

**Wednesday 17 March 2021 at 6.00 p.m.**

**Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams**

*Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020; and conducted according to the Council's Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.*

**Present**

Councillor Bird	Leader of the Council
Councillor Andrew	Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Councillor Perry	Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities
Councillor Martin	Adult Social Care
Councillor Wilson	Children's
Councillor Butler	Clean and green
Councillor Towe	Education and skills
Councillor Craddock	Health and wellbeing
Councillor Chattha	Personnel and business support

**3692 Welcome**

At this point, Councillor Bird opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, and explaining the rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage.

Councillor Bird also advised that the Cabinet would be trialling an e-voting system at this meeting whereby members would vote using the Microsoft forms for this purpose. As the vote was formally recorded but results not visible on screen, he said that he would announce the result following confirmation from Democratic Services Officer and that the results would be included in the decision list published on the Council's website the following day.

**3693 Minutes**

Councillor Bird moved approval of the minutes of the meeting on 10 February 2021. There was no dissent and it was therefore:

**Resolved** (by assent)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2021 copies having been sent to each member of the Cabinet be approved and signed as a correct record.

**3694 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3695 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985**

**Resolved** (by assent)

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items set out in the private part of the agenda for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

**3696 Petitions**

No petitions were submitted

**3697 Questions**

Questions were put and responses provided as follows:

**Question regarding Settled Status for EU citizens – Katie Moreton**

Ms Morton attended and asked the following question:

*"The deadline for EU citizens to register for Settled Status is 30th June 2021*

*Other councils are taking active steps to contact EU residents e.g. Brighton & Hove City Council have delivered a postcard to all addresses in the city, with a friendly message on the front, "We want EU citizens to stay in Brighton & Hove", and information sources, including phone numbers, on the back.*

*There are EU citizens registered on the Electoral Roll, but there may be others living in less formal circumstances such as sub-let's and HMO's and who may not be on the electoral roll.*

*Some EU citizens are working in roles where they have no formal contact with employers or HR resources to tell them about the new rules, such as self-employed tradesmen workers in the app-based gig economy.*

*I'm sure that the council would like all its EU citizens to continue to live their lives here.*

*With these points in mind, could the council leader give me the plan of action to contact Walsall's EU citizens so that nobody fails to apply before the end of June?"*

Councillor Bird responded as follows:

"Walsall Council has been working with the Refuge and Migrant Centre (RMC) who have an outreach service in Walsall. RMC are a national provider for the European Settlement Scheme and have provided support for over 3000 European citizens in Walsall so far.

Additionally Nash Dom CIC have been supporting European nationals living in Walsall in the areas such as access to public services, schools, housing standards assessments, homelessness etc since 2018. Their funding was originally allocated from MHCLG (Controlling Migration Fund) but not specifically for the EU settlement scheme.

Nash Dom observed demand for support with EU Settlement Scheme growing particularly since 2020 so they developed a targeted multilingual online promotion to inform residents of the process of application, offering further support with 'tricky issues' or refusals. While 100% is always the target, it is recognised that a small number will fail to apply due to illiteracy or lack of English language skills. It is hoped that through word of mouth Nash Dom will be able to reach majority of those cases. They are planning to contact schools focusing especially on Roma children where literacy is low amongst parents".

Ms Morton asked the following supplementary questions:

*"Can the council leader tell me about the resources, i.e. budget and officer time, that has been allocated to contacting EU citizens?"*

*Can the council leader tell me what target has been set for the number of EU citizens to be successfully registered for Settled status in Walsall?"*

*Can the council leader tell me how many of Walsall's EU citizens have been successfully registered to date? "*

Councillor Bird responded as follows:

"There is no specific or dedicated Council officer role supporting EU residents. However, Nash Dom CIC remains to be one of the Council partners through Walsall for All. For example, we commissioned them to produce a Welcome pack (which includes a Brexit guidance section) and set up a buddying scheme to encourage integration of newly settled. Nash Dom informs us that demand from EU residents remains high and they require not only support with the European Settlement Scheme but general immigration advice. For example, where the decision from the EU settlement form was negative and applicants had issues with expired passports, birth certificates or non-EU spouses, further reapplying was required. As embassies are difficult to access during the pandemic, processing of the forms is often delayed. Dealing with

these complex cases requires specialist Immigration Advice and Guidance qualification so Nash Dom invested time and energy in training their staff. Nash Dom assessed the resources utilised for this work so far in the range of £50k. We are currently waiting for some funding to be confirmed from the WMCA budget to reimburse Nash Dom for their work on Brexit.”

### **Question regarding speeding along Bentley Lane Birchills – ShokatFazal**

It was noted that Mr Fazal was unable to attend and had therefore asked Councillor Bird to read out the question.

Councillor Bird read as follows:

*“As vice chair of Birchills agenda 21 can we ask for urgent action to be taken to reduce speeding related accidents in Bentley Lane Birchills. We had another Road collision on Saturday 13th February 21 between a bus and car. This has added to the numerous other incidents in 18 months. We have raised issues with local councillors but await council budget appraisal”*

*Councillor Bird responded as follows:*

“The Council receive a high volume of requests for traffic and road safety schemes; these can range from speeding concerns, collisions concerns and parking issues. A data lead approach is taken to prioritising the implementation of road safety schemes and a programme is collated for Cabinet approval each year.

All scheme requests are recorded, assessed and categorised. In the case of Local Safety Schemes, sites should have a minimum of six personal injury collisions in the previous three years to be considered as part of this programme. This is indicative of the number of injury collisions which occur on the highway in the borough on an annual basis and generates a list of schemes which far exceeds the current level of funding available. The Traffic Engineering Team undertake the annual review of injury collisions to prioritise those schemes where road safety will be most effective in reducing known casualty histories.

Schemes that have a lower number of injury collisions are transferred to the Community Health & Safety programme (PCHS) for further review. Schemes held in this programme are assessed with the a road safety aspect, but include the impact a potential scheme may have on improving access to schools, local shops and public open space. The schemes are then ranked in priority and will be delivered based on the availability of funding.

Bentley Lane has been assessed and has been recommended for approval as part of the 2021/22 PCHS programme. This will be considered under item 11 of tonight’s Cabinet agenda. The scheme proposal comprises of traffic calming options and a review of signing, mini-roundabouts and pedestrian crossing provision”

### **Question regarding support for the community litter group – ShokatFazal**

It was noted that Mr Fazal was unable to attend and had therefore asked Councillor Bird to read out the question.

Councillor Bird read as follows:

*“Will the council executive , cabinet and chamber members agree to increase funding to Walsall council community litter group and recognise the Efforts of council officers Richard Upton and Beth Deeley and volunteer members.*

*We have gained Keep Britain Tidy community engagement award and this needs to be acknowledged by council executive team and best practice transferred to council departments”.*

Councillor Bird responded as follows:

“We are all very proud of the recent Keep Britain Tidy award, which is well deserved and recognises the excellent work of the officers involved in delivering our litter volunteering programme. The service continues to explore new ways of increasing the funding available to support this kind of community-based engagement and we are in the process of making a bid to The Big Lottery to provide new and additional equipment to expand the number of groups who want to be play an active part in keeping their neighbourhoods clean. Best practice is being shared with colleagues and partner organisations. For example, the Canal and River Trust have held a number of recent meetings with us to explore joint working”.

Councillor Butler thanked the organisers of the Community Litter Group for their work, together with that of all the volunteers, and said that a further 169 volunteers had been recruited during this calendar year. He went on to highlight some of the activities in place to support this work and drive it forward in the future.

Councillor Bird referred to fly-tipping and stressed that the Council would take a firm line in this regard and would not hesitate in taking enforcement action.

### **Question regarding Road Safety along Bentley Lane- Councillor G. Ali**

Councillor Ali said that he would like to make the Cabinet aware *“that many residents of Bentley Lane were very concerned about speeding along Bentley Lane and that there had been lots of accidents with drivers using it as a racecourse. Residents have asked for speed reducing measures so there needs to be some road safety plan”*

At this point, Councillor Bird brought forward item 11 on the agenda, the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan settlement and Transport Capital Programme, as it addressed the questions raised in relation to Road Safety measures along Bentley Lane.

### 3698 **West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan Settlement and Transport Capital Programme 2021/22**

Councillor Andrew presented the report.

(see annexed)

Councillor Andrew Moved approval of the recommendations which was seconded by Councillor Bird. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried and it was:

**Resolved**(Unanimously)

- 1) That Cabinet approves the Walsall Transport Capital Programme 2021/22 as set out at Table 2 in Section 4 of this report.
- 2) That Cabinet approves the utilisation of the Integrated Transport Block element of the grant funding for 2021/22 as described in paragraphs 4.35 to 4.38 of this report and **Appendices A to H**, including the allocation of any carry forward from 2020/21 to the 2021/22 programme.
- 3) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director for Economy, Environment & Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to manage any required changes to the 2021/22 Integrated Transport Block programme, including amending individual scheme budgets (within the overall programme budget); and adding new projects (to replace or part-replace other projects that can no longer be delivered), in order to maximise the use of the grant.
- 4) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director for Economy, Environment & Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to negotiate on its behalf with the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, West Midlands Combined Authority and government departments to maximise the values of future financial resources allocated to the Council in pursuit of its transport priorities, including signing relevant agreements and contracts for schemes which are approved within the Walsall Transport Capital Programme 2021/22.

### 3698 **Forward plan**

The forward plan as at 2 March 2021 was submitted:

(see annexed)

**Resolved** (by assent)

That the forward plan be noted.

### 3699 **Black Country Tenancy Strategy**

Councillor Andrew presented the report

(see annexed)

Councillor Andrew Moved approval of the recommendations which was seconded by Councillor Bird. Upon being put the vote, the motion was declared carried and it was:

**Resolved** (Unanimously)

- 1) That Cabinet approves the Black Country Tenancy Strategy as set out in Appendix A
- 2) That Cabinet delegates authority to make any future minor amendments to the Strategy, if and when required, to the Executive Director Children's Services in consultation with the Deputy Leader, Regeneration.

### 3700 **Voluntary Refugee Sponsorship Scheme**

Councillor Andrew presented the report

(see annexed)

Councillor Andrew Moved approval of the recommendations which was seconded by Councillor Bird. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried and it was:

**Resolved** (Unanimously)

- 1) That Cabinet approves and agrees to be part of the government's Voluntary Refugee Community Sponsorship Scheme and endorse the process for Walsall as detailed in Appendix A.
- 2) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Customer Access Management in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration to subsequently authorise the approval of any Community Sponsor Group applications and to support the selection of Community Sponsored refugee applicants through the Home Office process.
- 3) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Customer Access Management, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration to authorise any variations to the draft process (Appendix A).

### 3701 **Black Country Transport Hub Collaboration Agreement**

Councillor Andrew presented the report

(see annexed)

Councillor Andrew Moved approval of the recommendations which was seconded by Councillor Bird. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried and it was:

**Resolved** (Unanimously)

That Cabinet: -

- 1) Approves the financial implications of the Black Country Transport Team set out within Section 4 (specifically paragraphs 4.34 to 4.43) of this report.
- 2) Delegates authority to the Executive Director for Economy, Environment and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to authorise the sealing of the Collaboration Agreement for the Black Country Transport Hub at **Appendix A** and the sealing or signing of any associated contracts, deeds or other related documents to give full effect to the work of the Black Country Transport Team.

### 3702 **Making Connections Walsall**

Councillor Perry presented the report

(see annexed)

In presenting the report, Councillor Perry thanked the West Midlands Fire Service in particular for their significant support in this initiative and the outstanding efforts of the community association network.

Councillor Perry Moved approval of the recommendations which was seconded by Councillor Bird. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried and it was:

**Resolved** (unanimously)

- 1) That Cabinet notes the continuation of the Making Connections Walsall programme for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 by extending contracts with the 4 hubs which are Bloxwich Community Partnership, Old Hall Peoples Partnership, Accord Age Matters and Manor Farm



Community Association and also West Midlands Fire Service at a total additional cost to Council of £135,000.

- 2) That Cabinet approves a further allocation of £100,000 to support organisations in the wider MCW network. This money will be allocated through smaller grants in conjunction with the MCW hubs and will be used to improve social prescribing capacity in the MCW network.
- 3) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Economy, Environment and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resilient Communities, to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements for the services identified above, should this be required at any time during the term, in line with Public Contract Regulations and the Council's Contract Rules.
- 4) That a future report is brought to Cabinet on any future plans to continue the successful delivery of a social prescribing model in Walsall, which will ensure befriending, advice and guidance and referral to community activities is continued for Walsall residents.

#### **3703 Update on Action plan to address the mental wellbeing impact of Covid-19**

Councillor Craddock presented the report

(see annexed)

In presenting the report, Councillor Craddock thanked Councillor Perry for his resilient communities work and also the Community Associations, One Walsall, other voluntary groups, volunteers and the public health team for going 'over and above' over the last year. Councillor Bird also thanked Councillor Craddock for his work.

**Resolved** (by assent)

- 1) To note the progress on the action Plan for managing the impact of Covid-19 as set out in the appendix to the report
- 2) To note that the Health and Wellbeing Board will be receiving reports on the mental wellbeing outcomes of the Action Plan

#### **3704 Professional Services Provider for Capital Construction Projects**

Councillor Chattha presented the report

(see annexed)

Councillor Chattha Moved approval of the recommendations which was seconded by Councillor Bird. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried and it was:

**Resolved** (unanimously)

- 1) That Cabinet approves the appointment of Faithful+Gould Limited as the Professional Services Provider for Capital Construction Projects for a maximum period of up to 3 years (1+1+1) subject to satisfactory performance and delivery.
- 2) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Interim Executive Director for Resources and Transformation to enter into the contract, and to subsequently authorise the sealing, signing or variation of any deeds, contracts or other related documents for such services.

**3705 Proposed Early Years Funding Formula for two, three and four year olds-2021/22**

Councillor Towe presented the report.

Councillor Bird confirmed that there were no objections to this proposal raised by the Walsall Schools Forum.

(see annexed)

Councillor Towe Moved approval of the recommendations which was seconded by Councillor Bird. Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared carried and it was:

**Resolved** (unanimously)

- 1) That Cabinet approves the Early Years Funding Formula (**Appendix A**) recommended by Walsall's Schools Forum at its meeting on 9 March 2021.
- 2) That Cabinet approves to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills, to amend the final formula, within the total Early Years block funding that is available, to accommodate any changes required to rates once the outcome of the January 2021 headcount is available.

**Private session**

**3706 Exclusion of public**

**Resolved** (by assent)

That during consideration of the remaining item on the agenda, the Cabinet considers that the item for consideration is exempt information by virtue of the appropriate paragraph(s) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972, and accordingly resolves to consider the item in private.

**Public Summary**

**3707 Regional Materials Recycling Facility, Coventry**

The Cabinet approved a revised Business Case for the establishment of a regional Materials Recycling Facility with 6 other local authorities; and approved additional Capital funding and revised maximum investment total for this project in order to maximise the benefits of processing the Council's recyclable waste materials in the long term.

[Exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)]

**3708 Black Country Enterprise Zone: Financial Borrowing**

The Cabinet approved the funding /borrowing requirements to support the strategic delivery of a Darlaston EZ site, subject to the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership and Joint Committee decisions to approve such funding, including identification of funding sources to fully repay the investment; and delegated authority to the Executive Director Economy, Environment and Communities to enter into any grant agreement accordingly.

[Exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)]

The meeting terminated at 7.10 p.m.

Chair:

Date: