

**COUNCIL**  
**15 JULY 2021****REPORT OF CABINET - SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN**

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**Children's Homes and Semi-Independent Accommodation**

1. The Cabinet has considered an update on the 'Edge of Care' service, developed since Cabinet agreed principles for this in October 2018. The development of an Edge of Care Service, now established as 'Supporting Families First', is a key part of a revised strategic approach in supporting families to stay together and has been developed alongside a revised approach to Worcestershire's children's homes and a review of sufficiency of placements for children in care and care leavers.
2. In January 2021 the government announced the launch of the Independent Care Review and Yvette Stanley (Ofsted Director for Regulation and Social Care) responded to the announcement by expressing her hope that, "more children can stay safely and happily with their families wherever possible" (11 March 2021 – Ofsted Blog). This aligns to WCF's core values in maintaining family life wherever possible.
3. WCF has approved a Sufficiency Strategy which sets out the approach to meeting the statutory duty to make such arrangements as it considers appropriate for securing community homes are available for looked-after children, having regard to the need for ensuring the availability of homes of different descriptions suitable for different purposes and needs of children.
4. The success of 'Supporting Families First' in keeping more children within the family environment has led to a review of the range of support for children across fostering, special guardianship, residential children's homes, and semi-independent supported accommodation.
5. Cabinet has noted the contents of the Sufficiency Strategy in providing evidence for the direction of travel in services. The success of the Edge of Care service and growing demand for good quality local semi-independent accommodation has led to a shift in emphasis in how support is provided. Cabinet has agreed that consultation will take place on a range of changes to accommodation at Green Hill Lodge, Oak House, and Hill View to reflect these changes and the Cabinet Member with responsibility will consider the outcome from the consultation.

**Blakedown Rail Station Car Park**

6. Cabinet has considered proposals to increase car parking at Blakedown Rail Station and to mitigate on street parking in the village. Work has identified a brownfield site immediately to the south of the station on Station Drive (sometimes referred to as the Callow Oils site) as having the potential to provide car parking for the station.

7. Following initial survey work, the Station Drive site is believed to have capacity for up to 120 car parking spaces with work currently being undertaken on a detailed layout, ground investigations, ecology etc to inform the design and layout of the car park. The final design of the car park will include provision for electric vehicle charging points as set out in the Streetscape Design Guide. Provision will also be included for cycle parking.

8. Cabinet has agreed various actions needed to bring the proposals to fruition, including allocation of funding to purchase the necessary land, the use of CPO powers if required, submission of a planning application and authorised the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure to award the contract when all necessary permissions are in place.

### **Resources Report – Provisional Financial Results 2020/21**

9. Cabinet has considered the provisional financial results for 2020/21. These show that the Council underspent its £346 million budget by £0.783 million (-0.2%) in 2020/21, in line with the forecast previously reported to Cabinet. Additionally, the Council received nearly £88 million from Central Government with regard to COVID-19, with £74 million spent in year on providing vital and urgent support.

10. The February 2021 Cabinet 2021/22 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan Update report included a forecast of Earmarked Reserves which was based on the best knowledge available at that time. This is broadly consistent with the amount of reserves available at the end of 2020/21.

11. During the year, the Council drew down funding from unspent grant and earmarked reserves to help fund expenditure. It is also proposed that for a number of areas with unspent grant monies or other funding, this is carried forward to next financial year or onwards.

12. Cabinet has agreed to changes in various Earmarked Reserves including a new reserve for Education and High Needs set aside for adverse financial changes which fall to the County Council to resolve after exhausting support from the Department for Education; the Future Capital Investment Reserves to support capacity for Economic Development investment with the first call against these monies for Redditch Rail Station redevelopment; an £0.8 million increase to Children's Safeguarding risk reserve and £0.9 million creation of new reserve set aside for SEND Transport additional costs

13. Due to the cumulative impact of prior year's economic growth in the County for business rates income, and following a risk review, Cabinet also agreed that £10.6 million is released from the Business Rates Risk Reserve to support wider economic and social recovery from the impacts of the pandemic and the Council's ability to reform in light of future working processes. New earmarked reserves include £2 million new reserve for Infrastructure Project Support to enable the Council to move forward with highways and transport/connectivity; £3 million to extend the Council's Open For Business economic development ambitions; and extensions into 2022/23 and 2023/24 for the Councillors' Divisional Funds Scheme and Local Members' Capital Highways Fund.

14. In addition to these changes, Cabinet has endorsed financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2021 and the unaudited Annual Financial Report and Statement of Accounts 2020/21 and noted the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21.

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

### **Contact Points**

#### Specific Contact Points for this report

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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 24 June 2021.

[Browse meetings - Cabinet - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/2021/06/24/cabinet-meeting-24-june-2021/)