

COUNCIL

26th September 2023

Present: **The Mayor, Councillor Louis Stephen, in the Chair**

Councillors Agar, Ali, Allcott, Altaf, Amos, Bisset, Cleary, Cockeram, Cookson, Cooper, Cross, Denham, Desayrah, Ditta, Geraghty, Gregson, Hodgson, Jagger, Lamb, Laurenson, Lawrance, Lewing, Murray, Norfolk, Pingree, Piotrowski, Riaz, Sadiq, Smith, Stanley, Udall and Willmore

Apologies: **Councillor Round**

The Council stood and observed a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Andy Roberts, who had died in August.

The Mayor's Orator, Rhianna Levi, then addressed the Council before commencement of the formal business of the Council.

47 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Round.

48 Declarations of Interest

The following declaration of interest was made:

Councillor Cookson – Minute 53 (Notice of Motion – Violence Against Women) – Due to the nature of her employment. Councillor Cookson left the meeting for consideration of this item.

49 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

50 Mayor's Communications

Tribute to Councillor Andy Roberts

The Mayor paid tribute to former Councillor Andy Roberts, who had sadly died in August 2023. He had represented Warndon Parish South Ward for 17 years, having been first elected in 2006, and was Mayor in 2009/10. Group Leaders and other Members also spoke and paid their own tributes.

Recent Events

The Mayor highlighted some recent events which he had attended including the Worcester Show, the Drumhead Parade by the Battle of Worcester Society, degree ceremonies by the University of Worcester and Heart of Worcestershire College, Heritage Weekend at the Guildhall, the Evensong Cathedral service to mark the retirement of the Dean, and the Worcester City Run.

Coming Up

The Mayor highlighted two forthcoming events: the Worcester Civic Society Lecture at 7pm on Tuesday, 10th October and the Elgar Choral Christmas Carol Concert at 6.30pm Saturday, 2nd December. All money raised will be for the Mayor's charity, Age UK. He encouraged Members to support and promote both events.

Refreshments

The Mayor invited everyone to join him for refreshments in the Parlour at the end of the meeting.

51 Public Participation

The following persons addressed the Council:

Alex Sheppard spoke in support of the Notice of Motion relating to Pets as Prizes.

Craig Welsby spoke about healthy diets and prioritising plant-based food options wherever possible. He asked the following question: "Will councillors meet with me to address any concerns they may have, over the cost, inclusivity, and local impacts of such a policy, and hear how it could be an enormous win for health, sustainability and budget?" The Mayor asked Group Leaders to consider taking up this invitation.

Joy Griffiths, Chair of the Trustee Board of West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre, spoke in support of the Notice of Motion relating to ending Violence Against Women.

52 Questions

The Council considered the following questions submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.

Question No. 1	
Question From:	Councillor Smith
Question To:	Councillor Lewing, Chair of Planning Committee
Question:	<p>Can the Chair of the Planning Committee update Council on what action is being taken by Enforcement Officers, to ensure compliance with tidy land legislation to remedy the gaping hole in the face of St John's, the former Nightclub/Cinema site, which has been empty, and unused for many years, looking unsightly, ugly and derelict.</p> <p>What powers does the Council have to ensure the site is developed in line with existing planning consents?</p>
Answer:	As Chair of Planning Committee, I'd like to assure Members that if they have a query like this then I am available between Council meetings if they would like to discuss it directly with me, particularly because this is such a big issue

	<p>for a number of Councillors in your Ward, and also because the detail I'm going to give in the answer is quite complicated. I'm very willing to e-mail it to you as well so you can see it in detail afterwards, so don't worry about taking notes.</p> <p>This is about the site of the former Zig Zag night club in St John's. It is on the council's Heritage at Risk Register and I understand Planning Enforcement Officers have been trying to work with owner of the site for a number of years – as you know it's a long time since 2013 - to ensure that it is kept secure and tidy, with some degree of success. I share your concerns about the fact that the site is still vacant and hasn't been redeveloped to provide much needed housing. We have a number of sites across the city which are similar and could do with more housing.</p> <p>The demolition of the former night club building has left a gap in the street frontage and this is visually very prominent. The Council has been proactive in supporting planning applications on the site and a recent application was approved earlier this year but there has been no obvious sign of any start on the site.</p> <p>The Council has powers under section 215 of the Planning Act to ensure the site is kept tidy and powers under sections 94 and 95 of the Act to issue a Termination of Planning Permission Notice, which is sometimes referred to as a "Completion Notice." A Termination of Planning Permission Notice has to be approved however by the Secretary of State. It removes planning permission if a development is not completed within a reasonable time period. It does not actually compel a site owner to complete a development, so in some circumstances it can also be counter-productive.</p> <p>I have been assured by our officers that they will continue to work with the owner to try to bring about the commencement of the recently approved residential development on this site. They will work with the owner to support them throughout the construction phase to ensure that there are no planning hurdles to prevent the completion of the development.</p> <p>However, if there is no construction related activity over the next few months, I will ask officers to seek specialist legal advice on formal planning enforcement action including a Termination of Planning Permission Notice. I hope that will help.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question:</p>	<p>It's taking far too long. St. John's and Bedwardine traders and residents have been very patient, but patience must come to an end. The condition is having a serious and detrimental impact on the economic opportunities and</p>

	potential of retail in St. John's. Will she consider using her powers to compulsory purchase the site to ensure development can happen?
Answer:	I really do share your concerns. It is a blight on St. John's, I totally agree. I'm assured by Officers that they're doing everything they can, and I think some of the processes are slower than we would like, but we have got a dedicated team who will look into this for you.
Question 2	
Question From:	Councillor Riaz
Question To:	Councillor Udall, Chair of Licensing and Environmental Health Committee
Question:	I am hearing that there are out of district private hire drivers operating within the city of Worcester without local regulation. There are potential risks to passenger safety, as well as to our licensed Hackney Carriage trade, if the vehicle standards this Council has set are not maintained. Is the Chair of the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee aware of this problem? Could he comment on the impact of the de-regulation of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire rules which the government introduced in 2015?
Answer:	<p>The Deregulation Act of 2015 enabled private hire operators licensed by Worcester City Council to accept a booking and then subcontract it to another operator licenced by a different local authority. Whilst vehicles and drivers may not be licenced by Worcester City this doesn't mean that they are operating without regulation. Officers regularly undertake enforcement exercises and scrutinise out of area vehicles and drivers to ensure they are operating legitimately and within the Regulations.</p> <p>Sadly, the Government's intention when implementing the Deregulation Act 2015 was to encourage free movement of trade across districts, which inevitably has led to the current situation. Sadly, although this has provided a free market it has also harmed and undermined our own local taxi industry. It is alleged that some private hire operators from outside Worcester are also plying for hire, which would be illegal. Often the public don't realise the difference between private hire vehicles and taxis, which only adds to the confusion.</p> <p>The Government's sole intention when deregulating was to assist the likes of Uber and others to trade freely throughout the UK. The very nature of taxi-ing is therefore changing and is going further and further away from vehicles sitting on the ranks. We need to adjust to these changes.</p>
Supplementary Question:	I mean the question of enforcement is unfortunately a pivotal one in all of this. You mentioned that recent

	<p>enforcement exercises have taken place, but few and far between. I really do believe that more rigorous enforcement and more regular and consistent enforcement is absolutely needed to at least get a grip of the situation and at least get the value from what the City pay into WRS, get that value back from them. Will the Chair of the Licencing and Environmental Health Committee then agree to an item being placed on future agenda of the committee to discuss the problem and to consider ways to tackle the issue of private hire vehicles from outside the city illegally plying for hire and who to contact to request a change in regulation in order to increase the protection for the general public and our residents?</p>
Answer:	<p>The last time the Licencing Committee discussed these issues was way back in 2018, so we perhaps do need to refresh our knowledge about the changes and what has happened and the roles and responsibilities of the Licencing Committee. We do need to look again about how we enforce the rules, how we ensure compliance and examine the changes in the industry to see what can be done to help licenced drivers to adapt to those changes. Mr Mayor, I will speak to officers and representatives of the industry the taxi trade to see how best we can move forward and consider what further options could be considered by the Licencing Committee.</p>
Question 3	
Question From:	Councillor Amos
Question To:	Councillor Denham, Joint Leader of the Council
Question:	<p>In light of the Council's new Transport Strategy, can she tell me what roads will be closed to vehicular traffic; what road space for vehicular traffic is to be removed from the network; and how many residents' parking spaces will be removed as a result of the Strategy's proposals?</p>
Answer:	<p>The short answer is no – no for two reasons. We are operating in a two-tier authority and those questions relate to the responsibility of the County Council, which I would have thought as a former Cabinet Member for Highways the Councillor may have understood. The other reason is that we have only just within City Council signed off the city centre transport strategy, it was only published in July I think, so it's the beginning of a process of looking how it may be implemented between organisations.</p>
Supplementary Question:	<p>Well, I thank Councillor Denham for her answer and I am relieved that the County Council will come to the aid of the people of Worcester, but can you tell me how her party's endless war on motorists will benefit Worcester people commuting to work, doing their weekly shop, taking their</p>

	children to social and activity events, attending doctors or hospital appointments, or elderly people simply getting out of the house to see friends and family? 85% use cars as their main form of transport - what are the alternatives that they will or can use?
Answer:	I would dispute the premise of the question. If there are - I think it's something like 20% of the population, don't have access to a motor vehicle - it is about choice it is about enabling people to move around the city and it's unfortunate that our public transport system and our bus services have become so reduced that they are barely functional.
Question 4	
Question From:	Councillor Amos
Question To:	Councillor Bisset, Joint Leader of the Council
Question:	In light of the Council's new Transport Policy, can she tell me the intended locations of the new multi-story car parks that are to ring the City's outskirts?
Answer:	<p>Again, the short answer is no, and to elaborate on that answer, any work on new strategic car park locations must be undertaken in partnership between the city and county councils, as any such proposals will need to be carefully integrated into the highway network and take into consideration other planned changes that the County Council may wish to make, such as road closures, changes in traffic direction and signalling.</p> <p>Locations of car parts will also be subject to the normal planning application process so at this point in time no decision has been made with regard to the locations of any new car parks.</p>
Supplementary Question:	All I can say thank goodness again we've got a County Council to stop all this nonsense, but what evidence has she got that banning vehicles from the city centre - which is her objective after the elections in May 2024 - will not destroy businesses in the High Street, won't lead to the fantasy of a parking bonanza and given the current deep reluctance of people to use the St. Martin's gate car park, what evidence has she got that shows people will actually use other multi-storey car parks which will be even further away from the city centre?
Answer:	Although we don't know the exact locations, the car parks will be carefully situated so that people will be able to walk from them into the city centre. We are not waging war against motorists. I am myself a motorist, but we all have to recognise that we need to change our behaviour. Air quality is a major problem in the city as we heard earlier in the week at a Leaders' meeting. People are dying because of

	<p>poor air quality in this city, so we need to get out of our cars, and obviously there must also be provision in the city centre for disabled drivers so that they can still get to where they need to go.</p>
Question 5	
Question From:	Councillor Piotrowski
Question To:	Councillor Riaz, Chair of Communities Committee
Question:	<p>In recognition of the role that faith communities play in the life our city, would Chair of Communities Committee be happy to invite representatives of Worcestershire Inter Faith Forum to discuss the possibility of adopting the Faith Covenant by this Council?</p>
Answer:	<p>In short, we are always willing to consider initiatives that bring communities together and highlight our common ground. As you are well aware, Mr Mayor, my mayoral theme of "love not hate" was all about exactly that and we saw all faiths united, where ministers of all major faiths united and issued a joint statement against the demonstrations of the EDL. It is important to realise that role that faith-based charities and organisations played during the pandemic also, and how they were vital resources and a significant cog where central government was missing, and their intervention wasn't anywhere to be seen.</p> <p>We also need to recognise we have a process and we have an excellent Equalities and Diversity Champion here in my colleague Robin Norfolk, who is leading the charge in including peoples and groups and organisations of all kinds, so one part of me is thinking that actually is the process to follow in terms of this. However, we also need to understand the implications of the of the covenant that's being proposed and how it will work in practice and what it actually means for the for the citizens of Worcester.</p> <p>The Faith Covenant as you know is a joint commitment between faith communities and local authorities to a set of principles that guide engagement, aiming to remove some of the mistrust that exists and to promote open, practical working on all levels. The concept was introduced in 2014 by an all-party parliamentary group on faith and society in collaboration with an organisation called Faith Action, who are a national network of faith based and community organisations.</p> <p>The Faith Covenant entails the following commitments from local authorities:</p> <p>Local authorities commit to welcome the involvement of faith groups in the delivery of services and social action on an</p>

	<p>equal basis with other groups. In addition, they commit to building relationships and trust with faith groups; adopting strategies for the engagement of faith communities in consultation exercises; and encouraging faith groups and their members to be involved in the reshaping and redesign of local services, sharing training and learning opportunities between faith communities and the local authorities.</p> <p>Birmingham City Council I believe was the first Council to sign up to this, followed by 23 other Councils between 2015 and 2023, the most local to us being Solihull and Wolverhampton. So, in short, yes we will consider, but I think there is a question to be had regarding the appropriate mechanism from which to bring this.</p>
Question 6	
Question From:	Councillor Cleary
Question To:	Councillor Denham, Labour Leader
Question:	A constituent took in her daughter (and grandchildren) when she left an abusive partner. She'll join Worcester's 3,500 long housing list but fears a long wait in an overcrowded home. She asked if this was fair when hotels are used for migrants. I said no, but other than that, I wasn't sure what else I could say or do to reassure her. How would you answer this constituent?
Answer:	It's not really appropriate to give housing advice to an individual in this place because the detail of that should be confidential in this setting and depends on their precise circumstances. So, my advice to your constituent is that she should contact our housing team. Every individual household that contacts the Council for advice surrounding their housing circumstances is assessed by the housing team to determine their immediate and long-term housing needs.
Supplementary Question:	Do you think my constituent sees herself as part of a city of sanctuary?
Answer:	I haven't met your constituent, I have no idea what her views might be on a matter that we've yet to debate.
Question 7	
Question From:	Councillor Cleary
Question To:	Councillor Denham, Labour Leader
Question:	I've had several representations from allotment holders across the city about allotment services. There is a widely held feeling that when allotment services sat under the umbrella of the Communities Committee, some years ago, the service was better and more community focused than it

	is now, under the Environment Committee. Do you agree with me that the council should consider repositioning allotment services to Communities?
Answer:	I don't know whether Councillor Cleary has a particular issue in mind. I'm not aware of it. Allotments do make a key contribution to our city and to our city green spaces. They're an important part of biodiversity in the city, the environmental agenda, and actually a significant contribution to health and well-being. People enjoy their allotments, provide food, provide social content. Environment Committee oversaw a review of allotments during 2021. That resulted in the updating and refreshing of tenancy agreements and that's now providing greater clarity and support for over 900 plot holders in the city.

53 **Notice of Motion**

The Council considered Notices of Motion submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8.

Violence Against Women

According to national crime statistics in the UK, on average one woman is killed by a man every three days.

Council notes:

1. Sexual violence, sexual harassment, and domestic abuse remain endemic in our society, highlighted most recently by the appalling murders of Sabina Nessa, Sarah Everard and sisters Bibba Henry and Nicole Smallman:
 - According to national crime statistics in the UK, on average one woman is killed by a man every three days.
 - A 2021 YouGov national survey on behalf of UN Women UK found that among women aged 18-24, 97 per cent said they had been sexually harassed while 80 per cent of women of all ages said they had experienced sexual harassment in public spaces.
 - A recent OFSTED review into sexual harassment in schools has found that sexual harassment, including online sexual abuse, has become 'normalised' for children and young people.
 - The ONS reported that last year alone 618,000 women were victims of a sexual assault or an attempted sexual assault by a man.
 - The Government's End-to-End Rape Review found that only 1.6 per cent of rape cases brought to the police result in a charge.

2. Those from minority backgrounds experience sexual abuse disproportionately:
 - ONS figures for 2019 show that disabled women were more than twice as likely to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled women.
 - LGBT+ people are significantly more likely to experience domestic abuse, with 13 per cent of bisexual women facing intimate partner abuse in 2019/20, according to Stonewall.

- In 2019, 60 per cent of UK police forces admitted referring victims of crime to the Home Office for immigration purposes, harming migrant women.
3. White Ribbon UK is the leading charity with a mission to end male violence against women and part of the global White Ribbon movement which arose from a campaign started by men in Canada in 2004:
 - They mark White Ribbon Day annually on 25th November, the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women, by encouraging men and boys to pledge never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women and to make this by wearing a white ribbon on the day and for a week or two afterwards.
 - White Ribbon UK operate a system of male Ambassadors, female Champions and Youth Advocates, as well as having specific materials to support primary and secondary schools, all with the aim of encouraging men to take the pledge and help to eradicate violence against women.
 4. That hate crime particularly directed against minority groups and the LGBTQ Community have increased dramatically caused in part by increases in transphobic rhetoric in the public domain.

Council believes:

- Male violence against women and girls is part of a broader culture of misogyny in society.
- Perpetrators of serious violence usually have a history of inflicting abuse and harassment against women and girls.
- Tackling violence against women and girls means dismantling this culture.
- It also means tackling other forms of discrimination and the economic system that further enables abuse against women and girls.
- Sustained cuts to all elements of the justice system, as well as institutional misogyny mean that crimes against women and girls that are reported are not effectively investigated.
- More focus should be placed on changing men's behaviour than on women taking action to make themselves safer.
- That transphobia has become more commonplace under the cover of 'protecting women's spaces'.
- That transphobia, homophobia, misogyny and all forms of hate crime have no place in modern society.

Council therefore resolves to mandate the Managing Director to write to the Home Secretary and Prime Minister:

- Demanding an urgent Royal Commission into male violence against women and urging them to immediately declare misogyny to be a hate crime.
- For public sexual harassment to be made a crime, as was originally indicated in the Home Office Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) consultation.
- To take all necessary action to immediately address the backlog in the courts and put in place the funding required so in future the criminal justice system deals with cases promptly to ensure victims get justice and move on with their lives and the rehabilitation of criminals begins sooner.

- Increase investment in victims' services including refuges, mental health services and legal aid support for all victims of male violence.

In addition, Council further resolves to:

- Encourage all councillors to take the White Ribbon pledge, never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women.
- Continue to work towards White Ribbon accreditation, joining the large number of public sector bodies which have already done so; and
- As part of this, mark White Ribbon Day on 25 November each year and encourage participation among councillors, council staff and local primary and secondary schools.
- Work with our partners in the LGBTQ Community and Stop Hate UK to produce a Transphobia Hate Crime awareness plan.

The proposer, Councillor Murray and the seconder, Councillor Jagger, both spoke in support of the Motion.

Other Members spoke on the Motion, where a range of views were expressed across the Chamber, following which the Motion was put to the vote. The Motion was agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees to:

- 1. mandate the Managing Director to write to the Home Secretary and Prime Minister in the terms set out above;**
- 2. encourage all councillors to take the White Ribbon pledge;**
- 3. continue to work towards White Ribbon accreditation;**
- 4. mark White Ribbon Day on 25 November each year and encourage participation among councillors, council staff and local primary and secondary schools; and**
- 5. work with our partners in the LGBTQ Community and Stop Hate UK to produce a Transphobia Hate Crime awareness plan.**

Reintroduction of 30-minute Car Parking Charge

On the 1st April 2023 new increased car parking charges were introduced across the City Council owned car parking estate. Regretfully the 30 minutes short stay fee was removed meaning users were forced to pay for an hour even if they didn't spend that length of time. At a typical carpark the use of a parking space for half an hour effectively went up from 60p to £1.50, an inflation busting increase of 150%, albeit with the additional 30 minutes included. When the new charges were introduced car park users were exasperated by these new tariffs.

This Council therefore resolves that Policy and Resources Committee should, as soon as possible, consider the implications of reinstating the 30-minute fee, to help those who just need to make a brief visit in the city centre, with this fee being set at a rate in line with other increases that were imposed in April 2023.

The proposer, Councillor Hodgson and the seconder, Councillor Stanley, both spoke in support of the Motion.

Other Members spoke on the Motion, where a range of views were expressed across the Chamber, following which the Motion was put to the vote. The Motion was lost.

The Mayor then proposed a short adjournment. The meeting adjourned for a 10 minute period. Councillors Altaf and Ditta left the meeting at this point.

Closure of Railway Ticket Offices

That the Managing Director be instructed to write to the Chief Executives of both West Midlands Trains and GWR informing them that this Council strongly opposes the closure of the ticket offices at Foregate Street, Shrub Hill, and Worcestershire Parkway stations.

Given that up to 20% of passengers choose to buy their tickets in this way, their closure (or in large part closure at Foregate Street) will deliberately and knowingly remove passenger choice and thereby remove all customer service for a large proportion of their passengers; and will disproportionately discriminate against the elderly, people with disabilities, others who do not or cannot use IT services and/or are not comfortable with using the internet to make purchases; and others who prefer to pay by cash or card in person.

The closure of ticket offices will have absolutely no advantages for passengers and will bring them no benefit; and is a further very regrettable act to remove accountability and responsibility from the providers of a service towards their customers.

Furthermore, this Council resolves that the Policy and Resources Committee should consider a new policy on fees and charges which will ensure that residents and customers will always be given a choice of payment method for any service provided by this Council for which it makes a charge.

The proposer, Councillor Amos and the seconder, Councillor Cleary, both spoke in support of the Motion. Other Members spoke on the Motion, where a range of views were expressed across the Chamber.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Piotrowski and seconded by Councillor Laurenson that the final paragraph of the Motion be deleted and the issue raised in that paragraph be referred to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration. Following a debate, this amendment was withdrawn.

The Motion was then put to the vote. The Motion was agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees to instruct the Managing Director be instructed to write to the Chief Executives of both West Midlands Trains and GWR informing them that this Council strongly opposes the closure of the ticket offices at Foregate Street, Shrub Hill, and Worcestershire Parkway stations.

Nutrient Neutrality

The Mayor advised the Council that this Motion had been withdrawn.

Council of Sanctuary

This Council recognises that people fleeing violence and persecution are not only entitled to claim asylum under the law, but that they also deserve to be always treated with dignity, and to receive our welcome and support.

As a city with a rich history of welcoming and supporting those fleeing violence and persecution, we want to build on our proud tradition by committing this council to becoming a recognised 'Council of Sanctuary'.

We recognise that people fleeing violence and persecution flourish and contribute to their new country when given comprehensive, and well-co-ordinated support within their new host communities. The national network of City of Sanctuary Councils offers this kind of forward-looking approach to the welfare of people moving into the county while also enabling community cohesion between new and existing communities.

Local authorities across the political spectrum have been awarded 'Council of Sanctuary' status by following simple steps.

This Council resolves that the Communities Committee should consider the implications of Worcester City Council becoming a Council of Sanctuary including taking the following steps:

1. Contact 'City of Sanctuary' to pledge support and connect with them.
2. Join the local authority network. In joining the network, we are committing to work towards the Council of Sanctuary Award and are agreeing to sign up as a Supporting Organisation.
3. Produce an Action Plan, which focuses on learning and embedding the principles of City of Sanctuary and sharing good news stories.
4. Then, when ready, apply for formal recognition.

The proposer, Councillor Piotrowski and the seconder, Councillor Laurenson, both spoke in support of the Motion.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Desayrah and seconded by Councillor Denham as follows:

Delete items 1-4 and amend the preceding paragraph to read as follows:

"This Council resolves that the Communities Committee should consider the implications of Worcester City Council becoming a Council of Sanctuary, working with others already involved in working with refugees seeking asylum in Worcester."

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was agreed. Other Members then spoke on the Motion, as amended. The amended Motion was agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That the Communities Committee should consider the implications of Worcester City Council becoming a Council of Sanctuary, working with others already involved in working with refugees seeking asylum in Worcester.

Pets as Prizes: This Has to Stop

This Council:

- Is concerned about the number of cases reported to the RSPCA each year, regarding pets given as prizes via fairgrounds, social media, and other channels.
- Is concerned for the welfare of those animals that are being given as prizes.
- Recognises that many cases of pets being as prizes may go unreported each year.
- Supports a move to ban the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, in Worcester.

The Council resolves that the Place and Economic Development Committee should consider:

- Banning outright the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on Worcester City Council land and how this ban can be publicised and enforced to ensure maximum effect.
- Mandating the Managing Director to write to the UK Government, urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land.

The proposer, Councillor Laurenson and the seconder, Councillor Lewing, both spoke in support of the Motion.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Udall and seconded by Councillor Norfolk as follows:

Delete the words "Banning outright the" and replace with the words "Reconfirming our ban on"

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was agreed. Other Members then spoke on the Motion, as amended, following which the Council proceeded to vote on the Motion. The Motion was agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That the Place and Economic Development Committee should consider:

- **Reconfirming our ban on the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on Worcester City Council land and how this ban can be publicised and enforced to ensure maximum effect.**
- **Mandating the Managing Director to write to the UK Government, urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land.**

Roads Policing Review

Council notes that:

In the last ten years there has been no significant decline in the number of people killed and seriously injured on Britain's roads, after decades of reducing casualties. According to the Department of Transport figures, there are still on average 5 fatalities and 84 serious injuries in England and Wales every day. According to the charity, Brake, deaths and serious injuries are up 15% on 2020,

after falling during the pandemic lockdowns. Pre-pandemic and since 2012 there has been little change in the number of deaths and serious injuries annually.

Between early July and 5 October 2020, the Department of Transport published a public consultation document supporting a Roads Policing Review. In the preamble to that document, the Under Secretary of State for Transport said the review sought to 'build the fairest and most operationally effective enforcement capability in police and other agencies to deliver the best outcome for the safety of all road users'.

Also, in July of that year, the HM Inspectorate of Constabulary published a damning report which predicted an increase in road deaths because:

- According to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, there had been a 34% cut in funding in real terms for road policing between 2012/3 and 2019/20 leading to a reduction of police officers available for these duties.
- Those officers received insufficient training and operational support.
- Road policing was 'seen as less of a priority than it should be' in most local plans and there was an 'unclear national strategy'.

The HM Inspectorate called for urgent action as 'roads policing is not optional'.

The outcome of the Roads Policing Review has still not been published.

Council therefore resolves to mandate the Managing Director to:

- write to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Transport, making clear this Council's position that the outcome of the Roads Policing Review should be published without further delay; that funding in real terms for road policing should be restored; that the HM Inspectorate's recommendations be implemented in full as a priority; and that a new national strategy for road policing and safety should be developed:
- send copies of this letter to the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, the Police and Crime Panel and our local Members of Parliament to seek their support for the Council's position.

Council further resolves to ask the Council's representatives on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel to request the Panel revisit the local policing plan to ensure that roads policing is sufficiently prioritised.

The proposer, Councillor Murray and the seconder, Councillor Norfolk, both spoke in support of the Motion.

Other Members spoke on the Motion, where a range of views were expressed across the Chamber, following which the Motion was put to the vote. The Motion was agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees to:

1. mandate the Managing Director to:

- **write to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Transport, in the terms set out above;**

- **send copies of this letter to the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, the Police and Crime Panel and our local Members of Parliament to seek their support for the Council's position; and**
- 2. ask the Council's representatives on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel to request the Panel revisit the local policing plan to ensure that roads policing is sufficiently prioritised.**

54 South Worcestershire Local Development Scheme 2023-2026

The Council considered a report on a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS). The Chair of the Place and Economic Development Committee presented the report and explained that the most recent LDS for the South Worcestershire Councils was adopted in January 2022. National Planning Practice Guidance states that an LDS should be reviewed and kept up to date. This revised LDS will cover the period 2023-2026.

The Council were informed that the current iteration of the LDS provides clarity in relation to the anticipated timetable through to adoption of the Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Policies and Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), as well as the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review and future of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule.

It was proposed by Councillor Norfolk and seconded by Councillor Cleary and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That Council approves the South Worcestershire Local Development Scheme 2023-2026 in the form set out at Appendix 1 to the report and authorises the Corporate Director - Planning and Governance to make any necessary minor amendments before publication on the Council's website.

55 Review of Political Balance on Committees and Sub-Committees 2023/24

The Council considered a report on the allocation of seats between Political Groups as a consequence of the by-election for the Nunnery Ward which was held on 20th July 2023. The Monitoring Officer presented the report and explained that, at the date of the by-election, the Council had 35 councillors. The political balance of the Council and the proportion of overall committee places on the politically balanced committees that this would reflect was as follows:

Table 1 (35 Members)

Political Group	Number of councillors elected	% allocation share of seats
Labour	13	37.1
Green	10	28.6

Conservative	8	22.9
Liberal Democrats	4	11.4

A by-election had been called for 19 October to fill the vacancy which had arisen as a result of the death of Councillor Roberts in August. Until the by-election result is declared, the Council had 34 councillors and this again affected the political balance calculation, which, following political balance principles set out in the legislation, was as follows:

Table 2 (34 Members)

Political Group	Number of councillors elected	% allocation share of seats
Labour	13	35.3
Green	10	29.4
Conservative	7	23.5
Liberal Democrats	4	11.8

The political balance would change again after the by-election, when the Council returned to having 35 councillors.

A detailed spreadsheet showing appointments to committees based on Table 1 (35 Members) and Table 2 (34 Members) was appended to the report.

Group Leaders had been consulted on these proposals.

Pending the Warndon Parish South by-election, if the Council wished to make Councillor Willmore's appointment to committees effective but hold open the vacancy left by Councillor Roberts's death (Table 1 – 35 Members), then in accordance with the legislation this would mean there must be no Members present at the Council meeting voting against Table 1. Otherwise, the proposal which meets the legislative principles on political balance should prevail (Table 2 – 34 Members).

Upon being put to the vote it was unanimously agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agree the allocation of seats between Political Groups to take effect from the date of the Council meeting in accordance with Table 1 – 35 Members, pending a further review in due course as a result of the forthcoming by-election in the Warndon Parish South Ward.

56 Appointment of Members to Committees

The Council considered a report on changes proposed by Group Leaders to Committee membership for 2023/24 as a consequence of the changes to political balance agreed under the previous item.

The Labour Group Leader proposed the following:

- Policy and Resources Committee - Appoint Councillor Agar
- Health and Wellbeing Committee – Remove Councillor Udall and appoint Councillor Willmore
- Licensing and Environmental Health Committee – Remove Councillor Agar and appoint Councillor Willmore
- Standards Committee – Appoint Councillor Udall

The Green Group Leader proposed the following:

- Health and Wellbeing Committee – Remove Councillor Stephen
- Income Management Sub-Committee – Remove Councillor Round
- Personnel and General Purposes Sub-Committee – Appoint Councillor Round

The Conservative Group Leader proposed the following:

- Health and Wellbeing Committee – Appoint Councillor Stanley
- Personnel and General Purposes Sub-Committee – Remove Councillor Geraghty

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader proposed the following:

- Policy and Resources Committee – Remove Councillor Murray
- Income Management Sub-Committee – Appoint Councillor Murray

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees the changes to Committee appointments as set out above.

57 Report of Member Champion for Armed Forces

The Council received a report from the Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Agar, setting out the achievements and highlights over the last 12 months. Following her presentation, there was an opportunity for Members to ask questions.

58 Report from the Relevant Committee on Matters which are Referred to Council for Decision

The Council received reports on matters which by law or in accordance with the Constitution are referred to Council for decision.

59 Referral Report from Communities Committee, 25th January 2023 - Draft Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2021-2040

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Communities Committee.

The Committee at its meeting on 25th January 2023 had approved the undertaking of an 8-week public consultation exercise on the Draft Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2021-2040. The consultation has now been completed. The majority of issues raised as part of the City's consultation process were around matters addressed in other strategic documents either already in place, or due to be adopted in the near future, such as the South Worcestershire Development Plan, Housing Enabling Strategy, Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy and City Plan.

It was recommended that no further changes to the Worcestershire Housing Strategy are needed, and the Strategy should be adopted by Worcester City Council in its current form. A Worcester City Action Plan will be developed, identifying relevant and priority actions from the County Housing Action Plan, as well as addressing issues raised in consultation responses. In addition, a countywide multi-agency stakeholder event is planned before the end of the year.

A copy of the full Committee report was attached to the report (Appendix 1) together with the final Strategy document (Appendix 2).

It was proposed by Councillor Riaz and seconded by Councillor Laurenson and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees to adopt the Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2021 – 2040.

60 Referral Report from Environment Committee, 18th July 2023 - Bereavement Services Facilities Review

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Environment Committee.

The Committee at its meeting on 18th July 2023 considered a report on the Bereavement Services Review and in particular the feasibility review of cremator replacement at Astwood Cemetery carried out by specialist consultants, CDS, where three options were identified. The Committee had agreed to preferred Option B being progressed to a detailed design stage which would include full costings, with a further report to Policy and Resources Committee for final consideration. An amendment to the capital programme of £250,000 was required to complete this process.

It was proposed by Councillor Lewing and seconded by Councillor Cookson and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees an amendment to the capital programme of £250,000 to complete the work referred to above.

61 Referral Report from Policy and Resources, 25th July 2023 - Medium Term Financial Plan - Progress Update

The Committee considered a referral report from the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee at its meeting on 25th July 2023 had considered a report on progress made to date towards closing the budget gap of £1.7m identified in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) published at Council on 21st February 2023. The report set out a number of proposals to support the savings plan which has been developed in accordance with the process which was agreed by the Committee.

One of the proposals related to the introduction of new photovoltaic panels on Council buildings. Two opportunities had been explored to date which were expected to result in savings in energy costs and other efficiencies. To proceed to the more detailed stages of development required a commitment of resources which can be capitalised, subject to the asset development proceeding as planned.

It was proposed by Councillor Bisset and seconded by Councillor Denham and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees an adjustment to the capital programme of £710,240 to enable progress on energy cost reduction works on Council assets.

62 Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee, 25th July 2023 - Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/23

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee.

At the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 25th July 2023, it was agreed that the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2022/23 be referred for information to full Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Stanley and seconded by Councillor Bisset and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council receives the Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/23.

63 Report from the Joint Leaders of the Council on Any Matters Which They Are of the Opinion Require Urgent Consideration by the Council

None.

64 Items Involving the Disclosure of Exempt Information

None.

65 Any Exempt Issues

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 10.55p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
28th November 2023

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