

COUNCIL
18 FEBRUARY 2021**REPORT OF CABINET - SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN**

Annual Update to the School Organisation Plan and Recommendation for Provision in Worcester

1. The Cabinet has considered the updated annual sufficiency information for all areas of education to ensure the Council's five year strategic School Organisation Plan, which provides an overview of school place planning from 2019-24, is revised in order that the Council can meet its statutory duty and strategic aims to provide a sufficiency of school places for children in Worcestershire. The Cabinet has approved the publication of the 2020 update of place sufficiency information as part of the School Organisation Plan and has particularly noted the pressure on Mainstream and Special Educational Needs and Disability places, the impact on the provision of childcare as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the work being undertaken to support Post-16 provision.

2. The Cabinet has also agreed the proposal to build a new Secondary School in Worcester City to address the shortfall of places that has been identified in the area. The Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services, has been given authority to identify funding sources to be able to implement the recommended actions, to be approved by Council and Cabinet by the funding approval process. Authority has also been delegated to the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services, Chief Finance Officer and Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) where appropriate, to enter into a form of Memorandum of Understanding and continue and conclude the negotiation of an Option to acquire land to deliver a new Secondary School in the Worcester City District boundary with the intention of presenting this Option for agreement by Cabinet.

3. A pre-publication engagement with stakeholders on the proposal for a new Secondary School in Worcester City has been approved by the Cabinet. A full report for a new Secondary School will be considered by the Cabinet later in 2021 to include approval of capital programme, school specification and agreement of land purchase subject to planning approval and to authorise commencement of formal consultation of the proposals. The Cabinet will also consider, in the Autumn term 2021, a report that identifies opportunities to invest locally to meet specific Special Education Needs and Disabilities.

School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2022/23, Co-ordinated Admission Schemes 2022/23 and Published Admission Number Changes for 2022/23

4. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills has delegated authority for annually approving the school admission arrangements where no significant changes are proposed to those arrangements. For 2022/23 a change had been proposed to the Admissions Policy and a reduction in the Published Admission Number

(PAN) at Flyford Flavell Primary School. As a consequence, full public consultation and Cabinet approval of these changes has been required.

5. A proposal to remove the religious affiliation criteria from the admission arrangements for Wolverley CE Secondary School was subject to a full public consultation. There had been no applications submitted on religious affiliation grounds since the criteria was put in place. There were no responses received to that consultation. The Governing Body of Flyford Flavell requested the Council consult to reduce the PAN of the school from 22 to 15 for 2022 following the school's conversion to a primary school. The school is a rural one and has had a falling roll. The Council has reviewed future demand for places at the school and agreed the PAN reduction would not cause a concern for basic need. Full consultation had taken place and no responses were received on the proposed reduction.

6. The Cabinet has therefore approved the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2022/23 and the scheme for Co-ordinated Admissions for Primary/Middle and Secondary Schools for 2022/23. It has also approved the PANs for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools for the academic year 2021/22, including the PAN reduction for Flyford Flavell Primary School.

A Review of Day Opportunities for Adults with Learning Disabilities

7. Further to the report to Council in November 2020, a review of day service opportunities is being carried out to consider how the Council may continue to meet assessed eligible need in the most efficient and cost-effective way that promotes independence, social inclusion and positive outcomes for individuals and carers. The Council has directly provided internal day opportunity provision for over 25 years through Resource Centres (for those with complex learning difficulties) and Connect Services (for those with less complex needs).

8. The Cabinet has noted the findings of the first phase of the review which had focused on the current offer for people using Council provided Resource Centres. The first phase of the review has demonstrated that there is a need for the Council to continue to provide a Resource Centre/building-based offer that meets the needs of individuals with more complex needs. However, there was evidence that improvements and changes need to be made to ensure that individuals are receiving the most appropriate services to meet their assessed eligible needs in line with the Council's Statutory Duty. Evidence also showed that the Council needs to plan for the longer term taking into account the needs of young adults moving into the service and the ageing population of both service users and their families/carers.

9. The Cabinet has therefore endorsed the focus of the next stage of the review, which will aim to understand the overall breakdown of the service users currently using the Connect Services, to form a strategic overview of all of Council's internal day opportunity provision and to start identifying cohorts of individuals across the two services. This will allow the Council to start addressing the future "offer" of the Resource Centre, whilst ensuring the practice is strength-based for each individual, both presently and in the future. Processes and practices will need to be explored to understand how the two internal services have become blurred over time. The Cabinet will receive a further report later in 2021 which will make recommendations on proposals for the future service delivery model and the commencement of any formal consultation if required.

Scrutiny Report: The Council's Energy Purchasing Arrangements

11. The Cabinet has considered a Scrutiny Report on the Council's Energy Purchasing Arrangements. The Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel, following a budget monitoring discussion, was advised of a cost pressure relating to street lighting. As a consequence, the Corporate & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel was asked to look into the Council's energy purchasing arrangements. Following some initial research by a small group of panel members, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) agreed that a Task Group be established, with the following terms of reference, to look into the matter further:

“to review the Council's energy purchasing arrangements from West Mercia Energy (WME) to ensure best value for Worcestershire County Council.”

12. The OSPB fully endorsed the recommendations in the Scrutiny Report at its meeting on 6 January 2021. The Cabinet has received the Scrutiny Report on the Council's Energy Purchasing Arrangements together with the response of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning. It has noted the Scrutiny Report's findings and recommendations and agreed to adopt the response of the Cabinet Member as the way forward.

Corporate Landlord and Facilities Management Delivery Model

13. There has been an ongoing review of the direction and form of the Council's commissioned services. This has included consideration of how the Council should discharge its responsibilities as Corporate Landlord and oversee its facilities management. Further to the report to Cabinet in March 2020, notice was served to terminate the contract with Place Partnership Limited (PPL) from 31 March 2021. An options appraisal of delivery models has been undertaken and as a result a delivery model based on a hybrid arrangement, with some services delivered in-house and others through external providers, had been proposed which fulfilled the design principles required. This model would give the best value approach and was deliverable within the timescales.

14. The Cabinet has endorsed the actions taken in relation to Corporate Landlord and Facilities Management and approved the delivery model proposed. It has also agreed the dissolution of PPL by way of Members Voluntary Liquidation. The Strategic Director of Commercial and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning and Chief Finance Officer, will finalise the arrangements for this and all necessary actions to be taken to give effect to the decision.

15. Notwithstanding the above, the Cabinet has authorised the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning and Chief Finance Officer, to finalise the financial arrangements for the closing down of PPL, which may include leaving Place Partnership on 31 March 2021, prior to the dissolution, as is the current formal position.

Mr S E Geraghty
Chairman

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

Nichola Garner, Committee and Appellate Officer

Tel: 01905 846626

Email: ngarner2@worcestershire.gov.uk

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 meeting of the Cabinet held on 4 February 2021.

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