

Supplement to the agenda for

Cabinet

Thursday 23 February 2023

5.30 pm

**Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4
0LE**

	Pages
4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC	3 - 6
5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS	7 - 8

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 23 February 2023

Question 1

Mr P McKay, Leominster

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

May I please have an update on progress re adding a link on the PROW website to increase the visibility and availability of the Public Rights of Way Glossary of Terms that includes CRF, reference reply to question of 27 October?

Response

Thank you for reminding me that I had promised that the “Public Rights of Way Glossary of Terms” would be published on the Council’s website, please accept my apologies for the team’s oversight in progressing this matter. I can now confirm that a link to the document has been embedded on the page here: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/public-rights-way/definitive-map-statement-dms/3>.

Question 2

Kate Shepherd, Bright Sparks Nursery, Hereford

To: cabinet member, commissioning, procurement and assets

Since 1979 Bright Sparks have been providing Early Years education & in July 2022 we retained our ‘Outstanding’ OFSTED grade, providing the best possible start in life for those that attend, a key message in the council’s children & young people’s plan for Herefordshire. When Beacon College plans were publicised we were not consulted prior to this & again we have not been! Therefore we feel we are being victimized & council bodies have not given any due regard in their decision making to all those concerned. A key consideration in the report is to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet parental demand, I would like to point out, it is also their statutory duty to ensure sufficient childcare places.

What is the council's plan to make sure Bright Sparks is not adversely affected by council decisions again?

Response

Thank you for your question and a huge congratulations on the success with Bright Sparks Nursery. I am so sorry that you have felt excluded from the process and the upset that this has caused. The project is currently at feasibility stage and the purpose of the feasibility was to determine if the suggested capacity increase could be realised on the site. We also required an indicative concept as to what the expansion may look like and some high-level costs. This is not the developed and detailed design stage in which consultation will be undertaken with key stakeholders, including Bright Sparks Nursery. The results of the feasibility are being presented to us as a Cabinet to consider whether we agree that the project moves to this next stage.

I am sincerely sorry for the lack of consultation with the Beacon College, I was not part of this but can absolutely understand how this would have impacted on you, the nursery and the children and families. Please take my assurance that we will work with you as this expansion progresses.

Question 3

Mr J Shepherd, Hereford

To: cabinet member, commissioning, procurement and assets

Within the plans of the building that is hoped to be built for the expansion of Aylestone, what is going to happen to the current accommodation that the 'Outstanding' Bright Sparks Nursery currently use on site?

Response

Many thanks for your question. I can confirm that the intention is that Bright Sparks Nursery will remain in situ. Please refer to my answer to Kate Shepherd's question for further detail, if required.

Question 4

Ms H James, Hereford

To: cabinet member, commissioning, procurement and assets

With regard to 'Outstanding' Bright Sparks on site, are they within your future plans of the Aylestone expansion so they can continue to support the council with providing early years places?

Response

Many thanks for your question. I can confirm that the intention is that Bright Sparks Nursery will remain in situ. Please refer to my answer to Kate Shepherd's question for further detail, if required.

Question 5

Ms Reid, Hereford

To: cabinet member, children and families.

Two recommendations by the CYP Scrutiny Committee regarding the Improvement Plan agreed by the Cabinet (15/12/2022) have not been enacted.

Recommendation 2 includes:

“Family Group Conference model be targeted for implementation by April 2023.”

However, the Plan submitted to Ofsted states (5.7):

“Determine FGC model and approach by April 2023.”

Recommendation 3 includes:

“Request made for links to the Family Rights Group website and information pages be added to the Council's website in January 2023.”

However, at 20 February 2023, the website does not appear accordingly updated.

FGCs and such information would reduce the number/cost of children in care. Per FOI2022/01890: fostering agencies on average cost per child: £890 weekly (£46,280 pa). Also, family support, family advocacy and family reunification would reduce the number of Looked-After Children.

What will the Cabinet do to ensure that its decisions are timely implemented?

Response

Ensuring that families receive the right support at the right time and that where possible reunification is enabled and supported is an important element of our transformation activity and introducing Family Group Conferencing is a key part of this. The Director has made this an element of the services' practice model and of course it is clear within our Improvement Plan. Additional capacity is being planned for and new posts are currently out for recruitment. Draft changes to our website are currently being tested and are expected to be live by 1 March 2023.

Implementation, progress, and impact of the improvement plan are overseen by the Improvement Board (of which I am a member), and the Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet through regular assurance meetings.

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 23 FEBURARY 2023**Question 1****From: Councillor Ann-Marie Probert, Newton Farm ward****To: Cabinet Member, commissioning, procurement and assets**

Ref the expansion plan for Aylestone School - do these plans include bright sparks nursery?

Response

Thank you for your question. This particular expansion relates to Aylestone School itself and not any other occupiers of this site. Herefordshire Council are expanding the school in light of the growing need for secondary school spaces in the north of the city. Bright Sparks Nursery occupies a space on the wider site of Aylestone School and it is intended that they will remain on site and continue to provide an onsite early years provision.

Question 2**From: Councillor Nigel Shaw, Bromyard Bringsty ward****To: Cabinet Member, Finance, Corporate Services and Planning**

The third quarter revenue report shows an out of control budget deficit rising to £9.147m. Appreciating that there will be some positive balances that crystallise at the year end e.g. for employment costs, nevertheless there is likely to be an appreciable budget deficit at the end of the year. The budget recently passed was silent on this. Which reserve will this year's deficit have to draw on to provide a balanced outcome for 2022/23?

Response

The position reported at Quarter 3 represents the forecast budget outturn based on information available at 31 December 2022. In the remaining months of the 2022/23 financial year, Directorates will continue to identify recovery actions including reducing any discretionary spend where they can and making best planned use of any grant funding as part of financial management in the final quarter of the year to mitigate this forecast overspend.

The 2023/24 budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 to 2026/27, approved by Council on 10 February 2023, included proposals to fund the forecast overspend in 2022/23 from the council's Financial Resilience Reserve. This reserve was established to manage risks in the base budget, for example from unexpected demand which would include movements in forecast for the remaining months of the current financial year. This reserve will also fund the two year transformation programme the council has embarked on to improve the journey of the children in our care and services to the local community in line with the corporate plan. Any further use of reserves will be determined once the final outturn for 2022/23 is confirmed as part of routine year end procedures to report financial performance and prepare the statutory accounts.

