

MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday 13 March 2014 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor AW Johnson (Chairman)

Councillors: H Bramer, JW Millar, PM Morgan, GJ Powell, PD Price and EPJ Harvey

In attendance: Councillors WLS Bowen, A Seldon, P Rone, J Stone and ACR Chappell

Officers:

73. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence from Cabinet Members.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: JA Hyde, Cabinet Support Member, JG Jarvis, Chairman Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, AJW Powers, Group Leader It's Our County.

74. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

75. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

76. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - JANUARY 2014

The Chief Financial Officer informed Cabinet that Council was now forecast to spend within its budget, an improvement of £2.4m compared to the October forecast reported to December Cabinet. The overall position in directorates remained broadly the same but the forecast position had improved due to the successful bid for a capitalisation directive for use on one-off transformation expenditure. . In addition the integration of Public Health Services within the Council had led to joint working creating efficiencies in Public Health, Adults Wellbeing and Children's Wellbeing.

The Leader thanked Members for their support in setting the budget and the Chief Executive, the Chief Financial Officer, Directors, Cabinet Members and the wider team for their work. In response to a question asking for assurance on capacity within the Adult Wellbeing budget, the Cabinet Member, Health and Wellbeing advised that Members were aware of the decisions made to provide capacity and did not feel that any further assurance could be provided than had already been given. He added it should not be forgotten the significant contribution that other directorates had made in reducing the overspend which had helped change the budget situation. In response to a question on revenue improvements the Director, Economy, Communities and Corporate advised that planning applications had increased and usage of car parks was ahead of what had been anticipated.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- a) Cabinet noted the Council is projected to spend on budget, an improvement of £2.4m on the October position; and**
- b) Cabinet agreed the arrangements for future budget monitoring.**

77. HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL

The Cabinet Member, Young People and Children's Wellbeing reminded Cabinet of the discussions following the February Council meeting, when there had been confusion over the decision of Council. He advised of the 12 month delay that had been agreed to allay any confusion. He reminded Cabinet that it had been agreed not to bring changes in for children in their GCSE year. However, following Group Leader discussions the changes would now take effect per year as children entered primary school at age four and high school at age 11 and would not affect those children already in school. The Council had approved one off funding to maintain the current situation with the policy changes coming into effect in 2015. Members welcomed the 18 month breathing space given, which would allow schools, parents and bus companies to work together to make new arrangements.

Additionally, the Cabinet Member advised of the continued lobbying that had been carried out to get fairer funding for rural schools. Currently Herefordshire was the thirty ninth lowest funded for schools in the country. He advised that government had announced today an increase in funding for the lowest funded authorities, which for Herefordshire meant 2.9% increase from April 2015. This amounted to an extra £124 per pupil. The Leader expressed his thanks to all those involved in the lobbying. It was noted that although Herefordshire was still below the national average for funding, the gap had been reduced by 50%.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- a) the implementation date for the policy changes agreed by Cabinet in December 2013 be amended to September 2015, having the following effect:**
- b) to withdraw the Herefordshire free home to school transport policy eligibility based upon nearest and catchment school and replace with eligibility based upon:**
 - i) nearest suitable school with places;**
 - ii) where the nearest suitable school is in Wales, transport will be provided to that nearest school or the nearest school in England;**
- c) to withdraw from September 2015 free transport for Herefordshire post 16 years with SEN and replace with the requirement for all post 16 years with SEN to pay the same contribution as all other post 16 students;**
- d) to apply the policy change in b) only to those children newly entering a school from September 2015; and**

- e) **the implications of these policy changes are reviewed annually or sooner in the event that the impact of the proposed changes is materially worse than anticipated.**

78. RETENDERING OF ARTS COMMISSION GRANTS FOR 2014/15

The Cabinet Member Contracts and Assets reminded Cabinet that following the February Council decision; the previously withdrawn arts grant funding had now been reinstated for one year only. He informed Cabinet it would only be open to those arts groups that fitted the Councils core priorities and would only be for one year.

Members welcomed the change and felt it would be of great benefit to arts groups in order to help them become sustainable and aid them in accessing funding from other organisations.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- a) **the arts commissioning grant budget be allocated in a single bidding round open only to those organisations which received funding from Herefordshire Council in 2013/14; and**
- b) **tenders for the commissions are prioritised on the basis of the proportionate impact upon groups with protected characteristics, contribution to achievement of the Council's priorities and degree to which the applicants can demonstrate how the funding will be used to support the organisation move to sustainability without future funding from Herefordshire Council.**

The meeting ended at 2.30 pm

CHAIRMAN