

Meeting of the Council – 19th April, 2021

Report of the Cabinet

Capital Programme Monitoring

Purpose of Report

1. To report progress with the implementation of the Capital Programme.
2. To propose amendments to the Capital Programme.

Recommendations

3. The Council is recommended:
 - That progress with the 2020/21 Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix A, be noted.
 - That the Brierley Hill and Himley Road Homes for Sale projects be approved and included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 6.
 - That the Highways Maintenance allocation be noted and that the associated expenditure, together with expenditure to be funded from any subsequent annual allocations, be included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 7.
 - That those elements of the Brierley Hill Future High Streets project not already included in the Capital Programme be approved and included in the Capital Programme and that the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise and the Director of Housing and Community Services, as appropriate, be authorised to enter into all legal and funding agreements to ensure successful delivery of the project, as set out in paragraph 8.
 - That subject to completion of the necessary funding agreement the expenditure on the Dudley Interchange Highway Improvements be approved and included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 9.

- That the Very Light Rail (VLR) Halt project be approved and included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 10.
- That the Public Sector Decarbonisation project be approved and included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 11.
- That the recommendations of the Cabinet in respect of the Towns Fund be approved and that the associated capital spend be included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 12.

Background

4. The table below summarises the *current* 3 year Capital Programme updated where appropriate to reflect latest scheme spending profiles.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Public Sector Housing	35,712	59,458	59,449
Private Sector Housing	5,510	3,412	295
Environment	7,458	14,158	5,000
Transport	10,546	11,593	2,000
Regeneration	18,608	23,527	8,503
Cultural	13,221	18,097	0
Schools	14,413	14,084	2,825
Social Care, Health and Well Being	694	694	0
Commercial and Customer Services	489	818	268
Total spend	106,651	145,841	78,340
Revenue	3,487	5,093	1,129
Major Repairs Reserve (Housing)	24,090	25,025	25,309
Capital receipts	12,901	25,450	8,280
Grants and contributions	41,386	27,122	7,475
Capital Financing Requirement	24,787	63,151	36,147
Total funding	106,651	145,841	78,340

Note that the capital programme is subject to the availability of government funding.

5. An update on progress with the Council's most significant capital schemes is shown in Appendix A. It is proposed that the current position be noted.

Private Sector Housing

6. Homes for Sale

Following the successful development of 59 homes for market sale at Wrens Nest, Amblecote, The Mere and Beechwood Road, the Council now has an opportunity arising from the successful Future High Streets Fund application (see later in this report) to progress a further mixed tenure development in Brierley Hill, including around 32 homes for market sale as well as 191 for affordable rent. The affordable

homes for rent can be funded from Future High Streets Fund grant and Public Sector Housing capital resources. The homes for private sale can be financed initially by prudential borrowing to be repaid from disposal proceeds.

The estimated prudential borrowing requirement is £5.3m with estimated sales revenue of £6.2m. This would generate a one-off capital return on development for the Council of £0.9m, which will reduce underlying borrowing requirements and thereby debt charges, with the benefit to revenue spread over a 30 year period. The Council would also benefit from council tax income.

A further smaller Homes for Sale scheme of four homes is proposed on vacant land on Himley Road. The estimated construction cost is £0.9m, to be financed initially by prudential borrowing, with estimated sales revenue of £1.2m. This would generate a one-off capital return of £0.3m, which would likewise reduce underlying borrowing requirements and result in increased council tax income.

It is noted that for both the Brierley Hill and the Himley Road schemes, should the sale proceeds be insufficient to repay the borrowing, any shortfall will need to be met immediately from revenue resources. The risks have been assessed, including viability and market demand, as well as the benefits of regenerating the locality and increasing the offer of good quality housing in these areas.

It is proposed that the Brierley Hill and Himley Road projects be approved and included in the Capital Programme.

Transport

7. Highways Maintenance Capital Allocation

The Council has been allocated £1.685m by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) from its Department for Transport capital grant funding for Highways Maintenance. The distribution of this allocation between roads, structures and street lighting will be determined in due course in accordance with agreed procedures, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Realm. It is proposed that this allocation be noted and the associated expenditure, together with expenditure to be funded from any subsequent annual allocations, be included in the Capital Programme.

Regeneration

8. Future High Streets – Brierley Hill

The Council has been successful in bidding for Future High Streets Fund grant, which will support a range of interventions designed to renew and reshape Brierley Hill High Street, support new growth, improve the visitor experience and promote long-term financial sustainability. The Council's proposal received full approval from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in December 2020.

The project includes public realm and highways improvements which will improve connectivity, including new pedestrian connections from the High Street to the High Street and key buildings such as the Library, Health Centre, Civic Hall and the College. The proposals will also improve air quality as a consequence of road junction improvements and will enhance the High Street Conservation Area, linking to the Brierley Hill Heritage Action Zone project and including the creation of a new public events space for community use.

Community projects within the scheme also include the enhancement of Brierley Hill Library and provision of refurbished public toilets in the town centre.

A key element of the bid is addressing housing need and developing key retail sites, including the purchase of surplus land at the Moor Centre to deliver affordable homes, and the purchase, remediation and redevelopment of the site known as Daniels Land to deliver a mixed tenure development of affordable homes and homes for sale. Further details of this part of the project are set out earlier in this report.

The programme will be delivered during the period 2021 to 2026 and all Future High Street grant funding will be spent by March 2024.

The forecast capital cost of the overall project is £45.491m, which can be financed as follows:

Future High Streets Fund grant	£9.986m
Brierley Hill Heritage Action Zone project	£0.400m
Metro Connectivity budget including WMCA and TfWM contributions	£1.958m
Anticipated highways capital resources	£0.350m
Public Sector Housing Capital Programme	£27.459m
Prudential borrowing for Homes for Sale	£5.338m

It is proposed that those elements of the project not already included in the Capital Programme be approved and included in the Capital Programme and that the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise and the Director of Housing and Community Services, as appropriate, be authorised to enter into all legal and funding agreements to ensure successful delivery of the project.

9. Dudley Interchange Highway Improvements

Previous reports have indicated a funding gap of £10.6m with regard to the completion of the Dudley Interchange itself and the associated highways link. The WMCA Board on 12th February approved funding of £10.6m to complete the project. This includes a sum of £3.6m to fund the cost of the associated highway access improvements around the St. Joseph's Street area.

The Council, as the local highway authority, will be delivering these highway works in conjunction with wider highway infrastructure improvements in the town centre, so this funding will be passported to Dudley from Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) via a funding agreement which is currently being negotiated.

It is proposed that subject to completion of the funding agreement the expenditure be approved and included in the Capital Programme.

10. Very Light Rail (VLR) Halt

As previously reported, Coventry City Council has been awarded £1.8m of Get Britain Building funding towards their Very Light Rail project, the equipment for which will be tested at the Castle Hill facility. £943,000 has previously been reported as being contracted to Dudley Council to progress a workshop and equipment and included in the Capital Programme.

Aa further element of work has since been incorporated into the grant from Coventry City Council to allow for the development of a Research and Development Shuttle Halt at a cost of £150,000.

The Shuttle Halt will be a representative mock-up of what 21st century tram stops are envisaged to be like. It will use sustainable materials and include comprehensive passenger information, security CCTV, and provision for some social distancing. It will enable research into passenger experience, passenger behaviours, dwell time reduction and other factors to be investigated under controlled conditions. It will also provide the opportunity for branding proposals to be evaluated in a real environment.

It is proposed that the project be approved and included in the Capital Programme.

11. Public Sector Decarbonisation

Subject to final “technical checks” the Council has been awarded a grant of approximately £4.4m through the Government’s Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The funding must be spent before the end of September 2021.

The primary intention of the funding is to switch sites reliant upon carbon-intensive forms of heating such as oil and gas, to electrical forms of heating that have a trajectory to becoming zero-carbon (as the proportion of the UK’s electricity generated from renewables increases).

The grant includes funding to install air source heat pumps at all sites. Where feasible, solar photovoltaic (PV) and battery storage will be installed, and lighting will be upgraded to LED.

The list of sites to be targeted through this grant is as follows (subject to final approval from the funders).

- Amblecote Primary School
- Brook Primary School
- Caslon Primary School
- Cotwall End Primary School
- Dudley Council House/Town Hall
- Glynne Primary School
- Himley Hall

- Milking Bank Primary School
- Queen Victoria Primary School
- Straits Primary School
- Ward House
- Wrens Nest Primary School

It is proposed that the project be approved and included in the Capital Programme.

12. Towns Fund

On 15th March, 2021, the Cabinet considered a report on the Towns Fund and the development of a Higher Education (HE) building on Castle Hill in partnership with Dudley College with the University of Worcester as the HE provider. The report to the Cabinet is available on the [Committee Management Information System](#).

The Cabinet made the following decisions under delegated powers:

- (1) That the Council enter into a conditional agreement with Dudley College before receiving confirmation of funding to agree the formal structure of the relationship between the Council and the College to inform the type and terms of the Concession Agreement with the University for operation of the Higher Education Centre.
- (2) That, following confirmation of funding, a formal legal agreement be entered into between the Council and Dudley College together with a Concession Agreement entered into with the University of Worcester; the contracting party with the University to be subject to the agreement reached between the Council and the College but at this time it is anticipated that the Concession Agreement will be between the College and the University.
- (3) That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise, following consultation with the Director of Finance and Legal, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Legal, be authorised to negotiate and enter into an agreement with Dudley College.
- (4) That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise be authorised to commence preparations for a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) should it be necessary.

The Cabinet recommended the Council:

- (a) That spend incurred in preparing the Stage 2 Full Business Case submission be incurred at risk prior to the bid for additional capacity funding being approved and that any costs incurred over and above the additional capacity funding be funded by Dudley MBC and Dudley College revenue resources.
- (b) That capital spend, including any site acquisition costs, be incurred at risk prior to funding being approved for the main Higher Education building scheme and that this spend, currently estimated to be £1,600,000, be included in the Council's Capital Programme.

Since the Cabinet meeting on 15th March, 2021, confirmation has been received that additional capacity grant funding of £40,000 has been awarded and that the remainder of the costs to be incurred up to and including full business case and final grant bid submission (£125,000) can be funded from reserves to be held within the Regeneration and Enterprise Directorate.

Finance

13. This report is financial in nature and information about the individual proposals is contained within the body of the report.

Law

14. The Council's budgeting process is governed by the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980, the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and the Local Government Act 2003.

Equality Impact

15. These proposals comply with the Council's policy on Equality and Diversity.
16. With regard to Children and Young People:
 - The Capital Programme for Schools will be spent wholly on improving services for children and young people. Other elements of the Capital Programme will also have a significant impact on this group.
 - Consultation is undertaken with children and young people, if appropriate, when developing individual capital projects within the Programme.
 - There has been no direct involvement of children and young people in developing the proposals in this report.

Human Resources / Organisational Development

17. The proposals in this report do not have any direct Human Resources / Organisational Development implications.

Commercial / Procurement

- 18. All procurement activity will be carried out in accordance with the Council’s Contract Standing Orders, and the relevant officers will take the procurements through the Procurement Management Group to monitor compliance at the relevant Gateways.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

- 19. A number of capital projects are under review in light of potential changes to working practice following the Covid-19 pandemic.



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Leader of the Council

Progress with Major Capital Schemes

Public Sector Housing

New Council Housing

Completed:

- Worcester Road (Darby End, Dudley) – 10 affordable homes including 8 x 2 bedroom houses and 2 x bungalows. (Note – some external works still to complete)

On site and progressing:

- The Broadway (Norton, Stourbridge) – a mix of 10 affordable 1, 2 and 3 bedroom bungalows). Start June 2020, completion due Spring 2021.
- Tenlands, Halesowen – 3 bungalows. Commenced November 20, and completion due April 2021.
- Hinbrook Road (Russells Hall) - 12 apartments. Commenced January 2021 and completion due December 2021.

Planning approved and start pending within the next 6-8 weeks:

- Hollywell Street – 4 affordable homes; 2 bedroom affordable homes
- Commonsides (Pensnett) – 5 affordable homes; 1 x five-bedroom home, 1 x four-bedroom, 3 x two-bedroom and
- Branfield Close (Hurst Hill) – 3 affordable homes; 2 two bed and 1 3 bedroom
- Bromley Lane (Pensnett) – 5 affordable 2 bedroom homes

Schemes currently being considered for planning approval:

- Forge Road (Stourbridge) – 3 homes; 2 x one bedroom and 1 x two bedroom – decision pending w/e 26th February
- Foredraft Street – likely to be 11 houses but subject to final consultation

Other feasibility sites are currently being investigated for delivery by Housing and details provided as part of consultation to ward members prior to any planning applications:

- Beacon Rise – up to 11 units, which includes work to a number of garage sites in the North Dudley region to re-provide some parking
- Copse Road (Netherton) – up to 22 new units
- Lower Valley Road – up to 17 units
- St Georges Rd, Dudley - up to 7 homes
- Hurst Hill – up to 7 units

The programme will also support the delivery of:

- the Brierley Hill Future High Streets Fund project by delivering new housing in the Brierley Hill area, subject to the purchase of land from the private sector now that we have a successful MHCLG bid;
- new (possible) sheltered housing and redevelopment on the site of the high rise blocks at Arley and Compton Courts;
- the redevelopment of the current Dudley Leisure Centre site in Wellington Rd.

Environment

Lister Road Depot Redevelopment

The project was paused in June 2020 for the project team to re-evaluate spend to date and the suitability of the existing proposals in light of 'new ways' of working post Covid-19.

The project recommenced in September 2020 with a new building design deemed to be "Covid -19 secure" and to showcase the Council's green credentials.

The timeline for this project was dependent on planning approval which has now been achieved.

Further to this, officers are reviewing the contract proposal, cost plan and proposed contractual arrangements prior to determining the programme for commencement of future works.

Stevens Park, Quarry Bank

The project started on site in November 2020. Building work to Tintern House has been complicated by a range of unforeseen issues which came to light during the demolition and 'opening up' of parts of the building. Resolving these issues necessitated additional work and structural alterations and, alongside a member of staff testing positive for COVID, has had a slight impact with a delay of approximately three weeks to the programme. Value engineering exercises continue alongside close monitoring of the budget, with discussions & reporting to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Steady progress has been made on other parts of the project with only a 1 week delay to date due to the isolated case of Coronavirus.

We are closely liaising with our charity partner The Emily Jordan Foundation Projects who will occupy the majority of Tintern House and from which they will run their various projects: 'Spokes' (bicycle restoration and sales) 'Twigs' (horticultural training & sales) & 'Go Green' (recycling). It is hoped that the capital works will be completed by June 2021.

Wrens Nest Wardens' Base

On the 1st February we received contact from Dudley College's Solicitor confirming that they are now in receipt of instructions from the seller of the required properties and that they will be getting the relevant paperwork back to the Council as soon as they can.

Transport

Street Lighting (Invest to Save)

The street lighting lantern conversions to LED technology programme on main roads is all but complete. The conversion of columns along Manor Way is due to be completed during February / March following the introduction of lane closure on the 60 mph road. We are awaiting the delivery of 385 Lanterns from our supplier which will enable work to take place predominantly in the next financial year on the remaining outstanding areas which will also require traffic management and permit arrangements to be put in place.



Regeneration

Dudley Townscape Heritage Initiative

The Townscape Heritage (TH) programme is funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund which offers grant assistance to carry out repair, reinstatement and refurbishment works to historic buildings, as well as a programme of complementary education and community engagement activities. The Phase 2 TH programme, which is operating with a grant budget of £1.178m from the NLHF and £300,000 match funding from the Council, commenced in February 2017. Following agreement by the Heritage Fund for an extension to the Grant Expiry Date, the programme is now due to run until December 2021. However, the Heritage Fund have offered further flexibility for the expiry date to allow for delays caused by the pandemic and this will be explored further with them at the next quarterly meeting.

The programme focuses on buildings in the town centre's historic core. The work at 203/204 Wolverhampton Street has been completed. Other properties within the programme include the following:

- 216 Wolverhampton Street: the project is substantially complete, with only the decoration to the shopfront and new signage to be finalised.
- 208 and 209 Wolverhampton Street: grant offers confirmed, but work has not started on site due to difficulties with contractor and the positions of the applicants due to Covid-19. Applicants have now confirmed their wish to continue and the projects are due to recommence in spring.
- 204a Wolverhampton Street: work expected to commence on site in March 2021 with a three-month contract.
- 14 New Street: work underway, but a number of issues have arisen which have required further funding. An increase has been agreed with the Heritage Fund which will enable the external and internal work to be carried out.
- Fountain Arcade: grant approved and contracts signed. The contractor and owner are currently agreeing a work programme, but with an anticipated start on site in spring. A press release will be issued once a commencement date has been confirmed.
- Plaza Mall: scaffolding has been erected (January 2021) and work underway February. A press release has been issued.
- 207 Wolverhampton Street: tenders returned and currently being analysed, with a view to making an offer of grant February / March 2021.
- Crown: a small package of work to the external boundary treatment currently being developed.
- River Island: project to reinstate shopfront being considered by the owners.

It was anticipated that the majority of work would take place through spring/summer 2020. However, work has been delayed as a consequence of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and will now be carried out throughout 2021, with most projects commencing spring 2021.

Activities are also being progressed and developed in conjunction with teams in Adult and Community Learning, Museums, Communications and Public Affairs and the Historic Environment Team. A revised programme has been agreed with the Heritage Fund which has been adapted in light of Covid-19 restrictions. Further activities have been included in the programme which work with delivery partners (Co Lab) who already have established

links with the community of Dudley. A project which seeks and utilises the oral reminiscences of those 'Growing Up in Dudley' has been launched. The TH programme is working with education colleagues to share material produced as part of the programme and develop teaching resources. The project also works closely with the Historic Environment Team to produce information in the form of trails and leaflets to enhance understanding and appreciation of the historic environment. The project continues to work with volunteers where possible.

Brierley Hill High Street Heritage Action Zone

The High Street Heritage Action Zone Programme (HSHAZ) is a nationwide initiative designed to secure lasting improvements to our historic high streets for the communities who use them. It is Government funded and run by Historic England with the aim of making the high street a more attractive, engaging and vibrant place for people to live, work and spend time. Brierley Hill High Street was one of 68 High Street across England selected to receive a share of the fund.

The Brierley Hill High Street HAZ is operating with a grant budget of £1.8m from the Historic England and up to £0.4m match funding from the Council. It is a 4 year programme, due for completion by March 2024. The programme provides grant assistance to third parties to carry out repair, reinstatement and refurbishment works to historic buildings. It also provides funding for public realm improvements, plus there is a programme of complementary education and community engagement activities.

In January 2021 the Project Manager for this programme was appointed and is now in the process of preparing a Community Engagement Strategy for the programme and working with prospective applicants on their grant applications. The Project Manager is also working closely with Brierley Hill Community Forum on their application to Historic England for funding towards a Cultural Programme which is to run alongside the capital works funded through the HSHAZ.

Low Carbon Place Strategy

The Council has been awarded approximately £2.5m European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) to deliver a project that will reduce carbon emissions. This a joint project between Housing and Corporate Landlord Services that will reduce carbon emissions from council owned homes as well as corporate buildings such as the Council House. £2.5m of match funding is being met from existing HRA budgets.

The council has established a process for restarting the installation of new gas central heating, which involves a thorough Covid risk assessment. A small number of grant-eligible replacements have been undertaken. However, the ongoing situation with Covid makes it very unlikely that the shortfall will be recovered before the agreed project completion date. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is waiting to see how the situation with Covid develops, before issuing any guidance on "project change" requests.

The Council's boiler installation contractor went into administration at the end of 2020 and, as a result, no grant-eligible installations have been completed during 2021. Tender documents for a replacement contractor are currently being developed.

In addition to the various energy efficient measures already installed across corporate buildings, a package of works at Crystal Leisure Centre is expected to start in March 2021, to be delivered alongside the main refurbishment being undertaken by Alliance Leisure. A start date at Halesowen Leisure Centre is yet to be agreed.

Very Light Rail (VLR)

Track Works:

The intention is to install two Very Light Rail test tracks between Castle Hill Bridge and Cinder Bank with a test passenger platform located at the Cinder Bank end of the tracks. Full track length will be approximately 2km. The eastern track will be bedded on stone ballast and western track bedded on concrete track form system, the western track to form a later phase of work. The track route is on a disused Network Rail (NWR) freight track-way which is to be leased from NWR. A planning application was submitted on 10th November 2017 and determined with reserved matters on 25th January 2018.

Tenders have been received for the track and evaluation / recommendation completed. These works commenced on the 15th June 2020 and assuming that they continued as planned, completion was expected in February 2021. The Coventry prototype vehicle will now be arriving at the site on 7th April for testing.

Additional works identified as required by Coventry City Council have been procured, which are being funded through a grant from Coventry of £1.293m. This includes new equipment, workshop and a Research and Development Halt.

National Innovation Centre (NIC):

A planning application for the proposed new building for the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC), including a pedestrian foot bridge link to Tipton Road and links to future Metro line, car parking, rail vehicle test track sidings and linking lines into the VLRNIC engineering hall was submitted on 12th December 2017 and determined with conditions to be discharged on 2nd March 2018.

Building regulations conditional notification was received on 22nd February 2018 and conditional approval received on 25th May 2018.

Tenders were received on 10th January 2020 and were evaluated with final recommendation being Clegg Construction as the contractor. Clegg started on site at Castle Hill on 25th October 2020 and will complete the Innovation Centre by the end of February 2022.

Funding has now been confirmed from the Government's Get Britain Building (GBB) Fund (£12.350m) and LEP (£0.650m). ERDF grant of £5.000m was secured some months ago, making the total budget for the project £18.000m.



Metro Complementary Measures

The £9.1 million budget is to fund the works associated with the delivery of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension.

The legal agreement with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) states that the Council will fund the complementary measures along the route including pedestrian's crossings. The Council has also agreed with TfWM to fund the uplift of materials where the Metro is built through Dudley Town centre in order to provide high quality public realm. Large public realm interventions have been identified along the route at key stops, notably Station Drive (now Dudley Castle), Flood Street and Brierley Hill, to be funded by this programme of works. The £1million accelerated funding associated with the Towns Fund will be used to fund works to adopt Zoological Way, part of the works for the new loop road to access the Metro stop and some of the public realm work along Castle Hill.

Other interventions along the route, which the Council needs to fund, include creating a new wayfinding system to improve legibility, increase walking and cycling to tram stops and to provide a consistent recognizable branded signage across the borough to residents and visitors giving the information that is needed. The consultant to develop the wayfinding system has been appointed through the OJEU process and will start work on the system in October 2020.

Midland Metro Alliance (MMA) are constructing the Metro extension for TfWM. TfWM have approved MMA's costs and the next stage of the design process has started. The Council is now working with TfWM to confirm the costs of the complementary measures, the uplift of materials and the public realm interventions. This is expected to take 12 months. The Council has appointed a consultant to develop a legibility and wayfinding strategy on an 18 month contract.

CCTV Control Room

The new CCTV Control Room in Dudley is now operational and building work complete. The Emergency Planning team has been relocated to the new facility from Himley.

Work on phase 2 continues albeit there have been some delays due to the pandemic. The new radio link from the CCTV control room to WM Police's control room has been commissioned and users will now be trained.

Deployable cameras will have their housings assembled, built and configured in late February and should be ready for use by the end of the month.

In Lye, all 6 columns will have been erected by mid-February. Works by Western Power to install supplies will follow, so too will networks to the Library and Family Centre, town Wi-Fi connections, signage and installation of new cameras to those columns by early March with them being commissioned and going live in mid-March.

Work will then start on the additional cameras at Coronation Gardens, Wolverhampton Street and Castle Gate in Dudley and Bilston Street in Sedgley.



Dudley Interchange

The full funding package for the Dudley Interchange was formally approved by the WMCA Board on 12th February. The Council has allocated £3m towards the project costs.

The Dudley Town Centre Highways Infrastructure has been designed and developed by the Council to access not only the Portersfield sites but also the Interchange by a St Joseph's Street link. The cost of the Interchange link is £3.6m (net of Council land value of £0.5m). This cost is included in the WMCA approval described above and at paragraph 12

Project co-ordination meetings are being held on a monthly basis with TfWM. In addition formal governance is being established with the Dudley Transport Coordination Board having been created.

A total further sum of £2.1m has been approved by the Council to support third party land acquisition associated with the delivery of Interchange / town centre highway connectivity improvements. Negotiation regarding third party land acquisition is ongoing in advance of the formal Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process.

With funding now approved TfWM are predicting a start on site in February 2022 with an estimated completion of September 2023.

Dudley Town Centre Highways Infrastructure (Portersfield Link)

As reported previously the WMCA has conditionally approved funding towards the creation of the Highways Infrastructure to create access to the Portersfield site and the wider Town Centre. This funding amounts to £6.0m. It is anticipated that the conditionality and funding agreement will be completed imminently.

Former Dudley Museum and Enhancement to Dudley Town Hall Catering Provision

The Town Hall tenders have now been returned and each submission is now being evaluated. Planning permission / Listed building consent is being considered but has not yet been formally approved. It is hopeful that these permissions will be granted by mid-March / April following delays with Historic England. These delays will push back the anticipated start on site date to April / May 2021.

Design work has been held on the refurbishment of the former Dudley Museum until further consideration has been given to future training requirements post-Covid.

Black Country Blue Network 2

Procurement of works for the various projects which will undertake habitat improvement works to improve the biodiversity and conservation status of a number of sites in the Borough is under way.

Cultural

Leisure Centres

The construction of Dudley Leisure Centre continues at pace with internal work now progressing. Work has continued since last March with minimal delays and consequently the scheme is forecast to be completed on time and within budget with the new centre to open early in the calendar year 2022.



The refurbishment of Halesowen Leisure Centre is due to commence on 1st March 2021. The programme of work is scheduled to take 56 weeks with completion expected at the end of March 2022.

Phase 1 improvements to Crystal Leisure Centre have started. The initial focus is on demolishing the existing changing rooms to replace with more modern village style changing facilities. The programme of work is scheduled to take 26 weeks with completion expected mid July 2021.

Schools

Schools Basic Need Projects

The next phase of projects to be funded from Basic Need capital grant has been agreed, with Brierley Hill Township secondary school places as a priority. The plans include expansion to both Wordsley and Crestwood Secondary Schools to meet projected growth with an additional 300 pupil places for each school.

The construction works for the main building programme at Wordsley School started on site in December 2019, and the works scheduled at Crestwood School started in April 2020. Both projects have continued on site throughout the Covid lockdown, but with slippage in the programme due to availability of materials and resources though that period. Although there have been issues with Covid lockdown, both schemes are progressing well.

Numbers for both primary and secondary school places continue to be closely monitored and processes are in place to recommend capital projects to address any projected growth across both sectors.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Projects

We are in the process of re-profiling our special school and mainstream provision to bring it more closely in line with the current SEND pupil cohort and the special provision capital funding is a key component in this process.

In having undergone an Ofsted/Care Quality Commissioning (CQC) inspection into SEND in the local area our plans were shared with the inspection team. We wanted to take into account feedback on planned use of the funding before confirming projects.

We have confirmed capital funding to provide a 12 place Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) base at Hawbush Primary School, and converting space at Summerhill Secondary School into a care room to enable a range of complex needs to be met at this school. Both the base and the care room were completed within the Summer Holidays and is now open for use.

Other projects to fully utilise the grant are still currently being scoped.

The SEND grant conditions have been relaxed due to Covid, allowing us to carry forward unspent grant into next financial year. We have since commissioned a SEND project at the

Woodsetton School which is anticipated to be completed around the midpoint of the 2021/22 financial year.

Healthy Pupil Capital Fund

As reported previously, the Council has been allocated £226,000 from the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund (HPCF) to improve children's and young people's physical and mental health by improving and increasing availability to facilities for physical activity, healthy eating, mental health and wellbeing and medical conditions. Funding is provided from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, also known as the "Sugar Tax".

Schools continue to update the Council on their progress and there has been a constant stream of invoices coming through, though a number of schools are having projects carried out in the spring for external works. Information on school specific plans for the use of the fund was distributed to Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet members in November 2019. There are now only 9 schools yet to send their information through but they are in the process of getting the work completed before the end of the financial year. A number of projects had to be put on hold due to Covid lockdown.

Pens Meadow Special School – Acquisition of Land and Buildings

The surrender of the existing lease and purchase of all the land and buildings of the existing Pens Meadow School and surrounding NHS-PS land is progressing as expected.