

MINUTES of the meeting of CABINET held at THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD on Thursday, 10 April 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor RJ Phillips (Chairman)

Councillors: LO Barnett, AJM Blackshaw, H Bramer, JP French, JG Jarvis and DB Wilcox

In attendance: Councillors WLS Bowen, GFM Dawe and JK Swinburne

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor JA Hyde Cabinet Member Children's Services. In addition apologies were received from Councillors; ACR Chappell, TM James, RI Matthews and SJ Robertson.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

60. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, with typographical errors amended prior to publication.

61. COUNCIL ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008/09

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Asset Management and Property Services to which was appended the Council's Asset Management Plan (AMP) for 2008/09. The Cabinet Member for Resources advised Members that the Asset Management Plan set out the focus of activity for the Asset Management and Property Services team over the next 12 months and demonstrated how those activities supported the authority's corporate priorities.

The AMP outlined the following aspects:

- (i) team roles and responsibilities (although Members were made aware that it had been difficult to attract suitable candidates for key appointments to the revised officer structure agreed almost two years ago and that critical gaps had been covered through the use of interim support).
- (ii) working with stakeholders
- (iii) data and performance management arrangements
- (iv) planning and delivery of property related programmes
- (v) reviewed last 12 months activity against targets

The Head of Asset Management and Property Services introduced Russell Cheasley, who had recently been appointed Property Review and Contracts Commissioning Manager and was one of the first appointments secured to the new

structure.

Members attention was specifically drawn to the following points within the report:

- As there was a need to respond to the requirements of the Comprehensive Area Assessments and Local Area Assessments (paragraph 1.1, page 7), the AMP would form part of the compliance documentation submitted to Government, in support of the authority's appropriate use of resources.
- The authority currently used property data derived from four legacy systems (pages 11-13). As maintaining these systems currently required duplication of information, discussions had been held with the authority's ICT team to outline specification for a corporate property database which would provide high quality information across the council.
- Paragraph 5.1.3 'Capital Programme' had not been included in the draft AMP as it had been necessary to await the decision of the Cabinet on the Draft Capital Programme 2008/09 report, which would be considered on the meeting's agenda. Should approval be given to the Capital Programme report this paragraph would be finalised.
- Action Plans to support the progress of the AMP were outlined on pages 27-31 (appendices 5-12).

In discussion the following comments were made by Members;

- The action plans were welcomed as a means by which development and monitoring were clearly outlined.
- Consideration should be given to the asset management requirements across public bodies in the County and a culture developed within public partners of jointly achieving best use of property assets in relevant locations to allow for appropriate accessibility of public services to residents. Such an approach would reflect the recommendations outlined in the Audit Commission's 2000 report, Hot Property which considered how to achieve the best out of local authority assets.
- A request was made that the presentation of the data be reconsidered prior to final publication as a public document (e.g pages 11-13).
- In response to a comment on the apparent suspension of recording value for money information it was stated that it was unfortunate that the authority was unable to continue to collect the value for money statistics as the indicators were part of a suite of benchmarking indicators which were no longer collected by the collating body COPROP, however it was emphasised that value for money remained important to the Council through the Corporate Plan which provided for comparable information for benchmarking e.g. in relation to the Comprehensive Area Assessments.
- In response to a question relating to the new management structures, the Leader advised Members that the new structure was to be delivered on a cost neutral basis with any capacity required delivered at a senior level.
- As most of the graphs illustrated on pages 11-13 demonstrated a downward shift it was hoped that the situation would improve.
- Members in attendance advised the Cabinet of concerns expressed to them from tenants in Council smallholdings. It was confirmed that a review of the smallholdings policy would be undertaken by the SMC in the next few months.
- In response to a question regarding carbon management for schools, the Head of Asset Management and Property Services advised Members that all

schools would be assessed over time with building management systems undertaken over the next few months.

- The Chief Executive, in response to questions relating to Herefordshire Connects, stated that this project was put on strategic pause some months ago, however others, e.g Social Care, had been considered through SMC the previous week. Members were reminded that a commitment had been given to report back to Cabinet (indicatively June/July) on Herefordshire Connects following the next stage meetings with contractors.
- The Director of Resources confirmed that the AMP for approval was the latest revised version of the Plan formerly agreed in December 2006.
- In response to a member in attendance, officers advised the Cabinet that the £30m+ figure stated in paragraph 5.2.4.1 against the new back office, was solely an indicative figure as currently no project plan existed (therefore no costs were known) and that this project had many steps to go through. The final figure would be heavily dependent on the on the project plan which would be approved by Cabinet, which would include back office functions together with training provision, front office etc. It was acknowledged that the wording of 'new back office' in the report did not adequately reflect the breadth of the functions included and that it would be amended appropriately reflect this point.
- In response to a question from a Member in attendance, the Head of Asset Management and Property Services stated that the monitoring of schools would be ongoing, however the current administration has stated that there would be no disposals during their time in office (with the exception of the ongoing small schools review). Discussions would be held with Children Services regarding ongoing provision.
- Members were advised that whilst asset management list was public information and was available in hard copy, it was not accessible on the web due to the manner in which the information was stored. The Leader emphasised the difficulties of setting indicative values on assets, some of which would, by definition, be purely speculative and others valued for insurance purposes (especially civic buildings). As public information, the Leader emphasised that, as public information, all Members were welcome to receive a copy of the authority's assets at any time, however they were requested to exercise caution in particular when considering the value placed on assets as the information could be subject to misinterpretation without an awareness of the context to how the values were determined. The value placed against each asset was purely submitted for financial purposes, such as insurance, and did not necessarily reflect a full market value. Asset valuations were provided to comply with CIPFA regulations and as such were not a reflection of the value of the property for disposal, but a reflection of the "worth" of the asset to the Council. This included use of historical acquisition prices for community assets, etc, which might be £1.
- In response to a question about the certainty or otherwise of the authority's schools receiving £30m, and the process for allocation of these monies, the Director of Children's Services advised that the £30m related to areas of capital funding over three years for capital improvement. Whilst the amount expected was sizable, it would not be sufficient. The most significant projects to receive funding would be the Academy and the BSF. An allocation of £1.8m had been allocated to the authority's primary schools. Final approval for the £30m was awaited from the DCSF in June 2008.

RESOLVED

THAT: Cabinet;

- (a) approves the content of the Council's Asset Management Plan for 2008/09.**
- (b) note that the Council's Asset Management Plan for 2008/09 would form part of the Resources Directorate's service plans for the year with performance being managed in line with the Council's performance management framework.**

Additionally

- (c) the Cabinet endorsed the view expressed in discussion that asset management requirements should be considered across the County's public bodies and a culture developed with public partners of jointly achieving best use of property assets.**

62. DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2008/09

The Cabinet Member (Resources) advised the meeting that the Medium Term Financial Management Strategy for 2008-2011 had been agreed by Council in March and had reflected a commitment for additional investment in capital projects over and above those identified in the capital programme approved by Council at that time. This amounted to £8.823m.

The report identified for consideration three further spending proposals which related to projects in Hereford, Ledbury and Ross on Wye, all of which supported corporate priorities for promoting regeneration and improving the accessibility and quality of services to the community.

David Powell, Head of Financial Services outlined the detail of the three proposed projects within the report. For clarification, he stated that the current costs of the Ledbury Centre were as outlined in the table on page 53 of his report. It was additionally stated that some funding had been held back pending further information about the funding requirements of other major projects.

Members made the following comments:

- The report was welcomed. These three significant infrastructure projects had been the subject of effective community consultation.
- In response to a question from a Member in attendance, the Cabinet Member for Economic Development stated that a proposed extension to the Master's House in Ledbury would contain the library, as the existing building was not DDA compliant. The scheme proposed has undergone consultation with the community with whom excellent communications are maintained. Additionally, English Heritage had been consulted and had been made aware of the new extension proposal; tacit approval had been provided with formal approval subject to consideration of plans, which were awaited.
- In response to a statement from a Member in attendance, the Cabinet Member for Economic Development emphasised the benefit that an additional £751k would bring to the Herefordshire City Centre refurbishment that would allow for an upgrading of current proposals and ensure enhancement of the link between the City Centre and forthcoming Edgar Street Grid development.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- (a) additional capital resources of £440,333, be allocated to the scheme**

- bringing together Ross on Wye Library and Info Services on one site;
- (b) capital resources of £2.92m be allocated to the Masters House scheme in Ledbury
 - (c) additional capital resources of £751,000 be allocated to the Hereford City Centre refurbishment; and
 - (d) the balance of the additional funding be held pending greater certainty about funding of other major projects.

63. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2008-2011

The Director of Children's Services introduced Chris Baird, Head of Performance, Planning and Development and Philippa Granthier, Business Manager. She stated that the local authority had a statutory duty to prepare a Children and Young People's Plan and to review it on an annual basis. The Plan for consideration by the Cabinet was the second that had been developed for Herefordshire through the Children's Trust.

The Business Manager advised the Cabinet that the Council was the lead partner in the Children's Trust Board and that the priorities in the plan had been arrived at following a needs mapping exercise, debate at various forums with a draft plan subjected to an eight week consultation period. Those groups who had inputted into the plan include a shadow board of the County's young people. The current document outlined the local authority's priorities for 2008-2011 and would be subject to scrutiny prior to submission to full Council in May for formal approval. It was acknowledged that the document was very substantial in size and Members were made aware that, whilst the formal statutory document could not be shortened, young people were keen to ensure the publication and circulation of a shorter document and had established a design competition for the front cover of the publication.

Members made the following points in relation to this item:

- The hard work of the officers and partners were acknowledged and commended and the existence of the shadow board warmly welcomed. Members commented favourably about the shadow board and its contribution to the consultation process.
- In response to a question by a Member in attendance relating to the 10% of children with disabilities aged 14+ who did not have a transition plan support their move to adult services, officers stated that the data was being examined to identify work which would be undertaken with partner organisations and the Scrutiny Committee.
- In response to a question from a Member in attendance regarding clarification of the reduction of pupils receiving statements, officers advised the Cabinet that children were the subject of 'banded funding' which provided access to support earlier in the process than waiting for the need for statements. It was important to ensure that the support provided and the response given was appropriate to a child's needs. Members were advised that much work had been undertaken to determine priorities and the need to strengthen links across partners was recognised e.g with relation to statements. Whilst much work had been undertaken to support these issues, it was recognised that there was more to do.
- In response to a question relating to the scrutiny process the Director advised that the Plan was a statutory requirement which had been developed through the Children's Trust which has its own governance arrangements. Alongside that, relevant aspects were reported back to Council. Both scrutiny and cabinet had an important role in the development of the plan, and the scrutiny function would consider the Plan during April 2008.
- Members commented favourably.
- It was felt that the Plan considered Children and young People as a whole, and through partnership, the services provided to Children and young people should be inclusive and encompass the five outcomes of Every Child Matters. The scrutiny committee would have the opportunity to further investigate the issues and give a view on them.
- A concern was raised that the extended partnership working may reduce the ability to

maintain confidentiality to enhance the provision of good service.

- With relation to the outcome areas, Members noted that there were markers down for councillors to assist in delivering the Plan e.g promoting voice of children and young people in wider community agendas.
- The comment was made that information on GCSE A*-C would be useful (page 89).
- It was emphasised that rurality was a hit on delivery of services which was a challenge both to the local authority and households. The geographical nature of the County had a direct impact on communities and institutions and cost of delivery was further increasing with the 20% increase in fuel costs in recent months. It was vital that Government recognised this situation due to the possible impact on performance and standards.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet commends to Council for approval the Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011.

64. DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

The Chairman advised Members that the development of the Local Area Agreement was currently a living document which was subject to changes. Amendments would be drawn to the attention of Members during the presentation of the report.

The Herefordshire Partnership Team Manager advised Members that the indicators listed on pages 100-102 had been discussed by the Chief Executives Partners Policy Group prior to consideration by Cabinet.

- The support of GOWM had been gained to remove indicator N175 'Access to Services and Facilities by Public Transport, Walking or Cycling' and a more locally defined indicator was being considered in conjunction with the Environment Directorate (details of which were subject to technical specification).
- LAA indicator 167 : 'Congestion – average journey time per mile funding the morning peak'. Concerns had been raised around accessing the technical information required, however as it was important to retain a target which would indicate levels of congestion, it was proposed to include indicator NI 178 which related to bus services.
- LAA indicator 186 'Per Capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area' it was stated that following further consideration of the technical specification, this indicator may be difficult to monitor. It was proposed to replace with Indicator NI 185, which focused on the Local Authority operations.

Currently it was not clear as to how the local indicators would be counted, however it was important to have clarity on the impact of the indicators and how they would assist the authority achieve its priorities.

Members made the following comments:

- There was a need to ensure that the funding streams were protected and that indicators were robustly monitored.
- Responding to a question about the reward grant, the officer stated that Government was considering models of Reward Grant, but that there was no agreement to date.
- In response to a question relating to economic development, it was stated that LAA indicator 171 'New Business Registration Rate' would be a mechanism to monitor economic development. Consideration would be given in the future for an indicator which was aligned to Gross Value Added

(GVA).

- The indicators outlined on pages 100/101 would need to be robustly monitored as many were joint targets which relied on other public bodies e.g Highways Authority, PCT. The public needed to become aware of the targets that were to be achieved as they would have a direct impact on individuals and their communities.
- Whilst a specific indicator could not be selected to measure congestion in the county, it was a major issue that needed to be addressed.

RESOLVED: That the proposed list of Indicators included in the LAA be supported, subject to the amendments as outlined above.

It was noted that a final version of the LAA indicators would be submitted to Cabinet on 29 May 2008 for approval.

65. DATA QUALITY POLICY

The Cabinet Member for Corporate, Customer Services and Human Resources stated that following the annual audit for 2007/08 of the authority's data quality, the anticipated score of 2 had been achieved in an overall ranking of 1-4 (4 being the best score). The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee had authorised the formal response to the audit and it was emphasised that there was a need for the authority, across all directorates, to continue to improve its data quality systems and processes. Executive and Scrutiny Members would play their part in ensuring the authority's arrangements for ensuring high data quality were thorough and consistently applied.

The Head of Performance and Policy advised the Cabinet this issue was important. It represented a shift in the authority's approach to include working together with our partners. It also represented a fundamental shift in the approach of the various regulatory bodies. If assurance could be given that the quality of the authority's data was of sufficient robustness and followed regulatory guidance, it was anticipated that regulators would have confidence in our methods. If the authority did not adopt a more robust approach in future, the authority would be regulation would be more stringent.

The Data Quality Policy (pages 106-108) was based on existing voluntary standards, and had a critical role for members (specifically, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 6.1). The policy at paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2 outlined the suggested monitoring arrangements and paragraph 7.3 suggested an annual review and data quality audit report.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- In response to the question raised regarding how closely the PCT and the Council's data quality requirements were aligned and had the PCT signed up to the policy before Cabinet, it was stated that whilst the Council and PCT are working together to improve data quality the PCT had not yet signed up to the specific data quality policy. The Chief Executive emphasised that the PCT had stringent processes for data quality and that the health sector tended to have better data management arrangements than local government. It was hoped that the PCT would share their data quality skills with Council colleagues
- The clarity of the report was applauded and it was stated that it was an example of the culture which needed to be adopted wider through the authority.

RESOLVED

THAT Cabinet:

- (a) note the actions taken by the Chief Executive to improve data quality; and
- (b) approve those elements of the data quality policy (as at Appendix 1) that relate to its own role and those of the Leader, lead Cabinet Member and all Members.

66. RENEWAL OF CONTRACT - MICROSOFT ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT

Geoff Cole, Interim Head of Information, Technology and Customer Services and Sandra Dallimore, Technical Services Manager presented a report which sought the Cabinet's approval to renew the corporate Microsoft Enterprise Agreements. Members were advised of the process of negotiating the renewal (which commenced in November 2007) and the attention of Members was directed to paragraph 12 that highlighted the fact that the Council could not use the cheaper NHS PCT software agreement, as it would break licensing laws. Should this agreement not be renewed at this time, a new agreement with Microsoft would cost the authority an additional £102k over three years, for the provision of the same level of support.

It was acknowledged that as it was known that the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement would need to be reviewed prior to 31 March it should have been programmed on the Forward Plan.

In response to Member's question regarding consultancy days, it was stated that the support provided to the authority would vary depending on the actual consultancy requested.

RESOLVED**THAT Cabinet :**

- (a) note the funding available
- (b) approve that the contact be renewed in the sum of £645,000 over the three year period.

67. ASSESSMENT OF 18-64 YEAR OLDS' FUTURE NEEDS AND SERVICES: MENTAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Cabinet Member of Social Care, Adults and Health presented the report for Cabinet consideration which had been considered by the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee and the Health Scrutiny Committee, the comments of both Committees being appended to the report.

During discussion it was suggested by a member in attendance that an additional recommendation be considered for approval to encompass the comments from the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee and the Health Scrutiny Committee, as follows (as in last line of paragraph 11). The motion was seconded and it was agreed that the following sentence to additionally added to the recommendation:

'The committees' other resolutions to be taken into account in the course of implementing the new patterns of services'.

RESOLVED**THAT:**

- (a) the proposed patterns of high-performing mental health and physical

disability services be approved and put in place between April 2008 and March 2012.

- (b) These be achieved by means of detailed joint commissioning plans of the Council and the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust.**
- (c) The adequacy of the new patterns of services be subject to a further full review of needs and services by 2012 in the light of better data and of actual demand for modernised services**
- (d) The results of the review be used to inform budget planning at that time**

And additionally

- (e) the committees' other resolutions to be taken into account in the course of implementing the new patterns of services.**

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

CHAIRMAN