

MINUTES of the meeting of CABINET held at THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD on Thursday 19 March 2009 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor JP French (Chairman)

Councillors: LO Barnett, AJM Blackshaw, JA Hyde, JG Jarvis, PD Price and DB Wilcox

In attendance: Councillors PA Andrews, PJ Edwards, TM James, WLS Bowen and JE Pemberton

95. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council and H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources.

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

96. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

97. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to a typographical amendment made on the Strategic Monitoring Review of ICT Services Report.

98. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SCORES AND DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

The Chief Executive introduced the report to Cabinet on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and Direction of Travel assessment of the Council published by the Audit Commission on 5 March. He advised Cabinet that the authority was improving well, compared to adequately the previous year, with the capacity to improve even further over the next year. He added that there had been some positive movement across most of the priority areas. The fall in the Culture score from 3* to 2* was largely a result of there having been fewer visits to libraries.

The Corporate Policy and Research Manager explained that as from the 1 April 2009 the CPA would be replaced by the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), so that this was the last time the assessments would be in this form. CAA would look more widely at what the Council and its partners were achieving together for the people of Herefordshire. He added that overall the picture for the last year of CPA was one of improvement and referred Cabinet to the scores on page 10 of the report, where it was noted that although the score was 2* it was a far stronger 2* than before and probably not far from a 3*. He highlighted that the use of resources score had

returned to a 3 and the score for Benefits had moved to the highest score of 4. He referred Cabinet to the Audit Commission's explanation regarding the 2008 Direction of Travel on page 10 of the report, drawing particular attention to the importance of the further work in hand to achieve value for money across the Council and to the favourable comments on the effective remedial action that had been taken in response to the internal control issues that had been identified in ICT in 2007.

Both Cabinet and Group Leaders praised officers for the hard work that had led to these improved assessments. With reference to libraries the Cabinet Member Community Services stated that there was a strong user group working with the library service and that work was being carried out to generate more use of the service by young people, as well as substantial additional investment to improve library provision. There was some discussion around the benefits service score. Although commendably high score, there was some concern that it was one of the easiest areas to slip back on the score, particularly with the potential increased pressure that could be put on the service in the current recession. The Director of Resources appreciated the concerns raised but said that the service was already coping well with the additional demand of recent months and was well-placed to deal with additional demand in the future. He added that this had been discussed with the Acting Cabinet Member Resources and the Leader to ensure that the maximum benefits were available for people and to target those most in need of help.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

99. LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT REFRESH

The Acting Herefordshire Partnership Manager presented the report on the Local Area Agreement Refresh stating that some of the targets had been deferred at the time of the original submission and the refresh gave the authority the opportunity to finalise these targets and also to revise targets which may have been adversely affected by the economic downturn. Cabinet was reminded that at the time the report was printed information on three of the national indicators was outstanding. With regard to indicator NI110 – positive activities for young people – Cabinet was advised that only three schools and one PRU had responded with information making the baseline information unreliable. Following discussions with the Director of Children's Services, it had been agreed to move this indicator in with other local indicators, thus taking it out of scope for the reward grant calculations. With regard to NI17 – perception of anti social behaviour – Cabinet was advised that at the time of the original submission there was a low rate of crime in Herefordshire, but a high fear of crime and anti social behaviour (27%). The Place Survey results have brought this down to 12% and because of this it was felt there was a need to change to indicator NI21, which related to people's perception on how West Mercia Constabulary and Herefordshire Council dealt with crime and anti social behaviour issues. With regard to indicator NI171 – New Business Rate – Cabinet was advised that a decision on this indicator was still awaited.

The Chairman of the Strategic Monitoring Committee referred Cabinet to pages 14 and 15 of the report and stated that he felt that elected Members should be included in the refresh programme. He also referred officers to potential partnership working that could be carried out with a well-known supermarket in relation to activities provided for children in the school holidays.

The Vice-Chairman of the Strategic Monitoring Committee referred to the issue of the fear of crime and its effect on a local area. In referring to indicator NI19-126 he questioned whether this referred to the number of re-offenders or the number of offences and felt that some clarity was required. The Chairman agreed and requested the Acting Herefordshire Partnership Manager write to those attending

Cabinet to clarify the matter.

Cabinet noted that targets were measured on the perception people had of crime and it was added that the authority needed to be careful on how this was addressed, as perception could vary. Cabinet went on to discuss issues relating to public perception and how the media portrayed this. It was added that there was a need to address issues to ensure that there was not a perception that the authority did not care.

RESOLVED: That approval of the Refreshed Local Area Agreement be delegated to the Chief Executive.

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12(A) of the Act as indicated below.

100. REVIEW OF COUNCIL OWNED LAND PROPOSED OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR THE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Cabinet received a confidential report on the Review of Council Owned Land Proposed Options Appraisal for the Provision of Affordable Housing.

Not for publication this item discloses information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

101. PROPOSED OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR PROVIDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT THE SITE KNOWN AS ELMHURST

Cabinet received a confidential report on the Proposed Options Appraisal for Providing Affordable Housing at the Site Known as Elmhurst.

Not for Publication, this item discloses information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm

CHAIRMAN