

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

22nd March 2022

Present: Councillor Marc Bayliss in the Chair

Councillors Allcott, Altaf, Denham, Ditta, Gregson (Vice-Chair), Griffiths, Lamb, Mackay, Mitchell, Riaz and Stafford

Officers: Mark Baldwin, Head of Finance
David Blake, Managing Director
Shane Flynn, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources
Sian Stroud, Corporate Director – Planning and Governance
David Sutton, Deputy Director – Policy and Strategy

Apologies: Councillor Stephen

97 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor Altaf for Councillor Mrs L. Hodgson, Councillor Ditta for Councillor Stanley, Councillor Lamb for Councillor Hodges.

98 Declarations of Interest

None.

99 Public Representations

Francis Lankester spoke in respect of minute 103 – Town Investment Plan - Business Case for Heritage and Riverside. In summary, he expressed disappointment that the proposal does not meet the aims of the tourism strategy or match the tourism offer of other cathedral cities because Worcester's attractions are not integrated, and there is no joined up heritage trail.

Danny Brothwell, Chair of Bike Worcester, spoke in respect of minute 103 – Town Investment Plan - Business Case for Active Travel. In summary, he acknowledged the aims set out in the business case, but questioned what impact they will have, and suggested a change of approach whereby consideration is given as to what journeys could be made by bike instead of a private motor vehicle, and then finding out the barriers to making this happen. He offered Bike Worcester as a resource to support the Council in proposing and developing improvements to Worcester's cycle network and the schemes discussed in Business Case.

100 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th February 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

101 Minutes of Income Generation Sub-Committee

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2022 be received.

102 Minutes of Personnel and General Purposes Sub-Committee

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2022 be received.

103 Town Investment Plan: "Heritage And Riverside" And "Active Travel" Business Cases

The Committee considered a report on the business cases for the Heritage and Riverside project and the Active Travel project. The Deputy Director – Corporate Policy and Strategy presented the report and summarised the highlights of both proposals. The business cases had been considered by the Town Deal Board at its meeting on 10th March 2022 and had been unanimously approved. Subject to their approval by the Committee, a Summary Document would be submitted to Government to trigger the release of the remaining funding.

In connection with the Heritage and Riverside project, it was explained that the Worcestershire Soldier Museum would be relocated from the Art Gallery and Museum to the Commandery. The hosting agreement with the military museum Trusts required the Council to give 36 months' notice of termination. A new hosting agreement would be required to govern the new location of the Museum within the Commandery.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- The Deputy Director stated that he would be happy to discuss the points raised under public participation in more detail with the public speakers if they wish to do so.
- In response to the comment about an integrated approach to heritage and tourism, the Deputy Director explained that the Heritage and Riverside project is smaller than originally drafted as its scope was amended following the funding award and the various elements are linked. The business case is fully supported by the Town Deal Board. There will be other opportunities for heritage and tourism development beyond the city centre in future years.
- In reply to a questions about Member involvement in preparing the business cases, the Chair advised that Officers can provide more information regarding previous Committee reports, Member seminars and the membership and role of the Town Deal Board.
- The main features of the Active Travel business case are the creation of new cycle routes, the Kepax Bridge and a bike hire scheme. The new routes will help to shape the City Centre Transport Strategy. Active Travel incorporates improvements to walking routes. Issues such as lighting and the surface colour will be taken up at the design stage.

- Officers can look at whether E-cargo bikes can be made available as part of the scheme. Ward Members will be involved in establishing of bike hire scheme locations.
- Members will be kept informed of progress through future reports to the relevant Committees, There will also be regular updates through the Major Projects Member Reference Group.

Committee Members expressed support for the business cases, as proposed.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. support the business cases and approves the Summary Documents for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities;**
- 2. authorise the Corporate Director - Finance and Resources and the Corporate Director - Planning and Governance to undertake further due diligence and complete the appropriate funding agreements as detailed within this report; and**
- 3. authorise the Corporate Director - Finance and Resources and the Corporate Director - Planning and Governance to give notice to terminate the current hosting agreement with the military museum Trusts and enter into a new agreement as detailed within this report.**

104 Capital and Investment Strategies 2022/23 - 2024/25

The Committee considered a report on the Capital Strategy for 2022/23 – 2024/25 and Investment Strategy for 2022/23 – 2024/25. The Head of Finance presented the report and summarised the main points. The Strategies were required under statutory guidance and formed part of the Policy and Budgetary Framework.

The Chairman explained that the Investment Strategy was not appended to the report. In the circumstances, the Committee were recommended to consider the Capital Strategy only, and to recommend the Council to consider the Investment Strategy at its meeting on 29th March 2022.

Committee Members expressed support for proceeding on this basis.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. recommend the Council to adopt the Capital Strategy for 2022/23 – 2024/25; and**
- 2. to consider and approve the Investment Strategy for 2022/23 – 2024/25.**

105 A New Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for the Council

The Committee considered a report on the adoption of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Annual Action Plan.

The Corporate Director – Planning and Governance presented the report and highlighted the main points, including the work undertaken on the self-assessment of the Council’s performance on equality, diversity and inclusion, examples of excellent recent practice and examples of areas for improvement.

The proposed Strategy and Annual Action Plan were set out in draft at Appendix 1 and 2 of the report. The Strategy included arrangements for Member oversight and sponsorship of the work programme, including a proposal for a new Member Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The Corporate Director responded to questions from Committee Members.

Committee Members expressed support for the Strategy and Action Plan.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. note the work undertaken to develop a new 3-year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for the Council;**
- 2. approve the proposed Strategy and Annual Action Plan at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 and authorises the Corporate Director - Planning and Governance in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chairs of this Committee to finalise an accessible version for publication;**
- 3. approve for immediate publication the Council’s Equality Objective, to achieve Excellence, as set out in the Strategy;**
- 4. recommend to Council the appointment of a Member Champion for Equality Diversity and Inclusion; and**
- 5. note that the Personnel and General Purposes Sub-Committee will oversee the Annual Action Plan and report back to this Committee on progress with the Strategy annually.**

106 Staff Pay Award

The Committee considered a report on the recently agreed national pay award of 1.75% for all Council employees on NJC terms and conditions, which would be implemented by the Council and backdated to 1 April 2021. The Corporate Director – Planning and Governance presented the report and explained that, due to an historic pay freeze agreed by the Council in 2014, the pay spine for Worcester City Council was behind the national pay spine, which can contribute to difficulties in staff recruitment and retention. The Council had budgeted 2% for the national pay award for 2021/22 and there was an opportunity to narrow the gap in the inequality in the pay scales by paying the full budgeted amount for this year. The gap would then be 0.73% for the lowest grade and 0.84% for everyone else. It might be possible to further narrow the gap in future years, but this would be a decision for Members every year and would depend on financial circumstances prevailing at that time.

Committee Members expressed support for a local agreement, so that all employees on NJC terms and conditions receive an uplift of 0.25%.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. note the nationally agreed pay award of 1.75% for all Council employees on NJC terms and conditions, which will now be implemented by the Council and backdated to 1 April 2021;**
- 2. alongside the implementation of the national pay award, offer a local agreement, so that all employees on NJC terms and conditions on the Council's local pay spine receive an uplift of 0.25%, in order to reduce the gap between the Council's local pay spine and the national pay spine; and**
- 3. authorise the Managing Director and Corporate Director - Planning and Governance, in consultation with Chair and Vice Chairs of this Committee, be authorised to secure a local collective agreement with the Unions with the assistance of West Midlands Employers and to update the rates of pay stated in the Council's Local Conditions.**

107 Proposed Committee Performance Scorecard for 2022/23

The Committee considered the proposed content of the Policy and Resources Performance Scorecard for 2022/23. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and highlighted the main points, including the introduction of City Plan Projects and Activities, the proposed new Projects for 2022/23, and Projects and Activities which had been removed for the reasons stated in the report.

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members. In the ensuing discussion, the Chair proposed that a Member Working Group be set up in the new Municipal Year to consider in more detail which measures are appropriate for this Committee to include in the 2023/24 Scorecard.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree:

- 1. the proposed content of the Policy and Resources Performance Scorecard for 2022/23; and**
- 2. to establish a Member Working Group to consider what measures to include in the 2023/24 Scorecard.**

108 Referral Report from Place and Economic Development Committee - Proposal to Develop a Worcester City Strategic Play Area Development Plan

The Committee considered a referral report from the Place and Economic Development Committee. The Head of Finance presented the report and explained that, at its meeting on 14th March 2022, the Committee had considered a report on the findings from the working group and recommendations for the development of a Strategic Play Area Development Plan. The Committee approved the recommendation to engage a specialist contractor to undertake a detailed consultation exercise around future outdoor play space provision across the city, and from that consultation, develop proposals for a Strategic Play Area Development Plan.

A budget allocation of £40,000 was required to meet cost of engaging a specialist contractor. There were currently four identifiable reserves with a play element which had anticipated balances as at 31st March 2022. The full financial implications were set out in the referral report.

Committee members expressed support for the proposal.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree the allocation of £40,000 in order to engage a specialist contractor to undertake a consultation and engagement exercise that will support the development of a Strategic Play Area Development Plan.

109 Any Other Business

None.

110 Items Involving the Disclosure of Exempt Information

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act.

111 Minutes of Income Generation Sub-Committee (Exempt Items)

RESOLVED: That the minutes (Exempt Items) of the meeting held on 9th March 2022 be received.

112 Proposed Fees and Charges for Trade Waste 2022/23

The Committee reviewed the proposed schedule of Fees and Charges for Trade Waste Collection for 2022/23. The report was not for publication as the Fees and Charges were commercially sensitive.

The Head of Finance presented the report and explained that the existing charges had been reviewed by the relevant service and adjusted to reflect changes in the cost of providing the service. Where appropriate and feasible, a comparison had also been made to the amount charged by local competitors to ensure that the Council is providing a service which is competitively priced and represents good value.

Committee Members expressed support for the proposed schedule of Fees and Charges, as set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to recommend the Council to approve the proposed schedule of Fees and Charges for Trade Waste Collection.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 8.26p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
24th May 2022