

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Thursday 19 December 2019 at 6.30 pm

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

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

Cabinet support members in attendance Councillors Peter Jinman and Alan Seldon

Group leaders in attendance Councillor Jonathan Lester

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance Councillor Jonathan Lester

Other councillors in attendance: Councillors Mike Jones and Nigel Shaw

Officers in attendance: Chief Executive, Director for economy and place, Director for Children and Families, Solicitor to the council, Chief finance officer and Director for adults and communities

110. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies from members of the cabinet.

111. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 interests were declared.

In respect of item 6, Councillors Marsh and Seldon stated that family members had previously used the Integrated Community Equipment Service.

112. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

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

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

114. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS (Pages 7 - 8)

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

115. RECOMMISSIONING COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT SERVICE

The cabinet member health and adult wellbeing introduced the report. The head of community commissioning and resources and senior commissioning officer attended for this item.

Those in attendance were reminded that the successful bidder would not be named until the procurement process had been completed.

In discussion of the report cabinet members noted that:

- Herefordshire had an older than average age profile and some growth had been built into the contract specification, the focus of the service would be on older people and trying to keep them independent and at home, although there were some younger people who would access the service;
- The service provided some equipment such as sensory reminders and medication reminders which could help people with dementia, it was expected that the technology would change in the coming years and that the service would need to respond to this;
- The budget allowed for some growth but would be robustly managed to ensure that users were re-abled rather than made dependent on equipment and that over-prescribing was avoided;
- There were a variety of different models in use across the country, Herefordshire was unusual in having a single service for all equipment needs rather than separate streams, this gave more opportunity for recycling of equipment and presented a fuller picture of need and expenditure;
- Engagement with prescribers would be key to delivery of the service and prescribers with high levels of failed deliveries would be followed up, efforts would also be made to improve return rates when equipment was no longer needed;
- The equipment was sourced from a range of suppliers and included local suppliers where possible, particularly for specialist items;
- A self-purchase portal would be available for those people who preferred to buy a new or customised item rather than have a recycled one, it would also be available to self-funders with help and advice to meet their own identified needs but no follow up support;
- Much of the complexity of the contract was in the way in which equipment was prescribed, there would be clinical input from an occupational therapist and input from a business manager to support prescribers and monitor spending and performance.

Group leaders were invited to express the views of their group. Improvements to the service were welcomed and it was felt that these would enhance the service and help to address delays in transfers of care. It was suggested that the weighting of environmental considerations in the procurement scoring should have been higher and that this might need to be reviewed for future procurement. The head of community commissioning explained that more questions had been included in the procurement this time, including the question on environmental considerations, and that the weighting on that question had not made a significant difference in the outcome.

It was agreed that:

(a) a five year contract for the delivery of the Integrated Community Equipment Service is awarded to Supplier A outlined in Appendix 1 at a total cost of no more than £9m over the lifetime of the contract.

116. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

The cabinet member housing, regulatory services, and community safety introduced the item. The programme director housing and growth and strategic housing manager attended for this item to respond to questions.

It was acknowledged that tackling homelessness and rough sleeping was a high priority for the council and that the strategy focussed on prevention and developing suitable accommodation.

In discussion of the proposed strategy cabinet members noted that:

- Services were available to migrants, some of whom were rough sleeping, and there was a need to review and develop the structure for delivery;

- Many housing associations nationally had taken a more risk adverse approach to rough sleepers as potential tenants and avoided letting to people on benefits, in Herefordshire the strategic housing forum had been relaunched and the council had identified the importance of outreach and navigation workers to help individuals to sustain tenancies;
- The council was working with Hope Scott House in Hereford to develop their provision for homeless persons and a capital investment would shortly provide an additional 5 self-contained apartments with office space alongside for use by support services, being self-contained the accommodation was available to both males and females;
- The council's enforcement teams worked to deal with poor quality rented accommodation, it had been noted that increased regulation and small margins were squeezing out smaller landlords and work was taking place with housing associations to ensure that private rental properties were offered;
- The council was considering developing its own properties, which might provide an opportunity to fill gaps in the types of accommodation available;
- The lack of accommodation which would accept pets had been raised by the voluntary and community sectors as a deterrent to some people coming forward for help;
- Further bids would be submitted for funds to support health improvement projects and work continued with health partners to provide access to services;
- The housing solutions team had an out of hours service with 24 hour helpline to support people in crisis, the team had contacts with private landlords and with the night shelter in St Peter's Square in Hereford;
- Connections had been made between council strategies to co-ordinate work, for example the prevention toolkit for the community hubs model would help to support vulnerable people within and through their local community;
- There were differing views as to whether members of the public should be discouraged from giving money to people begging on the streets with some organisations believing that it helped to sustain individuals' drug or alcohol habits or rough sleeping as a lifestyle, however care needed to be taken not to stigmatise all homeless people and the council had given feedback to those responsible for recent posters on street furniture in Hereford that it was not an appropriate message.

Group leaders were invited to express the views of their group. It was suggested that reporting should use figures as up to date as possible, perhaps quarterly, to assess trends and check the effectiveness of the strategy. It was also suggested that the strategy should be titled for the prevention of rough sleeping.

Following consideration of the points raised:

Councillor Davies proposed and Councillor Harrington seconded that the strategy should be amended to make more specific reference to services for migrants.

Councillor Marsh proposed and Councillor Norman seconded that the title of the strategy should be amended to stress the prevention element and that the strategy should include reference to pets.

The above amendments having been accepted it was agreed that:

- (a) the Strategy for the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping at appendix 1 be approved, with the additional inclusion of reference to migrants and pets.**

The meeting ended at 7.36 pm

Chairperson

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 19 December**Question 1****Ms H Boughton, Llangarron****To: cabinet member, health and adult wellbeing**

I ask for reassurance from Herefordshire Council that they will follow the example of other UK councils, such as Totnes and Frome, and insist on a complete halt or a moratorium on the rollout of highly dangerous 5G technology because it has not been proved to be safe from a public health perspective. In fact the frequency band in which 5G operates is used as a weapons system (Active Denial System) by the US military. I believe that the council are unable to obtain liability insurance for damage claims relating to electromagnetic radiation exposure. Please see the objecting comments on BT's 5G planning application P193967/F for more details on this subject. Please can the council confirm that they will not be subjecting residents to highly dangerous 5G millimetre wave radiation?

Response

The role of councils in the deployment of 5G will be limited. The mobile providers will make their own decisions over deployment timescales and locations and often no planning permission will be required due to the existing national legislation of permitted development. The council is also aware of public concerns over potential health impacts of 5G, and will work with organisations such as Public Health England to understand and disseminate relevant information. It is possible that there may be a small increase in overall exposure to radio waves when 5G is added to an existing network or in a new area. However, the overall exposure is expected to remain low relative to guidelines and, as such, there should be no consequences for public health.

Public Health England is committed to monitoring the evidence applicable to this and other radio technologies, and to revising its advice, should that be necessary.

The full details are here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/5g-technologies-radio-waves-and-health/5g-technologies-radio-waves-and-health>

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 19 December**Question 1****Councillor Bernard Hunt, Newton Farm Ward****To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport**

Given recent traffic incidents and the continuing increase in traffic fume pollution through Hereford City, can the cabinet tell us when they will be announcing positive policies regarding the County's road infrastructure?

Response

Thank you for your question. Tackling traffic congestion and air quality in Hereford is a priority for me and, together with Highways England who manage the A49, I am actively exploring ways of keeping the county moving. Following my decision in October to review the Hereford bypass and southern link road schemes, the scope of this review has been developed and I anticipate confirming this in a formal decision which will be published next month. This will determine the next steps to be undertaken and a timescale for this work. The review will look at other options including an eastern link / river crossing, removal of traffic signals and emergency incident response arrangements to remove blockages on the city's roads, an electric bus fleet for the urban bus network, a very light rail system and further improvements to cycle and pedestrian provision across the city including safer routes to schools. Meanwhile, I am also progressing an ambitious programme of other improvements to deliver public realm and active travel schemes in Hereford. This includes the provision of a high quality transport hub at the train station, public realm improvements on Commercial Road, Blueschool & Newmarket Street, improvements to the public realm in the High Town area and south wye area. The draft budget for next year allocates funding to progress this work.

Question 2**Councillor Nigel Shaw, Bromyard Bringsty Ward****To: leader of the council**

The new, alternative, proposal presented by Cllr. Harrington to the LEP in place of the approved SWTP funding project was rejected by Marches LEP by 8 votes to 1 at their emergency board meeting in November. The proposal however remained "confidential" and has been kept secret from councillors and the public ostensibly because of election purdah rules. Now that the election is over will the Leader, in the spirit of openness and transparency, order the immediate publishing of this document so that we can all examine the alternative proposals that his administration have prepared in secret, without any consultation, and not just the cabal of officers, councillors and LEP board members who were privy to the LEP meeting?

Response

The proposal in relation to SWTP was recommended in a report presented by the LEP Executive not Cllr Harrington. However, I agree that it is important for this paper to be made public and I understand that the LEP will shortly be publishing the paper on their website now that purdah has ended.

Supplementary Question

I thank the Leader for his answer and in re-reading the LEP minutes I note that he stepped out of the meeting while the report was discussed by Richard Ball and Mairead Lane in the presence of Councillor Harrington and again when the decision to reject the proposals was made,

APPENDIX 2

Councillor Harrington curiously substituting for him only during these key moments of the meeting. If the report is a LEP executive report as the Leader states, then the issue of keeping the matter secret during purdah concerns me. The LEP is now a limited company and purdah rules do not apply to such entities. I believe that there is a public interest in transparency about this issue. When and where has the authority recorded its consideration of the public interest in not disclosing this information to provide a full picture? If the suggestion of purdah is a ruse to keep the report secret then I suggest that this is wrong and that the public interest matter is considered urgently by the monitoring officer with a view to ordering immediate publication by close of business tomorrow.

Councillor Harrington gave a solemn undertaking, publicised in this authority's press release of 23 October to provide a decision in respect of the SLR and bypass by the end of this year. I am very concerned that we are still waiting for any indication. Has the Leader warned Cllr Harrington that to renege on his promise to publish his decision would be very naughty, and might see him in receipt of only one lump of fossil fuel for Christmas? Seriously, before the LEP meet on 27 January with a recommendation to cancel the funding agreement, will he publish?

Response to supplementary question

I think you are probably only allowed one question but it's close to Christmas so we will let you off today. Your question about whether purdah applies or not, we will take up with the LEP as it was their decision. I think it is a fair comment from you so we will take that up. For the other, I will ask Cllr Harrington to respond.

Cllr Harrington

We will issue a decision on the scoping document just after the New Year.

Question 3

Councillor Bob Matthews, Credenhill Ward

To: leader of the council

The Cabinet Agenda is circulated on a Thursday, a full week before the meeting is due to be held, but the deadline for written questions is 5 PM the following day which gives Members very little time to prepare their questions and submit them to Councillor Services before the deadline expires.

I ask that the deadline be extended until 5PM the following Monday, still giving three clear days before the Cabinet meeting is due to be held. It is after all only democratic that councillors are given the opportunity to hold the administration to account.

Response

The council is committed to open and accountable local decision making and does encourage members of the council and public to engage in local decision making by utilising their right to ask questions at our public committees. In addition to written public and member questions, supplementary questions are also permitted at our public committees. The rules that govern our public and member questions processes are set out in the council's constitution and the timescales are outlined in the cabinet rules.

I will ask the audit and governance committee to consider this.