

**COUNCIL**  
**16 JULY 2020****REPORT OF CABINET - SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN**

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**Approval of Worcestershire Children First's Business Plan**

1. In September 2019, Cabinet approved Worcestershire Children First's (WCF) Interim Business Plan which was adopted in time for the launch of WCF and continued until 31 March 2020. The Business Plan is refreshed by WCF and approved by Cabinet on an annual basis. The draft Business Plan had been sent to the DfE and they had confirmed their support with no significant amendments.
2. The refreshed 2020/21 Business Plan maintains the previously agreed aims for WCF which are to improve outcomes for all children and young people (up to the age of 25) in Worcestershire, by addressing their needs holistically through excellent early help and prevention, education provision and social care. Its Vision, Mission and Values define the way WCF will work to improve outcomes for children and young people.
3. The Business Plan for 2020/21 outlines specific actions that WCF will focus on in the short term, including: implementation of Liquidlogic Case Management System, supporting delivery of the Early Help Strategy 2020-2024, the Troubled Families Programme and ongoing delivery of SEND and implementation of Family Safeguarding.
4. In the medium to longer term the Plan sets out that WCF aims to have national recognition for the quality of services it provides and the positive impact it makes to children and young people's lives.
5. The financial section of the Business Plan outlines the agreed contract sums which are shown as two separate elements, net funding from the Council's base budget and grants passed through to WCF to arrive at the gross contract price. In 2020/21 the net budget funded by the Council is £102.1m and the Gross cost £114.6m, which is equivalent to the budget set by Council in February 2020. The cost of learning and achievement services of c£6.5m, provided until 1 June this year by Babcock Services, had not been included in the WCF budget at this point. The contract price is being amended accordingly by contract variation.
6. Cabinet noted the contractual performance update, approved the WCF Business Plan for 2020/21 and noted the agreed contract sum for 2020/21 and indicative contract sums for 2021/22 and 2022/23 as included in the Business Plan.

**West Mercia Energy – Treatment of WMS Pension Liability**

7. The County Council, together with Shropshire Council, Telford & Wrekin Council and Herefordshire Council, is one of the member authorities (the 'Owning Authorities')

of West Mercia Energy Joint Committee, formerly known as West Mercia Supplies. At the point of sale of the West Mercia Supplies stationery division (WMS) in 2012, the existing pension deficit relating to the former WMS staff was retained within the continuing West Mercia Energy business and is overseen by the West Mercia Energy Joint Committee.

8. As one of the Owing Authorities, Cabinet has agreed to a request from the West Mercia Energy Joint Committee to take direct responsibility for the pension deficit liability. The pension deficit will be transferred directly to a new body 'WMS Pension' overseen by a new 'WMS Pension Joint Committee', made up of the same owning authorities.

9. WME's Risk Register identified a potential risk in bidding for future contracts while carrying the pension deficit liability for former WMS employees on its balance sheet, as potential customers will consider the financial position (through the accounts) of WME in assessing their bid. In order to facilitate WME in bidding for future contracts, the aim is to put it in a position where, at least initially, it is not carrying a pension deficit (and certainly not relating to former WMS employees) within the Shropshire County Pension Fund. For the change to happen, all 4 Owing Authorities had to agree to this proposal.

10. Cabinet agreed to remove the responsibility for the pension deficit liability in relation to former WMS employees, including compensatory added years benefits from the business of the WME Joint Committee with effect from 1 April 2020; to allocate the pension deficit liability to a new employer within the Shropshire County Pension Scheme, called WMS Pension and establish a Joint Committee with the other Owing Authorities to discharge the Council's functions in relation to this. Governance arrangements were also approved, and the Chief Financial Officer was authorised to progress and agree the details of the revised arrangements, including the final figures.

### **Resources Report – Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring – Month 10 (31 January) 2019/20**

11. Cabinet considered the 2019/20 outturn forecast for the Council's £330 million net revenue budget as at Month 10 (31 January 2020) and progress to date on the savings and reforms programme. The Council continued to deliver statutory services and deliver against its Corporate Plan although it was facing service cost pressures of £3.9 million (1.2% of budget), which included £2.9 million in relation to Adult Services.

12. This was after taking management action around Corporate Budgets to achieve £3.4 million from reducing corporate debt interest costs and pensions payments and withholding expenditure from the corporate contingency.

13. Cabinet noted significant underlying cost pressures with regard to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block, which was forecasting a £9.5 million overspend, with schools forecasting an overall net deficit of £3.4 million on their retained balances.

14. The overall outturn forecast was for a net overspend of £3.9 million (1.2% of budget) at the end of 2019/20. This included a £3.5 million forecast overspend on services, and £6.8 million relating to the timing of the achievement of savings plans,

offset by a £3 million planned withdrawal from earmarked reserves, and £3.4 million forecast underspend on corporate items. It was likely that the £3.9 million net overspend (1.2% of budget) would need to be funded from earmarked reserves (Financial Risk)

15. The Council had set aside £250,000 from the 2019/20 budget to support residents and businesses most affected by the winter floods. This money was in addition to, and goes further than, what the Government had promised to support.

16. Officers were also evaluating total costs incurred by the Council during the response for a potential claim under the Bellwin Scheme. Cabinet authorised expenditure up to £0.7m from earmarked reserves (the amount beneath the Bellwin Scheme threshold) to support recovery expenditure from the flooding.

17. At time of issuing the report, the Council was taking action and confirming public health and business continuity plans in reaction to the outbreak of Coronavirus. An initial allocation of £0.2 million from earmarked reserves to fund this activity was made but by the time of the Cabinet meeting circumstances had changed. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board was consulted and agreed to Cabinet considering additional information about the pandemic and implications for the Council and its services. He also agreed that the Cabinet would need to take urgent decisions about allocation of Government Grant which may fall outside the Council's budget and policy framework. This Cabinet report sets out the reasons for the decisions as required by the Constitution.

18. Cabinet noted that the County Council had been allocated £14.9m of unringfenced grant to support local responses. A further £1.3bn had been allocated nationally to support the discharge of patients in hospital to social care and this would be funded via the local CCG's.

19. At the time of the meeting the Coronavirus Act had just been passed. In addition to authorising the unringfenced grant to be included in the revenue budget, Cabinet delegated authority to senior officers to take appropriate action in relation to the coronavirus pandemic and make temporary changes to policies as necessary arising from the Coronavirus Act and other guidelines or directions.

## **Corporate Landlord and Facilities Management**

20. The Cabinet has considered an exempt report arising from a review of the direction and form of commissioning that the Council is seeking for the delivery of property services, including facilities management and project management.

21. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board had been consulted and agreed that this decision needed to be implemented urgently because of the timescale for giving notice to PPL of withdrawal.

22. Cabinet agreed to authorise the Strategic Director for Commercial and Change to serve notice on Place Partnership Limited (PPL) by 31 March 2020 of the Council's intention to withdraw from the service agreement with effect from 31 March 2021, when the Council will also give up its shareholding in the company. The Strategic Director for Commercial and Change in consultation with the Leader will work with appropriate partners and support services to draw up an alternative model for delivery

to be in place by 31 March 2021, including TUPE considerations and business needs. He was also authorised to take all necessary financial and contractual actions necessary to ensure the continued delivery of property services. Cabinet will receive a further report, following pre-scrutiny, to approve the alternative model for delivery.

## **COVID-19 Response and Restart**

23. Cabinet has considered a comprehensive summary of the Council's response to the Covid-19 outbreak across all services. This included how the Council's corporate emergency response framework aligned to the regional Local Resilience Framework structures and a 'One Worcestershire' approach involving Worcestershire Children First, District Councils and other partners. Subsequently Cabinet considered an update on the response and actions being taken for recovery and restart of services.

24. Following delegation by Cabinet in March, officers made a number of decisions as part of responding to the virus in the County, some of which were required by Government. These were logged as Records of Officer Executive decisions on the Council's website and include provision of PPE, Here2Help, development of the Adult Social Care Access Centre and purchase of care. In addition, various management decisions were made relating to the response, including closing County Hall to the public once the remote delivery of services was established.

25. In the People Directorate, all people in receipt of social care were risk assessed to ascertain their level of need and contacted as appropriate. Their care and support plans were reviewed and revised to ensure that appropriate levels of care and support were in place.

26. The Urgent Care and Community Hospital Teams responded to the need to support discharges, within 3 hours, 7 days a week, 8am – 8pm. This involved re-deploying staff from other social work teams, block purchasing care home beds and increasing the capacity of Pathway 1 (support at home). The Council also contracted with two local hotels to provide safe accommodation for people who were discharged 'home' but unable to do so immediately due to infection risk to other household members. This contract ended on 30 June as the initial wave of cases dropped.

27. Worcestershire's COVID-19 Care Home Support Plan was published on 29 May 2020. This sets out how key partners across Adult Social Care, Worcestershire Public Health, Public Health England, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and other health partners work together to support care homes. The support plan includes current and future plans for co-ordination of infection control measures, testing programmes, training, HR support, and co-ordination and distribution of PPE.

28. Planning for the recovery phase includes the new block contract which was commissioned with a home care agency being now fully operational and the future commissioning strategy for domiciliary care being updated to ensure that current and future needs arising from COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 can continue to be met. Discussions are taking place with externally commissioned day services in relation to a potential phased re-opening of services as national lockdown conditions are eased.

29. For self-funders in care homes whose capital has fallen below the £23,750 threshold, the Council has continued to fund their care home placement and has not followed the usual process where it explores where there is a better value placement available. This aimed to reduce the risk to people of transferring from care home to care home; minimise the impact on the care home market and reduce family anxiety caused by a potential care home move in such challenging times. All these 'self-funding pickups' have been notified that these arrangements will be reviewed within 6 months.

30. Some of the day services for people with Learning Disabilities are starting to reopen. Fewer people can initially return to their day service support and these will be prioritised by need – noting that all service users have been risk assessed and those with the highest risk of carer breakdown will be prioritised for day service support in the first phase. Changes to service delivery, put in place during the pandemic, have given rise to different ways of working and support being provided in people's homes or by staff and/or volunteers in the community, close to people's homes. Consideration is now being made to how the service may be improved and/or re-designed to continue with local and community-based support in the future.

31. The Council's home care service has continued, throughout the pandemic, with staff re-deployed from other areas of the People Directorate to ensure appropriate capacity to domiciliary care provision given in people's homes and in the County's prisons. The service is now planning to introduce the Community Reablement service, due originally to go live in April 2020 – it is envisaged that this service will be promoted and be in place from the Autumn.

32. Every Upper Tier Local Authority in England was required to create a local Outbreak Plan, led by the Director of Public Health (DPH), by the end of June and WCC will be allocated a share of £300m to fund these.

33. Plans should cover 7 themes set out nationally and can be locally developed and refined through a new local Covid 19 Health Protection Committee. This committee will go on to oversee management of outbreaks, ensure that appropriate resources and SOPs are in place for outbreak management and reflect on learning to identify improvements for future outbreak management.

34. A Member led 'Covid 19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board' is being developed to provide effective public communication and democratic oversight of the management of outbreaks.

35. Schools and settings were closed to most children from 20 March 2020, remaining open only for children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Schools continued to work with children remotely to ensure that education continued although in a different way.

36. The Worcestershire Education Incident Planning Group for COVID-19, consisting of WCF, WCC and school leaders from all phases, agreed a set of basic principles some of which have been in place throughout the COVID response period and some relate to the basis of working towards recovery. Wider opening of schools commenced on 1 June and WCF produced a detailed risk assessment framework for schools to use to ensure that they were considering all reasonable action to take to ensure that they could safely welcome more pupils.

37. The social care and safeguarding service has worked under the Covid 19 service delivery protocol introduced from the beginning of April which set out the approach to delivery in light of the need to minimise community spread of the virus and cope with the reduction of staff capacity. From 1 June the service delivery protocol has been updated to phase 2 'road to recovery'. This includes resumption of direct 'face to face' work with children to support well-informed professional judgements about support and protection planning and resumption of Family Front Door management of contacts and referrals.

38. All libraries were closed on 24 March and the speedy introduction of a Digital Library Hub was established to help Worcestershire residents stay active and connected with their communities. Cabinet noted plans for reopening libraries and the County Museum at Hartlebury Castle in line with Government Guidance.

39. Library re-opening plans also include emergency plans for closing in response to the possibility of a second wave of Covid 19 and have also ensured that requirements to sustain the Here2Help service, with appropriate levels of support continuing, can be met.

40. Highways reactive and safety critical works continued throughout the lockdown period, including gully emptying and street lighting works. There was also an opportunity to catch up with the huge number of flooding enquiries received.

41. Following the Lockdown announcement on 23 March 2020, the majority of construction work on Major Infrastructure Projects was temporarily suspended and sites safely closed down. This was due to supply chain matters, resourcing, being able to socially distance, confidence to be able to safely finish work started.

42. Where possible on-site work continued, including Worcestershire Parkway – Platform 2 works and snagging, Kidderminster Station – internal / external works and seasonal / critical survey works and inspections. Non-construction work on infrastructure projects continued throughout the period e.g. design works, business case development and planning development

43. The internal Fleet team supported a number of specific response activities including receipt, storage and distribution of 400+ food parcels, support for delivery of medical supplies and support for transportation of Waste Collection Operatives for district councils. Transport continued to be provided for children of key workers.

44. A COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant of £336k was received from the DfT to support services through the challenging period. Early access was also granted to funding for supported bus services of £468k. In March, Officers decided to maintain 100% of the contract payment for operators and maintain the levels of concessionary and Severncard reimbursements.

45. In May, the Department of Transport also announced additional funding for active travel response to recovery post COVID-19. The funding is divided into two phases, Phase 1 is for the immediate response as part of recovery, Phase 2 is to support long term actions, in line with the Council's Transport Strategy, LTP4.

46. A package of proposals for Phase 1 has been submitted which supports the delivery of active travel routes and policies set out in Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4). The focus of the interventions is on key commuting routes supporting permanent future upgrades through small scale works such as changes to the white lines and signing.

47. The Waste Management Service continued to operate throughout the response period with the key waste facilities of EnviroSort, EnviRecover and the Landfill site remaining fully operational. Following the introduction of the "lockdown", all Worcestershire Household Recycling Centre HRCs in Worcestershire were closed reflecting the overall position of "Stay at Home".

48. 7 of the 11 Household Recycling Centres in Worcestershire reopened as of Monday 11 May 2020. This recognised the need for higher levels of resourcing in order to operate the sites safely in line with the new social distancing requirements.

49. The Council's Procurement Team undertook several critical activities including establishing a PPE centre to source, stock and distribute PPE items & hand sanitiser to care homes, domiciliary care providers, personal care assistants, hospices, GPs, dentists, funeral directors, district councils and schools; creating a food preparation and distribution hub at County Hall to deliver food boxes to individuals in crisis and catering packs to street kitchens and food banks and arranging alternative temporary accommodation for hospital discharge, rough sleepers and homeless people.

50. Going forward working with local partners and providers, it is proposed that the County Council will run and manage a One Worcestershire Storage hub for PPE for our care providers to maximise economies of scale and purchasing power in buying this equipment. A storage facility will be leased and managed by the County council with these costs sought to be recovered via Government funding, however the PPE itself will be charged at actual purchase cost to providers.

51. Cabinet has noted and endorsed the action taken by the Council in the pandemic and in restart planning to date; noted the revenue expenditure incurred to date and receipt of Government grant and approved the setting up of a One Worcestershire central PPE store hub for care providers.

## **Covid-19 Economic Restart Plan**

52. Jointly with Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) partners, the Council formed a Worcestershire COVID-19 Economic Response, Recovery and Resilience Group (WCERG) which first met in March 2020. The WCERG has developed a clear seven-point action plan to support economic restart and for each area the group has identified actions already being undertaken, areas of support and activity that can be repurposed to have greater impact during this current situation.

53. As part of the response to the business support workstream and to support the restart of the local economy a fund is proposed of up to £3.57m from the Council's Open for Business Reserves (of which £2.1m is capital).

54. Cabinet has noted and endorsed the action taken by the Council in supporting the county-wide activity of the Covid-19 Economic Response and work to date on the Economic Recovery Plan; approved the use of £3.57m of Open for Business Reserves to be used to fund grants to support local businesses as part of economic planning and will continue to review resources required to support the restart.

### **Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring – Financial Outturn**

55. Cabinet considered a report detailing the provisional financial results for the year ending 31 March 2020 subject to external audit and noted progress to date on the savings and reforms programme.

56. The report identified that the Council overspent its £330 million budget by £0.3 million (0.1%), a reduction from the previous overspend forecast of £3.9 million reported to the March Cabinet meeting.

57. Cabinet endorsed the financial performance for the year ending 31 March 2020 and the unaudited Annual Financial Report and Statement of Accounts 2019/20; approved updates to earmarked reserves and general balances and noted the emerging financial issues for 2020/21 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Review of Delivery Model for Medical Education Provision**

58. In January 2020 Cabinet received an initial report proposing a review of Medical Education Provision in Worcestershire. The report set out the full context and case for conducting a review into Medical Education Provision for Worcestershire children and young people and Cabinet approved a timetable and process for the review. This envisaged redesign proposals to be brought to Cabinet in June this year with phased implementation from September.

59. In order to allow sufficient time for the coproduction and engagement with stake holders currently delayed by Covid-19, the change-over in school years, as well as other parallel reviews and work which have been referenced, a new timeline has been approved which envisages re-design proposals and recommendations being reported to Cabinet during the autumn.

### **Scrutiny Report – Care Work as a Career**

60. Cabinet has considered the report of the Scrutiny Task Group which investigated how the Council could promote and develop care work as a career and how the existing care workforce can be better supported and celebrated. This was in response to a Notice of Motion agreed by Council in February 2019.

61. Recommendations included prioritising a publicity campaign to increase understanding of the carer role; examining the influence that the Council can bring to bear on terms and conditions of care workers through the commissioning process; scaling up the provision of care work apprentices; liaison with education and training providers and learning from others.

62. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Adult Social Care accepted 10 of the 12 recommendations in the report, partially accepted one and rejected the other. Cabinet noted the report's findings and recommendations and adopted the response of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility as the way forward.

**Mr S E Geraghty**  
**Chairman**

### **Contact Points**

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### **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and background papers for the meetings of the Cabinet held on 26 March, 4 and 25 June 2020.

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=131&Year=0>