

## **COUNCIL**

### **10 NOVEMBER 2022**

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

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### **Open for Business**

1. Cabinet established the Open for Business Board in 2013 as an internal mechanism to decide on County Council investment priorities and it provides governance and oversight of the relevant budget. Cabinet has taken the opportunity to review and agree the Terms of Reference for the Board to ensure they remain fit for purpose and aid sound decision making.

2. Cabinet also agreed funding for 3 specific projects recommended by the Open for Business Board:

- Visit Worcestershire – to improve visitor experience and marketing, provide support to the sector, build Worcestershire’s national and international profile and work with partners to create a common vision and brand;
- Workforce resilience – to support businesses around key recruitment needs and skills development, including apprenticeships, and
- Business Worcestershire – a programme focusing support on Start-up and High Growth, Net Zero/Decarbonisation, Innovation & Technology and Inward Investment.

### **DfE Multiply Programme**

3. The Multiply Programme is a strand of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund designed as a core part of the Government’s Levelling Up mission and investment in adult skills. Its overall objective is to increase the levels of functional numeracy in the adult population in Worcestershire. The programme will support residents over 19 years old, who have not previously attained a GCSE Grade 4/C or a higher maths qualification, to either work towards a GCSE or equivalent, develop specific numeracy skills for their work or progression or simply refresh their skills to help them get on in life or work.

4. The County Council submitted an investment plan to the DfE in June. This outlines the interventions to be delivered over the 3- year lifetime of the programme, 2022-2025, along with information around the partners engaged, points of engagement, outcomes and the challenges in delivery.

5. Cabinet has endorsed the content of the Investment Plan and delegated implementation of it to the Strategic Director for People in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills.

## **Major Road Network Scheme Update**

4. Cabinet has noted progress with a number of major road network schemes across the County and has allocated up to £0.360 million from the Strategic Infrastructure Fund revenue reserve in order to deliver the Outline Business Cases for these schemes.

5. The Council is developing strategic outline cases (SOC) for two major road network schemes within the county. These are the North West Worcestershire Corridor (NWWC) and the A44 / A4538 (Worcester to Evesham).

6. The NWWC corridor covers three roads, the A491, A450 and A456 in a broad corridor from M5 junction 4 at Wildmoor, Bromsgrove through Hagley, Blakedown and Kidderminster, including Mustow Green.

7. The A44 / A4538 route in south Worcestershire is a 24 km route from the A38/A4538 junction at Martin Hussingtree, continuing along the A4538 Pershore Lane, through the M5 junction 6 connecting with the A44/A4538/A422 junction. The route continues along the A44 through Pershore, connecting to the A46(T) in Evesham

8. These routes form part of the major road network in the county, linking the major settlements with the strategic road network including the M5 and the A46. Development is proposed in adopted and emerging local plans which will increase the use of these routes. The proposals in the strategic outline case are being developed to assist in mitigating this impact. Funding for the NWWC strategic outline case has been secured from Midlands Connect in recognition of the importance of the corridor.

## **Resources Report – Revenue Budget Monitoring – Month 4 (31 July) 2022/23**

9. Cabinet has noted the forecast budget position at 31 July, approved the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) reserves, noted progress with savings plans approved by Council in February 2022, the financial impact and forecast for COVID-19 reserve funded expenditure, noted progress and commitments relating to the Open for Business Reserve, approved the use of various reserves, and noted the borrowing and lending transactions during 2021-22.

10. Overall, at 31 July the Council is forecasting an £8.281 million cost pressure without further action. This is reported after the delivery of savings and mitigations of over £15 million in year, a mixture of one-off and recurrent savings.

11. The majority of the overspend forecast is based on demand being faced within adults and children's social care and is a situation that could worsen as we progress through the year. Demand management and savings opportunities are being implemented within People Services; however significant cross council action is required to support the closure of the financial gap.

12. It is expected that all of the Covid General and Contain Outbreak Management Grants which were carried forward will be fully utilised in 2022/23.

13. A total of £13.292 million of Covid-19 related general grants were carried forward from 2021/22 into 2022/23. A plan to allocate the unspent grant has been prepared to support ongoing recovery across the Council's services in 2022/23. Cabinet has approved further allocations from this fund which include: additional costs associated

with Adult Social Care reviews delayed due to staff working on pandemic activities; support for additional costs arising from increase in Home to School and SEND transport; support for additional legal costs associated with childcare cases, education and adult care appeals and legal fees; improvements at Countryside Centres and Libraries and support for inflationary increases in services recovering from the impact of the pandemic such as transport.

14. The report included an annual report on Treasury Management which noted that The Council's treasury activities were managed successfully within the approved Prudential Indicator limits.

### **Relocation of Redditch Library**

15. Cabinet has considered proposals for relocation of the library in Redditch as part of wider proposals for improving the public realm in Redditch Town Centre, funded from the Town Deal.

16. A business case for the Town Deal bids is being submitted to central government on 14 October with the outcome expected to be known by the end of 2022.

17. Cabinet has focused on the re-development of the current Redditch Library site which involves the demolition of the existing library building and the delivery of a new public square and associated commercial development. It is proposed that the library moves to a new 'public hub' at Redditch Town Hall.

18. The Council is working collaboratively with the Borough Council on the re-location of the existing Library into other suitable premises. To protect the County Council's interests, both commercially and in terms of service offer/statutory responsibilities it is proposed that the following requirements, with the three areas of commercial arrangements, service conditions and collaboration opportunities, are used with Redditch Borough Council to agree the re-location arrangements.

19. Cabinet has approved high level plans and requirements for the relocation of the Library, approved the commencement of formal public consultation on the proposed plans for the relocation and authorised officers to progress negotiations with Redditch Borough Council for the commercial arrangements for the proposed relocation. Cabinet will consider the outcome of the public consultation and negotiations in a report back in May 2023.

### **Worcestershire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032**

20. Cabinet has ratified the Worcestershire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JLHWS) which had been approved by Health and Wellbeing Board on 27 September 2022. Following detailed consultation, the Health and Wellbeing Board agreed that the JLHWS would be developed with one priority of good mental health and wellbeing, supported by action on the wider determinants of good mental health: Healthy living at all ages; Safe, thriving and healthy homes, communities and places; and Quality local jobs and opportunities.

21. The JLHWS focuses on early intervention and prevention as well as focusing action on the wider determinants of health and tackling health inequalities through collective action and partnership working.

22. A range of outcomes and indicators will be used to measure the impact of this JLHWS. This will be a mix of local data, engagement, feedback and case studies. The framework will be monitored by the Health and Wellbeing Board and will continue to be updated to ensure it uses the most relevant and best quality data available. Cabinet has noted the arrangements for implementation and review of the Strategy.

### **Report of Pershore Area Review Consultation Findings and Recommendations**

23. In September last year Cabinet approved pre-publication engagement 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.

24. Overall, respondents were in support of the proposals, with 78% agreeing and 16% disagreeing on the proposals to convert to a single tier structure in Pershore. A further 6% neither agreed nor disagreed.

25. Based on the consultation feedback and parental preferences, Cabinet agreed a commitment in principle to support a collective change of age range to align schools in the Pershore Education Planning Area (EPA) to a single, two-tier (primary and secondary) system of education. This is subject to funding being fully secured to ensure there is an agreed, clear and practical pathway for children to move on from each school affected by the change.

26. The Cabinet Member for Education has been delegated the decision to publish the statutory proposals for Abbey Park First and Middle School to change age ranges to a Primary School.

27. The aim to implement the changes with effect from September 2025, reflecting the desire of stakeholders to implement as soon as possible, is contingent on certain decisions being implemented in accordance with the timetable set out in the report to Cabinet.

### **Redditch Railway Station**

28. At its meeting on 18 March 2021 Cabinet confirmed support for the redevelopment of the 'Railway Quarter' (Redditch Railway Station and surrounding area) as a Gamechanger 2 site and endorsed the acquisition of land required to deliver the Railway Quarter proposals.

29 The Redditch Town Centre Regeneration proposals acknowledge that the current Railway Station is an important gateway into Redditch Town Centre. However, in its current state it provides a poor first impression of Redditch for anyone arriving by train. An Options Appraisal for the first phase, Redditch Railway Station, was undertaken by the Design Team and the Preferred Option was presented to Cabinet.

30. Cabinet has noted the allocation of £10m funding for delivering Redditch Railway Station which exists within the Capital Programme. It has authorised the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the CMR for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills to enter into contracts for the construction of the works; and to carry out other actions to implement the project.

## Treasury Management Mid-Year Update to 30 September 2022

31. Cabinet has considered the mid-year report to 30 September 2022 which was prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, and covered the following:

- An economic update for the first part of the 2022/23 financial year
- A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2022/23
- A review of the Council's borrowing strategy for 2022/23
- A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2022/23.

32. Cabinet has noted the report, recognising that the Council is operating within its approved Treasury Management Strategy; and endorsed the conclusions that the Treasury Management activities continue to be cost effective.

### 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 Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) 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 22 September and 27 October:

[Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 22nd September 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

[Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 27th October 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)