

County Councillor's Report for Malvern Wells Parish Council on Tuesday 31st October 2017

Evidence of improvement identified in latest Ofsted monitoring visit.

The latest monitoring visit to Worcestershire children's services, by Ofsted Inspectors, has found evidence of improvement.

An Ofsted report, published in January 2017, found that Children's Services in Worcestershire were inadequate. Nine months on inspectors have now identified some tangible improvements. The County Council's Improvement Plan was described by inspectors as succinct and well-focused.

However, in a letter published today by Ofsted following a monitoring visit in September, Her Majesty's Inspector Dominic Stevens made it clear that services for children in Worcestershire require much further progress.

It was noted by Ofsted that the staff are working very hard to deliver the improvements that we need to deliver. It has also been welcomed that the inspectors have seen some improvements but we have an awful lot of work still to do to get to the stage where we are consistently delivering high quality services to children, young people and their families.

The priority for the council continues to be to make sure that long term improvements are made. We remain absolutely committed to that and we have already allocated an extra £5.1 million into improving Children's Social Care in Worcestershire this year.

Essex County Council was last month formally appointed as Worcestershire's Improvement Partner. The appointment was approved by Trevor Doughty, the Department for Education's Commissioner for Children's Services in Worcestershire. Experts from Essex are working alongside the county's Children's Services team to improve the lives of children and young people in Worcestershire.

A recommendation to voluntarily place Children's Services into a different form was discussed at the September meeting of the County Cabinet. A review into alternative models has now begun.

A new Children and Young People's Plan setting out the ambition for Worcestershire to be a wonderful place for all children and young people to grow up in has also been launched following agreement by Cabinet and Council.

Amount of waste sent to landfill drops by 70%

The amount of waste sent to landfill in Worcestershire has dropped by more than 70% in more than a decade.

The drastic drop has occurred since Herefordshire and Worcestershire launched their Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) in 2004.

Since 2004 the amount of waste recycled has also increased by more than 60%.

The JMWMS is a joint strategy, running until 2034, across the six Worcestershire borough, city and district councils, Worcestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council, reflecting the partnership across Worcestershire and Herefordshire in relation to municipal waste management. Despite the progress made, there is still a way to go.

Worcestershire County Council is committed to a more sustainable future by assisting residents to reduce the amount of waste they produce, reuse and recycle more thereby sending even less waste to landfill in the future.

The main factor in reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill was the opening of the county's energy from waste plant, EnviRecover, earlier this year.

EnviRecover opened in Hartlebury in March this year and treats up to 200,000 tonnes of waste, exporting 15.5 MW of electricity to the grid.

EnviRecover complements Worcestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council's other waste and recycling facilities, such as EnviroSort at Norton.

Worcestershire County Council has reduced its carbon footprint by nine per cent in the past year. The target over a period of five years is 20% so we are nearly at the half way stage already.

Major funding announcement for Worcestershire

The Department for Transport (DfT) today announced multi-million pound funding for the biggest road construction project in Worcestershire for decades.

The main road bridge (Carrington Bridge) en route from West Worcester to the M5 will be turned into a dual carriageway in a project that is costing more than £60 million.

Today Jesse Norman MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Roads, Local Transport and Devolution, has been in Worcestershire to make the announcement that £54.5m has been secured for Carrington Bridge.

Dualling the bridge forms part of the wider A4440 Southern Link Road improvement scheme which will relieve congestion, reduce journey times and improve journey time reliability as well as being an important boost for the local economy.

The Southern Link Road is a key road linking the M5 Junction 7 and the western side of Worcester. Phase 4 of the scheme includes dualling the road between Ketch and Powick, including Carrington Bridge. Construction is planned to start in 2019.

It sees 30,000 vehicles drive along it each day and is one of the county's most congested roads.

The first two phases of the planned improvements have been delivered and construction of the third phase started in October 2015.

As well as funding for Carrington Bridge, the Minister also announced an extra £6.6 million to help to ease traffic congestion in Worcestershire. This investment will seek to improve walking and cycling routes in Worcester town centre and Bromsgrove.

The £6.6m complements millions being invested by Worcestershire County Council into easing congestion.

County in tourism boom

Tourism is on the up across the UK, and Worcestershire is no exception.

Nearly 40 million overseas visitors are expected to have visited the UK during 2017 with 50% of those planning to explore beyond London. Forecasts suggest that overseas trips to the UK will increase 6% to 39.7 million with spending up 14% to £25.7 billion.

Record numbers of people are choosing to take their holidays in Britain; British Tourist Authority Chairman, Steve Ridgway, stated that tourism now contributes £127 billion to the British economy every year.

The most recent statistics show that over 16 million tourist trips are being made to Worcestershire every year, contributing over £850 million to the county's economy and creating over 17,000 jobs.

Surveys co-ordinated by Visit Worcestershire and Worcestershire LEP show that the majority of visitors (71%) come to the county on a day trip, with only 2% of all visitors coming from overseas.

Eight out of ten respondents (83%) were repeat visitors, suggesting that the county is an unforgettable destination that visitors simply love to return to. With only 17% of visitors coming to Worcestershire for the first time, this is something that can be improved by word of mouth and raising the profile of the county.

Those surveyed were asked what they liked most about Worcestershire, and the top answers were:

- Countryside: 22%
- Shopping: 17%
- History and historical sites: 13%
- Rivers/Canals/Waterways: 13%

Visit Worcestershire recently toured the county with representatives from New York at Kuoni and leading campaigns to promote Worcestershire to the US visitor market.

There have also been meeting regularly with Inbound Tour Operators - companies based in the UK that put visitor packages together and lead the organising and delivery of holidays in the UK for visitors from all over the world, including Japan, Europe and US. For the first time, these packages will be sold in American brochures.

Visit Worcestershire will also be representing the county for the first time at World Travel Market in London in November, which will see 50,000 visitors over three days.

Worcestershire has also joined up with the national committee for Mayflower 400 celebrations. The national committee held their recent committee meeting in Worcester. An Edward Winslow from Droitwich was on the Mayflower and Worcester and Droitwich will be taking part in the events. Edward Winslow was one of the first to write about the celebrations of Thanksgiving, he returned to England and became an advisor to Cromwell before dying on expedition to the West Indies. The programme for events in Worcestershire will be led by the LEP and Worcester and Wychavon District Councils.

Carbon emissions cut by 9% in one year

CO2 emissions across Worcestershire County Council have been cut by 9% in one year thanks to a new Plan.

The County Council is actively reducing its energy consumption and carbon emissions, coupled with reducing Council spend on energy across our corporate sites and future proofing against rising energy costs.

Significant reductions in energy consumption and carbon emissions have already been achieved over recent years: emissions fell by **23%** from 2009/10 to 2015/16 from Council operations and activities.

Following on from this success, the County Council produced a new Energy & Carbon Management Plan in 2016 and set a new target to reduce emissions by 20% over the next 5 years.

The Council operates an internal £3m Spend to Save Energy Efficiency Fund to support energy projects on our own estate. The projects that are supported by the Council's Spend to Save Fund are saving the Council £395,000 every year.

The main areas of CO₂ reduction were realised through street lighting and staff mileage - 14% reduction respectively; and WCC buildings (excluding schools) where gas and electricity consumption reduced by 6%.

This is the result of a number of energy saving initiatives, in particular street lighting projects to implement part night switch off as well as dimming and LED street lighting across the County; implementation of invest to save projects in WCC buildings including solar photo voltaic (PV) array installations; lighting improvements, lighting controls and insulation projects; and the introduction of three electric vehicles to the Council's transport fleet, amongst others.

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The County Council has had energy and carbon management plans in place since 2005. It is continually striving to reduce energy costs, consumption and carbon emissions in line with the Corporate Sustainability Programme.

The Energy and Carbon Management Plan is available here

http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/7584/county_council_carbon_management_strategy_and_action_plan_2016%E2%80%932021

Travel wallet is just the ticket for passengers with disabilities

A newly-launched 'Travel Wallet' is to help residents with disabilities overcome communication barriers whilst using public transport in Worcestershire.

The credit card-sized folder allows passengers to organise tickets and travel passes, with transparent sleeves to display cards detailing their accessibility needs that can be shown to bus drivers or ticket staff.

Some of the cards will be simple requests for patience, such as 'please wait for me to find a seat', while others will request specific assistance, including help with entering or exiting the bus or train.

The travel wallet was developed by Worcestershire County Council following a pledge at a 'People's Parliament' public debate on transport for people with learning disabilities. The People's Parliament are a group of Worcestershire residents with learning disabilities who highlight issues that are important to them.

To support the launch of the Travel Wallet, bus and rail operators have briefed staff working on routes running through Worcestershire to look out for cards, and to provide assistance where required.

Residents interested in receiving a travel wallet can contact their social worker at Worcestershire County Council, while supplies are also being provided to a range of local charities.