

MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday 18 April 2013 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor JG Jarvis (Chairman)

Councillors: H Bramer, RB Hamilton, AW Johnson, PM Morgan, RJ Phillips, GJ Powell and PD Price

In attendance: Councillors

Officers:

86. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence from Cabinet.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

5. Rising to the Challenge and Root and Branch Review Programme.
Councillor P Rone, Disclosable Pecuniary, Director of South Wye Regeneration Partnership.

88. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings held on 27 February and 14 March 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments.

Minutes 27 February 2013 – Minute No: 3

Assistant Director's comments, bullet point 7 be amended to read – *Cabinet was advised that Appendix C to the report outlines the draft community infrastructure preliminary charging schedule proposed for consultation.*

Cabinet comments, bullet point 7 be amended to read – *In referring to the Enterprise Zone and its importance it was emphasised there would also be enterprise hubs in the market towns and rural communities. It was important that everyone realised that Hereford City was not the only place driving the economy of the county.*

Minutes 14 March - Minute No: 85

The first paragraph be amended to read – *The Cabinet Members for Environment Housing & Planning and for Education and Infrastructure presented reports in respect of the urban village/link road compulsory purchase order, and the associated side roads order.*

89. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Cabinet Member Financial Management presented the Chief Officer Finance & Commercial report which covers the period to the end of February and includes revenue, capital and treasury management positions. The following points were made:

- The current position is £3.5m overspend, a slightly improved position on last month. However, should this continue the overspend will need to be funded from general fund balances.
- A key pressure area remains Adult Services where the delivery of the improvement plan is taking longer than estimated.
- It is anticipated that there will be spending of around £38m on capital schemes in 2012/13, which is largely financed by grants and contributions from central government in addition to capital receipts and the use of prudential borrowing.
- There is a projected underspend of £776k through delaying borrowing, capitalisation of interest and using short term arrangements with other local authorities.

During discussion the following points were made:

- Concern was raised over contingency funding and that it was not clearly defined in the report. Cabinet was informed that the summary table at Appendix A outlined contingency funding.
- In response to a query on projects using capital or revenue funding Cabinet was informed that capital schemes were not set up on revenue funding.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- a) the report and forecast position be noted;**
- b) the treasury management report at Appendix C to the report be noted.**

90. RISING TO THE CHALLENGE AND ROOT AND BRANCH REVIEW PROGRAMME

The Deputy Chief Executive presented his report on Rising to the Challenge and Root & Branch Review Programmes and advised of three aspects Cabinet needed to consider:

- Closure of the Rising to the Challenge programme;
- Progress on the implementation of the Root & Branch reviews; and
- Outstanding actions from the Root & Branch reviews and proposals for the Herefordshire 2020 review.

In discussion the following points were made:

- It was felt that communication was needed with grass roots employees for everyone to buy into the process.
- Concern was raised over discretionary spend.
- Need to ensure that all Members are aware of the issues.
- Cannot continue working as currently are with the possibility of 50% reduction in funding.
- Parish Councils are being informed of cuts. Members need to provide help and support to their Parish Councils. It was felt that Parish Councils were not aware of the urgency of the 2020 Review.
- Review taking place on discretionary spend in directorates.
- Need to agree care services that can be provided effectively and efficiently.

- Post 16 travel – moving towards full cost recovery, however, looking to minimise the costs to families as much as possible.
- In response to a question on the Local Enterprise Partnership / Hereford Enterprise Zone the Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning advised that an overall redesign and restructure was proposed and work on this was being carried out with colleagues using government funding and match funding.
- It was noted that the consultation on the proposed move to fortnightly waste collection had received an even spread of views from residents and negotiations to move to fortnightly collections were currently being carried out. If successful this would create a significant saving for the Council.
- In referring to the key point summary of the report concern was raised over the delivered savings of £21m. It was felt the Council was not delivering on the behavioural changes referred to at paragraph 10.6 of the report.
- Concerns were also raised over the transformation team and the potential risk in having the team as part of Hoople. Cabinet noted that transformational change of how to deliver services was difficult, but also a key area of work.
- Cabinet was reminded that the Council was in unprecedented times and all local authorities were having to deal with a similar financial situation. There needed to be a refocus to provide a smaller number of services well. This needed to be reflected to the public clearly as Herefordshire could face government cuts of up to 50% of funding. Proposals for the new smaller service provision would be clarified by the end of April and a timetable put together for the next three years.
- General Overview and Scrutiny recommendations, which were in agreement with the recommendations of the Cabinet report, were noted.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- a) the achievements and lessons learned from the Rising to the Challenge Programme as set out at Appendix 1 to the report be noted;**
- b) progress with the implementation of the Root & Branch Reviews as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be noted;**
- c) the relevant directors be authorised to jointly produce and implement delivery plans for the phase 2 and 3 reviews and report to Cabinet or Cabinet Member(s) as appropriate; and**
- d) it be agreed that the scope of the Herefordshire 2020 Review be extended to include all remaining work from the review programme as set out in paragraphs 10.8 to 10.14 of the report.**

91. DIGITAL STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services presented the report of the Assistant Director People, Policy and Partnership and reiterated the relevance and importance of the cost savings needed and noted the recommendations of the General Overview and Scrutiny Committee (GOSC).

In discussion the following comments were made:

- Important to use technology in the best way possible in the challenging financial situation as root and branch reviews were dependant on technology to make the savings.
- Worked being carried out on consolidating a number of systems with more to be done.
- Residents indicating that their communications with the Council were getting better.
- Looking at consolidation of accommodation and enabling staff to work more flexibly and efficiently.
- Looking at cheaper ways of storing information other than on a network.
- Need to consider moving to personal gateways where people can set up their own web page and access information on services and link with partner organisations to deliver services differently.
- It was requested that the budget for the digital strategy was ring fenced.
- It was also stated that the Council needed to ensure that those people without access to digital equipment did not feel excluded.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- a) the Digital Strategy 2013/18 be approved; and**
- b) the Commercial & Commissioning Board ensure that the principles with the strategy inform future commissioning arrangements.**

The meeting ended at 3.30 pm

CHAIRMAN