

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Council Chamber - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Tuesday 25 June 2019 at 2.00 pm

Present: **Councillor David Hitchiner, Leader of the Council (Chairman)**
 Councillor Felicity Norman, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors Pauline Crockett, Gemma Davies, John Harrington, Liz Harvey,
Trish Marsh and Ange Tyler**

Cabinet support
members in attendance

Councillors Peter Jinman, John Hardwick and Alan Seldon,

Group leaders in
attendance

Councillors Jonathan Lester and Bob Matthews and Alan Seldon

Scrutiny chairpersons in
attendance

Councillors Elissa Swinglehurst, Carole Gandy and Jonathan Lester

Officers in attendance:

Alistair Neill, Richard Ball, Chris Baird, Claire Ward, Andrew Lovegrove,
Stephen Vickers and Karen Wright

66. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies from members of the cabinet.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

68. MINUTES

Resolved: **That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2019 be approved
as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

69. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 5 - 6)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

70. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS (Pages 7 - 10)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 2 to the minutes.

71. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2019 - 2024

The cabinet member for children and families presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The children and young people's plan had been developed with children and young people and partners
- The plan builds on the achievements and challenges of the previous plan
- The latest data from the children's integrated needs assessment, Ofsted and other sources had been used.
- The matters of concern included children and young people's mental health and the high numbers of looked after children (LAC).
- The positives were the increasing achievement in education in schools; the opportunities of the university and the cyber security centre.
- The plan is an overarching framework within which the partners will work to address challenges and bring about changes. There are delivery plans and action plans which underpin the framework so not all the detail or the issues being worked on is set out in this overarching plan.

In discussion of the report, the cabinet members noted that:

- Issues of peer on peer sexual abuse were being addressed by council staff, schools and others in a variety of ways. It was stressed that it was being taken seriously and that the council was promoting the use of national guidance. There had been a range of briefings for safeguarding leads, head teachers, practitioners.
- the consultation with children and young people was positive and hopefully that could be a model which could be followed.
- there was awareness of the issues with some schools have issues with parked cars and there would be work undertaken with officers to look at increasing the number of 20 mph limits around schools.
- Encouraging children to walk would be positive for their health and the environment.
- Herefordshire had on average comparatively low levels of deprivation (14% against 20% nationally). These issues will be addressed in every way the council could.
- They were keen to encourage the schools and the wider community with regard to the climate emergency.
- Children and young people had clearly demonstrated that they wanted to have an influence which should be encouraged.
- The loss of youth groups / centres had caused issues. The cabinet member would like to look at the possibility of reinstating them.
- There would be regular partnership meetings to review the plan and there would be regular updates considered by children and young people scrutiny committee and health and wellbeing board.
- It was an overarching plan which had broad statements which made it flexible enough to act on emerging issues through the life of the plan.

The chair of the children and young person scrutiny committee commented that the plan was a strategic document. The committee had subsequently held spotlight review into obesity in children and dental decay. As a result of this the chair, the NHS, public health and HealthWatch would be attending a meeting with MPs to look at dental decay issues faced by Herefordshire in terms of its rural nature. The possibility of a mobile dental service for rural areas was also being considered as a possibility. The children and young person scrutiny committee would also be undertaking a number of spotlight reviews, one of which would be peer on peer sexual abuse.

Group leaders were invited to express the views of their group. There was support for the plan and the hard work of the officers, partners and previous cabinet member were appreciated. The plan was a work in progress and the challenge would be to make this a county plan which was delivered in a realistic way.

The relatively high number of looked after children were commented on and the director for children and families confirmed that this continued to be an area of focus. There had been a number of children and young people's reviews and a number of cases would be going to court for a decision on whether they should be in family based arrangement rather than continue as looked after children. It was stressed that any decision would be in the best interest of the children or young people concerned.

That:

- (a) the draft Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2024 at appendix A be recommended to Council for approval.**

72. END OF 2018/19 CORPORATE BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The cabinet member for corporate services and finance presented the report and highlighted the following:

- It was a comprehensive report and appendices.
- The old administration were thanked for overseeing the corporate plan.
- There had been an overall underspend of £600k and these monies had been placed in general reserves.
- The savings had been delivered but not necessarily in the areas identified
- Departmental savings needed to be realistic.
- Treasury management had underspent by £2m and this underspend had been revised in year. This area was instrumental in balancing the directorates over and under spends.
- Adults and communities had made excellent progress.
- It was gratifying to see the increase in use of Wellbeing Information and Signposting for Herefordshire (WISH) by 19%
- Home First had been rated Good by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). This was a key service in relation to hospital discharges and care in the home.
- The children and families pressures continued primarily to be in relation to LAC.

In discussion of the report, the cabinet members commented:

- It was important to note the delivery of the savings in the adult and wellbeing directorate budget for the last finance year. Some areas had not delivered their savings due to policy changes but that other areas had over delivered.
- The issue of the recruitment and potentially retention of social workers may now need to be revisited via a task and finish group. The director of children and families reported that retention of children's social workers was not an issue due to work in the past year in developing career pathways and increasing business support and management. Market forces supplements had also been implemented. The directorate were also starting to roll out software which enabled voice recording for visit notes which reduced the social workers typing time. Recruitment of children's social workers was the issue. The directorate would expect some turnover but that work with regional colleagues and individual recruitment agencies was being undertaken to look at this issue. The key issue was the geography and location of Herefordshire.
- Whether the report could be made more readable, especially by children and young people.

Group leaders were invited to express the views of their groups which were as follows:

- The previous Cabinet had selected the red route for the bypass which was concerning for those residents whose properties were now blighted. The cabinet member for infrastructure and transport indicated that until any alternative arrangements were considered, if there were residents who had concerns they should contact the council.
- There was little detail in appendix 5 of the report to show how the debt write offs had been chased. It would be helpful for more clarification to be provided as to individual write offs and the processes used. This area may be of interest to the relevant scrutiny committee.
- With regard to appendix c (capital expenditure), it was surprising to see that the financial costs were higher by £1m. The chief finance officer provided clarification that it was a matter of interpretation as this was an indicator of affordability. It was amount of theoretical borrowing and not actual borrowing.

- It was pleasing to see there was an underspend and it was a testimony to the way the finances had been managed.
- Herefordshire should be proud of the savings made, especially in adults.
- It was encouraging to see that educational attainment is being maintained.
- It was noted that in paragraph 33 of the report, there continued to be a problem with regard to referrals to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and would recommend that this area came under greater scrutiny.

That:

- (a) Performance and financial outturn for 2018/19, including debt write off, as set out in appendices A, B, D and F were reviewed and no additional outcomes were identified;
- (b) the treasury management outturn report at appendix C be recommended to Council for approval; and
- (c) delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director People and Performance to produce and publish the final year end performance report

The meeting ended at 15:07

Chairman

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 25 June 2019**Question 1****Mr R Palgrave, How Caple****To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport**

At Cabinet on 31 Jan 2019, the response to public question number 3 was that expenditure on the SWTP in the year ending March 2019 would deliver among other things, "Completion of the full business case for the South Wye Transport Package for submission and sign off to Department for Transport". In the light of this commitment to complete the business case last financial year, can you explain why an Officer Decision on 4 June to spend a further £283k on the SWTP was described as being necessary to "continue to develop the business case and progress the South Wye Transport Package, including appraisal of options"?

Response

The response provided to the question asked on 31 January 2019 assumed completion of the business case for submission by end of that financial year, against forecast expenditure. Actual expenditure was lower than forecast and the officer decision authorises the expenditure in the current financial year – it did not authorise additional expenditure. The decision taken on 4 June 2019 set out funding for scheme activities in 2019/2020 to end of June which included finalising the business case to a revised programme and consideration of options for the SWTP as the new administration had not at that time made a decision on the status of the SWTP. I anticipate some further expenditure on ground works necessary to preserve planning consent whilst consideration is given to future actions by the new administration. Those options would be to continue with progression of the scheme, pause and review the scheme, or cancel it.

Supplementary Question

I understand that the options for the South Wye Transport Package (SWTP) are now to progress the scheme, to pause and review the scheme or to cancel the scheme. If the scheme is paused or cancelled, when the active travel measures in the SWTP be progressed and is the original funding allocation of £8m confirmed by Councillor Price at the November 2017 Cabinet meeting secured whether or not the southern link road goes ahead?

Answer

First of all, the £8m figure for active travel measures was an incorrect statement by Councillor Price, previous cabinet member. So we agreed as an authority on this particular scheme to spend £5m on active travel measures. Now whether the scheme is paused, reviewed, cancelled or progressed as it is, this administration is fully committed to the active travel measure elements of that scheme and will continue them in some shape or form.

Question 2**Ms K Sharp, Hereford****To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport**

The Department for Transport granted £5.1million to Herefordshire Council in November 2018 to improve the County's very poor, and sometimes downright dangerous, road surfaces. How then can an officer of the Council just 3 months later decide to allocate up to £1million of revenue funding from the Local Transport Plan 'End to End Network Improvement service' of public realm annual plan 2018/19 to the capital South Wye Transport Package project?

Response

I understand that officers have not taken decisions to allocate £1m of revenue funding from the Local Transport to the South Wye Transport Project.

Two operational decisions taken by officers (on 14 May and 4 June) cumulatively allocated some £443k of Local Transport Plan funding to the South Wye Transport project. This is in accordance with the decision taken by the then cabinet member on 8 March which confirmed that in 2019/2020 spend in advance of a full business case being signed off by the Department for Transport would be funded from the Local Transport Plan budget.

These decisions will not lead to any reduction in highways maintenance work already planned for this financial year.

Councillors' questions at Cabinet – 25 June 2019

Question 1

Councillor Nigel Shaw, Bromyard Bringsty Ward

To: cabinet member, finance and corporate services

Can the appropriate Cabinet Member provide a table of business rates and council tax charged by year for the last (say) 10 years?

Response

Yes. I have asked officers to liaise with you to clarify the information that you require given the wide range of variables that exist – for example whether you are seeking information about rates and taxes levied, or collected.

Question 2

Councillor Carole Gandy, Mortimer Ward

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

What plans does the portfolio holder for environment, economy and skills as part of the new administration have to increase the employment opportunities for the people of Herefordshire by encouraging companies providing skilled, well paid jobs to relocate to Herefordshire and thus raise the average wage of Herefordshire workers, which currently lags behind both our near neighbours and well behind the National average.

Response

The average weekly wage within Herefordshire is significantly below the national average (circa 20%). In order to enable the development of the economy, and attract higher value employers, we need to ensure that we have an appropriately skilled workforce, available employment land supported by appropriate infrastructure, and the provision of advice and guidance to business.

The council is supporting the growth of higher education provision to enable the development of a highly skilled workforce. Supporting the development of Hereford College of Arts and the New Model in Technology and Engineering Higher Education Institutes is a significant opportunity to transform our economy, attracting business investment. NMiTE is being developed to attract the national shortage of engineers. We have recently approved the development of the first student accommodation in Hereford, which will provide 178 bedrooms on station approach.

We are also continuing the development of key employment sites, such as the Hereford Enterprise Zone (Skylon Park), and developing the Ross on Wye Enterprise Park. At the Enterprise Zone a £9m Cyber Security Centre is currently being constructed through a Joint Venture with the University of Wolverhampton – creating a specialist facility to support the growth of higher value cyber security businesses and associated jobs. An incubation space

is also being constructed on the Enterprise Zone (the Shell Store), developing specialist facilities to support the development of new businesses.

We also continue to work closely with the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership to provide business support and guide the development of our economy. For example, the Growth Hub (funded through the LEP) provides business support services to businesses across the county. The council also operates grant schemes such as the European funded LEADER programme and the Marches Business Improvement Grant to enable businesses to grow.

In order to help support new and existing businesses to improve their environmental performance, reduce their costs and increase their competitiveness we also offer a range of environmental business support schemes. Some examples of these include:

- The Business Energy Efficiency Scheme - offering free energy efficiency audits and capital grants of up to 50% towards energy efficiency and carbon reduction projects.
- We have recently secured £1.3m of European funding to offer 50% capital grants for renewable energy projects which will help local businesses to reduce costs by generating their own low carbon energy.
- Through our 'Destination Hereford' programme we offer a broad range of sustainable transport support to businesses including, free cycle parking, business travel grants, travel planning support and offering cycle loans and free public transport travel for jobseekers and apprentices to help them access employment.
- The 'Business Futures Forum' is Herefordshire's environmental business support network which supports local businesses to collaborate, share best practice and drive efficiencies.

Supplementary question

I thank the portfolio holder for her response and note that they appear in the main to be concentrated on initiatives relating to Hereford City, initiatives that were well advanced under the previous administration. I also note that it is stated that new businesses coming into the City would be dependent on the appropriate infrastructure being in place. I wait to see what that Infrastructure will be.

However my question was more about what the new administration's plans were to tempt businesses to relocate from other towns and cities into Herefordshire ie selling our County as a place to do business and I do not believe that question has been answered.

Many in the rural areas living outside of the City and market towns have little or no access to public transport and as they make up over 40% of our population cannot be ignored. How will cycling and public transport initiatives benefit such a large proportion of our population, especially as the new administration appears to wish to discourage the use of the car to access the City and its immediate surrounding area where most of the more skilled jobs already in existence and going forward are likely to be based.

For your information to cycle from my ward to Rotherwas would take 2 hours and to walk 7 hours.

Answer

As you are aware the portfolios have only actually been finalised in the last week, so the degree of my new planning is so far fairly basic. We remain committed to getting businesses to relocate but I am also very keen that we do our best to provide opportunities for those who are already in the county to upskill and there will also be a focus on getting about. There are likely to be many changes and I agree that a normal bicycle would take a

long time. We hope there will be further uptake of electric bikes. We are aware with the climate emergency, there will be a lot of re-thinking of how we get about the county and in place like Herefordshire that will be a major challenge. It is an area we will be looking at as it will be of the top priorities.

