

MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday 26 November 2009 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor RJ Phillips (Chairman)

Councillors: H Bramer, JP French, JA Hyde, JG Jarvis and PD Price

In attendance: Councillors PA Andrews, WLS Bowen, PJ Edwards, TM James and RI Matthews

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: LO Barnett, Cabinet Member Older People and Social Care, AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member Economic Development and Community Services and DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

40. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41. INTEGRATED CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Cabinet Member Corporate and Customer Services presented the report, which was the second in the new style . She advised Cabinet that the format had been slightly revised to take into consideration the suggestions made by Strategic Monitoring Committee and others on the first such report. Cabinet had been made aware of the budget monitoring revisions that had been made subsequent to this reporting cycle of the integrated corporate performance report, which covered to the end of September.

The Corporate Policy and Research Manager advised Cabinet that there was a mixed picture overall, but this included significant improvements compared to the end of first quarter. In particular, he highlighted the increase in the number of Local Area Agreement indicators that were on track to achieve target and that action plans were now either in place or in preparation for all of them, as well as the big improvement in relation to the timely assessment of children in need, which was now ahead of target. While waste disposal indicators were now improving, the indicators for clean streets needed to be brought back on track and an action plan had been drawn up to address the issues.

He advised Members that adult social care staff had had to prioritise safeguarding work in relation vulnerable people in residential care, which had led to performance in relation to timely assessments and the delivery of care packages falling below target. There was no current reason to believe that there was an underlying falling off of performance in this respect. The Leader reminded Cabinet again of the updating of figures which had been made subsequent to the report being printed.

Cabinet went on to discuss:

- the Safer Communities Partnership and the improvement in the reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents;
- the reduction in CO2 emissions by Amey Wye Valley vehicles; and,
- other issues in respect of safer and stronger communities.

RESOLVED

THAT: Performance to the end of September 2009 and the measures being taken to address areas of under-performance be noted.

42. CUSTOMER STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources congratulated officers on the report of the joint customer strategy and welcomed the results for Herefordshire citizens. It was agreed that in order to provide an integrated service it was key to have accessible frontline offices that could deal with a variety of enquiries.

The Interim Head of Customer Services advised that the strategy had been devised around the four key elements outlined in the report, and alongside this to bring the strategy together would be the Corporate Area Assessment, World Class Commissioning, and the Duty to Involve agenda. He emphasised that the authority needed to be seen as an efficient partnership organisation for citizens bringing together all the different areas of service and providing a joined up approach.

Cabinet went on to discuss the recent high percentage of calls received regarding the recently issued recycling bins. It was noted that although additional staff had been brought in to deal with any additional calls, the number of calls received had been ten times that normally received.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- (a) the strategy its implementation and next steps be supported;**
- (b) regard be given to the strategy in future plans, commissioning of services and budget decisions.**

43. RISK MANAGEMENT AND ASSURANCE

The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic presented the Risk Management and Assurance report to Cabinet and advised that the Council had an integrated policy, which was kept under regular review. She advised that the new policy focused on risk management and training and development and that there had been changes made in the way the policy was expressed to encourage staff to take innovative risk and not to avoid taking risk, but for it to be managed successfully with a five step implementation process to encourage a positive approach to risk and the application of risk.

In discussing the strategy it was emphasised that it was intended to encourage staff to be innovative and creative in identifying risk and managing it properly and that monitoring would be carried out through the corporate performance indicators.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- (a) the revised joint Risk Management and Assurance Policy be approved; and**
- (b) the joint Risk Management Assurance Guidance be approved.**

44. RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Regeneration advised Cabinet that the original Economic Development Strategy had been produced in 2004, refreshed in 2006 and had been aligned to the regional strategy, however, due to the downturn in the economy it was in need of a further review taking into consideration the new duty to provide a local economic assessment based on need.

Cabinet accepted the majority of the recommendations put before them in the review and agreed in principle the remaining recommendations, with the acceptance that some further work needed to be undertaken on the remaining recommendations.

RESOLVED That: the responses to the recommendations as set out at Appendix 1 to the report be agreed in principle.

45. RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF TOURISM

The Director of Regeneration presented the report in response to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee review of tourism and reminded Cabinet that the review had come before Cabinet previously, but at that time it was felt that further work needed to be carried out⁵. It was noted that the majority of the recommendations were accepted or agreed in principle; however, two recommendations were not.

Recommendation two which stated never to combine a Tourist Information Centre (TIC) with an Info in Herefordshire office; and recommendation eight that each TIC should have a minimum of 2.5 full time staff equivalent. Cabinet noted that in Bromyard there was already a successful combination of TIC and Info office in one building and would not wish to rule out joint work places to use buildings effectively. In addition to have a minimum of 2.5 full time equivalent staff would not necessarily be appropriate to all TICs and Cabinet could not therefore approve this recommendation either.

Cabinet discussed the importance of the points raised but in the context of providing efficient use of resources and joined up services.

RESOLVED That: the response to the recommendations as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, but excluding recommendations 2 and 8, be approved.

46. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK, CONSULTATION ON THE CORE STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing presented the Local Development Framework (LDF) report and consultation document on the core strategy. He advised that it was a significant document which replaced the current Unitary Development Plan and requested Cabinet endorse the document as fit for purpose for consultation. He reminded Cabinet that every Member of Council would have received a

draft copy and that the options would not be finalised until after the consultation process had been completed.

Members were reminded of the need to encourage Parish Councils to review the document, seek their views and for Members to reflect those views back to the LDF meetings. It was emphasised that the document was a starting point to incorporate all views. The Planning Policy Manager advised that it was important for the public to be aware:

- that the launch event scheduled for 18 January 2010 would be held at the Kindle Centre and was the start of the consultation process;
- that the document contained all the major principles and would look at Housing distribution growth areas;
- that Members needed to ensure their communities were fully involved
- that it was important in terms of communities, infrastructure, provision of affordable housing and the provision / sustainability of services in growth areas.

The Cabinet Member advised that all options for future development sites would be looked at and he encouraged Members to bring any issues to the LDF meetings.

The Leader drew Cabinet's attention to a letter received from Councillor Dawe and advised that the LDF consultation was carried out in the same way as other authorities, emphasising that the consultation was to establish where new housing developments could to be sited along the supply of some affordable housing.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- (a) the Place Shaping Paper as a consultation document on the emerging Core Strategy, Hereford Plan and Market Towns and Rural Areas Plan be approved;**
- (b) the Head of Planning and Transportation be delegated (in consultation with the Cabinet Member) any further minor text changes; and**
- (c) the outline consultation details, including the dates for the formal consultation period of Monday 18 January to Friday 12 March 2010 be approved.**

47. HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS TASK GROUP CONSULTATION

The Cabinet Member Educational Achievement and ICT presented the Herefordshire Schools Task Group Consultation report and introduced to Cabinet the Chairman of the Task Group, David Brown. He emphasised the importance of the process and that extensive consultation had been carried out resulting in broad agreement. In referring to Recommendation (c) of the report, he advised that it had been agreed that further work needed to be done to define what a small school was and what defined a sustainable school. He stressed that the process had engaged with everyone that had wanted to be involved, professional, public, school governor etc., and that there was unanimous agreement that standards must be maintained at schools. The Cabinet Member thanked David Brown for the work he had done and how quickly he had provided the report and recommendations.

The Director went on to highlight the key principles and points:

- The Leader's announcement that no school closures would be carried out within this administration unless it already fell into the current small schools policy.
- School professionals involved in the debate – response rate of 95 replies.
- That the status quo was not sustainable.
- Provide clear steer to Cabinet for the long term provision of sustainable education for young people.
- Work schedule already identified and issues were around finance, performance, falling roles and recruitment of head teachers.
- The Schools Forum has considered finance in detail and discussed at head teacher meetings.
- The dedicated schools grant is under pressure and the current economic climate had added to the anxiety.
- Herefordshire schools keen to look now at possible clustering of schools.
- The term small school by design needs to be clarified and work is being carried out on this.

David Brown thanked stakeholders for their input to a challenging task. He stated that schools would need to work in partnership / form cluster groups and provide a different way of working. He stressed that as head teachers step down governors would need to understand the financial issues that apply not just to primary but secondary schools also. All must work closely together to ensure standards are not just maintained but improved and school premises sustained to deliver good education. He added that falling numbers and parental choice could have a significant impact and moving towards cluster working appeared to be the right road to take. In addressing sustainable communities travel costs must also be addressed as often not recognised by governors, but has significant impact.

Cabinet noted that the report had not been included on the forward plan and was advised that the processes involved were being reviewed and this should not happen in future. Concern was raised that high performing schools might be brought down and that it was important when looking at planning development to also look at education and transport issues. It was also noted that all school governors and not just chairmen and head teachers needed to be supported and trained.

The Director reiterated to Cabinet the number of ways that schools had been involved in the process to date and how every school had received a copy of the consultation document, which had also been made available in public places and to parish councils. Cabinet thanked Mr Brown for his work throughout the process.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- (a) the five cluster working proposals as detailed at paragraph 10 of the report be endorsed;**
- (b) the four school leadership proposals as detailed at paragraph 12 of the report be endorsed; and**
- (c) the principle of establishing sustainability criteria and thresholds be endorsed and that officers and partners be requested to produce a detailed analysis of Small Schools by Design models, including sustainable schools criteria and thresholds, which can inform judgements on suitability of cluster plans, once submitted, be reported back to Cabinet within three months.**

48. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Cabinet Member Resources presented the Budget Monitoring report and reminded Cabinet that 2009/10 would provide a challenging financial environment to work in and allowances for this were reflected in the budget. Cabinet discussed the key considerations outlined in the report and some of the areas of concern lay in the Integrated Commissioning Directorate, with a projected £2.1m overspend and the Children and Young People's Directorate, with a £945k projected overspend.

The Head of Financial Services referred to the recovery plans for directorates outlined in the report, particularly for Integrated Commissioning and Children and Young People's Directorates and pointed out that it would take some time for the measures identified to take effect but action plans had been put in place. Cabinet noted both the recovery plans and agreed these were working well and that overspends for the Children and Young People's Directorate were already below £500k.

The Chairman of the Strategic Monitoring Committee raised a query with regards to funding for the Hereford Academy and whether the sums involved were due to the school becoming an academy. The Director of Resources advised that he would set out in a letter to the Member the issues relating to recruitment at the Hereford Academy.

RESOLVED That: the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 4.00 pm

CHAIRMAN