

**MINUTES of the meeting of CABINET held at THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD on Thursday, 2 October 2008 at 2.00 p.m.**

**Present:** Councillor RJ Phillips (Chairman)  
Councillor (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: LO Barnett, AJM Blackshaw, H Bramer, JP French,  
PD Price and DB Wilcox

**In attendance:** Councillors WLS Bowen, ACR Chappell, PJ Edwards and TM James

**46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cabinet Members Councillors: JA Hyde and JG Jarvis.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillors: RI Matthews, Independent Group Leader and SJ Robertson, Chairman, Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

**47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**48. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**49. HEREFORDSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES**

Cabinet considered a report which gave details of progress made regarding the development of public services in Herefordshire; and to approve the revised Terms of Reference for the Herefordshire Public Services Steering Group.

The Chief Executive informed Cabinet that the report gave the progress against the Development Plan together with revised Terms of Reference for the HPS Steering Group.

The Cabinet Member Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources was of the view that the report recorded a really good achievement to date. It quantified what was currently in progress and priority activity over the coming months for inclusion in the next report. The report was also an indication of the involvement and integration of Members, the community and local areas and that this was important and should be recognised. The Chief Executive informed Cabinet that those points would be taken forward. Also that the future needs to talk of benefits that the Trust will give to the Community.

The Chairman for Strategic Monitoring Committee welcomed the progress made

against the development plan but emphasised the need for progress to be timed and dated.

**RESOLVED: That**

- (a) progress made against the agreed development plan be noted;
- (b) the revised Terms of Reference for the Herefordshire Public Services Steering Group be approved; and
- (c) further progress be reported to Cabinet bi-monthly.

**50. INTEGRATED CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR APRIL TO JULY 2008**

The Cabinet considered a report on the Council's performance for the first four months of 2008-09 against the Corporate Plan 2008-11 and national performance indicators used externally to measure the Council's performance, taking account of the separate but complementary financial performance report, the updated Council risk register and progress against the action plans produced following the Crookall review.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources expressed thanks to the officers for the improved and new style approach of the report. In some cases, Cabinet Members would need to meet relevant Directors to discuss issues identified in the report.

The Corporate Policy and Research Manager stated that the report had been further simplified and improved in response to feedback from Joint Management Team, Cabinet and Strategic Monitoring Committee. In particular, it was now structured to show performance against each of the themes in the new Corporate Plan, with the covering report highlighting performance against the Council's priorities. In doing so, it took account of the updated risk register, which was appended to the report, and the complementary budget monitoring report, which would be considered in its own right later in the agenda. The report also set out progress against the action plans put in place in the light of the Crookall report. The next report, in November, would give performance up to the end of September.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation questioned whether it was appropriate to mark indicators as red where no activity has been reported. He also drew attention to page 45, where the out-turn figure in respect of the number people slightly injured in road accidents was incorrect the figure having been previously been reported at Environment Scrutiny Committee.

The Corporate Policy and Research Manager explained that it was a clearly laid down duty of named postholders to ensure that submitted data were correct and, where there was, for good reason, no performance against target to report, to submit an account of progress with the action being taken that should enable the target to be achieved. Most officers complied fully with these requirements but he would reinforce with officers the crucial importance of data accuracy. Members were assured that information and data are looked at critically when they are submitted so that, if there is an apparent nonsense, this is clarified with the originator. Other Members reinforced the importance of indicators being marked red if officers had failed to submit the required information.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation suggested that, where no data or other information was due to be reported, this should be stated, together with the date when it would be due. The Member also questioned why the Young People's Participation in Positive Activities Indicator on page 22 of the report, in respect of which the latest out-turn was recorded as 'No data', was rated green rather than red.

The Corporate Policy and Research Manager informed Members that in that instance, green was correct because the only possible measure of progress would be in the results of the annual Tellus survey. This had been conducted, with the results expected to be available for the next report. In relation to a question raised on out-turn to date in relation to the red indicator for Youth Work on page 23 of the report, the figures were very low for the first four months of the year but action was in hand to fill staff vacancies so as to improve performance.

**RESOLVED: That Cabinet**

- (i) **Notes the performance to the end of July 2008 and the measures being taken, where necessary, to improve it;**
- (ii) **in particular notes progress in implementing the action plans produced following the Crookall review; and**
- (iii) **agrees that future reports be made quarterly, namely in relation to performance at the end of September, December, March and June.**

**51. COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT - JOINT INSPECTORATE PROPOSALS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR HEREFORDSHIRE'S PREPARATIONS**

The Cabinet considered a report which detailed proposals for the new system of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and sought agreement to how Herefordshire's preparations should be taken forward.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources emphasised the importance of the CAA inspection as the key external judgement on the Council and its partners in future years. A series of CAA preparation seminars for Members, non-executives and officers of the Council, the PCT and partner organisations had been launched and the objectives of the seminars were set out in the report.

The Corporate Policy and Research Manager informed Cabinet that the latest proposed arrangements for CAA had taken account of the views submitted by local authorities and other organisations on the original proposals, to the extent that they now appeared less complex and onerous to operate. Above all, the latest proposals should enable the Council and its partners to concentrate on what really mattered understanding the needs and aspirations of people in the county and responding to them better, with value for money services that would improve people's life chances and quality of life.

The Labour Group Leader agreed that the Council needs to be proactive and not reactive with a view to making sure we are in a position for the new system of inspection. The Member stressed, in particular, the importance of public understanding and involvement and of the Council communicating to people the

value of the independent review of the Council's performance.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources agreed that there was a need to involve communities and that Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings needed to be addressed as it was felt by Members that they leaned more towards the police and away from the Council. It was added that it had been sometime since the Member seminar on PACTS had been held, but as yet no changes had been brought about. It was emphasised that communities must be kept informed and involved.

**RESOLVED: That**

- (i) the development and re-launching of the CAA preparation programme so that all energies are focused on the delivery of the improvement programmes of the Council with the Primary Care Trust and the wider Herefordshire Partnership, tested against the proposed CAA key questions and lines of enquiry be agreed;**
- (ii) this be buttressed by a rolling programme of self-evaluations against the key questions for the area assessment and the key lines of enquiry for the Council's organisational assessment, updated quarterly, the first cut of which to be produced by November and finalised before the end of December;**
- (iii) the Council's response to the inspectorates' proposals be developed and submitted within the County Councils' Network; and**
- (iv) the final report on the out-going CAA preparation programme be noted.**

**52. BUDGET MONITORING 2008/09**

The Cabinet considered a report on the Council's performance against revenue and capital budgets as at 31 August 2008 and provided an indication of the estimated outturn for the 2008/09 financial year.

The Cabinet Member for Resources informed Cabinet that the basis for the current forecast was sound and reliable. The key message was that the Council's financial policy that Directors must manage service delivery within or below the approved budget remains in force and that it was expected that the projected expenditure levels would show improvement at the next meeting. Financial pressures were being experienced and as cash resources become tighter the Council needs to focus on making sure the needs of the community were met within the financial constraints.

The Head of Financial Services informed Cabinet that the report covered the first five months of the financial year. With a net projected overspend as detailed in the report, the message must be that position has to improve. The impact of the projected overspend at the year end would reduce the revenue reserves position and this was shown in paragraph 5 of the report. The further allocation of central government funding for the 2007 floods from the Restoration Fund, paragraph 7 of the report refers, would be used to offset budget pressures in the highways service.

The Adult Social Care Directorate projected overspend was based on the assumption that the result of the ongoing review of eligibility criteria for continuing health care, future funding for some clients would come the Primary Care Trust

(PCT), paragraph 9 of the report refers.

The Children and Young People's Directorate was showing a net projected overspend and that the pressure could rise in respect of the estimated external residential places needed throughout the remainder of the financial year.

The Deputy Chief Executive's Directorate projected overspend was due to the reduction in local land charges income and uncertainty in the costs relating to the Coroner's Service, paragraph 30 of the report refers. It was pleasing to report that Information Communications Technology was operating to a balanced budget.

The Environment and Culture Directorate was showing a projected overspend after being assisted by funds from the Restoration Fund. The pressures on the budget will be from highway maintenance resulting from winter conditions, the loss of car parking income and a job evaluation issue, paragraph 47 of the report refers.

The Regeneration Directorate was showing a net overspend based on income to date and anticipated income.

The Resources Directorate was on budget although managing some significant pressures as identified in the report

The Vice-Chairman of Strategic Monitoring Committee asked when the PCT would give an answer on the review of cases against the continuing health care criteria. The Chief Executive stated that if people are eligible for continuing health care, the PCT will pay for it.

Responding to a query on Modernisation Plans funds held in Earmarked Reserves, the Chief Executive reminded Members that this fund was a contribution from the PCT which had been matched by the Council, towards the expenditure on the development of closer integrated working arrangements between the Council and the PCT.

The Vice-Chairman of Strategic Monitoring Committee referred to central government's Restoration Fund allocation for the 2007 floods and queried if this met the full cost of the expenditure.

In response to a query from a member in attendance, the Head of Financial Services informed Cabinet that the Bellwin Threshold fund in the Earmarked Reserves was a reserve against future Bellwin claims. The previous years Bellwin claim has been resolved and there a new claim was being put forward. The Bellwin Threshold fund in the Earmarked Reserves is for this financial year.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources referred Cabinet to page 142, paragraph 47 of the agenda regarding HALO job evaluation. The Cabinet Member stated she was concerned as she believed it had been agreed that job evaluation would be dealt with as a corporate issue. The Chief Executive confirmed that any job evaluation issues would be looked at and dealt with in line with the agreed policy.

The Head of Financial Services referred to the capital programme budget monitoring (Appendix B refers) and emphasised that there was evidence of slippage as in previous years but that efforts would be made to alleviate that problem. The Prudential borrowing total referred to in paragraph 9 of Appendix B included a loan of £5 million recently taken in line with the Council's borrowing strategy because attractive interest rates were available.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation made reference to the Ross flood alleviation scheme and whether central government would be covering the total cost. The Head of Financial Services stated that his understanding was that the over spend would be covered by additional grant funding from the government.

With regard to several queries raised by Members in attendance, the Head of Financial Services stated that he would inform those Members and Cabinet Members of the total cost of borrowing £1 million and provide details of the Council's borrowing position compared to other local authorities.

**RESOLVED: that**

- (a) the forecast outturn for 2008/09 agreed with Directors based on service and financial performance outlined in this report be noted;**
- (b) the continuing efforts of all Directors to ensure service targets are met within the approved budget be endorsed; and**
- (c) an improved forecast of outturn for the 2008/09 financial year be reflected in the next financial monitoring report.**

The meeting ended at 3.03 p.m.

**CHAIRMAN**