

**Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Council Chamber -
The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on
Thursday 28 February 2019 at 10.00 am**

Present: Councillor JG Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor NE Shaw, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors H Bramer, BA Durkin, DG Harlow, PD Price, P Rone and
EJ Swinglehurst

Cabinet support members in attendance Councillors AW Johnson, JF Johnson and RJ Phillips

Group leaders in attendance Councillors PP Marsh and EPJ Harvey

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance Councillors PA Andrews, WLS Bowen and CA Gandy

Other councillors in attendance: Councillors A Seldon and AJW Powers

Officers in attendance: Richard Ball, Chris Baird, Claire Ward, Andrew Lovegrove, Stephen Vickers and Karen Wright

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies from members of the cabinet.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

52. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

53. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

54. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 2 to the minutes.

**55. AGREEMENT OF SECTION 75 (S75) BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND
HEREFORDSHIRE CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP (CCG)**

The cabinet member health and wellbeing introduced the item.

It was noted that it was a national requirement to have a section 75 agreement in place and that such agreements enabled the joint commissioning of integrated health and social care provision. The future of funding was uncertain beyond April 2020 and, as a result, the new agreement would run for 12 months only ending in March 2020. The total value of the agreement was in excess of £55m.

The agreement was a continuation of what was already in place with the only significant change being the introduction of a discharge to assess pilot scheme to deliver short-term

bed based care whilst promoting the opportunity for assessment and planning to meet longer-term care needs.

The head of partnerships and integration confirmed that the council would continue to work very closely with its partners and that there had been no specific tensions or concerns with the operation of the current agreement.

Group leaders were invited to express the views of their group. There was concern that the authorisation of the agreement would mean that officers would be able to move £55m without any further reference to cabinet. It was agreed that written clarification on this point would be provided.

It was agreed that:

- a) The section 75 (s75) agreement for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 at a total value of £55.685m between the council and Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), as at appendix one, is approved; and**
- b) The director for adults and communities be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to complete the section 75 agreement.**

56. APPROVAL FOR HEREFORDSHIRE ADOPTION SERVICE TO JOIN ADOPTION CENTRAL ENGLAND (ACE) REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

The cabinet member children and families introduced the item. She noted that the council was required to join a regional adoption agency (RAA) by 2020 and Herefordshire Council proposed to join Adoption Central England (ACE). The practical implications were being worked through but the advantages of joining the regional agency included sharing of resources and the ability to place children across a wider geographical area, which would reduce the need to purchase costly independent placements.

In discussion of the report it was noted that:

- Herefordshire adoption service was judged to be working well and would take its strengths to the RAA as current staff would transfer;
- Herefordshire Council would retain accountability for the provision of adoption services to children in the county and it is expected would continue to be subject to Ofsted inspections of those services;
- An implementation group had been established to oversee the transition of staff into the RAA, staff would be seconded to begin with and a TUPE process initiated subsequently;
- There was no indication that there would be a requirement for staff to travel across the whole region covered by ACE but opportunities might exist for staff who lived close to the border with Worcestershire;
- ACE was a standalone agency, governed by a board which Herefordshire would be entitled to join as a member of the RAA, Warwickshire County Council acted as the host authority;
- A sub-hub may be set up in Worcester, staff who worked in Herefordshire would have opportunities to work in offices in Herefordshire;
- Wales operated under a different legal framework so joint working with Welsh authorities had been discounted;
- Shropshire Council was part of a regional agency with Telford and Wrekin, Stoke and Staffordshire Councils which formed a large area and was not felt to be as good a match for Herefordshire;
- Herefordshire Council had a long-standing relationship with Worcestershire adoption service and joining ACE would build on that relationship;
- It was important that the transition happened as smoothly as possible.

The chair of the children's wellbeing scrutiny committee commented that the proposal had been coming forward for some time. Joining ACE should make adoption quicker for children and provide better matches with potential adopters. A government evaluation of RAAs in November 2018 noted some challenges but it was felt that ACE was the correct agency for Herefordshire to join.

Group leaders were invited to express the views of their group. There was cautious support for the proposal to join ACE but concerns were expressed that the current good service in Herefordshire should be protected and that the regional setup could make the service feel further away from Herefordshire.

It was agreed that:

- a) Herefordshire adoption service joins Adoption Central England (ACE) regional adoption agency with effect from 1 July 2019; and**
- b) the Director of Children and Families be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to complete the partnership and hosting legal agreements with ACE.**

57. REVISED SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDER (SGO) FINANCIAL SUPPORT POLICY

The cabinet member children and families introduced the item. The proposal would increase the financial allowance for carers with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) to the same level as foster carers. Having a SGO conferred benefits for the child and for the carers. The carer would be able to take day-to-day decisions and would have reduced contact with social workers. The child would be treated the same as other children in the family. The reduced contact with social workers would release capacity in the service to focus on those children needing more support. The modest cost of the proposal would be met from existing budgets.

The chair of the children's wellbeing scrutiny committee supported the proposal and noted that it would remove potential stigma for a child in a family.

It was explained that an SGO would be put in place through the court and would grant the holder(s) parental responsibility for the child until the age of 18. While contact with social workers would reduce, continued family support would be available where families wanted it and they would be able to contact the council for support at any point in the future.

Group leaders were invited to express the views of their group. There was support for the proposal and it was queried whether there were other changes that could be made to deliver similar benefits.

It was agreed that:

- a) The revised financial policy for special guardianship orders at appendix 1 is approved; and**
- b) The policy is implemented from 1 April 2019.**

58. END OF DECEMBER CORPORATE BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The cabinet member finance and corporate services introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- The projected revenue outturn for 2018/19 was an overspend of £289k, this compared favourably to the same point in 2017/18 when an overspend of £2m was projected;

- The adults and communities directorate projected a balanced budget through reducing the number of cost of placements while the overspend in the children and families directorate had remained reasonably static since September;
- A steady increase in people accessing information and advice through WISH had been reported, while it was encouraging that people were using the service there was concern that the number of people needing support was increasing;
- The uptake of NHS Health Checks had improved but was still below target;
- Steady progress had been made on recruitment to the HomeFirst service with a full complement expected by the end of March 2019;
- Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 there had been a 59% increase in footfall and an increase in demand for temporary accommodation, this was impacting on budgets and continued to be managed by the Housing Solutions Team;
- There was increased demand for nursing provision, the number of block beds available to the council had been increased and projects at Waverley House and Hillside would deliver further capacity;
- School budgets remained tight, the budget for 2019/20 had recently been approved by the Herefordshire Schools Forum and included the full funding according to the National Funding Formula plus an additional £15 per pupil;
- Special education needs provision was under review, the council was committed to supporting schools to develop inclusive practices;
- Herefordshire continued to be below the national average for exclusions and home schooling but numbers had risen in line with national trends;
- The new local Early Help Assessment (EHA) had replaced the Common Assessment Framework and resulted in an increase in completed assessments meaning more families were being helped earlier;
- The number of child protection plans remained static, additional capacity had been provided to review current cases and the council's figures were now below statistical neighbours and below nation and regional figures per 10,000 children;
- The South Wye Transport Package was progressing to programme;
- Masterplanning had commenced on options for the Country Bus Station including potential for a new multi-storey car park and initial design feasibility works had been commissioned for stand redevelopment at Hereford Football Club;
- Ledbury was the first market town to reach referendum stage in its Neighbourhood Development Plan with Leominster's referendum due on 28 February;
- The proposed student accommodation block on Station Approach had received planning approval and would be the first significant project through the Development Regeneration Programme;
- The elections team had completed the canvass, increasing the electoral register by 1%, and planning was underway for council elections on 2 May.

In discussion of the report it was noted that:

- Table B included projections of schemes likely to come forward and assumptions as to grants that would be received to cover these schemes, the table had been updated to end of December 2018 with additions since the capital programme was last approved by Council in July 2018;
- Herefordshire was now in the top or second quartile for the vast majority of performance indicators for educational outcomes, showing a significant improvement;
- Work was continuing to target particular groups, for example to secure higher attainment for pupils eligible for free school meals and in supporting speech and language development in the early years;
- Progress had been made quickly and effectively to address the weakness identified by Ofsted, work continued to ensure areas continue to improve and did not drift;

- The decision taken to increase the financial allowance to carers with a Special Guardianship Order was an example of measures to tackle the number of Looked After Children;
- The recent Ofsted focussed visit noted the improvements made and teams report they are feeling supported by the management team, there was still work to do but the improvements achieved to date should be acknowledged;
- Work under the national Troubled Families programme was achieving sustained change, with 366 families supported to the end of December 2018;
- 87% of premises were now able to access superfast broadband and this was expected to increase significantly in the next quarter, Herefordshire now had seven out of the top ten wards in the west midlands for full fibre coverage;
- There had been some slippage in the original timescales of the Fastershire project, this was disappointing but additional properties were being pulled into the contract and the council was on target to deliver full fibre to 50% of rural properties;
- Officers in adults and communities should be commended for delivering a balanced budget;
- The take up of NHS Health Checks was still below target despite an improvement in the latest quarter.

Group leaders were invited to express the views of their group. The positive progress in a number of areas was recognised, including delivery of planned savings. Concerns noted were:

- Herefordshire schools were still poorly funded compared to some and there were a number awaiting replacement buildings or major refurbishment;
- Whether the council was achieving good value for money from the scheme to provide student accommodation;
- Poor broadband connectivity remained a problem in some areas;
- Stress was now back up as the cause of nearly a third of staff absences;
- The overspend in the children and families directorate, showed a £200k increase since September and was double the figures in June, the pressure from the number of LAC was recognised but the costs needed to be turned around;
- The majority of underspends arose from reduced borrowing leading to savings on interest payments as investment was slower than planned;
- Clarification was requested as to whether the continuing overspend in children and families was being funded by delays in planned investments and how expected grant income had changed since the previous quarter report as the capital programme appeared to show a £2.75m net reduction on the previous figures.

It was confirmed that the S151 Officer would provide clarification on the capital programme outturn.

It was agreed that:

- a) **The projected financial outturn and performance for the first nine months of 2018/19 are reviewed and cabinet determines any additional actions required to achieve improvement.**

59. CORPORATE DELIVERY PLAN 2019/20

The cabinet member finance and corporate services introduced the item and summarised the priorities of the corporate plan and the key additions to the delivery plan for 2019/20:

- Prevention activity to keep people well, including the use of technology;
- A focus on the needs of people with dementia;
- A focus on reducing Delayed Transfer of Care (DTOC) figures;

- Developing edge of care services to prevent families needing higher levels of intervention;
- Develop speech and language skills of under 5's through education and training in early years settings;
- Economic development such as the construction of student accommodation on Station Approach and development of Ross Enterprise Park;
- Commence construction of the Southern Link Road and associated walking, cycling and public space improvements;
- Develop proposals for the transport hub in Hereford City;
- Progress developments within Hereford City such as improvements to the Edgar Street ground and a new multi-storey car park;
- Continuing to rationalise accommodation for the council.

Group leaders were invited to express the views of their group. There was support for some elements of the plan, with individual groups having some different priorities. Concerns were expressed that:

- The council should get best use from its property assets;
- There should be more emphasis on the community as a great deal of support was already being provided by communities around the council and more was being requested of them, also reference to working with parish councils;
- There was a lack of reference to the environment with climate change only implicitly mentioned, nothing about a revision of the core strategy or the procurement strategy.

It was confirmed that work had started on a climate change seminar for delivery as early as possible in the new administration. The council was also working to deliver natural flood management across seven catchments in the county, this was an example of looking at new ways of managing climate challenges.

The plan contained a wealth of initiatives to benefit the citizens of Herefordshire, reaffirmed the council's commitment to vulnerable people, growing the economy and supporting education and higher education.

It was agreed that:

- a) the draft corporate delivery plan 2019/20 at Appendix 1 be approved.**

The meeting ended at 11.41 am

Chairman