why Gloucestershire County Council require a higher quality of tar from Ringway than we do to resurface the counties roads?"

Answer

I thank Mr Lunn for his question.

I can advise him that the use of tar has been outlawed for many years in Highway Maintenance and current maintenance processes have to manage the existing layers of previously laid tar-bound materials very carefully.

The specification of modern, mainly bitumen based, materials is governed by various design manuals and the type of site in question.

I can confirm that County Highways officers ensure that all their maintenance schemes utilise only permitted materials.

I am not aware of Gloucestershire doing anything fundamentally different to us except that, traditionally, they don't do as much surface dressing as us, which is one reason why our roads are so much better than theirs.

Supplementary question

Had the Council considered the use of alternative environmentally-friendly road surface dressing materials? The Cabinet Member responded that he would welcome and investigate any suggestions that were forthcoming.

QUESTION 6 – Mr R M Udall will ask Simon Geraghty:

"The Leader will be aware that the Ministry of Defence have commissioned five new Type 31 Frigates. Worcester has a proud tradition of supporting the Royal Navy, the first HMS Worcester was launched in 1651. Others were launched in 1698, 1735, 1769, 1843 and 1919. The last HMS Worcester was decommissioned in 1945. Will he use his influence with county members of parliament and the Ministry of Defence in order to campaign for one of the new frigates to be named HMS Worcester?"

Answer

Thank you, Richard, for your question.

I'm glad to see you are an avid follower of the Deputy Leader's twitter feed and support Adrian's suggestion that we use our influence to encourage our County MPs to lobby for

one of the new Frigates to be named after Worcester or Worcestershire. I have already followed this up with Robin Walker, MP for Worcester, and will raise it with our other County MPs later in the month. Good to hear you are fully supportive of the suggestion.

Supplementary question

In response to a query, the Leader of the Council commented that he would support the naming of a ship whether it was HMS Worcester or HMS Worcestershire. It was likely that the next fleet of ships had already been named. However, further enquiries were being made and he would make appropriate arrangements to lobby the Government to request that a ship be named accordingly in the future.

QUESTION 7 – Mrs F M Oborski will ask Simon Geraghty:

"Every Local Authority has been required to appoint a Brexit Lead. Could the Leader tell me:

- 1. The name of the County Council Brexit Lead; and*
- 2. Given that University of Birmingham estimates that 25,000 jobs in Worcestershire are at direct risk from a No Deal Brexit can the Leader tell me what advice this Council is giving to local employers whose businesses and employees may now be at risk?"*

Answer

Firstly, can I thank Fran for her question in relation to Brexit and our work with businesses to prepare. We had a good debate on this on the Notice of Motion.

Following the request from the Government to identify a lead Brexit officer, this Council has nominated Andrew Spice, our Director of Commercial & Commissioning as the lead officer to manage the authority's response to leaving the EU. There are a lot of issues that the Council was involved in, not just the civil contingency and the Resilience Forum but also in relation to the economic issues. All those issues will be brought out in the Cabinet report.

QUESTION 8 – Mr R C Lunn will ask Alan Amos:

"Does the Cabinet Member with Responsibility agree with me that an 80% yes vote by those voting on top of 50% +1 of all available houses being in favour, makes it unrealistically difficult for any road to implement a residents parking scheme? Surely the 50% plus 1 house and a simple majority of those voting should be enough? Will he recommend revising the policy?"

Answer

I thank Mr Lunn for his question.

I can advise Council that the current policy was adopted in January 2018 after full consultation with a cross-party working group of local Members. The working group considered the situation in detail and recommended a number of changes to the existing scheme, which were implemented. These included removing some qualifying criteria that featured in the old policy and which actually did prevent some requests going ahead. In particular, garages no longer count as parking spaces; and there is no longer a requirement that there should be sufficient kerbside space to accommodate at least a 0.8 space per household.

With regard to local support, the old policy required 80% of households to vote in favour of a scheme. That meant that in order for a scheme of 100 households to qualify, at least 80 had to respond, and all of those had to be in favour. The current policy retains the 80% requirement but now includes a response rate threshold so that 50% of households must

respond for the ballot to be valid. This means that a 100-household scheme would qualify as long as at least 50 households voted and 40 of those votes are favourable. That, of course, equates to only 40% of households having to be in support of a scheme for it to go ahead and I don't think that is excessive for something that will affect all households.

It is important to bear in mind that implementation of a residents' parking scheme means that residents have to obtain and pay for annual permits allowing them to park where previously they were able to do so on the highway free of charge. Consequently, there is an imperative to ensure that there is a substantial level of local support before proceeding, otherwise there is a strong risk of objections to the supporting Traffic Regulation Orders or calls for schemes to be removed post implementation, a situation that has happened in Redditch. I have heard of schemes failing to go ahead once residents realize that they will now have to pay to park, that there is no guarantee of a space, and that their visitors will also be subject to the regulations.

Ultimately, the aim of a scheme is to displace extraneous parking but no scheme can guarantee a space for all residents so they must consider all the pros and cons and vote accordingly.

Given this context, I will ask officers to keep the position under review and evaluate the impact of the current policy early in 2020, that being two years after its implementation, and consider any appropriate changes.

And could I just add one more thing. I am acutely aware of the sensitive nature of parking and the constant battle to provide enough of it, so I have reviewed the Streetscape Design Guide to require developers to provide more off-street on-site parking spaces and have significantly tightened up on HMOs and City centre developments by also requiring more off-street parking from them too. It is, therefore, more than irritating that members of other Parties opposed these measures when I introduced them so I would say that if we want more room for more parking, then you need to work with me and support my initiatives rather than going to planning committees and opposing them.

Supplementary question

The ceiling of 80% of residents voting in favour of a parking scheme was too high and should be based on a simple majority of those voting. The Cabinet Member responded that an 80% vote in favour on a 50% turnout would mean that only 40% of those voting in favour of the scheme was required. It was vital for the success of a scheme to get public support. The current scheme only required 40% of households to go out and vote in favour of it. Any less than that and you would end up with schemes voted in on a smaller minority vote which could subsequently prove unpopular.