

**MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday 16 September 2010 at 2.00 pm**

**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, WLS Bowen, PJ Edwards, TM James, RI Matthews, PM Morgan and MAF Hubbard

**50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor WU Atfield, Labour Group Leader.

**51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**4. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN.**

- Councillor DB Wilcox, Personal, Youth Court Magistrate.
- Councillor RJ Phillips, Personal, Youth Court Magistrate.

**6. REVIEW OF TOURISM DELIVERY.**

- Councillor H Bramer, Personal, Business interest in tourism industry in Herefordshire.
- Councillor JG Jarvis, Personal, Business interest in tourism industry in Herefordshire.
- Councillor MAF Hubbard, Personal, Business interest in tourism industry in Herefordshire.
- Councillor PD Price, Personal, Business interest in tourism industry in Herefordshire.

**52. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the scheduled meeting held on 22 July 2010 and the additional meeting held on 12 July 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**53. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN**

The Cabinet Member Children's Services presented the report on the Annual Youth Justice Plan 2010/11.

Responding to comments raised in discussion, the Cabinet Member:

- Stated that the performance was moving positively in the right direction.
- Acknowledged that most of the statistics related to a combined Herefordshire and Worcestershire data set and noted that the Court system had access to more local data on youth offending.
- Recognised that there was a significant cost to local authorities to provide a programme of support and supervision to young offenders when provided as an alternative to custody. There was a need to meet these costs within the current financial constraints.

The Leader emphasised the need to balance the challenging issues of reducing public finances during a time of economic crisis, which may, as a consequence, lead to an increase in youth crime.

**RESOLVED: that the Youth Justice Plan as prepared be endorsed and that it be recommended within the Policy Framework that the Plan be approved by Council at its meeting on the 19 November 2010.**

#### **54. INTEGRATED CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Cabinet Member Corporate Customer Services and Human Resources presented the report which provided an overview of performance against the Joint Corporate Plan 210-13 for the first quarter of 2010-11. Cabinet was advised that the report used content from Performance Plus (P+), the electronic performance management system being used by Herefordshire Public Services, which was still in the process of being fully integrated. Future reports would be refined and re-designed to include meaningful indicator descriptions and more timely data.

The Head of Policy and Performance advised Cabinet that the report was a transitional one, as previous reports reported performance against the Annual Operating Statement, whilst this and future reports outlined how the Council managed performance against the Joint Corporate Plan via P+. The majority of indicators at the end of quarter one were on track to achieve target and a further report, outlining the mid year position, would be presented to Cabinet in October.

Responding to a question on the funding of the flood alleviation scheme, the Director of Sustainable Communities advised Members that the scheme remained a planned commitment for AWM during 2010/11 – 2011/12. The financial support committed from AWM was second only to the scheme to redevelop Birmingham New Street Station. The Council was currently awaiting a suitable outcome of the Compulsory Purchase Inquiry, the results of which would be expected in November 2010.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

- (a) noted the performance to the end of June 2010 and the measures being taken to address areas of under-performance, noting that a more comprehensive report will be presented in October; and**
- (b) noted the recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the indicators in the Local Area Agreement, and that the opportunity be taken to review the indicators and projects that are in the Joint Corporate Plan 2010-13, using the forthcoming review of the Joint Corporate Plan 2010-13 to do this.**

#### **55. REVIEW OF TOURISM DELIVERY**

The Cabinet Member Economic Development and Community Services presented a detailed report on the remodelling of tourism delivery in Herefordshire which had been based on a comprehensive review of the service and outlined the reasons for the recommendations. Cabinet was advised of the proposal to form a new Destination Management Partnership (DMP) and to remodel the tourist information centres (TICs) service to move away from the traditional methods of service delivery to create a more efficient service.

The Leader stated that,

- Given the expectations of the Comprehensive Spending Review of the need for local authorities to cut between 25-40% of their budgets, difficult decisions needed to be made about the future of public expenditure. Debates about the future of services needed to had against the background of public sector cuts. Currently AWM and the ERDF contributed to the funding of advertising, market campaigns and sponsorship within the county, however, future funding from these sources could not be relied upon.
- In relation to the TICs, the Council had inherited some expensive leases, which could no longer be sustained.
- The great importance of tourism to the local economy was recognised and a commitment was made to retain a TIC presence in the localities, however such a presence needed to be provided in the most cost effective way through, where possible, a locality contact point. The administration would commit to retain such presence.
- In relation to the development of tourism, the joint bid for a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) from Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin (Marches LEP) to HM Government would place an emphasis on the tourism industry as a priority area for support. Tourism would be an important keystone for the LEP bid and its strategic importance would be emphasised.
- The importance of neighbouring areas in attracting visitors and in encouraging spend was emphasised, as visitors did not confine themselves to county area boundaries.

In discussion the following points were made by Cabinet Members:

- Thanks were expressed to all those involved in the tourism services within the county, however times were changing and a different approach to supporting tourism was imperative.
- In determining the future of the TIC service, it was necessary to consider the most cost effective use of council tax by vacating expensive buildings to appropriate shared facilities and using multi talented staff, whilst ensuring the presence in the City and Market Towns. Such an approach would emphasise the Council's 'tell us once' vision. The reports of alleged closure of the TICs service had been made out of context.
- It was acknowledged that the decision to remodel tourism delivery would not be easy and that such changes would need to be dealt with sensitively. It was stated that there was a need to cut the cost of doing jobs before consideration of cuts to the front line delivery of services.
- In considering the proposal to form a new DMP it was emphasised that there was a need to strategically develop new opportunities, to raise the profile of the county and to work with adjoining counties.
- It was recognised that the internet was increasingly being used by tourists to find out information on destinations and to make on-line bookings; at the same time there had generally been a decline in visitor numbers for TICs.
- The development of a Tourism Strategy was to be welcomed and would provide vision and direction. It was stated that local businesses, through the local Chamber of Commerce, were in agreement that the private sector was key to the future promotion of tourism in the county.

The Cabinet Member Economic Development and Community Services, in responding to comments from Members in attendance stated that:

- He did not recognise the comments which had been made regarding the fact that difficulties with the current DMP could be traced back to its establishment due to the fact it had not been set up as an independent body with the Council retaining control. Additional comments made regarding the frustrations of tourist providers

- in relation to the DMP and that it was not given the opportunity to develop engagement with the private sector were additionally not recognised.
- He welcomed the acknowledgement that there was a need to reconsider the Council's approach to TICs but did not support the view expressed that it was not appropriate to radically alter the TICs at the same time as proposals to change the DMP structure.
  - The new business model was based on world wide best practice and would transfer tourism to the private sector and commissioned by the public sector.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (a) Cabinet support the establishment of a new Destination Management Partnership (DMP) which will be required to work with Shropshire and Telford DMPs under the emerging Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP);**
- (b) The proposed principles of the tourism strategy and brand essence are agreed as outline in appendix 1 to the report;**
- (c) The remodelling of the TICs is progressed as outlined in the report; and**
- (d) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Sustainable Communities to negotiate, subject to decisions about the Council's spending proposals in 2011/12 and taking account of the Government's comprehensive spending review (CSR) to be announced later in the autumn, future financial and staffing resources for the DMP.**

**56. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

The Leader advised Cabinet that, as the report sought approval for the publication of the Herefordshire Core Strategy: Hereford Preferred Option paper for consultation purposes, any discussion or comment on the item would need to pertain to the process of the consultation which included ensuring that all issues which needed to be consulted upon had been included. Discussion was not to be had on the content of the Preferred Option paper. The opportunity for an informed balanced debate would take place within the framework of the consultation process.

The Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing introduced the report and stated that:

- this was the start of an important consultation process about the future of Hereford and Herefordshire.
- The proposal was based on the outcomes of consultations, public engagement and detailed work and sought to place economy and quality of life at the heart of a successful Herefordshire, which was dependent on a successful Hereford.
- The Preferred Option document set out a package of proposals to deliver the vision of; more and better paid jobs, increased number of homes, improved leisure and shopping and infrastructure (including the preferred option of a western route corridor for the relief road).
- Local media be requested to assist in publicising the consultation process.

The Strategic Delivery Manager informed Cabinet that:

- Once adopted, the Core Strategy would set the guidance for the long term development of new homes, businesses, open space and other facilities across the county to 2026.
- The Preferred Option paper had been developed following consideration of evidence base and external consultation on the Place Shaping Paper (which contained a number of possible options) undertaken during early 2010.
- The distribution of growth and urban expansion areas outlined in the report provided an opportunity to meet the vision agreed for Hereford 2026.
- Feedback had been received from specialist environmental consultants who undertook Sustainability Appraisals of the preferred policies and it was proposed to make minor amendments to the Preferred Option paper to reflect these findings prior to the start of the consultation process. Habitat Regulation Assessment work was continuing and would inform the final Core Strategy.
- The consultation process would run between 27 September 2010 and 5 November 2010.
- Close working with Elected Members was being undertaken to go through any concerns.
- There had been a typographical error in the report. The reference to the Hereford Relief Road – Study of Options August 2010 under the Background Papers heading should have stated Hereford Relief Road – Study of Options September 2010.

In discussion Cabinet:

- Stressed the importance of ensuring that the public were aware of the consultation process and its importance to the future of Hereford and the county over the next 16 years, not least in providing a future for young people in the county. Comments and views needed to be encouraged and the consultation needed to be actively monitored to ensure receipt of responses and that it received active publicity.
- Emphasised that Elected Members had a role to play in encouraging good in depth debate and engagement within local communities.
- Provided assurances that the consultation process would welcome alternative views than those outlined in the Preferred Option document.
- Acknowledged that consultation on the Preferred Options for the county's market towns had been undertaken to complement that now being proposed for Hereford.

The Leader, in responding to comments from members in attendance stated that:

- Contrary to the statement made that there had been a lack of engagement on the growth agenda, the wider growth agenda had been discussed by Council during this administration and publically through the Place Shaping consultation held in early 2010.
- He emphasised the importance of actively mobilising the public to respond to the consultation process, both from those in favour and against the proposals.
- The city needed to have managed growth and that the consequences of development would need to be debated, managed and addressed. The sensitive nature of some of the proposals under consultation was acknowledged.

An additional recommendation (b, below) was proposed and accepted for consideration.

**RESOLVED That:**

- (a) **the publication of the Herefordshire Core Strategy: Hereford Preferred Option Paper be approved for consultation purposes.**

- (b) **approval of further minor text changes be delegated to the Director – Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member.**

**57. WINTER WEATHER DECEMBER 2009 - FEBRUARY 2010 THE RESPONSE TO IT**

The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny was invited to present the report of the Scrutiny Review of the Impact of Winter Weather December 2009 to February 2010. Thanks were expressed to the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for undertaking the review and to officers for providing information.

The report outlined five key areas which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee believed the Council should consider when seeking to improve the response to future episodes of severe weather; these were the Council's role as: Community Leader, Service Provider, Commissioner of Services, Employer and Partner. Overarching these areas was the importance of communications and the proposal to provide a central communications point which would better facilitate timely information flows.

The Leader welcomed the report and endorsed the thanks to all the members and officers involved. He stated the importance of gaining clarity on certain matters, such as legal responsibilities of individuals and businesses for snow and ice clearance, advice which would be appropriate for Government to provide. He additionally commented on the need for Government departments to act pragmatically in severe weather situations. The example was given of HM Customs and Excise issuing a reminder to farmers during the severe snow to ensure farm vehicles, when assisting with road clearances, ran on white, not red diesel. In the era of the Big Society when communities were encouraged to help themselves, such messages would not be helpful.

The Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation advised Cabinet:

- that the Winter Plan 2010/11 has been revised and updated. The Plan covered as many eventualities as possible and encompassed matters such as access routes, buses routes, schools.
- Preparation for the winter season had already begun with salt bins being filled.
- That the Government had advised all local authorities that they could not use as much salt as was used during Winter 2009/10. There would be a need to spread the salt as thinly as possible to achieve as much as possible.

Cabinet welcomed the report and emphasised the need to monitor progress on actions.

An additional recommendation (d, below) was proposed and accepted for consideration.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (a) **the Committee be thanked for undertaking a comprehensive review and producing an excellent report;**
- (b) **The Executive joins with the Committee in recognising and commending the considerable efforts made in response to the winter problems;**
- (c) **All thirty recommendations be agreed and implemented within existing budgetary provision; and**
- (d) **HM Government be lobbied to provide clarity and legislation on the responsibility for snow/ice clearance for both individuals and businesses.**

## **58. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2009/10**

The Cabinet Member Resources presented a report on the forecast financial position for both revenue and capital to 31 March 2011 which also provided an update on Directorates' recovery plans instigated to address projected overspends. Additionally, the report provided information on treasury management activities in the first four months of 2010/11.

Cabinet was advised that;

- the projected overspends were within the Integrated Commissioning Directorate and the Children and Young People Directorate, both of which had recovery plans in place.
- The general reserves as at 1 April 2010 was £6.4million, having been replenished by £1million as part of the agreed budget setting process.
- The Council was working within a challenging budgetary environment given the likely reduction in funding to be announced in October's Comprehensive Spending Review.
- Due to maximising investment interest and rescheduling loans, it was expected that £800k would be delivered above budget.
- Whilst the level of write offs had increased the collection rates remained good.

The Head of Financial Services added that:

- the projected overspend equated to 1.4% of the budget.
- All service areas had initiated recovery plans to work towards a balanced budget.
- There were no significant changes captured in August as the financial position was static.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- The comprehensive report was welcomed
- That the £540k Park and Ride scheme had been put on hold for the time being, however it remained a future objective for the Council. A coach park behind the swimming pool in Hereford was still planned to go ahead.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

- (a) note the report and the forecast deficit position of £1.9 million; and**
- (b) note the Chief Executive's requirement that Directors deliver recovery plans to ensure a balanced revenue budget.**

The meeting ended at 3.45 pm

**CHAIRMAN**