

Meeting of the Council – 11th October, 2021

Report of the Cabinet

Capital Programme Monitoring

Purpose of Report

1. To propose amendments to the Capital Programme.

Recommendations

2. The Council is recommended:
 - That progress with the 2021/22 Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix A, be noted.
 - That the inclusion of the Buffery Park Play Area project in the Capital Programme, be noted as set out in paragraph 4.
 - That the expenditure of £180,000 on the Driver Simulator and specialist tools for Very Light Rail (VLR) testing be included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 5.
 - That the recommendations of the Cabinet concerning the regeneration of the Portersfield area of Dudley Town Centre be approved, as set out in paragraph 6.
 - That the urgent amendment to the Capital Programme be noted, as set out in paragraph 7.

Background

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

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Public Sector Housing	60,914	59,449	71,168
Private Sector Housing	9,502	6,074	1,483
Environment	13,963	5,996	5,000
Transport	14,751	2,000	2,000
Regeneration and Corporate Landlord	38,681	13,048	5,356
Culture, Leisure and Bereavement	18,257	0	0
Schools and SEND	18,108	10,000	0
Social Care, Health and Well Being	512	435	0
Digital, Commercial and Customer Services	781	268	268
Total spend	175,469	97,270	85,275
Revenue	5,604	811	974
Major Repairs Reserve (Housing)	25,025	25,309	25,621
Capital receipts	27,558	14,480	10,447
Grants and contributions	49,611	10,657	8,214
Capital Financing Requirement	67,671	46,013	40,019
Total funding	175,469	97,270	85,275

Note that the Capital Programme is subject to the availability of government funding.

Environment

4. Buffery Park Play Area

Buffery Park has an active “Friends of” group, which works to improve the park for the wider community. The group has obtained funding to provide an element of inclusive play, and to provide new dynamic play equipment for the older age groups, as there are no items of inclusive play equipment for a person with physical impairment and little in the way of provision for the older age groups. The play equipment on site currently includes static climbing frames with slides, swing bays with flat and cradle seats, a seesaw and a set of sunflower-speakers.

The project will see the installation of a flush ‘Swirl’ roundabout, which will provide an inclusive play element. Other dynamic play items for the older age group include a 25m zip wire, Crusader swing and Saturn swing. The new items will increase the capacity for play in the park for a broader audience. In addition, the funding will provide some new items of play equipment to update and refresh the existing play area and the Friends will be painting the fencing and existing play equipment where required to improve the aesthetics and appearance of the play space.

The overall project is expected to cost £44,300. External funding of £30,000 has been received from Enover; the Friends and Residents of Buffery Park have contributed £7,000. The remaining £7,300 has been found from within the Chief Executive’s revenue budget.

It is proposed that the inclusion of the project in the Capital Programme be noted.

Regeneration

5. Very Light Rail (VLR)

Coventry City Council has agreed to fund further works to support the development of their test vehicle and an appropriate grant agreement is being prepared for the a new Driver Simulator and additional specialist tools for working on the vehicle, all to be procured by Dudley Council in conjunction with the Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation (BCIMO).

The Driver Simulator is expected to cost in the order of £160,000 and Coventry is agreeing to contribute £100,000 toward this with the remaining being funded from supplier match funding and ERDF match funding. The details of the procurement process will be agreed with the Council's procurement team.

The tools item comprises a list of small, specialist hand tools that are needed for the day to day testing of the test vehicle and are estimated to cost £20,000. It has yet to be finalised and once it has been completed a procurement plan will be agreed with the Council's procurement team.

It is proposed that the total amount of £180,000 be included in the Capital Programme, noting that the funding will be recovered fully from Coventry City Council and matchfunding.

6. Portersfield

On 23rd September, 2021, the Cabinet considered a report on the regeneration of the Portersfield area of Dudley Town Centre. The Cabinet endorsed the launch of a development and design competition leading to the appointment of a developer to deliver the regeneration of the Portersfield area. In addition, the Council was recommended:

- (a) To approve an increase to the revenue budget for specialist technical and programme management of the Portersfield project by an additional £175,000 in the current financial year and by £250,000 in 2022/23.
- (b) To authorise the Deputy Chief Executive, following consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise, the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise to acquire other parties' land interests in the developable area, on terms and conditions to be agreed and reflecting best value.

- (c) To authorise the Director of Finance and Legal, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Legal, to amend the Capital Programme to reflect the costs of acquisition of land and amend the revenue budget and medium-term financial strategy to reflect the consequential ongoing debt charges.

The full report considered by the Cabinet is available on the [Council's Website](#) and on request from Democratic Services (email: democratic.services@dudley.gov.uk or telephone: 01384 815238).

Urgent Amendment to the Capital Programme

7. Gornal Wood Cemetery – Creation of further Burial Space

Gornal Wood Cemetery is a well requested location for families to have their loved ones buried. It is important to ensure that we can provide burial space at the cemetery for as long as possible and utilise as much of the existing land for further grave spaces. An area of existing land has been identified that can be used for burial. The landscaping of this area would provide an additional 350 adult graves and a further 60 baby graves. This would give a further 4 years of additional burial space at the cemetery. The ideal time to carry out the landscaping works is during the summer months when the ground is dry. Having this work completed in 2021 allows for the area to be used from early 2022.

The estimated cost is £128,000 which can be financed initially from prudential borrowing. The resulting debt charges can be covered by income from burials.

In order to progress the project, the Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 21st July 2021 that the creation of further burial space at Gornal Wood Cemetery be approved and included in the Capital Programme.

Finance

8. This report is financial in nature and information about the individual proposals is contained within the body of the report.
9. In connection with Portersfield, the costs of running and programme managing the design and development competition are a charge to revenue. The costs of acquiring third party land would be capital funded from prudential borrowing. The consequent Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and interest would be charged to revenue over 50 years. The details and financial impact of this ambitious development are subject to the outcome of the design and development competition. It will be necessary in due course to consider whether the terms of any proposed development constitute capital expenditure by (or generate capital receipts to) the Council. Any further capital expenditure would require Cabinet and Full Council approval before entering into any binding agreements.

Law

10. 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.

Risk Management

11. Risks, and their management, are considered prior to proposals being brought forward to include projects in the Capital Programme. This includes risks relating to the capital expenditure itself, funding of that expenditure (e.g. grant availability and conditions), and ongoing revenue costs and/or income.
12. The corporate risk register recognises that the Portersfield Development is an ambitious project that has potential to drive regeneration of Dudley Town Centre and add value to the local economy but, at the same time, carries financial, commercial, planning, procurement and other compliance risk that will need to be carefully managed.

Equality Impact

13. These proposals comply with the Council's policy on Equality and Diversity.
14. 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.
15. There is no impact from the development of the land at Gornal Wood Cemetery on people with different protected characteristics.
16. The Council's Equality and Diversity policies will be applied throughout the delivery of the Portersfield project, including the identification of any specific equality impacts.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

17. It is proposed to recruit resources on a fixed term contract to contribute to the delivery of the Portersfield project. Recruitment will be progressed in partnership with Human Resource and Organisational Development colleagues. There are no additional 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.

Council Priorities

19. Proposed capital projects are in line with the Council's capital investment priorities as set out in the approved Capital Strategy. Facilitating the Economic Regeneration of the Borough is a key priority of the Council. The regeneration of the Portersfield site will contribute to that aim by delivering a development encompassing residential, retail, leisure and commercial facilities in a high-quality public realm setting.



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Leader of the Council

Progress with Major Capital Schemes

Public Sector Housing

New Council Housing

On site and progressing:

- Hinbrook Road (Russells Hall) - 12 apartments, commenced January 2021 and completion due December 2021;
- Hollywell Street – 4 affordable 2 bedroom homes;
- Branfield Close (Hurst Hill) – 3 affordable homes, 2 x two bedroom and 1 x 3 bedroom
- Commonsides (Pensnett) – 5 affordable homes, 1 x five-bedroom home, 1 x four-bedroom, and 3 x two-bedroom;
- Bromley (Pensnett) – 5 affordable 2 bedroom homes;
- Forge Road (Stourbridge) – 3 homes, 2 x one bedroom and 1 x two bedroom.

Planning approval achieved and commencement imminent:

- St Georges Rd, Dudley – 7 houses.

Schemes due to be submitted for planning:

- Swan St, Netherton – 75 affordable units including a sheltered housing scheme of 55 units;
- Enville St, Stourbridge - 9 affordable apartments.

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. Notably Daniels Land and the High Plateau, and rear of the Moor Street Shopping Centre;
- the mixed tenure redevelopment of the current Dudley Leisure Centre site in Wellington Road.

Private Sector Housing

Homes for Sale – Himley Road & Brierley Hill:

- 4 new detached homes likely to commence at Himley Rd in Quarter 2 (September 2021);
- Feasibility and design briefs are progressing for Homes for Sale as part of the wider mixed tenure regeneration of Brierley Hill within the Future High Streets Fund project at Daniels Land and the High Plateau, and rear of the Moor Street Shopping Centre.

Environment

Lister Road Depot Redevelopment

The overall project is currently paused to review links with other sites and ensure the best strategic use of space. Further proposals will be brought back to Cabinet and Council in due course. However, it is intended to proceed immediately with the demolition of identified buildings at the Lister Road site to ensure Health & Safety compliance and in preparation for further works to commence once any other proposals are brought back to Cabinet and Council. The tenders for the demolition work have been received and are being evaluated.

Stevens Park, Quarry Bank

The refurbishment & extension to Tintern House is essentially complete & the Emily Jordan Foundation Projects have been in residence since mid-July. They have set up their various projects: 'Spokes' (Bicycle restoration & sales) 'Twigs' (Horticultural training & sales) & 'Go Green' (recycling) and are actively seeking trainees.

The community facilities including the new toilets, cafe, kitchen & servery (with external terrace) are all open to the public.

Externally, the vehicular access & parking facilities are all in place as is the Horticultural training Area and new hardstanding areas. The main drives have been resurfaced and new southern footpaths completed forming a circuitous route.

The main entrance gates have been restored. Essential repair works have been carried out to the bandstand & the original colour scheme is being investigated prior to planned redecoration.

In the Peace Gardens the memorial statue has been repaired & the plaques and walls have been cleaned. The new ramped access wall, Portland Stone cladding, commenced on 22nd July & is nearing completion.

An application for an additional grant for £127,400 Covid-19 related costs, was submitted to the Lottery & has been granted. This will hopefully enable works that have been omitted to be completed within the defects liability period once the final account has been agreed.

Wrens Nest Wardens' Base

The acquisition of 113 and 115 Wrens Hill Road was completed on the 6th August 2021. Design briefs with input from Green Care, Friends Groups and other interested parties will need to be undertaken to enable the proposed use.

Transport

Street Lighting (Invest to Save)

The street lighting lantern conversions to LED technology programme on main roads is complete apart from the remainder of 310 lanterns, received recently from our supplier. These will be installed over the next 2-3 months on the remaining outstanding areas, all of which 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, in the light of delays as a consequence of the pandemic, the programme is now due to run until December 2022.

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 has reached practical completion and only snagging items remain to be completed.
- 208 and 209 Wolverhampton Street: grant offers confirmed, but work has not started on site due to difficulties with contractor, delays as a consequence of the pandemic, increases in materials cost and problems with sub-contractors. Applicants have confirmed their wish to continue, but the contractor has now confirmed withdrawal. The second lowest tenderer has been approached and has confirmed his continued interest in the work. A further small increase will be required to move the projects forward.
- 204a Wolverhampton Street: work commenced on site in June/July 2021 with a 3 month contract.
- 14 New Street: work underway, but a number of issues have arisen which have required further funding. The external repairs have now been completed and the scaffolding has been dismantled. Internal work to be carried out when current lease comes to an end.
- Fountain Arcade: grant approved and contracts signed. Initial opening up works have been carried out and designs revised accordingly. Scaffolding due to be erected beginning of August.
- Plaza Mall: scaffolding has been erected and work is well underway. More extensive deterioration has been revealed following the removal of the paint to the façade. The full extent of the repairs has been ascertained and costed and an increase in funding agreed with the funders and the grant recipient.
- 207 Wolverhampton Street: an offer of grant has been agreed with the applicant. Awaiting programme from contractor and confirmation of start on site.

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 and into 2022, with most projects commencing spring/summer 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. The Heritage Open Days event in September will form the focus for the publication and display of much of the material being produced, including the unveiling of a blue plaque for Percy Shakespeare on the former Dudley Museum and School of Art, the re-issuing of various Dudley trails and information panels and exhibiting of material gathered through the Growing Up in Dudley initiative. A 4-page insert about the programme will be included in the next issue of the Home magazine.

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 Streets 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 £400,000 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 grant towards public realm improvements, plus there is a programme of complementary education and community engagement activities.

Work has continued with engaging with property owners about the grant assistance that is available, this has resulted in the appointment of Conservation Accredited Architects for several of the properties in the High Street and the commencement of pre-application discussions with the local planning authority. With respect to the public realm parts of the project, at the end of May the Council went out to tender for a contractor to undertake repairs and architectural reinstatement works to the Brierley Hill War Memorial and its associated memorial gardens, tenders were returned at the end of June and following a number of clarifications, approval to award the contract was granted on the 28th July. A pre-contract meeting has been arranged with the contractor for 5th August and works will commence on-site soon after.



Community engagement and activities are also being progressed and developed in conjunction with Brierley Hill Community Forum. On the 8th June, Brierley Hill in Bloom was launched to which funding was provided by the High Street Heritage Action programme for the purchase of two mobile water containers for use by the project volunteers. On the 25th June it was confirmed by Historic England that the application submitted to them for funding for a Cultural programme had been successful and that the total sum of £94,000 was to be awarded. Training was provided to project volunteers in August in oral histories and in September the Heritage Open Days and Brier Fair will form the main focus for a series of events that will take place on Saturday 11th and also Saturday 18th September.

Low Carbon Place Strategy

The Council was awarded approximately £2.5m European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) to deliver a project that will reduce carbon emissions. This is 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.

In December 2020 the council's central heating installer went into administration, and as a result no grant-eligible boiler installs have been completed in 2021. A tender process to appoint a new installer is underway and it's hoped that the programme will recommence in the autumn. A project change request is required to enable this ensuing delay to be accommodated which affects the Housing side of the programme. It should also be noted that where homes are sold under the Right to Buy scheme, but have had the benefit of the grant, the council is required to refund the capital impact of the grant. The programme of energy efficiency improvements to the corporate estate is nearing completion, the final element anticipated to complete in June 2022.

Public Sector Decarbonisation

The council has been awarded a grant of approximately £4.4m through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS).

The primary intention of the funding is to switch sites from 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, solar photovoltaic (PV) and battery storage and LED lighting. The list of sites to be targeted through this grant are below (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
- Stourbridge Town Hall and library

Final proposals are being drawn-up with the council's energy efficiency contractor, Larkfleet, with works expected to start during the summer of 2021.

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 is bedded on stone ballast and western track will be bedded on concrete track form system as part of a later phase of work. This aspect of the project has now been completed and handed over to the Council. The track route is on a disused Network Rail (NWR) freight track-way which is to be leased from NWR.

The additionally approved Loop Extension works are due to complete by the end of June 2021 but delays due to Covid have delayed the delivery of remaining points / turnout equipment from Poland and the Czech Republic. These are expected to be delivered and completed by the end of September 2021 but the outstanding works would not affect the use of the loop as a manual over ride facility is available.

The Coventry prototype vehicle is expected to arrive at the site in December 2021 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.

Additionally, and as referred to in the main body of the report above, Coventry City Council are in the process of agreeing a further Grant with the Council for the procurement of additional tools and a Driver Simulator in the sum of £20,000 and £100,000 respectively.

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.



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.

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 26th October 2020 and the formal Completion date for the Innovation Centre is 25th February 2022. Whilst the Project is progressing well the changes referred to previously have led to delays which are still being assessed by the Contract Administrator but have been indicated by the Contractor, Clegg Construction, to a new completion date of 19 April 2022. Associated costs of the delays, assessed as the responsibility of the Council, are anticipated to be contained within the Contract sum by the Project team.

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 started work on the system in October 2020. Dudley print map is now available.

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.

CCTV

Phase 1 has been completed which included a new CCTV Control Room, and replacement of all associated public realm cameras which are now fully operational. The Emergency Planning team has been relocated to the new facility from Himley.

Work on phase 2 continues as there have been some delays due to the pandemic. Phase 2 includes the installation of all new camera locations identified as part of previous consultation, which is due to be concluded this calendar year. 6 of these cameras were installed in March 2021 on Lye High Street and By-Pass, and are fully operational, with



images relayed back to the new CCTV control Room. The camera on Lye Junction is awaiting installation of fibre circuit from Virgin Media. This is now in progress having been delayed due to contractual and construction issues. The remaining camera is expected to be completed in September 2021. The proposed camera in Coronation Gardens has been completed and the camera is now operational. Planning and procurement works have started on the additional cameras at Wolverhampton Street, Castle Gate in Dudley and Bilston Street in Sedgley. These are expected to be operational by December 2021.

Our 12 deployable cameras became operational from February 2021 and at present 6 are in use, requested from West Midlands Police and from Ward Councillors.

Phase 3, subject to formal approval and budget identification, will include various public space cameras around Dudley borough, namely Toys Lane / Furlong Lane Colley Gate, Wynall Lane Cradley, Meriden Avenue Island Wollaston, shopping precinct near Jews Lane / Eve Lane Upper Gornal, Queensway and Shell Corner Halesowen, and Netherton High Street.

Phase 3 will also include the upgrade of the existing urban traffic control cameras, of which there are 27 across the borough. Preliminary work is being undertaken, and it is likely many will be operational later this year, with all being replaced and operational by spring 2022.

Dudley Interchange

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) has now secured all the funding for the Interchange. TfWM are out to competitive tender to secure a contractor for the works. Gateley Hamer have recommended the CPO process. Counsel advice recommends that the CPO is split into two - one for the Interchange and associated highways works and another for the Portersfield scheme and highway works. Assuming all land required can be acquired by negotiation then construction for the highways will start at the end of the year and for the Interchange will start in February 2022. A report requesting use the Council's CPO powers to acquire any land for the Interchange and associated highways is elsewhere on this agenda.

An alternative location for the Interchange during construction has been identified.

Ownership of the Photographic Studio on Birmingham Street has been resolved and it is hoped to acquire the property in the next few weeks.

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 development site and the wider Town Centre. This funding amounts to £6.0m. In addition to ongoing design work, some site clearance has already been carried out to allow for intrusive site investigation to provide information to support the design process. In terms of land acquisition for the highways, a CPO will be developed as part of the overall development of the site.

Black Country Blue Network 2

Work programme in place for three of the sites. Surveys work has commenced. Extending procurement to cover the other two sites. Milestones and profiled spend all reviewed and project change request submitted to Wolverhampton.



Dudley Town Hall and former Museum

The tender for the Town Hall Bistro refurbishment was won by J R Slee, who are based in Shrewsbury. They are a family business and whilst working on the usual type of projects, specialise in working on Listed Buildings.

Confirming a start on site date has been difficult. This has been mainly due to confirming access to building materials (a national problem at the moment), compounded by the necessity to then reconcile ambiguous delivery dates with the availability of suitable sub-contractors who use those materials. A provisional start date of 11th October 2021 has now been set as achievable and the work is scheduled to be complete in March 2022 but, like all capital projects in the current climate, that may be subject to refinement. At this stage, the project should be finished well before June/July in time for the Commonwealth events.

Refurbishment of Dudley Council House Campus

Following approval this project is now in the early stages of design. The provisional programme is that the pre-contract stage will be completed by early 2022. Following a report to Future Council Scrutiny in June 2021, officers were asked to report back confirming proposals, incorporating comments made at the meeting and highlighting proposed financial and energy related savings to Scrutiny in March 2022. Once started, the construction phases are scheduled to take around 2 years to complete.

Brierley Hill (Future High Streets)

The Council secured £9.99m from the Future High Streets Fund in December 2020. This is to support a programme of activity at Brierley Hill, to be implemented in the period 2021 to 2026. The key objectives are to improve footfall, reduce vacancy rates and improve the diversity of shops and facilities. All Future High Streets Funding has to be drawn down by 2023/24. DMBC match funding, identified through existing approvals, will be used to fund projects within the latter part of the programme. The overall investment value of the programme is in the region of £44m.

Project summaries:

Public Realm and Connectivity Improvements (£4.75m) - Funding to connect the new Midland Metro terminus to the High Street, improve existing public realm connectivity between key buildings and provide new public spaces and pocket parks. Appointment of lead designer / contractor in the autumn of 2021 to prepare and consult on proposals, with a commencement of initial works in Q4 2021/22. The majority of the public realm works will be implemented during 2022/23 and 2023/24 to be ready in advance of the Midland Metro opening.

Key Retail Sites (£1.05m) - The owners of the Moor Centre are preparing proposals to redevelop the precinct to bring parking closer to the shops. This will free up the rear car park land for development. The Council wishes to redevelop the site for up to 44 homes. The Future High Streets Fund provides the money for site acquisition and remediation. A purchase agreement to secure the land is currently being negotiated. The shopping precinct

redevelopment works are programmed for 2022/23. DMBC build out on land to the rear will be during 2023/24 and 2024/25. Combined overall investment value £8m.

Infrastructure and Air Quality Improvements (£255,000) - Future High Streets will provide support to amend two highway junctions at Venture Way. The intention is to improve pedestrian connectivity between the High Street and medical centre; prevent queuing traffic which has resulted in movement delays; and improve air quality levels. The works are programmed to commence in Q4 2021/22 and complete in Q1 2022/23.

Addressing Housing Need (£3.55m) - Discussions are underway to acquire 10 acres of brownfield land known as Daniels Land and the High Plateau. These are two long-term vacant sites, formerly part of the Round Oak Steel Works that have remained undeveloped for over 40 years. Future High Streets funding will support site remediation and preparation costs. Dudley Council's Housing Department will then construct up to 220 new mixed tenure homes to meet local housing needs. Density and housing numbers may increase following the receipt of urban design advice and the completion of detailed design work. Following INTU shopping centres entering administration, discussions have continued with Ellandi retail investment which is acting on behalf of the creditors that own the Merry Hill Centre and adjacent land. Initial feasibility works will be phased around the construction of the Metro rail viaduct that crosses the sites during 2022, with remediation works and build out to commence in late 2022/23. Completion is anticipated during 2025/26. The overall value of the project is £30m.

Public Library (£308,000) - refurbishment of Brierley Hill public library and ground floor housing department reception area. Scheme designs have been the subject of community consultation and have been well received. Freeholder approval has been received in-principle for the refurbishment works and a meeting is scheduled for September to review the detailed designs. The works will commence on site in the autumn of 2021 and complete by March 2022.

Public Toilets (£80,000) - Reopening of public toilets to support the High Street visitor return following Cv-19; and the provision of welfare facilities for Metro tram drivers. Midland Metro Alliance is making an additional contribution of £38,000 to support the works. Feasibility designs under preparation that will also include changing facilities after discussions with stakeholder groups. Completion of designs autumn 2021, with works programmed to start during Q4, 2021/22 and complete Q1 2022/23.

In addition to the Future High Streets Fund award, the Council has secured further investment from the West Midlands Combined Authority. This is to acquire land to support implementation of the High Street Link. A funding agreement between WMCA and DMBC is currently being finalised. This is a long-term vacant gap site where there is the opportunity to provide a new connection from the High Street to the Metro terminus. The Council has appointed an agent and opened discussions with the landowners to acquire. The funding award includes an allowance for CPO costs if acquisition cannot be secured through private treaty.



Cultural

Leisure Centres

The construction of Dudley Leisure Centre continues at pace. 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 progressing well. The programme of work is scheduled to take 56 weeks with completion expected at the end of March 2022. Phase 1 is due for completion mid-November.

Phase 1 improvements to Crystal Leisure Centre have been completed. The new village style changing rooms and improvements to the leisure pool have been well received by customers.

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.

Both the projects will be complete by the start of the new term in September, allowing the schools to be able to take the additional intake as programmed.

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 continuing 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.

The SEND Special Provision Fund capital grant conditions were previously relaxed due to Covid allowing us to carry forward unspent grant into the 2020/21 financial year. This grant funding has now been allocated in its entirety to the following projects:

- A new 12 place base for primary pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs at Hawbush primary school – completed and operational



- Creation of designated care rooms at Summerhill secondary school and the Glynne primary school to promote the inclusion of children with SEND that include physical disabilities and specific personal care needs - completed
- Expansion of Woodsetton Special School through a new mobile specifically designed to cater for the needs of children with SEND and to provide the additional space the school requires to meet the needs of an increasingly complex cohort of pupils – due for completion 10/9/21
- Various capital works at Halesbury School in response to independent Accessibility Study – in progress

In addition to this carry forward, we have received a further allocation of capital funding for SEND. Projects to be funded are still being scoped with the need for detailed feasibility studies to be undertaken but is likely to include further expansion within our maintained special schools. A tender process is also underway to establish a further primary SEMH base. Any requirements for capital works to establish this base within the successful school will be met from this funding.

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 still being negotiated, with a further investigative survey to take place in September 2021.