

COUNCIL
14 JULY 2022

REPORTS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH RESPONSIBILITY – CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CORPORATE SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION

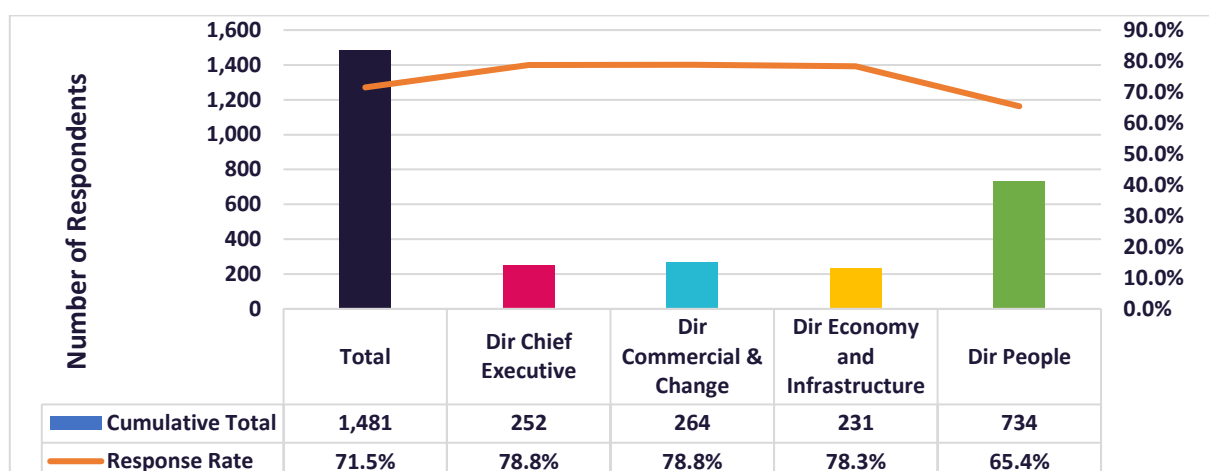
Introduction

1. It is my pleasure as Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Corporate Services and Communication to submit my report to Council on work that has taken place across my portfolio of responsibility over the last year. The role of CMR for Corporate Services and Communications is cross-cutting, covering a number of service areas and underpins how we do business as a Council.
2. As we have moved out of the response phase of the pandemic the Corporate Services and Communication portfolio has refocussed on the challenge of improving productivity and efficiency.
3. We have developed our data driven approach with more use of software such as Power BI to support our management and decision making in real time.
4. Digital innovation using our low code development platform, GIS systems, Web and Data services, has helped us deliver over 150 new improvement projects for the Council, for our businesses, residents, and communities.
5. Our recently introduced Workforce Strategy 2021 –2024, is helping us to build a skilled, flexible, and agile workforce, supported by the property team in developing a fit for purpose working environment with the latest Microsoft Teams technology.
6. I am also very pleased to report that we have made great strides in supporting apprentices in the Council and in the wider County through the transfer of the apprenticeship levy to local firms. This report outlines some of the progress and achievements over the last 12 months.

Human Resources, Organisational Development and Engagement

7. Engaging with our workforce ensures organisational success and is key to realising our workforce strategy. One channel for employees to share their views is our WCC Annual Staff Survey 'Your Voice'. WCC Your Voice 2022' was launched during a Staff Briefing on 02 February 2022. **1481 WCC Employees completed the survey, resulting in a record-breaking response rate of 71.5%.** Feedback from 'WCC Your Voice 2022' will inform our workforce strategy over the next 12 months

8. Your Voice Survey 2022 - Cumulative Totals and Response Rates by Directorate



Year	Total responses	Response rate
2021/22	1481	71.5%
2017/18*	1510	52%
2016 / 17*	1784	60%

*Prior to WCF - Children's still in scope

9. Our HR Operations team continues to provide a comprehensive, high demand, advisory service on all HR policies including Performance, Attendance, Grievance, Conduct, Probation, Bullying and Harassment and Whistleblowing. In 2021-22, over 7,000 emails and 5,000 calls have been handled, with over 70% of queries resolved at first contact. We have supported over 1,087 formal cases and provided comprehensive advice on restructuring and change, supporting 30 Change Projects, impacting over 500 employees. We are now also providing HR Consultancy support for 185 maintained schools, academies and multi academy trusts across Worcestershire.
10. In addition to standard recruitment activity, we continue to provide dedicated, specialised end to end recruitment support for WCF and the People Directorate for social work and social care roles. The Recruitment Team processed 1948 social work and social care applications in 2021 -22, and 1093 new employees were appointed. Recruitment campaigns have been conducted for several Chief Officers within WCC and WCF.
11. As part of our workforce strategy, we are focused on building a workforce which has personal and collective resilience with mental, social, and physical wellbeing at the centre of everything we do. In 2021-22 we have started to develop our competitive wellbeing offer. We have run our first successful wellbeing week, with a blend of face to face and virtual sessions and support for our employees across the county, introduced wellbeing days, wellbeing champions and now have approximately 40 mental health first aiders across WCC. We have also launched and embedded a workplace adjustment passport, so we understand what support or adjustments our employees need to thrive in their roles.
12. We are committed to celebrating diversity and encouraging equality and inclusivity amongst all of our workforce. This year we have developed our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and established our approach to EDI across the organisation,

with Equality Champions, Directorate Equality Groups, and our Strategic Equality Group now in place.

13. In 2021-22, we developed and successfully launched our new Learning Management System 'myLearning' which offers an improved experience for learners and managers and enhanced reporting capabilities.

14. Learning Management courses delivered in 2021 / 2022

- 300 Fast Track and New Manager Inductions
- 73,160 E-Learning modules
- 147 Personal Resilience Courses
- 160 Performance Coaching Modules
- 114 Leadership E-Learning Modules
- 151 Communications Dynamics for managers

15. Our mandatory learning strategy was developed to ensure the organisation and our employees were compliant with required learning in critical areas such as cyber security, safeguarding and Prevent. 2021/2022 was the first year this programme ran, with each employee receiving a standard objective to complete the required courses. Employees who did not meet this objective receive a revised rating of development needed for their year-end review. ***Provisional mandatory learning completion rate (2021 – 2022) is 81.41%, analysis and review is still ongoing***, and these figures may change as HR Operations Partners work with the business to finalise position.

Apprenticeships

16. Our apprenticeship strategy proactively promotes opportunities from level 3 to level 7 including senior leader, chartered manager, project management, improvement specialists and business administration.
17. WCC has 198 people on an apprenticeship programme currently and we continue to support local businesses by transfer of levy, over £621,000 levy to more than 50 local businesses to fund 164 apprenticeships. In April 2022 none of the apprenticeship levy was returned to government. ***This is an improvement on previous years and a significant achievement.***

Safety

18. During 2021 -22 the key focus has been ensuring that our staff, volunteers, visitors, and contractors are safe and feel safe when working or visiting our sites, working from home or working off site.
19. As each Coronavirus change (change in law, tiers, lockdown etc.) occurred, we have:
- Ensured there are risk assessments and Covid safe processes in place
 - Ensured suitable coverage of equipment and assessments for staff required to work at home.
 - Liaised with our peers and responded to any incidents.
 - Cross-reference incident reporting against HSE guidance for RIDDOR reporting relating to Covid 19

- Ensured we have correct PPE, hand sanitizer, signage etc in place

20. There continues to be good buy back of Health & Safety Services from schools with 99.17% of maintained schools and 108 academies including some out of area in Birmingham, Herefordshire, Leicestershire and Gloucestershire.

Social Media

21. Our channels through which we communicate with our residents and stakeholders continue to grow. In the last year we have increased our followers across all of our key platforms. We have used new platforms and channels such as Snapchat and Spotify in addition to supermarket and sports stadium advertising, to reach specific audiences with key messages. Our wide and diverse portfolio of ways to communicate with our residents means our overall engagement has increased and we are able to get the right messages to the right audiences at the right time.

22. Our strong social media engagement statistics for April 2021 – March 2022 are shown below

WCC Facebook (WCC + WCC Jobs pages):



- Total Fans 18.4k (1.27k new fans; +8% on previous period)
- Impressions 6.46 million
- Posts Sent Out 2.62k
- Engagements 239k
- Link Clicks 30.2k

WCC Instagram (Main WCC channel):



- Total Followers 3.64k (+13% on previous period)
- Impressions 449k
- Posts Sent Out 980
- Engagements 10.5k

WCC Twitter (Main WCC channel):



- Total Followers 21.9k (+4% on previous period)
- Impressions 3.61 million
- Total Outbound Tweets 3.71k
- Engagements 60.1k
- Post Link Clicks 9.39k

WCC LinkedIn (Main WCC channel):

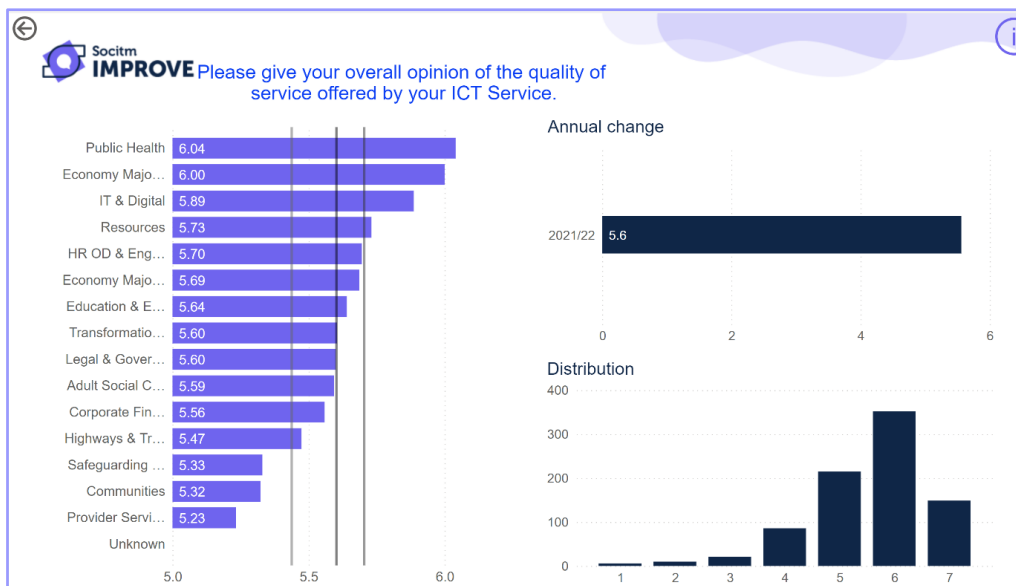


- Total Followers 11.2k (1.3k new followers; +12% on previous period)
- Impressions 411k
- Posts Sent Out (Updates) 1k
- Engagements 17.7k
- Post Clicks 11.8k

23. ***Our Equivalent Advertising Value for 2021-22 was in excess of £50m.*** Over 500 proactive stories were issued to media and 75 plus to trade press.

IT and Digital

24. Over the last 12 months our systems and structures have proved highly resilient, and we have continued to invest to support that resilience and our capability to operate flexibly. During the year we have completed the implementation of Microsoft Teams aligned to the Council's Collaboration Strategy. This has enabled teams within the Council to have their own Microsoft Team, mailbox and SharePoint site supporting chat, video / audio conferencing and document storage / collaboration both inside the Council and with external partners.
25. Throughout 2021 there has been a significant and concerning increase in cyber-attacks, including ransomware attacks, on the public sector and education organisations. The Council continues to invest in a range of measures to protect our systems and the data they hold from potential attacks.
26. Work has been undertaken to develop the strategic direction of the service and this is articulated in several new key documents.
27. The IT Strategy defines the technology and digital services that we will implement to enable the delivery of Council priorities and digital agenda.
28. The Information Governance strategy describes the development and implementation of a robust Information Governance (IG) framework needed for the effective management and protection of organisational and personal information.
29. The Data Management and Insight Strategy will help everyone in the organisation understand the value of data and their part in making the Council data driven.
30. The [Digital Strategy](#) focused on outcomes and customer experience, providing a blueprint for how we will use technology and digital resources to achieve our business challenges and goals.
31. An independent external review of the IT service was undertaken by Socitm Ltd in April 2021 to critically examine the current ICT environment and ICT service provision to provide insight into the size, cost and performance of the ICT service as well as user satisfaction. The results from the benchmark identified what is working well and what needs investment and attention. It was pleasing that our scores in the IT User Satisfaction Survey were above average for all organisations recently surveyed and **above average** for similar sized authorities. On a scale of 1 to 7, where a score of 1 is very poor and 7 is excellent the most common score awarded to us was 6 out of 7. In recognition of this the ***Council was awarded the Socitm User Satisfaction Award 2021.***



32. The Customer Services Contact Centre provides a first point of contact for Worcestershire residents' enquiries, offering a channel of choice – telephony, webchat, email and online applications. The aim is to make things simple, clear, easy to use and accessible for our residents whilst supporting them. Over the last year the team has continued to deliver excellent performance against the KPI target and has taken on several new services including Payments & Client Charging, Care Contributions and Demand Responsive Transport Service. The team has also been an essential front-line team in supporting the delivery of our Here2Help service during the Covid 19 pandemic.

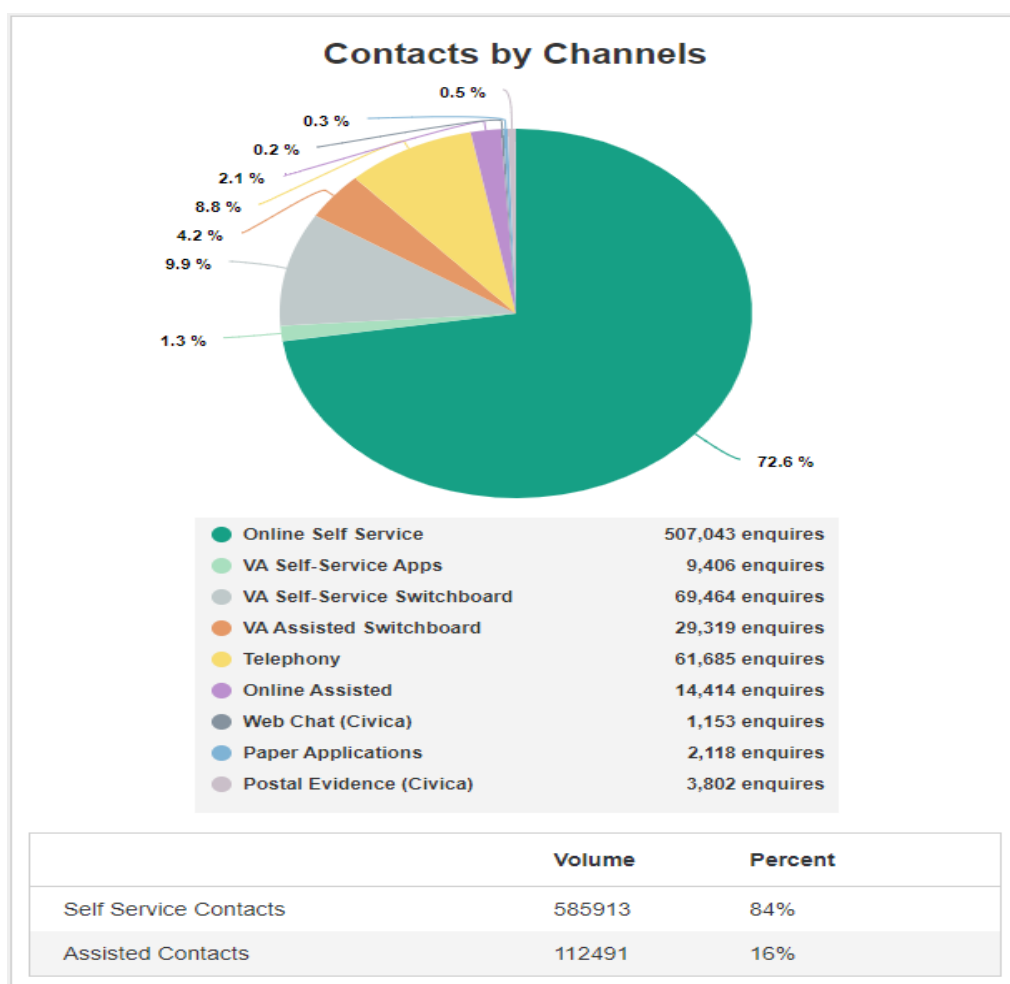
33. The Corporate Information Governance Team continues to provide assurance that the Council's arrangements to ensure personal data is held securely, information is disseminated effectively and that the Council is compliant with the legal framework – notably the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

34. The service continues to deliver a range of innovative and transformational digital solutions to support new ways of working and efficiencies, while also improving our digital offering to customers, with more services available online 24/7 through end-to-end applications and information available via the web.

35. Assisted Contacts vs Self-Service Contacts – Contact Centre Only (Apr 21-Mar 22)

The performance of our contact centre continues to improve and the number of resolutions through self-service has improved as shown below. Principally this is through the implementation of the corporate Chatbot "Worcestershire Web Assistant" and the introduction of the new Chat With Us icon. **For example, a resident wanting to check eligibility for a concessionary bus pass can now progress this query entirely via self-service through the Chatbot.**

Month	Assisted Contacts	Self-Service Contacts	Month	Assisted Contacts	Self-Service Contacts
Mar-20	40%	60%	Mar-21	27%	73%
Apr-20	48%	52%	Apr-21	30%	70%
May-20	37%	63%	May-21	17%	83%
Jun-20	38%	62%	Jun-21	20%	80%
Jul-20	35%	65%	Jul-21	13%	83%
Aug-20	21%	79%	Aug-21	15%	85%
Sep-20	25%	75%	Sep-21	12%	88%
Oct-20	40%	60%	Oct-21	15%	85%
Nov-20	41%	59%	Nov-21	17%	83%
Dec-20	35%	65%	Dec – 21	15%	85%
Jan-21	35%	65%	Jan-22	17%	83%
Feb-21	29%	71%	Feb-22	16%	84%



36. Through the use of our low code development platform, GIS systems, Web and Data services we have now delivered over 150 new improvement projects for the business, for our businesses, residents and communities.

This means;

- Removal of historical paper forms / applications
- Reduction of data inputting and manual processes
- Leaner service delivery
- Efficiencies in time and resource management
- Better outcomes for staff, businesses, residents and communities
- More information and services available online for customers 24/7
- SCULPT adopted by private and public sector across the country
- Improved support for vulnerable people in the community
- Plan and deliver emergency response using geolocation data
- Improved customer engagement
- Supporting and maintaining service delivery throughout the pandemic

37. We were also finalists for several awards this year, including

MJ Awards – Delivering better Outcomes
Women in IT – IT Team of the year
UK IT Industry Award – Operational response to the pandemic
Tech4Good Awards – Accessibility
iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards – Use of Data Insights
MJ awards - Highly Commended in Workforce Transformation

Transformation and Commercial

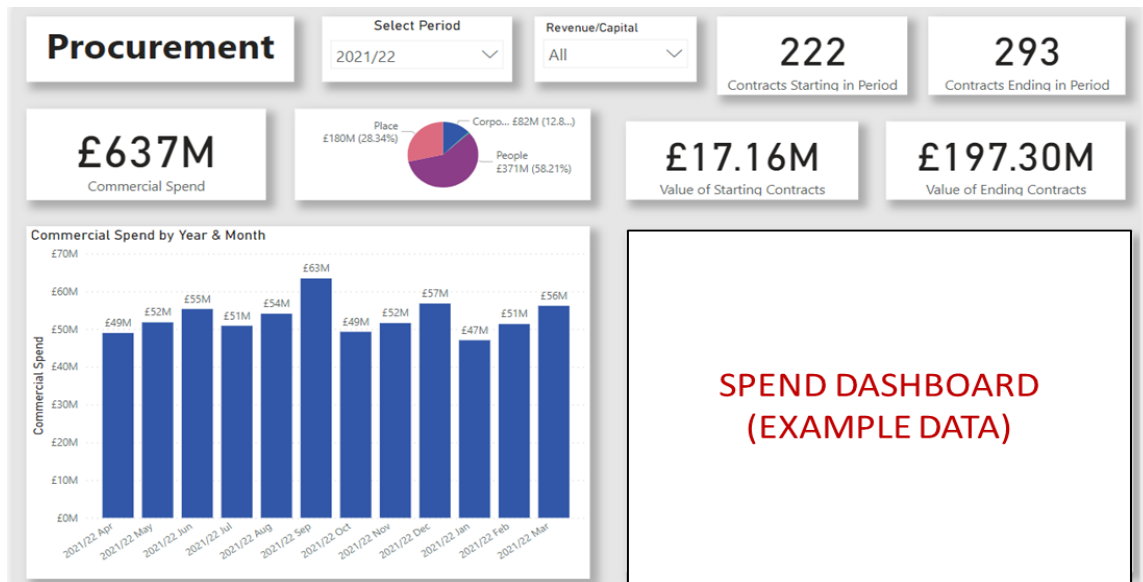
Property

38. From April 2021, Property Services have been delivered in-house, following the cessation and subsequent transfer of services from PPL. The team has two distinct disciplines.
39. The first is the Corporate Landlord which delivers our strategic asset management activities (including disposals and acquisitions, capital project management, surveying etc).
40. The second is Facilities Management which delivers our planned preventative and reactive maintenance, cleaning, security, and compliance management.
41. Since the conclusion of the insourcing, we have been evaluating the service delivery model to assess fitness for purpose, reviewing our third-party contracts, and establishing a transformation plan covering all aspects of the function. Key deliverables and progress has been defined below:
- **New structure** – A new operating model has been developed to cover both the Corporate Landlord and Facilities Management functions. £400k in savings have been achieved, with further savings anticipated during 22/23.

- **Compliance** – The Council’s Property team supported by the Health and Safety manager has been the driving force to improve our compliance position and the reporting of that position, with compliance now in its best ever state.
- **Capital Receipts** – 2021/22 saw the successful disposal of 5 surplus property assets consisting of a mix of land and buildings. These sales grossed a capital receipt of £2.614m. At the same time, work has progressed on a further 10 assets that will have an anticipated conclusion during 22/23 FY, with a total estimated capital receipt in excess of £10m.
- **Rural Estate** – The Council manages a Worcestershire wide rural estate consisting of some 2800 acres which is let under 75 separate tenancy/license agreements for agricultural purposes. Through a robust review of the estate and strategic approach, the last 12 months has seen the benefits of identifying irregularities, reviewing existing tenancy agreements with new agreements being granted and full market values implemented where possible. The result has been a 14% increase in income with a subsequent increase in the value of the estate. Parts of the rural estate have also been identified from desktop reviews of issues such as ecology, landscape, archaeology, as potentially being suitable to support the Council’s tree planting project and are being progressed for this.

Commercial Team

1. To manage spend, the Commercial Team has developed a real time performance tool, using Power BI, to be able to track contractual and commercial spend by the Council, allowing us to consolidate information across 7 systems to intelligently manage spend with the supply base.



2. The team is responsible for all the Council’s and WCF’s procurement activities, ensuring that the strategies being deployed will deliver best value contracts and that both organisations comply with the Council’s Procurement Code, the Local Government Transparency Code and procurement legislation.

3. Over the course of the past 12 months, we've been recruiting to the new structure and embedding the new category management operating model. The service is now split across three pillars (People, Place, Corporate/Resources) as is typical in most local authorities. Category strategies are in development, and several strategic contracts have been renegotiated/retendered this year.

Management Information, Analytics and Research

46. The Management Information, Analytics and Research (MIAR) team delivers a wide range of business intelligence products across the County Council, including corporate and directorate performance reports, the County economic assessment and summaries, resident surveys, Your Voice (staff survey), and statutory reports for Adult Social Care, Education and Workforce. The team continues to develop new products including workforce dashboards, a consistent set of management information reports for scrutiny committees, a consultation toolkit, and development and management of reports from Liquid Logic (the adult social care case management system).

Performance Management and Pentana

47. We are about to go live with the new Performance Management system (Pentana), and are currently building the system down into directorates and services to provide a more interrogatable performance management dashboard that will enable managers to review all key management information for their areas of responsibility.

48. The team is leading a council wide project to deploy PowerBI, including licences for developers and consumers of dashboards, training and support for developers, and establishing good practice to ensure we maintain information security and accessibility as we develop our PowerBI capability. Linked to this, we are working with IT and Digital around a proof-of-concept data warehouse to provide a suitable platform for more advanced analysis of key organisational data (including automated reporting and visualisation, and predictive analytics).

Legal and Governance

49. Democratic Services worked effectively with District Council colleagues to ensure the 2021 County Council elections were delivered with the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. They also arranged the formal requirements of 'signing in' the new Councillors within the Covid rules and co-ordinated the induction programme for members after the election.

50. The team also continued delivery of its core function to arrange and support formal and informal Councillor Meetings whilst developing the use of technology to streamline processes. Meetings were conducted remotely for over a year because of the Covid-19 pandemic and social distancing requirements. When the legislation for this ended, the team supported returning to in person meetings at County Hall whilst meeting Covid secure requirements. In addition, they have worked with colleagues in IT to introduce the new **Member Portal** – a case management system for Councillors. Some members have worked with the team to try out the system and give feedback and further ideas for development and I would like to thank them for their constructive contributions.

51. Legal Services continues to support a wide range of corporate business – e.g., processing permanent and temporary traffic orders (such as for road maintenance/repairs),

unlawful encampments, s.106 agreements, land sales and purchases, and commons searches.

52. Legal Services play a major role in safeguarding children through pursuing care proceedings in court and pre-proceedings cases (which try to divert cases away from statutory court intervention). The pressure volume of demand has plateaued at a high rate– 129 sets of care proceedings were concluded in 2021/22. And for the same period Pre-proceedings cases remain at a high level – 131 cases concluded. Worcestershire’s Child Care legal team, WCF social work teams and the courts have collaborated to become the ***highest performing nationally*** to meet the statutory 26-week target (KPM1 table below) for care proceedings completion rates this year.

53. In addition to our Court of Protection work, the Legal team has made significant progress in its debt recovery work taking this work back in house as a part of the centralised debt recovery service and has recovered over £1m in 2021-22.

Conclusion

54. I would like to thank all those working in my portfolio for their commitment during the pandemic and since the restrictions were fully lifted in the spring of this year. The move from service continuity to service improvement has begun and I am confident that my portfolio will continue to directly contribute to the overall performance of the Council and the delivery of our Corporate Plan.

Councillor Adam Kent
Cabinet Member for the Corporate Services and Communication