

## **COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

**8th June 2022**

**Present:** Councillor Jabbar Riaz in the Chair

**Councillors Ali, Cleary (Vice-Chair),  
Desayrah, S. Ditta, Mrs L. Hodgson,  
S. Hodgson, Lamb, Laurenson, Mackay and  
Piotrowski**

**Officers:** Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director –  
Operations, Homes and Communities  
Shane Flynn, Corporate Director – Finance  
and Resources  
Tom Mountford, Head of Homes and  
Communities  
Warwick Neale, Community Services  
Team Manager  
Alan New, Contracts and Performance  
Manager

### **1 Appointment of Substitutes**

None.

### **2 Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillor Mrs Lucy Hodgson - Minute 5 (Purple Flag Status Application for Worcester City Centre) - As a Director of Worcester BID

Councillor Piotrowski – Minutes 9 (Developing A Worcester City Council Housing Enabling Strategy) – As the report makes reference to his employer.

### **3 Public Participation**

None.

### **4 Minutes**

**RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

### **5 Purple Flag Status Application for Worcester City Centre**

The Committee considered a report on Purple Flag Status, an international accreditation programme that aims to reward those who achieve excellence in the Evening and Night-Time Economy. The Community Services Team Manager presented the report and explained that Purple Flag strives to help create safe and thriving locations at night for all. Worcester Business Improvement District (BID) will be applying for Purple Flag status and Sam McCarthy, Chief Executive of Worcester BID gave a presentation to the Committee and answered questions.

The submission deadline was 24<sup>th</sup> June and City Council officers had been providing supporting information and reviewing the feedback from the preliminary assessment to put in place improvements where possible in advance of the judging visit later in the summer.

It was recognised that Worcester's evening and night-time economy extends beyond the Worcester BID boundary, specifically properties on The Tything and Lowesmoor. The report highlighted that the City Council and Worcestershire Regulatory Services will be required to allocate resources to engage with premises in these areas.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to note:**

- 1. the intention for a Purple Flag Status Application to be submitted in respect of Worcester City Centre, led by Worcester Business Improvement District (Worcester BID) and supported by Worcester City Council; and**
- 2. the preference for the inclusion of streets and businesses on The Tything and Lowesmoor in the application area which sits outside of the Worcester Business Improvement District.**

## **6 Provision of A New Artificial Grass Pitch at Perdiswell**

The Committee considered a progress report on the development of a multi-use Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) at Perdiswell. The Contracts and Performance Manager presented the report and explained that the Football Foundation will need to see and approve a complete business case. At this point they had provisionally allocated a specialist to work with the Council to reach approval stage, but required a capital commitment by the Council.

The report summarised the business case. It was explained that there is a strong likelihood that the proposal would benefit from grant funding of 75% of the costs of approximately £800,000.

Officers responded to questions and comments from Committee Members.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:**

- 1. approve the progression of a business case and detailed design for a multi-use Artificial Grass Pitch at Perdiswell;**
- 2. recommend to Council an 'in principle' capital allocation of £200k that is required to unlock specialist support from the Football Foundation to facilitate the development of a business case and detailed design; and**
- 3. note that the Council would be required to pay costs of up to £10k should the Football Foundation or the Council decide the project is no longer viable as part of the application process.**

## **7 Installation of a Municipal Artificial Cricket Wicket**

The Committee considered an update report on the location of an artificial cricket wicket. The Contracts and Performance Manager presented the report and explained that, at the Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, it was noted that the proposed location of the pitch had yet to be finalised.

Following consultation with Ward Councillors for Rainbow Hill, the Council's City Services team, Worcester Community Trust and immediate residents, KGV Playing Fields at Brickfields was identified as the most suitable location.

The Chair and Vice-Chair of this Committee were consulted and they too supported the recommendation to proceed with the release of funding for this project. In order to make the facility accessible for the second half of the cricket season, the Managing Director's Urgency Powers had been used to release the funding.

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee note the use of the Managing Director's urgency powers for the release of funding for the installation of an artificial cricket wicket at King George V Playing Fields.**

## **8 Extension of the Single Person and Childless Couples Homeless Prevention Support Service (HoPES)**

The Committee considered a report on the Single Person and Childless Couples Homeless Prevention Support Service contract. The Head of Homes and Communities presented the report and explained that this contract was due to end on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022. The proposal was to extend the contract for a period of 6 months to allow time to carry out a comprehensive consultation and market testing exercise, in order to enable the partner councils to procure a contract with a specification which is effective and complements our existing services. The proposed extension will also allow for continuity of support for individuals using the service. He clarified that the extension would be until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, not 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023 as stated in the report.

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:**

- 1. approve a six-month extension of the Worcestershire Single Person and Childless Couples Homeless Prevention Support Service Contract, to cover the period 30th September 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023;**
- 2. note that the Council's financial contribution towards the contract extension period of £51,605 will be funded from the Flexible Housing Grant Reserve; and**
- 3. note that a future report will be presented to this Committee following a review of the existing contract and outlining options for future service provision.**

## 9 **Developing A Worcester City Council Housing Enabling Strategy**

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of a piece of work undertaken by Ark Consultancy to identify how the Council can maximise its effectiveness as an enabler of housing locally. The Corporate Director – Homes and Communities presented the report and summarised the findings.

The Ark Report had identified a number of actions that are deemed as quick wins, low risk and low cost, and Officers intended to progress these with immediate effect.

It was important that, in addition, the Ark Report was used in a strategic manner to drive the Council's work over the next few years. Therefore, the preferred option was the development of a Worcester City Council Housing Enabling Strategy that will set out this direction both for the Council, and important key stakeholders such as registered housing providers, private developers, commissioners, other public bodies, and Homes England.

It was also considered important to bring a draft Strategy back to Committee for debate, scrutiny and consideration, as this is a critical area of work for the City moving forward.

In the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the relevance of the Strategy to the current SWDP Review and it was suggested that Planning Policy Officers should be consulted as part of the development of the draft Strategy.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:**

- 1. note the contents of this report and in particular the ARK Consultancy Options Appraisal Report for Council Led Housing Development and for Fully Utilising Housing Enabling at Appendix 1; and**
- 2. endorse the development of a Worcester City Council Housing Enabling Strategy with a draft strategy to be presented back to this Committee in November 2022 for approval.**

## 10 **The Proposed Closure of Pedestrian Footpaths at Brickfields Railway Crossing and Kays Railway Crossing by Use of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO)**

The Committee considered a report on the creation of Public Space Protection Orders to prohibit the use of the two railway crossings, footpath WR858 linking Brickfields Park to Astwood Road and WR-678 linking Bromyard Road to Laugherne Brook Nature Reserve, also known as the Kays crossing, in response to anti-social behaviour.

The Community Services Team manager presented the report and explained the findings of the public consultation which had been undertaken in March and April. In summary, the negative impact of closing the two footpaths on residents had to be balanced against the severity of the anti-social behaviour in both locations, the danger for young adults and the impact this has on Network Rail staff and its passengers.

The report concluded that the anti-social behaviour identified and experienced by Network Rail met the criteria for a PSPO in both locations and the identified restrictions were considered to be measured, will stop anti-social behaviour and will not be a significant detriment to other users.

Committee Members debated the report and balanced restricting public access against the need for public safety. The view was expressed that any fencing should be as robust as possible. Members noted that closure would be for a maximum of 3 years.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:**

- 1. note the contents of this report, and in particular the outcome of the public consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the Draft Public Space Protection Orders attached at Appendix 5 and Appendix 6;**
- 2. approve the implementation of the Public Spaces Protection Order at Appendix 5, that will close to pedestrians, Footpath Wr858 (Brickfields Crossing) for a maximum period of three years; and**
- 3. approve the implementation of a Public Spaces Protection Order at Appendix 6, that will close to pedestrians, Footpath Wr678 (Kays Crossing) for a maximum period of three years.**

**11 Annual and Quarter 4 Performance Report for 2021/22**

The Committee considered the annual and quarter 4 performance report. In response to questions, the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities explained that a number of performance measures which were previously within the remit of this Committee will now appear on the Health and Wellbeing scorecard.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Council’s annual and quarter 4 performance for 2021/22.**

**12 Any Other Business**

None.

**Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 9.50p.m.**

Chair at the meeting on  
20th July 2022