

COUNCIL
12 NOVEMBER 2015**REPORTS OF CABINET****(b) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN**

Positive Activities for Young People: Future Direction

1. Further to the report to Council in September 2014 the Cabinet has considered the future provision of Positive Activities for young people. Given the findings of a wide-ranging review of County Council funded Positive Activities for young people provision and the accepted budgetary restraints the Council faces, it has acknowledged that investment needs to be maintained to ensure an adequate local offer of Positive Activities is consistently available across the county and that the Council meets its statutory obligations. The Cabinet has therefore agreed to continue investment in Positive Activities from April 2016 and to incrementally reduce funding over three years. This approach will allow providers to rebalance income and secure funding from other sources to sustain a Positive Activities offer.
2. The Cabinet has also approved the continuation of the allocation of £100,000 annually for infrastructure support and the focus of that funding. Additionally, it has approved the needs-based formula funding and district allocation of Positive Activities. To meet the Council's aim of an adequate local offer of Positive Activities consistently available across the county it will be necessary for Council commissioned services to be prioritised in areas where there would be little or no appropriate accessible provision for young people who need it most. The Cabinet has therefore approved a number of priorities and processes that will be applied to the commissioning of targeted Positive Activities from April 2016 onwards.
3. The Director of Children's Services has been delegated responsibility for implementation of the above decisions in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families

Future Governance of Worcestershire Youth Music

4. The Cabinet has considered the future governance options for Worcestershire Youth Music service. A Needs Assessment had been prepared detailing the needs of service users. Five options were considered for the future delivery of the service. The Cabinet has agreed in principle that a Company Limited by Guarantee with charitable status is the preferred option for Worcestershire Youth Music service and approved the development of a Detailed Business Case (DBC) for this option. In order to ensure this option is effective and that the service will have a sustainable future, a number of deliverables will be developed and agreed as part of the DBC.

5. The benefits of this option to service users, including schools and individual pupils, and also to the Council and the service, have been considered by the Cabinet together with the risks of the service remaining in-house. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Business, Environment and Community, has been delegated authority to take the final decision on the future governance of the Worcestershire Youth Music service based on the findings of the DBC.

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2014/15

6. The Independent Chair of Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB) is responsible for publishing an Annual Report that gives a public assessment of the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children in Worcestershire and both recognises its achievements and is realistic about the challenges that remain. The Report has also been considered by the Health and Well-Being Board and the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

7. The Board concluded at the end of 2014/15 that based on an improved body of evidence from data, audits, reports and learning, safeguarding arrangements are in place. In order to be assured of their effectiveness in respect of children in the children protection system, the Board felt it needed to see significant improvement in frontline basic practice, evidence that children's needs are met in a timely manner and that risk is being effectively managed. Appropriate help needs to be offered to children and families at an earlier stage by a range of agencies to reduce the pressure of those requiring specific services in the social care system. Work is ongoing on establishing the extent and nature of child sexual exploitation and on developing effective preventative measures. There continues to be multi-agency areas for improvement around consistent practice, communication/information sharing and 'Think Family'. However, overall there is a strong commitment by all Board member agencies to prioritise safeguarding.

8. The Cabinet has received the 2014/15 Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report and noted the progress of the work of the Board.

Future Delivery Arrangements for West Mercia Youth Offending Service (WMYOS)

9. Further to the report to Council in May 2014, members will recall that the County Council took on the role of host agency for WMYOS on an interim basis pending a formal decision on the most suitable longer-term delivery arrangements. Following a comprehensive options appraisal undertaken by the WMYOS Management Board, which included detailed consideration of a broad range of alternative delivery models, the Cabinet has approved an arrangement for the West Mercia and Crime Commissioner to act as the host organisation for WMYOS with effect from 1 April 2016. The Council will retain statutory responsibility for the discharge of its Youth Justice functions.

10. The overriding consideration of WMYOS partners has been to find a model that will offer the best impact on reducing offending and re-offending, whilst securing the best possible outcomes for children, young people, the victims of crime and the wider community. It is believed that the model approved will achieve this aim. A detailed analysis of demand and workflow with a focus on improving efficiency, quality and impact will be undertaken during the implementation phase. The Cabinet has authorised the Interim Director of Children's Services to take all necessary steps to conclude and implement the above arrangement including consulting with affected Council staff on the details of transferring to the new host.

Fair Funding Consultation Outcomes 2016-17 – National and Local Changes to the Funding Arrangements for Schools including the Local Funding Formula for Worcestershire Mainstream Schools

11. The Government made significant changes to the funding formula factors for schools from April 2013 which have had an impact on both schools and central local authority services. The Department for Education (DfE) has again stated overall that all its reforms to date will facilitate introduction of a new National Fair Funding Formula but this is not likely to impact until 2017-18 at the earliest. The Council receives funding for schools through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This ring-fenced grant has historically been allocated in 3 blocks: Schools; High Needs, and Early Years. A fixed element of the Schools Block is retained for centrally provided services but the majority is delegated to mainstream maintained schools and academies through the local schools funding formula.

12. In respect of the proposed formula development for 2016-17 there has been conflicting considerations between the need for stability given the number and scale of changes since 2012-13 and the desire for a local formula which can appropriately serve all schools in Worcestershire. Taking all the considerations into account the Worcestershire Schools Forum's (WSF) recommendation has been for stability and no change i.e. to retain the 2015-16 formula parameters for 2016-17. A detailed consultation document was circulated to all maintained schools, academies, other providers, all members of the County Council, staff associations and the Worcestershire Association of Governors which included details of the recommendation to retain the existing formula.

13. The Cabinet has considered all the issues including the feedback from the consultation, the involvement of the WSF members and schools during the consultation and the former's views on the local funding formula issues for 2016-17 and other matters. As a result it has approved the local funding formula for Worcestershire mainstream schools from April 2016 to apply for 2016-17 and other matters. The Cabinet has authorised the Interim Director of Children's Services to make the relevant arrangements to submit the details to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) by 30 October 2015 and to make any subsequent submission to the EFA by 21 January 2016 as a consequence of the impact of the October 2015 census and other 2015 data, any other data changes and the final 2016-17 DSG.

Future of Bishops Wood Centre

14. In line with its objectives around commissioning, the Council has explored the possibility of the Bishops Wood Centre being managed by an alternative provider to ensure its longer term sustainability and focus. Following an extensive evaluation process, The Field Studies Council, has been identified as the preferred alternative delivery organisation that could manage the site and secure the future for Bishops Wood by enabling the Centre to focus on the delivery of innovative and creative environmental education. It will provide a channel to bid for capital projects and leverage funding in order to develop and grow thus ensuring the Centre retains its high national and international profile within the environmental education sector. The proposal will allow the Centre to thrive in the future and ensure that the focus remains on environmental education rather than on income generation.

15. The Cabinet has therefore authorised the Director of Business, Environment and Community, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Localism and Communities, to enter into discussions and finalise the relevant due diligence and transfer agreements in order that the delivery of the Bishops Wood Centre is transferred to the Field Studies Council. The Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, has also been given authority to consult with staff and Unions over the process of transfer.

Designation of Worcestershire as a Pollinator-Friendly County

16. In July 2015, the Council referred the following motion to the Cabinet:

“This Council wishes to designate Worcestershire as a Pollinator Friendly County and to promote protection of pollinators and their habitats. All types of pollinators including bees are declining in number throughout the United Kingdom including Worcestershire. They are vital to the food supply of the nation and are particularly important in a county with a large agricultural and horticultural industry such as ours where food including fruit, grains and animal feeds are grown. This will include looking to the management of County Council owned land including roadside verges and spreading information on biodiversity to help residents and businesses play their part in increasing local habitats, promoting bee keeping and planting pollinator friendly plants.

Pollinators include various species of bees, butterflies, moths, beetles and hoverflies. The economic value of honey bees and bumble bees alone as pollinators of commercially grown insect pollinated crops in the UK has been estimated at over £200 million per year.

Pollinators have been affected by a number of issues including a decline in habitat, caused by the intensification of land use, habitat loss, pests, invasive species, climate change and the inappropriate use of agro-chemicals. The bee population in particular has declined significantly since the 1950's, with three native bumble bee species becoming extinct and another eight suffering serious contractions in their range.

We call upon all Council Members and Officers to make sure pollinator habitats are not destroyed and to help increase them wherever possible”.

17. The Cabinet has considered a report on the importance of pollinators to the national economy and environment and their importance to Worcestershire. It has also been provided with the detail of the actions the Council is currently undertaking with regard to pollinators and the proposals for further activities. In addition, it has received details of the actions other partners are undertaking and work across the county to promote pollinator habitat through the Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership.

18. As a result, the Cabinet has accepted the principles behind the Notice of Motion and has resolved to give effect to it by endorsing both the current work being undertaken to ensure Worcestershire is a pollinator-friendly county and the actions proposed in relation to land management, education, Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership and planning to increase pollinator-friendly habitat.

Self Sufficient Council – Income from Sales, Fees & Charges

19. The Council has a duty to balance the budget within a limited financial envelope and as a result is reviewing its ability to be self-sufficient. The review will include maximising income received from sales, fees and charges with regard to ensuring that the full costs that go into delivery of these valued services are recovered. Whilst the scope for generating additional income is limited by what is allowable in law and other factors, it is essential that wherever possible the Council adopts a consistent approach which ensures residents contribute fairly to the services that they receive.

20. The Cabinet has therefore agreed a number of charging principles in relation to executive functions to form the basis for charging across the Council. All areas of the Council's business will continue to be reviewed to confirm that where there is discretion to charge, this should be considered. Any proposal to charge will be subject to appropriate consultation on a service area basis. The principle will be to charge adopting a full cost recovery method.

21. The Cabinet has agreed to fully review the policy at the start of each new Council (every 4 years) and has delegated the annual review of charging under this policy to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Finance.

Commissioning of Transactional HR and Finance Services

22. Further to the report to Council in February 2014, the Cabinet has considered arrangements for the commissioning of Transactional HR and Finance Services to enable transformational change, investment and innovation in service delivery and sustain or improve service delivery levels and quality for the Council, schools and other valued partners. In addition, the proposal will remove significant financial risks from the Council relating to potential loss of income from traded services and the reduction of headcount enabling delivery of required savings on target.

23. The Cabinet has therefore approved the recommendation to appoint Liberata UK Limited ('Liberata') as the preferred bidder of Transactional HR and Finance Services as outlined in their bid. It has delegated authority to the Director of Commercial and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning, to agree any final details and to take all steps necessary to give effect to the decision above and for the completion of the contract with Liberata. The Cabinet has also delegated authority to the Cabinet Member at a later date to change the scope of related business support services within the boundaries of the relevant OJEU notice and procurement legislation and using the change control process in the contract.

24. Liberata will develop a detailed transition plan with the Council to ensure all activities are identified, planned and delivered. It is anticipated that the projected savings of £2.2m over the contract period should be delivered in full and could be exceeded.

Resources Report

25. The Cabinet has considered the provisional financial results for the year ending 31 August 2015. £20.3m of the £27.5m savings target for 2015/16 has either been delivered or confirmed as on target. The majority of the remaining target has been rated as Amber in relation to risk to delivery. In terms of revenue budget monitoring, the overall financial pressure forecast at this point for 2015/16 is £5.1m or 1.6% of the authorised cash limited budget. The Council's capital expenditure to date for 2015/16 totals £47.2m compared with the revised expenditure profile of £180.2m. Good progress is being made on a number of significant projects here. The external auditor Grant Thornton has formally closed the 2014/15 financial statements and issued the Certificate of Completion for the External Audit.

Mr A I Hardman
Chairman

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Email: worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk

Specific Contact Points for this report

Nichola Garner, Committee and Appellate Officer

Tel: 01905 766626

Email: ngarner2@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Cabinet held on 24 September 2015 and 15 October 2015