

Supplement to the agenda for

Cabinet

Thursday 24 October 2019

6.30 pm

The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX

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PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 24 October**Question 1****Mr D Howerski, Eaton Bishop****To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport**

There are 137 Parish and Town councils in receipt of precept income. Their total spending value in 2019 is approximately £4,622,000. A small 1.25% portion of the £376 Million, that Herefordshire County Council will spend this year.

From the 137 Parish and Town Councils, how many completed an “expression of interest” in Community Commissioning with Balfour Beatty Living Places? From those who did, how many of the Annual Maintenance Plans submitted for each were, “Generic Versions” with no budget figures, which have subsequently been accepted by Balfour Beatty Living Places for the year 2019-2020?

Response

For 2019 / 2020 the ‘Community Commissioning Model’ scheme has had 48 requests to date with 13 completed and 17 progressing. 18 have not been progressed by the relevant parish councils.

Expressions of interest and annual maintenance plans are not part of the community commissioning model requirement but relate instead to the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme (P3 Scheme) and the Parish Lengthsman Scheme. For 2019/2020, 85 parish councils submitted an expression of interest. Of those, 66 parish council annual maintenance plans identified budgets for the schemes to progress. Of these 53 parishes are doing both the P3 and Parish Lengthsman Scheme, 1 is doing the P3 scheme only and 12 are doing the Parish Lengthsman Scheme only.

If any parish council wants to be part of the scheme they should submit the maintenance plan with the identified budget.

Further information is available at

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200231/parish_councils/207/lengthsman_scheme

Question 2**Dr N Geeson, Hereford****To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport**

This time last year at the Public Inquiry for the Southern Link Road CPOs we were told that the business case for the Southern Link Road was being finalised, but this did not happen during the last four months or so of the previous administration. What were the main reasons for the Southern Link Road business case not being ready to be submitted to the Department for Transport before April/May 2019?

Response

The development of the final full business case for the SWTP progressed following the public inquiry in November 2018. However Department for Transport guidance sets out that the final full business case cannot be formally submitted until all statutory consents have been obtained and a tender price for the scheme has been agreed and included in the business case.

The statutory compulsory and side roads orders for the Southern Link Road were not confirmed (following the public inquiry) until middle March 2019 in the week before the purdah period for the May 2019 local elections began. In addition the tender process for the SLR had not concluded before the purdah and election of a new administration. As a result the business case has not yet been finalised or submitted.

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 24 October

No questions were received for this meeting.



Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	24 October 2019
Title of report:	Annual Review of Earmarked Reserves
Report by:	Cabinet member finance and corporate services

Supplementary information

Both of these proposed reserves below will be created from a transfer from the financial resilience reserve.

1. Housing

It is proposed to establish a new earmarked reserve of £150k, utilising funds held in the financial resilience reserve, to fund the investigation of different models of delivering council housing.

Herefordshire residents continue to face difficult housing challenges with a large proportion of the population unable to afford to own or rent a suitable property to call home. The lack of housing choice, especially in respect of affordable housing, is not currently being addressed through the developer-led market where the focus continues to be on developing the most profitable housing products on the most profitable sites, not necessarily in the places of highest housing need. Many local authorities are now actively intervening in the housing market by becoming developers of new homes themselves, creating Local Housing Companies with the aim of acquiring sites and developing and managing both affordable housing and open market homes.

There is an urgent need to address this issue and the creation of this reserve would quickly provide resources to undertake a detailed analysis of the options available, including the establishment of a wholly owned housing company, to enable the delivery and management of new homes to better meet the needs of residents. A business case would be developed for consideration and further investment.

2. Children's Safeguarding

Herefordshire has a significant number of children and young people who are looked after. The number continues to grow and is much higher than our statistical neighbours. In the inspection of local authority children's services in June 2018 Ofsted noted that "Appropriate decisions are made when children need to come into care". However, Herefordshire does not have a bespoke edge of care service to work intensively with children and families where children and young people are on the edge of coming into care, or have come into local authority care and could be

appropriately returned to a safe, home if there was some intensive work. This is something that councils that are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted have as a matter of course. Officers have worked up a proposal, using best practice and the involvement of Staffordshire local authority and more recently work with adult services and local providers to develop a holistic model. The development of the budget for 2020/21 includes proposals for the ongoing funding of such a service; using reserves to begin recruiting to the core offer of dedicated workers to work within family homes will enable the council to start the service up and begin to provide a dedicated preventative service in an area of continued growth that also increases the spend on keeping children safe but outside of their family home.

In addition using some of the reserves to provide the opportunity to recruit early to improve the quality of children's social work will enable the service to potentially recruit social workers to non-child protection work in the assessment service. This would enable some cases to be held in the assessment teams rather than in the child protection court teams and therefore lessen the pressure on social workers, particularly in the child protection court teams where we are finding it particularly difficult to recruit agency and permanent staff, despite all the work the council has done to improve the offer. It is critical that the council provides the conditions for good social work to flourish and caseloads are still too high for some staff in some teams. Using this reserve would enable the service to try to address this (and there is more opportunity to recruit to social work that is not child protection) now rather than from April 2021.

Proposed amended recommendation:

That

The following changes be made to the reserve balances held, as shown in appendix 1:

- i. Establish a new earmarked reserve of £150k, utilising funds held in the financial resilience reserve, to fund the investigation of different models of delivering council housing; and**
- ii. Establish a new ear marked reserve of £550k, utilising funds held in the financial resilience reserve, to fund the initial implementation in 2019/20 of an enhanced edge of care service for young people and support a high quality children's social care service.**