

## **COUNCIL**

### **11 NOVEMBER 2021**

## **REPORT OF CABINET - SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN**

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### **School Sufficiency And Organisation for the Pershore Education Planning Area**

1. The County Council has a statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places for all children resident in the county who wish to attend a state funded school.
2. Changes to schools in the Pershore education planning area over several years by DfE and WCC has led to uncertainty and sustainability concerns across the education planning area. This creates a risk to ensuring clear and quality education journeys for pupils in Pershore and the surrounding rural villages and ensuring the sustainability of a number of small rural schools.
3. A number of schools in the Education Planning Area (EPA) have varied their age ranges so that it is now made up of education tier journeys.
4. Cabinet has approved a pre-publication consultation with stakeholders on the proposal for a coordinated change of age range to align schools in the Pershore EPA to a single, two-tier (primary and secondary) system of education. A report of the consultation findings and full proposals will be presented to Cabinet in February 2022.

### **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans**

5. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIPs) are a part of the vision and ambition set out by Government. They are strategic documents which set out the proposed network for walking and cycling within a defined geographic area. They enable a long-term approach to the development of networks, typically over a ten-year period and set priorities for investment in relevant infrastructure. They also set out a narrative to explain and justify the proposed network, looking at considerations such as barriers to walking and cycling, trip attractors, existing links and infrastructure
  6. LCWIPs are not statutory documents however funders, including the Department of Transport (DfT), are increasingly targeting their funding at schemes within LCWIPs and to understand how their funding will contribute to delivery of the wider network
  7. The current Local Transport Plan (LTP4) sets out the County Council's strategic aspirations for walking and cycling and identifies proposals for a series of overarching active travel corridors.
  8. It is proposed to develop a series of LCWIPs for the county focussed on the individual towns and Worcester City. These documents will build on the overarching strategic active travel corridors set out in LTP4, providing details of the proposed
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routes for walking and cycling, trip attractors and considering any barriers to proposals. This builds on the significant progress made in implementing active travel corridors since LTP4 was adopted in 2017.

9. Cabinet has authorised the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport both to approve individual Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for public consultation and modification and to adopt individual Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for implementation

### **Worcestershire Bus Service Improvement Plan**

10. The Department for Transport (DfT) has recently published the National Bus Strategy (NBS) outlining its ambition to improve bus services in England. The County Council, as the Local Transport Authority, has decided that it wishes to enter an Enhanced Partnership with Local Operators by the end of March 2022. This decision will have implications for the local bus network in Worcestershire, the majority of which is currently operated on a commercial basis.

11. Creation of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and Enhanced Partnership would allow both the County Council and bus operators to benefit from increased levels of Government funding. If these are not created and implemented, the Government will not release funding.

12. If Worcestershire County Council does not commit to delivering a Plan, the Department for Transport will cease £0.55 million per annum in Bus Service Operators' Grant (BSOG) funding. The absence of Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership would mean the loss of Bus Service Operators' Grant. This would require the withdrawal of circa 20% of the Council's current supported network, leaving a significant number of rural areas without any bus service.

13. Prior to the pandemic Worcestershire delivered its Passenger Transport Strategy (agreed by Cabinet in November 2019). This will translate into the various aims of the BSIP and will make it easier for WCC to achieve the deadlines set by the Department for Transport. Worcestershire is using the work carried out to deliver its Passenger Transport Strategy as the basis of its Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP).

14. Cabinet has committed to the development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan to set out the Council's vision and priorities for the future of bus services in Worcestershire. This will be used as a high-level bidding document to secure capital and revenue grant funding from the Department for Transport.

15. The CMR will approve the BSIP and operational policies, together with the statutory Enhanced Partnership. The BSIP will be based on the previously agreed Worcestershire Passenger Strategy.

### **Establishment of a Charitable Body to Support Museum Funding**

16. The Joint Museums Committee has approved in principle the set up this year of a charitable body to support fundraising for the City and County museums.

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17. This charitable body will enable the museums to apply for a wider range of grants towards projects and future development and will create a more tax-advantageous vehicle for individual's donations.

18. The charity will be overseen by a board of trustees who will be advocates for the museums' development in the local community and to grant-giving foundations. They will have a scrutiny role ensuring funding is spent as intended.

19. The establishment of the new charity is not intended to change the way the joint museums service is governed by the Joint Museums Committee or managed operationally.

20. Cabinet authorised the Strategic Director of People in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities, to enter into all necessary legal agreements to establish the charitable body.

### **Adult Social Care – Annual Local Account**

21. Adult Social Care is required to publish an annual Local Account. The account is a summary of activity, setting out the Council's priorities, showing improvements, where further change is needed and including feedback from service users. This promotes transparency, scrutiny and accountability to adult social care service users and the public, as recipients and funders of public sector services. Cabinet has received the report which covered the last financial year and stated how the council has performed as a provider and commissioner. It also includes future developments within the wider People Directorate and People Strategy that support positive outcomes for users of adult social care.

22. The report highlights the development of services such as Here to Help, how residents and existing service users have been supported through the challenges of the pandemic, significant investment in reablement to promote people's independence and the Council's commitment to working with our health colleagues to promote timely, safe discharge from hospital to a person's usual place of residence, despite the challenges of Covid. Cabinet has endorsed the report, which will feature on future agendas on an annual basis.

### **Resources Report – Revenue Budget Monitoring – Month 4 (31 July) 2021/22**

23. This report set out the 2021/22 outturn forecast for the Council's £355 million net revenue budget as at Month 4 (31 July 2021), the estimated financial impact of COVID-19 and progress to date on the savings and reforms programme.

24. At month 4 the Council was forecasting a £1 million cost pressure whilst achieving savings of over £10.5 million in year.

25. In addition to this, the Council is managing around £36 million of additional one-off funding to support its response to COVID-19 working alongside partners and suppliers to ensure vital support services are enabled across the County area. Costs are broadly in line with the additional funding allocated by Central Government. Looking forward, the Council will be refreshing its Medium-Term Financial Plan noting the continual need to invest in the priorities that support vulnerable children and adults, ensuring road and infrastructure improvements support strong economic

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growth for the county area whilst acknowledging the financial risks on our income as we continue to recover from the effects of the pandemic.

26. This report also noted the latest position with regard to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block.

27. The most significant cost pressure was the WCF forecast position of a £1.164 million deficit (less than 1% of the WCF budget) mainly related to increased demographic pressures in Placements for Looked After Children. There has been a Covid-19 impact on the ability of WCF to move children and young people onto permanent arrangements which contributed to increased costs, however the primary increase is due to the rising cost of residential and external foster care provision.

28. The report showed that the Council's treasury activities were managed successfully within the approved Prudential Indicator limits.

29. Total long-term debt outstanding is within plan and stood at £522.7 million at 31 March 2021 at an average rate of 3.27% (3.33% for 2019/20).

## **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 23 September 2021.

[Browse meetings - Cabinet - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/worcestershire-council/cabinet-meetings)

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