

## COUNCIL 16 JULY 2020 - AGENDA ITEM 10 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below. Questions 8 - 11 were not asked on the day.

**QUESTION 1** – Mr P M McDonald will ask Marcus Hart:

*“Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility explain why the Children and Families Overview Scrutiny Panel were informed, that the Council did not know the actual per cent of children out of those able to return to school who actually attended; although the Gold Command Report stated 60%?”*

### Answer to question and supplementary question

Mr McDonald is talking at cross purposes because he is asking why the Director for Children, Families and Communities at the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel back in June did not know the percentage attending school when it was in the Gold Command report that stated 60%. What that was referring to was effectively the range of pupils going back to school that was anywhere between about 35% and 70% per individual school. The percentage of overall pupils at the time you asked this question was substantially lower than that and was changing by the day and week and was approximately 12% of the overall pupils because only Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils were back. I am confident that the officer was aware of the information and the percentage figure was circulated after the meeting.

As a trend, our pupil numbers have been increasing since 1 June. Overall for all 242 schools, the percentage varies from 30% in Reception to 60-70% and the same for other year groups.

*Updated data from 15 June - % of eligible groups:*

Year R	35%
Year 1	32%
Year 6	44%
Year 10	11%
Year 12	8%

The 60% figure referenced in the Gold Command report (11 June) related to the maximum % that had been seen at individual school level of some year groups.

As of 5 June we have been receiving attendance data returns for wider reopening along with national comparisons. Worcestershire’s attendance has been higher than national throughout this initial return period.

The following provides a comparison between National and Local attendance of the priority year groups:

	05/06/2020	12/06/2020	19/06/2020	26/06/2020	03/07/2020
Total Attendance % All Children - Worcestershire	9.4%	12.3%	14.6%	17.7%	17.9%
Total Attendance % All Children - National	6.3%	9.1%	12.2%	15.6%	16.9%
Year 6 Attendance - Worcestershire	26%	37%	39%	44%	45%
Year 6 Attendance - National	17%	26%	34%	41%	44%
Year 1 Attendance - Worcestershire	19%	30%	33%	35%	37%
Year 1 Attendance - National	12%	20%	26%	34%	38%
Reception Attendance - Worcestershire	21%	30%	33%	36%	38%
Reception Attendance - National	14%	22%	29%	36%	40%
Secondary Schools open to Yr 10/12 - Worcestershire	n/a	n/a	63%	83%	90%
Secondary Schools open to Yr 10/12 - National	n/a	n/a	60%	74%	75%
Year 10 and 12 Attendance - Worcestershire	n/a	n/a	11%	14%	15%
Year 10 and 12 Attendance - National	n/a	n/a	10%	13%	14%

We also know the numbers and percentage of Critical worker children and Vulnerable children attending Worcestershire schools. Below is a snapshot for week commencing 6 July:

Last Week Averages	
Number of Schools reported to DfE	203
Number of Schools not reported to DfE	65
Attending Pupil Total (DfE)	13996
Pupil Proportion (Attending/80,400 - DfE Total)	17.4%
Critical Worker Children Attending (DfE)	4561
Pupil Proportion (Attending/6000 - Estimate)	76.0%
Number of Critical Worker Children with a EHCP Attending (DfE)	n/a
Vulnerable Children Attending (DfE)	848
Pupil Proportion (Attending/WCF listing)	40.6%
Number of Vulnerable Children with an EHCP Attending (DfE)	461

**QUESTION 2** – Mr R C Lunn will ask Alan Amos:

*"What attempts have been made by the Cabinet Member to secure Worcestershire's share of the monies allocated by central government to increase and promote cycling and other sustainable modes of transport? How will he ensure that this is distributed appropriately around the county?"*

## Answer

I thank Councillor Lunn for his Question and for giving me the opportunity to again provide the details of our Bid and to update Members on it.

This relates to the funding from the Department of Transport through the Emergency Active Travel Fund. There are two phases to the Fund:

Phase 1 – Worcestershire – was given an indicative allocation of £271 000; and Phase 2 - for which our indicative allocation was £1,082,000, representing 80% of our total Bid. Details of Phase 2 were only released on Monday of this week for which, as we expected, the emphasis is on more permanent measures which fits well with our intention to base our Bid on our ready LTP4 schemes.

The programme for the Phase 1 bid was submitted to the DfT on 5 June, for the full amount. The programme set out a series of elements to promote and facilitate active travel with the specific aim being to embed this as a long-term change. The short-term deliverables which we set out were all linked to schemes within Local Transport Plan 4, and to potential additional sources of funding which we set out in our submission - including Phase 2 of the Fund - and developer contributions.

The schemes we submitted were ones which we could implement quickly and which would have some long-lasting benefit for active travellers rather than ones which were intended to be temporary which were likely to have been made redundant by the time they could have been implemented. The details of the scheme were:

- Sectional enhancements to the Redditch to Bromsgrove cycle route utilising less busy routes;
- Evesham - initial phase of the Hampton link along the riverside;
- Stourport to Kidderminster - link with the strategic employment and housing site at Silverwoods in Kidderminster;
- Sectional enhancements on the A38 south of Worcester between Ketch and Kempsey;
- Sectional enhancement on the A38 to the north of Worcester towards Droitwich and onwards to Bromsgrove, linking to the newly delivered Bromsgrove cycle network;
- Links from the north of Worcester B4536 Fernhill Heath and the main employment / retail areas on the northern edge of the city at Blackpole;
- Worcestershire Parkway cycle routes;
- Sectional enhancements to the existing A449 Malvern to Worcester cycle route.

These schemes are distributed across the whole county and as they are drawn from LTP4 are linked to wider long-term aspirations and to areas of economic or housing growth.

In addition, the bid also included new cycle parking provision within the Bid, to be provided at locations which attract a large number of trips such as town centres, businesses, employment sites and retail centres.

The third and final part of the programme was to provide travel planning to businesses, updated information on active travel; and to provide easily accessible route information in an app and on the website.

Worcestershire was awarded £135,500 to support cycling and walking on a number of key commuter routes across the county. Most of our neighbours received the same 50%,

including Oxfordshire, Herefordshire, Warwickshire and Staffordshire. But, as I have said before, we need to manage expectations. This money amounts to just over £20,000 per District/City so it's not going to pave our streets in gold. For example, as a comparison, the cost of a main controlled pedestrianized crossing alone is in the region of £120,000.

The routes that will see improvements include:

- Stourport to Kidderminster route; a link with the strategic employment and housing site at Silverwoods in Kidderminster;
- Fernhill Heath to Blackpole in Worcester, B4536 link, connecting a large residential village with the main employment/ retail areas on the northern edge of the city;
- A449 Malvern to Worcester corridor enhancements to support increased cycling; and
- Redditch to Bromsgrove corridor enhancements to support increased cycling.

This Administration supports all forms of travel, to the detriment of no one type. Improving our road network goes hand in hand with improving our cycling network, and remains one of our key priorities. This funding will allow us to continue the progress we've already made.

It will also help to create a cycle parking initiative, which will provide secure cycle parking at businesses, education and retail locations across Worcestershire. These will be placed where no parking exists currently, or provision is limited, to enable more people to consider cycling to access local services and facilities.

The funding will also continue the process of digitising Worcestershire's walking and cycling maps to enable the public to access information and updates about the routes directly from their smart phones or other enabled devices.

It will also see the installation of safety signage for COVID-19 and waymarking, to support safe social distancing, whilst improving and supporting a positive visitor experience for Worcestershire's towns and city centres.

**QUESTION 3** – Mrs F M Oborski will ask Simon Geraghty:

*"All the information coming from the LGA indicates that later this year an expected Government White Paper on "Devolution" will indicate that the Government intends to force through Unitary Authorities based most probably on groupings of 5-7 Parliamentary Constituencies. This would indicate a likely single Unitary Authority for Worcestershire. In some other Shire Counties eg Hertfordshire and Surrey discussions are already being held as to what type of Unitary Structure would be most appropriate to those areas.*

*Could the Leader tell me:*

*What if any informal discussions have already been held with the Leaders of the 6 Worcestershire Districts? Whether and when he intends to set up formal discussions across the County?"*

**Answer**

Firstly I would like to thank Fran for her question.

I can confirm that no discussions have taken place with our district partners on this matter. Instead we have focused our attention on working together as One Worcestershire to coordinate our collective response to the pandemic, restarting our services and working up our plans to support the economy to recover. We also need to remain ready to respond to any new local outbreaks. We will await the publication of the white paper in the autumn and see the framework of any devolution offer before considering an appropriate response with partners

### Supplementary Question

In response to a question as to why the Council had not made a pre-emptive response, the Leader of the Council commented that he would prefer to see the details of the White Paper before preparing a collective response in consultation with partner organisations. This would avoid any abortive work being undertaken that would take away from the Council's work in response to the pandemic.

### **QUESTION 4** – Mr M J Hart will ask Alan Amos:

*"Would the Cabinet Member for Highways reassure me that issues with the surface dressing on the roads on the Spennells Estate, within my Chaddesley Division will be properly addressed?"*

### **Answer**

Can I thank Cllr Hart for his question and commend the diligence and determination with which he pursues his constituents' interests.

I have received a number of briefings updating me on this situation and what remedial measures have been and will continue to be taken to put the matter right. He can be assured that the issues with the surface dressing on the Spennells Estate are being properly addressed. The Contractor has and will continue to implement a number of remedial measures to manage the situation that has been caused by the very hot weather in recent weeks. As he will know, surface dressing prolongs the life of roads for about 8-10 years and is an integral part of our policy to keep Worcestershire roads in the top quartile condition of roads throughout the whole country. It is not an exact science but methodologies are improving all the time, particularly with regard to dealing with the increasing trend of extreme weather conditions occurring so soon after each other, in particular the large ranges in temperature which we have faced in recent years. Treatments able to withstand the extremes of both hot *and* cold remain very challenging. But not to use this method of repair and improvement will leave many roads in an unsatisfactory condition as they deteriorate to the point of needing costly structural replacement.

The Head of Highways Operations has confirmed that, following his recent inspection, use of the 3mm aggregate on the key locations has settled the scuffing and tracking that occurred during the hot weather. There are still a few locations where further use of the 3mm aggregate would provide some benefit. There is a small amount of excess dust/fine chippings at the treated locations which, however hard we try when completing the spot/localised treatment, will leave a slight visual difference between this and the general surface dressing. However, he accepted that, from an aesthetic perspective in the cul-de-sacs and a small number of other locations, residents were concerned.

To further address the issues, Highways are carrying out and will complete the following works:

- We will get a highways team to attend the estate to address any further areas of scuffing/tracking. They will apply the 3mm aggregate to the locations affected. They will do this by hand, to reduce the likelihood of any dust issues where practicable. For this to be as effective as possible, it will need to be completed when the temperature is between 20 and 25c so the aggregate binds into the surface bitumen. They will inform Cllr Hart when the team is going to visit the estate. This operation will take a few days to ensure a full treatment of all of the key locations identified.
- Once this treatment on the additional locations has bedded in and settled down, operatives will sweep the key areas treated to remove some of the excess fine chippings and dust and hopefully improve the appearance in relation to the rest of the surface dressing.

- Operatives will then monitor the estate and, should there be further prolonged very hot weather, treat any further locations as necessary and follow up with a sweep of treated locations, should this be required.
- Regarding the black bitumen on the kerb bottoms, this will be treated with a method that removes it via an enclosed jet spray, which will hopefully remove the bitumen from the kerb bottoms and provide for an improved look. Cllr Hart will be advised when this work is due to take place by contacting him when suitable temperatures obtain for a couple of days in succession to address this problem.
- If there are any outstanding areas that the above approach does not resolve, we can consider using 'Water texturing'. This is a very focussed high-powered jet water spray which takes off the top layer of any exposed bitumen. However, its use is generally restricted to the Autumn, as the road temperatures need to be low to ensure it works as effectively as possible. The Estate will be reviewed later in the year.

#### Supplementary Question

The Cabinet Member for Highways agreed that addressing these highways issues would not be to the detriment of the work already taking place to tackle congestion and improve pavements in this area.

#### **QUESTION 5** – Mr S J Mackay will ask John Smith:

*"Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility give an update of the success or otherwise of the Test and Trace Procedures that are being carried out within our County as compared to other authorities and is he confident that if we are subject to a further wave of infections later in the year we have access to sufficient supplies of PPE to accommodate all our settings."*

#### **Answer**

Thank you, Councillor Mackay, for your question.

The Worcestershire Outbreak Control Plan was published on the Worcestershire County Council website on 30 June 2020. Worcestershire has a Local Outbreak Response team available by phone or email 7 days a week from 9:00am until 6:00pm.

The team includes Environmental Health Officers and Public Health specialists. This team will work closely with regional Public Health England teams and the national NHS test and trace service in outbreak situations. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 can book a test online or by calling 119. There are testing sites at the Worcester Warriors Ground and at pop-up units across the county. Anyone who is positive will be contacted by the NHS National Test and Trace Service to identify contacts with any contacts of the person required to self-isolate for 14 days.

A Member Engagement Board has been set up to support this which met last week for the first time and is made up of Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing, Cabinet Members for Education and Adult Services, appropriate Directors from the County Council, Leaders of District Councils, Senior Health leaders, Police, Regulatory Services, the Voluntary Sector, the LEP to support businesses and a dedicated Communications Team.

The number of people being tested for COVID-19 and cases confirmed are being closely monitored across Worcestershire. This includes close monitoring of exceedances in cases at district level using sensitive statistical measures. Other early warning data sets are also being drawn upon to indicate the possibility of subsequent waves of COVID-19, such as GP surveillance data, hospital utilisation and 111 calls.

Regarding PPE, a Worcestershire PPE Pandemic Stockpile has been created and is being maintained for a proposed minimum 12-month period. This is stored in a dedicated facility in the County. This has stock of the key items of masks, gloves, aprons, face shields/visors, hand sanitizer and swabs to mitigate the risk of disruption to the supply chains. Care providers are also being encouraged to register with the central government National PPE Portal and to also maintain their own stockpile of 6 weeks' worth of PPE.

#### Supplementary Question

In response to a query about future PPE supplies, the Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being was confident that there was an adequate stockpile of PPE to address requirements in the near future.

#### **QUESTION 6** – Mr M E Jenkins will ask Alan Amos:

*"After only receiving 50% of the available money from phase 1 of the Active Travel bid, I would like to ask why our bid was considered so poor by the DfT, with it failing to meet the clear criteria set by the Department? What restrictions were placed on officers making the bid by the Cabinet Member for Highways?"*

#### **Answer**

I thank Cllr Jenkins for his Question and for part of the answer refer him to the answer I gave to Cllr Lunn.

Worcestershire can be extremely proud of its record in successfully bidding for Government grants and for leveraging in more funding for a whole range of highways schemes in recent years, for roads, pavements, walking and cycling. A recent example of our success was in getting £3.5m for a massive walking and cycling scheme in Bromsgrove, not that we've had even an acknowledgement of that let alone any thanks from certain quarters. For this particular Bid, Worcestershire was in the middle band. Some Councils only received 25% but – significantly – most of our neighbours also received 50%, including Herefordshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, and Staffordshire. This is most likely because the thrust of the money was for areas where the use of public transport was high and so were disproportionately affected by current social distancing rules in connection with the use of public transport. Worcestershire, with over 80% of journeys being made by car, like most of our neighbours, did not fall into that category and so we all ended up with roughly the same result. So, obviously, this alleged Worcestershire vast anti-cycling conspiracy has now extended to include Herefordshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, and Staffordshire as well. The approach we took within our Bid was to ensure that our interventions were linked to our longer-term proposals in LTP4 which we will be bringing forward for our Phase 2 Bid, which have already been assessed as things we want to do, and are substantive and useful schemes that will permanently enhance active travel throughout the County. Officers worked extremely hard against a very tight Government deadline to submit our Phase 1 Bid and I would want to put on record my thanks to them. One minute we were accused of not putting in a Bid – wrong. Then we were accused of not putting in a Bid for the full amount – wrong again. Worcestershire Highways works on the basis of evidence and facts produced both by our officers and DfT civil servants.

#### Supplementary Question

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member for Highways indicated that the bid had been drawn up by officers in line with Council policy and denied that any restrictions had been placed on officers in the submission of the bid to the DfT.

## **QUESTION 7** – Mr A A J Adams will ask Tony Miller:

*"As you all know Worcestershire was badly affected by the terrible flooding that occurred last Winter. My own Division suffered terrible flooding in October, again in November, and a third time in February with many properties flooded in Broad Marston, South Littleton, Badsey, Cleeve Prior and Honeybourne including the local pub – The Gate Inn. Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment, please update this Council on what action is being taken to alleviate flooding before next Winter to prevent our communities suffering again?"*

### **Answer**

We are working towards solutions. We are the middle of a Section 9 which forensically examines all the aspects and reasons for flooding. The main reason was rainfall which we have no control over. That impacts on areas where developments have not created an infrastructure to cope with the rainfall. What are we doing? It was a multi-agency approach including further programmes informing businesses, warning them and giving them information. Residential properties will be receiving welfare visits. The most devastating aspect was the evacuation and rehoming which we have had to undertake. We do hand out and deliver sand bags through the district councils. It seems a trifle amount when you see the amount of water we have had through the autumn and winter. I can't say these events will not happen again.

As part of the multi-agency control, the LRF and silver and gold command control, the amount of work undertaken I can only give my thanks to those people. We are still going through the recovery programme which will take some time. We have had online information for Tenbury and Worcester and visits are being arranged. With multi agency visits, it is difficult to get everyone together at one time. We have finally achieved it for yourself. It is an ongoing programme that we must achieve. There was good news for Tenbury which had been allocated £4.9m. The LEP had put £1m in. So we are spade ready in Tenbury and must start digging into that project and get it through to fruition. We are not sitting back, we are continually working and with the RFCC, it will be an agenda item to see how we can resolve flooding across the county. It will not stop. It is ongoing and is working. All parts of the agency are coming together to work. I would like to see it work a bit faster but we are pressurising as much as we possibly can.

### **County-wide effort**

The significant flood events in the Autumn of 2019 and the Winter of 2020 led to the following:

- Flood event response including:
  - Highway flooding queries, investigations, clearance, closures, re-opening, future programme development
  - Resident / business warning & informing
  - Resident / business welfare visits / checks
  - Resident rescue / evacuation / re-homing
  - Sandbag distribution
  - Flood defence erection / maintenance / removal
  - Impact data collection / management / dissemination
  - WCC internal & multi-agency LRF command and control structures
  - Comms
- Flood event recovery including:
  - Ongoing welfare visits
  - Community support grants roll out
  - Property flood protection grants roll out and support - ongoing
  - Virtual community support sessions
  - Infrastructure inspections and repair - ongoing
  - Flood response resource review and renewal

- Flood event review and investigation including:
  - LRF debrief of Autumn 2019 flood events
  - LRF debrief of Winter 2020 flood events – being scheduled
  - Formal flood investigations and reports - ongoing
  - Specific location investigations - ongoing
- Development and implementation of mitigation works including:
  - Major flood alleviation schemes - ongoing
  - Highway flood adaptation schemes - ongoing
  - Smaller scale flooding & drainage schemes - ongoing
  - Community flood alleviation schemes - ongoing
  - Natural flood management – ongoing
  - Production of prioritised programme of works – ongoing
  - Production of scheme business cases and funding bids - ongoing
- Development of community resilience including:
  - Support for existing community flood action groups - ongoing
  - Support for establishment of new community flood action groups - ongoing
  - Support for community and individual resilience plans - ongoing

### **The Littletons Division**

All listed locations in the Littletons Division have benefitted to date from:

- Flood event response / recovery visits by the SWLDP including sandbag distribution
- Flood event recovery visits by the EA where there was impact from a Main River
- Access made available to virtual community flood recovery support sessions – delivered by WCC, SWLDP, EA, STW and the National Flood Forum
- Recovery support grants rolled out by the SWLDP
- Property Flood Resilience grants being rolled out by the SWLDP
- Locations toured by the WCC CMR
- Inspection and removal of highway drainage issues by WCC

However, further planned works include:

- Site tour with Local Member, CMR and community reps by technical officers
- Further inspection, cleansing and assessment of highway drainage infrastructure
- Investigation of potential upstream Natural Flood Management measures
- Potential development of mitigation schemes
- Continued liaison with the community and development of local resilience

In addition:

- At Broad Marston the SWLDP and WCC will continue to liaise with the local community, the Local Member, the EA and the Heart of England Forest about the potential attenuation / wetland area
- At Honeybourne the SWLDP and WCC will continue to investigate the Taylor Wimpey development and proper operation of the associated attenuation pond.

### **QUESTION 8** – Mr P Denham will ask Alan Amos:

*"Our bid to government for available funding for Active Travel improvements, during the COVID-19 emergency, resulted in Worcestershire residents being short-changed and receiving only half of the indicative funding available. We believe that the county's bid failed to meet the criteria set by government which included the desire to make it more attractive for short journeys less than two miles to be undertaken by walking or cycling.*

*Can the Cabinet Member advise us what he will do to ensure that this county gets its proper share of the second (and much larger) tranche of available government funding, so that residents in both urban and rural areas benefit from long-term measures which make short journeys on foot and bicycle to become more attractive?"*

## Answer

I thank Cllr Denham for his Question and for part of the answer I refer him to the answers I gave Cllr Lunn and Cllr Jenkins a few moments ago.

His assertion that Worcestershire residents have been short-changed is so far from the truth that I will be happy to correct his ignorance.

This County has some of the very best Active Travel provision in the region, second to none, in terms of what we already have done; in terms of what we are currently providing; and in terms of our plans for the future.

Phase 2 of the Active Travel Bid is for over 80% of the total money available. We received the details of this only on Monday and it is essentially focussed on long term and permanent activity, which fits in very well with our hope to take on some of our schemes in LTP4 in which we have **34** Active Travel Schemes already agreed in 2017 and ready to go. I'm sure Cllr Denham will have read this essential document so I won't list the policies individually but just refer him to the 7 sections that relate to Active Travel from WC1 to WC7:

Policy Number	Title
WC1	Infrastructure and other measures for pedestrians and cyclists
WC2	Partnership working to deliver walking and cycling measures
WC3	Maintenance
WC4	Spatial planning and developer contributions for walking and cycling
WC5	Walking and cycling safely
WC6	Parking for cycling
WC7	Network Direction Signage

In working on potential schemes to be included in Phase 2, we're also looking at additional funding opportunities either through submitted bids or developer contributions. The approach set out in LTP4 is to facilitate active travel along whole corridors and routes and **not** to take a piecemeal approach. By taking the corridor approach we can provide consistently greater travel choice for both commuters and leisure walkers and cyclists. This will also link to the proposals which we have for updating our information on walking and cycling provision, links between routes, and our on-line mapping.

I am proud to list just some of the work which either ***has already been*** or ***is being delivered*** for active travel across the County:

- 11% of the budget is spent on walking and cycling;
- At £8m, the biggest-ever footway investment programme in this year's budget – the largest-ever amount to improve and expand our footways and encourage walking in both our urban and rural areas;
- Ham Way footbridge and cycle-way improvements as part of the dualling of the Southern Link Road, including widening the existing route along the causeway. Currently being delivered;
- Delivery of a new active travel bridleway over Swinesherd Way to Whittington and the new development with the Worcester cycle network including the hospital and Warndon cycle network. Currently in delivery by the developer;

- Securing the funding for a new bridge across the Southern Link Road at Broomhall Way to link St Peters and Worcester City with the new South Worcester Urban Extension. Planning permission granted;
  - Bromsgrove walking and cycling improvements; a massive £3.5million investment in a comprehensive package of routes across the town. Delivery in progress; Redditch to Bromsgrove cycle way;
  - Worcester to Malvern active travel corridor;
  - Worcester to Kempsey active travel corridor;
  - Evesham Active Travel corridor, significant design work completed. Implementation pending funding for Hampton Bridge (section 106);
  - Pershore Infrastructure enhancements to include the delivery of new cycleway infrastructure as part of the delivery of the link road;
  - An Active Travel link to the new Worcestershire Parkway station;
  - Support for a new walking/cycling bridge at Kepax in Worcester;
  - Major improvement for the Sabrina Bridge in Worcester;
  - Diglis pedestrian and cycle bridge in Worcester;
- Following my revision of the Streetscape Design Guide, a new requirement on developers to make generous provision on all new development for cycle storage facilities, to encourage cycling;
- £4m. on bridges for walking and cycling;
  - New scheme to complete walking/cycling provision in Diglis;
  - Bringing forward a commuter cycling scheme linking Fernhill Heath and Blackpole;
- \* A new segregated pedestrian and cycle way along New Road in Worcester.

I could go on but won't be allowed to, so I'll let the facts and the record speak for themselves.

#### **QUESTION 9** – Mr R M Udall will ask Alan Amos

*"In January the government made available £10m for local authorities in England to apply for funding to install kerbside electronic vehicle charging machines. The government wanted to promote electric vehicle use. Has Worcestershire County Council applied for any of this money?"*

*Why has my request for the County Council to apply for some of this money to install EV Kerbside charging machines, which could earn revenue for the Council, to be installed as a pilot scheme in St John's, been ignored?"*

#### **Answer**

I thank Cllr Udall for his question.

Worcestershire County Council **has** applied for funding from the Government to install electric vehicle charging units and has obtained £37,500 for 5 charging points in car parks, 2 in Bewdley, 1 in Stourport, and 2 in Worcester City. As you can see, at £7,500 each, they are not cheap. We support the installation of EV charging points other than on highways land. They are not suitable to be installed on the highway (kerbside) for a number of practical reasons, including concerns over the ability to preserve access to these facilities in areas where there is significant demand for on-street parking, maintenance costs, and the need to avoid exacerbating already serious congestion on our roads. There is the very important point that - as there will be no enforcement - it will not be possible to keep them clear on on-street parking locations as local residents invariably seek to park as near as possible to their homes; and also to avoid the inevitable conflict between neighbours who would object to space outside or near their property being taken by others, including outsiders, who may likely choose to leave their charged vehicle in the same place after it

has been charged up thereby using it effectively as a parking space rather than just for its purpose as a temporary facility to charge their vehicle.

Instead, Worcestershire County Council is working with a range of potential providers to increase the provision of EV charging units in off-street locations, such as public car parks where vehicles can charge for longer periods, in designated spaces, without impacting on the operation of the highway.

Worcestershire already benefits from a network of public EV charging units at convenient locations, and this network is growing all the time. Some Worcestershire Districts Councils are making their own arrangements, including Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, and Wychavon, For further details, I would direct Cllr Udall to [www.zap-map.com](http://www.zap-map.com).

As for generating income, I have discussed this possibility with officers on a number of occasions, and it's a non-starter. Apart from anything else, the electricity supply from our lampposts are of the wrong ampage for any such scheme to be remotely viable.

As for his alleged request for a scheme in St. John's, officers have scoured their records and found no such request. But if he'd like to re-send it to *me*, highlighting those residents' parking spaces he wishes to remove, then I'll ensure he receives an appropriate response.

**QUESTION 10** – Mr R C Lunn will ask Marcus Hart:

*"In view of the pressing need to ensure that all children return to active schooling in September, what measures are being taken to use external buildings to ensure that as many children as possible are taught in a class environment?"*

**Answer**

The DfE guidance published on the 2 July 2020 is clear in the section on Estates that they do not believe schools need to make significant adaptations to their sites, or deliver any of their education on other sites, such as community centres or village halls, because class sizes can return to normal and spaces used by more than one class or group can be cleaned between use.

Worcestershire Children First as part of its Covid-19 response, is carrying out capacity analysis of our schools to identify any potential issues, is working with schools across to provide additional storage space in the schools to free up accommodation and has the support in principle of Worcester Diocese for the use of church buildings for before and after school activities.

**QUESTION 11** – Mr M E Jenkins will ask Karen May:

*"I would like to think that all councillors in Worcestershire agree that black lives matter. However, we can all be susceptible to prejudices and unconscious biases that mean we may act in a discriminatory way without realising it. I would therefore ask that all councillors take part in a Diversity Training session. Can this be arranged?"*

**Answer**

As a Council we pride ourselves on being an inclusive organisation and do not treat people less favourably because of their race. We also have a number of eLearning packages which are available for our workforce, including one on unconscious bias which aims at raising awareness of the role we all have in promoting inclusion and challenging inequality. The Council's Equality and Diversity Manager will ensure this is made available to all Councillors so as to raise awareness and to consider any additional future training requirements.