

MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday 11 October 2012 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor JG Jarvis (Chairman)

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

In attendance: Councillors JA Hyde, AW Johnson, NP Nenadich, J Hardwick, MAF Hubbard, TM James, RI Matthews, AJW Powers and A Seldon

Officers:

29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

31. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

32. ROOT AND BRANCH REVIEWS - PHASE 1

The Leader of the Council presented the report of the Deputy Chief Executive on the Root and Branch Reviews. The Leader stated that this was Phase 1 of the review the Council was undertaking. The Leader emphasised the need for cost effective ways of working and that the reviews were fundamental to the decisions of the Council for the future. He added that the priority was to redefine roles and priorities and to build on the engagement already carried out for the reviews. Cabinet went on to discuss each area of the review programme.

OLDER PEOPLE IN HEREFORDSHIRE

The following comments were made by the Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing and Members:

- Recognised the social care budget was a significantly large budget and therefore it was critical to ensure there is a sustainable budget in place for the future delivery of the service.
- The discovery phase of the review agreed that the current direction of travel was moving in the right direction.
- There was a clear need to improve and transform services, have processes in place which were efficient and user friendly and achieved best value for money.
- There was a need for a national debate on Adult Social Care provision to address the ever rising costs and increased demand.

- The authority needed to accept the changes and to link plans with neighbourhood plans / planning applications to address how, as a community, we looked after a maturing population.
- It was acknowledged that in providing for the elderly and most vulnerable there was extensive technology that could be used to assist and that housing provision needed to be fit for life long living. Members were reminded of a forthcoming seminar addressing housing issues.
- It was emphasised that there was a need for honesty and clarity in the process in order that the public was fully aware of the potential reductions in service.

The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny addressed Cabinet with the recommendations of the Committee:

- The Committee was broadly content with the proposals in the review of older people.
- The Committee believed it was essential that it was clearly stated that housing policies recognised the needs of older people.
- That assurance was sought that current contracts were delivering value for money.
- That it was highlighted to Cabinet that, whilst it was not explicitly stated in the report, the saving target for Adult Social Care for the current financial year would not be met, emphasising the need for a realistic, sustainable budget for adult social care to be established as a priority.

CUSTOMER SERVICES

The following comments were made by the Cabinet Member Corporate Services and Members:

- It has been made easier for residents to contact the Council and make enquiries.
- Savings had been made by bringing together of a range of customer contact methods through Info by Phone and Info Shops.
- Customer Satisfaction ratings had increased. It was important to build on and improve the consistency of customer services particularly through mobile phone technology and the website and to look at new approaches to address the challenges of the next decade.
- Provide value for money for residents.
- The key benefits would be improved service; increased self-service; significant savings; local services specific to the localities across the county.

The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny addressed Cabinet with the recommendations of the Committee:

- The Committee was broadly content with the proposals in the review.
- That there was a need to integrate communication processes with partners and ensure that the processes operate with simplicity and work correctly and responsively.

HOUSING, ECONOMY AND REGULATORY SERVICES (HERS)

The following comments were made by the Cabinet Member Economic Development and Cultural Services and Members:

- In referring to the Executive Summary on HERS the Cabinet Member emphasised the requirement for value for money and developing a thriving economy.
- The Cabinet Member stated the last three bullet points of the summary, which referred to joined up enforcement, a single delegated grants service and providing a strategic development service were clear. However, the first two points of the executive summary referring to the planning service and how planning applications were dealt with and the council's policy on housing required more discussion and understanding by Members.
- Cabinet noted the lack of available housing Herefordshire balanced against a low wage economy and possible future changes in the welfare benefit system.
- Cabinet believed it was essential that the authority engaged with residents, so that proposals were clear and the potential effects on communities were understood.
- It was emphasised that HERS covered 30 services and that it was vital that any changes were introduced in a clear and precise manner.
- In referring to proposed changes in planning applications, although this was welcomed it was asked that more smaller properties suitable for the elderly were available, although it was noted that the benefits of the proposed planning changes would not come about until the medium to long term.

The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny addressed Cabinet with the recommendations of the Committee:

- The Committee was broadly content with the proposals in the review of Housing, Economy and Regulatory Services.
- The HERS vision for the future should recognise the role that encouraging responsible behaviour could play in reducing both the need and demand for services.

STREETSCENE

The following comments were made by the Cabinet Member Education and Infrastructure and Members:

- The Cabinet Member stated the review covered a wide area of activity. The Cabinet Member said in looking at savings there was a need to renegotiate the highway contract and to look at ways to bring highways costs to a sustainable level.
- It was added that this was the opportunity to deliver something better in a relatively short time. The contract needed to deliver what the authority wanted.
- The Cabinet member stated that where previously local businesses had been encouraged to bid for contractual work a lot of interest had been received and it was proposed to look at this method again to refine it for future use.
- It was felt that a review of services could be carried out in phases and the market towns were looking to see what they could deliver.
- In referring to the rural areas and the Council's Lengths Man's scheme, officers were investigating the ways the scheme could be enhanced. In response to a question on the scheme and the benefits of it to communities, the Cabinet Member stated that meeting the needs of the various localities through the scheme would play a crucial part in any new contract.

The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny addressed Cabinet with the recommendations of the Committee:

- It was felt that productive discussions had been carried out with the towns and rural areas and that the key was in ownership and the market towns and villages needed to feel that they had taken ownership of services for their areas.
- The Committee was broadly content with the proposals in the review of Streetscene.
- That the general principles set out at paragraph 17 of the report should be amended to incorporate a principle that as far as was practicable contracts should be let through the local supply chain.
- That the Council should redouble its efforts to ensure that work with Parish and Town Councils on their potential role in service delivery was taken forward swiftly to deliver an outcome that was to the benefit of the County as a whole and that appropriate support would be provided to Town and Parish Councils to prepare them to take on the additional responsibilities.

The Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning brought to Cabinet's attention the issue of the availability of public conveniences across the county. He stated that no decision had been made as yet to any changes to the public conveniences. The Cabinet Member added there was a need to be honest about the quality of the current facilities provided and he believed that better facilities could be provided for the public through a community scheme and thanked the It's Our County Leader for the proposal he had put forward in the way of provision for the profoundly disabled. The Cabinet Member also brought Cabinet's attention to the county's commitment to being a low carbon county and stated that he was in the early stages of looking at a solar panel scheme for residents. In addition he was also looking into making further significant savings on street lighting.

The Deputy Chief Executive and the Leader thanked officers and Members for the work that had been carried out and stated that the recommendations being put before Cabinet were ones that would be built on for the next phase of the review. The Leader welcomed the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and accepted their comments as part of the implementation of the on going review.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- a) **The proposals from the Phase 1 Root and Branch reviews be approved as set out in the Appendices and summarised in paragraphs 11-14 of the report;**
- b) **The principles for future service delivery emerging from the Phase 1 reviews be approved as set out in paragraph 17 of the report and be built into the refreshed Corporate Plan and future Root and Branch reviews;**
- c) **The relevant Directors be authorised to jointly produce and implement the programme of Business Case development and Delivery Plans for the four Reviews and report to Cabinet as appropriate;**
- d) **The potential savings opportunities as outlined in paragraph 34 of the report be approved as the basis for further financial modelling; and**
- e) **A further report on progress against implementation targets for the Phase 1 Reviews be submitted to Cabinet alongside the Phase 2 Review output recommendations in April 2013.**

The meeting ended at 3.45 pm

CHAIRMAN