

MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Thursday 21 January 2016 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor AW Johnson (Chairman)
Councillor PM Morgan (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: H Bramer, JG Lester, GJ Powell, PD Price and P Rone

In attendance: Councillors JM Bartlett, WLS Bowen, BA Durkin, JA Hyde, TM James, CR Butler, ACR Chappell, PE Crockett, EPJ Harvey, JLV Kenyon, MD Lloyd-Hayes and NE Shaw

Officers: Alistair Neill, Jo Davidson, Geoff Hughes, Peter Robinson and Claire Ward
119. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs R Phillips, D Harlow, P Andrews

120. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

121. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

122. ANNUAL FOSTERING REPORT - APRIL 2014-2015

The team leader for Herefordshire fostering service provided an overview of the activity, quality and impact of Herefordshire's fostering services. Proposed updates to the charter, guide for young people, and statement of purpose were outlined. Following questions by members of cabinet the following points were noted:

- Feedback from those in care indicated that generally the quality of care experienced whilst in foster care was good although there was some frustration about changes in social workers; there were continued difficulties in recruiting social workers, as experienced nationally, and there were signs that recruitment and retention was improving
- Recruitment rates for foster carers remained positive
- 70% in house placement rate was improving

In response to queries by members in attendance the following points were made:

- unannounced visits were part of the national minimum standard requirement, and the reasons underlying the process were well understood and accepted by foster carers
- sibling placements were made together where possible and appropriate to do so
- recruitment and retention strategies were having a positive effect but would take time to fully embed
- detail of the overspend in the past and current financial years as a percentage of the overall budget would be provided

Resolved that:

- (a) the activity, quality and impact of Herefordshire Council's fostering service as detailed in appendix a to this report, be reviewed and any additional actions to support improvement identified;**
- (b) the Herefordshire foster carers charter (appendix B) be approved;**
- (c) the guide for young people that are looked after (appendix C) be approved; and**
- (d) The statement of purpose (appendix D) be approved**

123. ADOPTION REPORT, ADOPTION SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND CHILDREN'S GUIDE TO ADOPTION

The adoption service manager for Herefordshire provided an overview of the performance of the adoption service which had consistently been rated as good by Ofsted in the last three inspections. Cabinet were advised that the statement of purpose and the children's guide to adoption had been reviewed and refreshed. It was noted that the service had a wider remit than simply facilitating adoption, retaining responsibilities to adopted children into adulthood and to adopting families.

In response to questions from cabinet members the following points were noted:

- Differences between national/Herefordshire rates of adoption were likely to be accounted for by the respective courts rates of making adoption orders
- Seeming discrepancies in activity rates across years were due to the reporting of the varying decision points required on the adoption journey of any one child which frequently straddled more than one financial year; it was agreed that consideration be given to in future providing a simple summary of data to enable members to be assured that adoptions were being progressed in a timely manner
- Consideration be given to lobbying MP's for action to reduce the tension between the courts reluctance to place children for adoption and the need to secure a stable family placement in the best interests of a child

In response to queries by members in attendance the following point was made:

- Action was always taken to follow up initial enquiries from prospective adopters swiftly and using a variety of methods

Resolved that:

- (a) the performance of the adoption service as outlined at appendices a and b to this report be reviewed, any risks to achievement of objectives noted and relevant mitigating actions approved ;**
- (b) the statement of purpose attached at appendix c to this report be approved; and**
- (c) the children's guide to adoption attached at appendix d to this report be approved.**

124. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REPORT

The early years policy and strategy manager provided an overview of the provision of childcare places in the county for 0-5 year old children.

In response to questions from cabinet members the following points were noted:

- There was not a statutory duty for settings to respond to surveys
- The majority of childcare providers were city based; there was a generally good spread in the rural areas but risks around the availability of places in Ledbury,

Ross on Wye and Bromyard existed, and encouragement would be given to providers in those risk areas to develop additional places.

Resolved that:

Cabinet approve the childcare sufficiency report for 2016-2019

125. PROVISION OF SHORT BREAKS AND RESPITE CARE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The cabinet member placed on record his thanks to colleague members, partners and parents for their active engagement over recent months. The focus of activity had been to remove the 'cliff edge' faced in July 2015 by families using 1 Ledbury Road for short break and respite care; the recommendations now before cabinet would provide some certainty during the coming 12 months whilst transitional arrangements were finalised and further decisions were taken about short breaks arrangements.

The chairman of the health & social care overview and scrutiny committee task and finish group welcomed the acceptance of the majority of the recommendations made by the group and the actions now proposed for adoption by cabinet. It was emphasised that the committee would continue to monitor progress and would offer support to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

In response to questions from cabinet members the following points were noted:

- Monitoring of progress would be undertaken through the quarterly reports to cabinet
- Predicted numbers of children and young people with assessed need had been challenged robustly; recruitment of carers was already underway and recommissioning of other services would be undertaken through the year
- Budgets for future years would need to reflect any unanticipated increase in numbers of service users requiring short stay and respite care
- There should be a clear and continued information flow to parents and families

In response to questions from members in attendance the following points were noted:

- Referrals to 1 Ledbury Road would not be re-opened; rather focus would be given to tailoring the break to the needs of the child as identified through the core assessment; provider capacity issues did not support increasing numbers and doing so may result in greater instability of service for existing users
- There were a number of potential providers, including the friends of 1 Ledbury Road, who had expressed interest in developing services
- Re-designation of 1 Ledbury Road would not resolve the issues relating to meeting higher level medical care

Resolved that:

- a) the executive's response to health and social care overview and scrutiny committee's recommendations regarding the provision of short breaks and respite services for children with disabilities, as attached at appendix 2 to this report is approved;**
- b) the council takes on the role of lead commissioner on behalf of the council and Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and awards a contract to Wye Valley NHS Trust at 1 Ledbury Road, with effect from 1 April 2016;**
- c) authority be delegated to the director of children's wellbeing, following consultation with the director of resources and cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing, and subject to the outcome of**

consultation and ongoing funding from the CCG; to conclude contract negotiations within the financial envelope as set out in this report and enter into a contract with Wye Valley NHS Trust, to ensure the continued availability of overnight short breaks at 1 Ledbury Road for up to 12 months, through an alternative delivery model;

- d) the council budget for 2016/17 for short break services is, subject to Council approval, increased by £600k to cover the transitional cost; and**
- e) by virtue of this decision, an exemption to paragraph 4.6.13.2 of the council's contract procedure rules be granted to enable the direct award of a contract for the services provided at 1 Ledbury Road for the reasons set out in paragraph 10 and 22**

126. CORPORATE PLAN 2016-2020

The deputy leader of the council presented the draft corporate plan for the period 2016/2020, being the council's key strategic document, for cabinet consideration.

In response to questions from members in attendance the following points were noted:

- Asset disposal plans ensured that properties which provided a viable return were retained
- Disposal of unviable property often secured revenue savings
- Market towns had been supported through county wide initiatives such as investment in leisure facilities
- Cabinet members would welcome suggestions for performance indicators for future meaningful reporting
- A briefing for members on the draft economic masterplan was scheduled for 26 January

Resolved that:

- (a) the draft corporate plan 2016-2020, as set out at appendix A to this report, be recommended to Council.**

127. 2016-17 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) (Pages 7 - 8)

The deputy leader of the council presented the draft 2016/17 budget and the draft medium term financial strategy, drawing attention to government plans for funding reductions and the consequent need to secure economic growth in the county.

The director for resources, as chief financial officer to the council, confirmed the proposed budget was sound, deliverable and reasonable. Confirmation had been received from the department for communities and local government that the council's proposals met the government's criteria for the 2% adult social care levy.

In response to questions from members in attendance the following points were noted:

- Litigation risks related to two ongoing court issues and a further longer term case; an appropriate risk mitigation reserve was maintained
- The council's liabilities in relation to introduction of the national living wage should be clearly explained.

Resolved that the following be recommended to Council:

- i. approval of a 1.9% increase in council tax in 2016-17;**
- ii. approval of an additional 2.0% increase in council tax in 2016-17.
This will result in a total council tax increase of 3.9% increasing a total band D charge from £1,275.10 to £1,324.83 for Herefordshire**

- Council in 2016/17;**
- iii. approval of the draft 2016-17 revenue budget (at appendix 1 to this report);**
 - iv. approval of the draft medium term financial strategy (MTFS) which incorporates the capital programme approved by Council on 18 December (at appendix 2 to this report);**
 - v. approval of the draft treasury management strategy (TMS) (at appendix 3 to this report); and**
 - vi. in the event of final central government funding allocations being above or below the provisional settlement level any variation is managed by an adjustment to general reserves.**

The meeting ended at 3.53 pm

CHAIRMAN