

MINUTES of the meeting of CABINET held at THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD on Thursday, 31 July 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor RJ Phillips (Chairman)

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

In attendance: Councillors PA Andrews, GFM Dawe, PJ Edwards, TM James, RI Matthews and SJ Robertson

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

NOTE:

Cabinet and Members in attendance acknowledged the excellent news of the agreement for a radiotherapy treatment unit at Herefordshire County Hospital. The Leader thanked staff and everyone involved in the campaign with particular thanks to Cllr Swinburne, as chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee, for the work she had carried out.

31. SWIMMING PROVISION FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN HEREFORD CITY

The Cabinet Member ICT, Education and Achievement advised that since the publication of the LEA Swimming Pool report in the cabinet agenda there had been amendments made to the original recommendations to more fully explain the proposals. It was stated that a more evidence based report was required to look holistically at the issues, as they did not just relate to the LEA pool, but to the LAA agenda, the Olympics, encouraging swimming and providing services in a competitive way. It was also stated that HALO were experts in the provision of leisure facilities and there was a need to ensure there was a quality provision, as currently there was concern over this. Additionally an examination was needed of what is required and how to address the rising costs to schools.

A Member in attendance stated it was felt the report did not provide the overall cost to be incurred to bring the HALO leisure pool up to standard. The change over period in getting the children in and out of the pool would mean the children only had 20 minutes of actual swimming time. The cost of transporting the children would also be extensive. It was felt that additional capacity would be required even though an independent report stated it would not. At a site visit it was stated that the public

use would out of necessity be limited in the main leisure pool to accommodate the schools. It was felt that the public needed to be consulted if any of the public swimming time was to be taken away.

The Leader of the Council stated that the recommendation clearly stated that any alternative provision needed to be monitored. A Member in attendance suggested that the minimum amount of maintenance should be carried out at the pool in order to prevent further deterioration. Cabinet was advised that petitions and emails had been received in support of the pool, however, a further report was proposed for Easter 2009, when a business case could be set out and the monitoring analysed. Cabinet was reminded that 38 schools were affected and a number of schools had stated they would not use the leisure pool. Cabinet was urged to reconsider its proposal and not to close the LEA pool but to find the money to bring it up to modern standards.

The Leader acknowledged that this was an emotive issue and reminded cabinet that there were four pools in the county fit for purpose and that in the current climate energy costs must be considered. He added that the school transportation bill was rising and that Herefordshire Council was the third lowest funded for children's services in the country. He added that without government support authorities were being forced into difficult positions, but it was essential to ensure that there was access to swimming provision for every child.

Cabinet was reminded that the amended recommendations called upon the community and HALO to work together to provide a suitable provision to an acceptable standard and to work with all clubs and other organisations, however, time was needed for officers to put a clear business case forward. It was stated that 27 schools had already agreed to the HALO offer. Cabinet was reminded that HALO provided good value for money and discussion would be held with them over service provision. The Chairman of Children's Services Scrutiny Committee stated that HALO provided a fantastic service, but there was concern over the loss of public swimming time and that an hour per day for children to swim was not sufficient. Therefore, the LEA pool needed to be reopened and that money should be found from the reserves to fund it. Cabinet was reminded of the costs of running a swimming pool and that no pool was financially viable. However, it was important to take on the views of the public, as outlined in the report and to ensure that as an efficient and viable service as possible was provided.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- (i) the LEA swimming pool not be reopened;**
- (ii) alternative provision from September 2008 be offered at Hereford Leisure Pool and that the provision by HALO be monitored to ensure the needs of schools and other users continue to be met;**
- (iii) close collaboration and partnership working be undertaken between the Council and HALO with schools, clubs and other users of the LEA pool to ensure a viable and efficient service is provided; and**
- (iv) a report be brought back to Cabinet by Easter 2009 at the latest outlining the outcome of the process.**

32. VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Cabinet Member ICT, Education and Achievement presented the report Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and advised that full consultation had been carried out with the schools. Following on from the procurement process a preferred supplier had now been selected to provide a VLE for schools across the county. This provision would allow schools to meet the requirements for an online learning platform. Cabinet was informed that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) had introduced the Harnessing Technology Grant (HTG) scheme, which required 75% of funding to be devolved to schools however; it was proposed that 98% of grant funding be devolved to the schools, with £25k retained for the purchase of central servers.

The Cabinet Member was asked whether the system would be able to interact with the proposed Hereford Connects programme and how secure the system would be for the children to use. Cabinet was advised that the VLE would be hosted on its own dedicated server with its own firewalls to ensure no outside influence. It was stated that even when a child used the system from home all use of the system would be monitored. There would be full training of staff and pupils to ensure everyone was fully aware of the system and it would be fully interactive with all other Council systems.

RESOLVED That the strategy for providing a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for schools be agreed and the contract with the preferred supplier be approved for signature.

33. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT

The Cabinet Member Corporate, Customer Services and Human Resources presented the Integrated Performance and Finance Report (IPFR), which outlines performance for the whole operating year 2007/08 against the Annual Operating Plan 2007/08, Best Value Performance Indicators and the Direction of Travel indicators. Cabinet was informed that the Council's performance was still improving, although a significant number of targets had not been reached and the rate of overall improvement was slowing. More consideration needs to be given in future to setting appropriate, challenging targets. However, as many targets were agreed as part of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) or the Herefordshire Community Strategy (HCS) more work still needed to be done to deliver to the timescales outlined and ensure that under performance was rectified. Finally, future IPFR's would be in a revised format to accommodate the national indicator set and other desirable changes.

A Member in attendance raised a question on climate change and the continued lack of baseline figures. Cabinet was advised that this was now one of the new national indicators and some work was still needed to establish what the government was setting as the baseline for Herefordshire.

Note: Subsequent to the meeting it was established that the Council had now received DEFRA's baseline figure for carbon emissions in Herefordshire and progress against this would be monitored from now onwards

RESOLVED:

THAT:

- (i) **performance in 2007/08 be noted; and**

- (ii) **directors ensure that the issues are addressed within their respective areas, including the updating of service improvement plans.**

34. COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT PREPARATION PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Cabinet Member Corporate, Customer Services and Human Resources presented the Comprehensive Area Assessment Preparation Programme Progress Report. Cabinet was advised that further guidance had recently been made available on the Corporate Area Assessment (CAA) and that it was important that all Members, along with partner organisations, attend a forthcoming training event on 8 October. Cabinet noted that overall Herefordshire was getting on with preparations, but not as quickly as had been anticipated. As outlined in paragraph three of the report there were a number of items marked amber. It was added that there was a lot for the Council and its partner organisations to do in order to complete the joint preparation plan and that there were issues to consider around capacity and communications remained the key issues.

RESOLVED:

THAT:

- (i) **progress made in delivering the Comprehensive Area Assessment Preparation Programme over the first six months of 2008 be noted; and**
- (ii) **Cabinet agree the need for effective remedial action for the items marked amber listed in paragraph three of the report.**

35. HEREFORDSHIRE CONNECTS OPTION APPRAISAL

The Cabinet Member ICT, Education and Achievement presented the report on Herefordshire Connects Option Appraisal and referred Cabinet to page 158 of the report, the summary of the recommendations. He advised that the Herefordshire Connects Programme had been paused for a while but it was now time to take it forward on the recommendations for the choice of software. Cabinet noted that at a recent meeting with the ICT department many Members did not fully understand what the Herefordshire Connects programme was trying to achieve. It was proposed therefore, that a series of short messages outlining what the programme was about would be made available to Members shortly.

The Deputy Chief Executive informed Cabinet that a review of the business case had been undertaken by the Joint Management Team and Deloitte. The priority now was to address the high number of systems at risk of failure. Should the Herefordshire Connects Programme not be progressed Herefordshire Council could be put in a serious position. He added that staff had looked at the rank system and what could be upgraded and looked carefully at the costs and which were the most expensive applications on the market place. He stated that the most expensive system was the one for adult social care and that was already in place and working. Cabinet was advised by the Head of Financial Services that in the budget for 2008/09 costs of £750k had been built in.

Cabinet referred to the savings of £5.5m that would be made and were asked if further technical staff would be required to see the system fully in place. The Deputy

Chief Executive advised that a significant number of the staff required were already in place, however there might be a requirement for an additional six members of staff with the preference to have the staff in house rather than consultants. Cabinet was advised that the costings outlined were at worst case and the savings were at risk averse, however the problem was the risk regarding the old systems. The Leader praised the staff in ICT as being extremely capable and paid tribute to them as they had been exposed to some loose comments in the past.

RESOLVED**THAT:**

- (a) Herefordshire Connects be re-focused on implementing the three updated business cases and further developing these business cases jointly with the PCT as Herefordshire Public Services partners, as defined in section 5.3 of the report attached;**
- (b) Cabinet note the critical risks to service continuity of key ICT system failures. This is due to the current large number of inadequately connected systems requiring upgrades that would not achieve the Council's ambitions for improving customer services and satisfaction, provide poor value for money or that are no longer supported by providers due to their age;**
- (c) the Council's ICT system application portfolio be rationalised to achieve the minimum number of integrated applications by Joint Management Team and Deloitte conducting a two month evaluation of:
 - (i) the four market proven system providers for an integrated back office system and associated integration tools to enable integration between Council systems and where jointly approved, Council and PCT systems, as stated in Section 6.4 of the report attached;**
 - (ii) the two market proven system providers for an integrated environment and planning system, as stated in Section 6.4 of the report attached;**
 - (iii) market proven system providers for an integrated performance management system, as stated in Section 6.4 of the report attached;****
- (d) a report on the recommendations arising from (c) above be produced for Cabinet in October 2008;**
- (e) the Customer Relationship Management System Upgrade should proceed to secure the significant increase in system efficiency and customer service standards. Deloitte advise this upgrade is already delivering these for other Council users of this system;**
- (f) the current Finance System Upgrade should proceed; which will address imminent service continuity risks; and**

- (g) the Joint Management Team implement Connects Programme Management arrangements based on Section 8 of the report attached to provide assurance to the Council, and where relevant PCT, of compliance with the applicable Procurement Policies and best practice in the Project Management risks, costs and the realisation of benefits for customers and staff.**

36. WASTE COLLECTION CONTRACT

The Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing presented the Waste Collection Contract report. He stated he believed the proposals outlined in the report were inline with the wishes of the majority of residents in the county. With regard to the collection of waste he stated that the authority would continue with a weekly waste collection, with recycling carried out on a bi-weekly basis and wheeled bins would be provided. He added that Herefordshire would also be recycling glass products as part of the kerbside collection, and for that reason it was no longer safe to use plastic bags. By not using plastic bags there would be a saving of 2.5m bags every year. With this provision it was felt that the Council could now discuss with the supermarkets how to reduce the use of plastic bags. For those members of the community who would be unable to use wheeled bins then plastic bags would continue.

It was emphasised that any resident who might have difficulty in putting out their rubbish help would be provided, as it was important to ensure that everyone could participate in the scheme. It was not proposed to impose any draconian measures on residents, however it should be noted that if the government recycling targets were not met then heavy penalties could be imposed upon the authority.

The Cabinet Member referred Cabinet to paragraph 21 of the report and the consideration of other tasks that could be undertaken by contractor staff. He commended officers for the ideas they had put forward at a recent ideas session the director had held, in particular the delivery and collection of library books to vulnerable residents. Cabinet was also referred to paragraph 19 of the report and the discussions held with EnviroAbility who manage the Rebox scheme. It was stated the EnviroAbility were delighted to be asked to pilot the scheme, which if successful would be introduced across the county. It was added that the public would be encouraged to respond with ideas to improve the scheme. Cabinet was advised that currently recycling was at 74% and it was hoped it would reach 88%. The Cabinet Member stated he was confident that Herefordshire now had the right policy to take forward on recycling.

Both Cabinet Members and Members in attendance welcomed the recommendations, the creative ideas such as the collection of library books and the reduction in the use of plastic bags. It was felt that it was important to ensure the recycling facilities were operating fully before offering the kerbside collection across the county, as currently residents were sorting their waste and this would not be required under the new system. The Cabinet Member thanked officers for their work and the Hereford Times for its support.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- (a) a weekly refuse collection service is provided at the kerbside for all households in the county and that plastic**

sacks be used for this purpose;

- (b) the kerbside recycling service be extended to a near 100% of the county's homes as is practicable from the current level of c.75%;
- (c) the recycling service collect mixed materials from the kerbside including glass, paper, cardboard, plastic and metal cans and that the collections be made fortnightly. The Council to provide a rigid container (a wheeled bin) for the purposes of collecting and presenting the recyclables. Householders may choose an appropriate sized bin from a number offered;
- (d) both services (waste and recycling) offer to anyone who has difficulty presenting waste and recycling at the kerbside (whether through old age, disability or other reasonable cause) a collection from any agreed part of their property; and
- (e) officers, through the procurement process, explore all opportunities to add value to the new waste and recycling collection contract especially provision of additional services by contractor staff whilst undertaking their main duties. For example, the collection and delivery of library books from vulnerable people, reporting road defects, carrying out automated road condition surveys, the delivery and collection of community equipment such as walking frames and other aids and any other possibilities that become apparent.

37. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES 2007/08

The Cabinet Member Resources presented the Treasury Management Activities 2007/08 report and the outturn of Prudential Indicators for the year 2007/08. He stated that it covered the Council's performance for 2007/08 through cash flow, banking and money markets and borrowing transactions; adding that a significant contribution had been made to the Council through investment. During the year the average amount in daily investments was £53.7m and £3.27m was received through investment income. The overall performance in the year allowed income from investments to exceed the budget by £804k, which helped produce an overall underspend. He reminded Cabinet that it was not only incumbent upon the Council to spend tax payers' money wisely, but to invest it wisely also. The savings made significantly contributed to the improvement of the waste and recycling arrangements for the county and congratulated the Treasury Management Team on their performance.

The Head of Financial Services drew Cabinet's attention to paragraph 3.5 of the report regarding the externally managed investments. He stated this was now managed by the treasury team with some of the monies going out to the schools. A Member in attendance raised concern over the monies held on behalf of the schools and felt this should be held separately as the Council only managed the funds on behalf of the schools. Cabinet was informed that the funds were accounted for separately even though they were held jointly. A question was raised on the nearly £106m in long term borrowing and whether the maximum the authority could borrow was £169m. Cabinet was advised this was correct as advised at the recent July Council meeting.

CABINET

THURSDAY, 31 JULY 2008

The meeting ended at 3.50 p.m.

CHAIRMAN