

Council, 20 September 2023

Leader's announcements

On 7 September I was pleased to join the Chairman, a number of colleagues who represent Wribbenhall or Bewdley and some staff at the official sod-cutting ceremony for the Environment Agency's flood defence scheme at Beales Corner. The ceremony was performed by the flooding Minister, Rebecca Pow MP, Mark Garnier MP and Councillor Emily Bourne in her role as Deputy Mayor of Bewdley. The Minister announced an additional £1.5m of funding for the scheme, which will provide a better level of protection for properties on the Wribbenhall side of the river than the previous temporary barriers, without the need to shut the bridge when river levels are high. Anthony Perry, the Environment Agency's Operations Manager for the West Midlands, thanked WFDC Councillors and staff in his speech. He subsequently sent a message to the Chief Executive: "We work with a lot of local authorities, and I really meant it when I talked positively about the people we have dealt with at WFDC. They have been impressive, and very different to some other local authorities who seem to get bogged down with either process or internal politics." It is a pleasure to see the Council's contribution to progress of this scheme positively acknowledged.

Tonight Council is being asked to adopt its corporate plan for 2023-2027, an important document which articulates its priorities and what we are seeking to achieve. I would like to thank colleagues who served on the Cabinet Advisory Panel for their work in support of the process of developing the plan, and the staff who have conducted and analysed the consultation with the public.

Following the public engagement event in August, the planning application has been submitted for the Connectivity Project that will create an urban park to link the higher level of Bromsgrove Street with Worcester Street and High Street. There has been a positive public reaction to the illustrative images for the finished scheme and work will get under way once planning permission has been obtained. This and other economic regeneration projects that will transform the town centre continue to progress favourably – works are well under way on the transformation of the former Magistrates' Court into a Creative Hub, with practical completion scheduled for September 2024.

Finally, as a result of confirmation of the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete at County Hall, at short notice the meeting of the full County Council was relocated to Wyre Forest House last Thursday. WFDC staff pulled out all the stops to ensure that the meeting was able to go ahead smoothly, and I would like to extend thanks in particular to the facilities and ICT teams for their contribution.