

MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Thursday 11 February 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, JA Hyde, TM James, RI Matthews, AJW Powers, EJ Swinglehurst, DG Harlow, AR Round, NE Shaw and D Summers

128. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr AW Johnson

129. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

130. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman noting that Cllr Mathews and Cllr Powers had been in attendance.

131. HEREFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (HSCB) ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15; HEREFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING ADULT BOARD (HSAB) ANNUAL REPORTS 2013/14 AND 2014/15

The interim manager of the safeguarding boards' business unit provided an overview of the annual reports produced by the two boards.

In relation to the report of the safeguarding children's board, and in response to questions by members of cabinet the following points were noted:

- Engagement of partners at a high level in the partnership was good; focus needed to be maintained to ensure continued engagement of partners at an operational level to ensure improvements in practice
- It would be important to be clear about priorities and planned activity aligned to the community safety partnership to provide clear guidance on funding priorities to the incoming police and crime commissioner.

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

- The forecast drop in the number of under-fives was based on the expected family profile of those moving into additional planned housing.
- The age profile of looked after children and those under child protection arrangements did not remain static, but varied over time

- It was confirmed that an internal audit report in relation to safe employment practices found no concerns in relation to employment of agency staff in the children's directorate although some areas of improvement had been identified in relation to use of volunteers
- Increases in court proceedings case rates reflected a national trend but actions were being taken to reduce this locally which included ensuring an effective multi-agency early help offer and intervention including a focus on areas such as the prevention of homelessness amongst the 16/18 age group.
- The board had recently undertaken work to improve engagement with the third sector and this improvement would be reflected in the next annual report.
- The chairman of the health and social care overview and scrutiny committee drew attention to the need to maintain focus on the support required from partners to deliver improvement following the recent CQC report on Wye Valley Trust.

Resolved that:

- (a) the content of the annual reports and the safeguarding arrangements for children, young people and adults in Herefordshire as assessed by the boards be noted;**
- (b) the strategic priorities identified by the board be used to inform future decision making by the council.**

132. SCHOOLS CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing presented the draft strategy for cabinet consideration noting that the strategy provided a call to everyone to pull together to provide practical solutions to the issues identified. Already, through co-operation between council officers, head teachers and governing bodies much had been achieved but the strategy would provide a focal point for delivering further development.

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

- The strategy was not prescriptive in determining a minimum school size but principle five within the strategy provided guidance as to the issues to be considered
- Positive discussions with a number of schools had already been held and innovative solutions were already being explored; moving into the next stage of planning and debate to include local communities was critical

In response to issues raised by members in attendance the following points was made:

- The strategy acknowledged that the solutions did not lie only with the council but with all schools partners regardless of their status and, taken with the children and young people's plan, would provide a sound basis for ensuring Herefordshire's children received the best standard of education and access to opportunity
- The strategy was sufficiently flexible to meet the requirements of emerging legislation; regardless of whether a school was a local authority maintained

school or not the council retained a strategic role to ensure good quality education is in place to meet demand

- Rural school issues in other council areas had been reviewed and the challenges of making changes to smaller rural schools were often left to one side in the light of falling school numbers
- All schools had been visited to confirm the data held and discussions with schools had and would continue to take place; the strategy had not been developed as the result of a desk top exercise
- The strategy would be developed in alignment with other strategic planning documents including neighbourhood development plans
- Community and/or shared use of schools was recognised within the draft strategy to maximise the benefit of the assets; the council was no longer in the position to require schools to consider joint or shared use but would continue to work with schools and communities to explore the potential opportunities and benefits
- The potential for participatory budgeting had not been specifically considered but all opportunities for wider funding would be explored on a case by case basis
- Solutions were not yet being proposed to issues relating to the city and surrounding areas identified, however the strategy would provide the framework for identifying solutions
- There was no evidence to suggest areas of concern in relation to staff morale were specifically related to shared leadership arrangements; any such concerns should be brought to the attention of the head teacher and governing body of the school in question in the first instance
- The strategy was aligned to the growth identified within the core strategy and investment requirements in those areas were accepted although the detail of how that investment was used would be determined as more concrete plans evolved
- The specialist educational advisor for children with disabilities had been consulted

The cabinet member infrastructure emphasised the value of a coherent plan and effective engagement with communities in securing government and other funding to deliver fit for purpose educational facilities.

Resolved that:

- (a) the schools capital investment strategy be approved; and**
- (b) detailed financial plans, including representation to the secretary of state for education be developed and brought to cabinet for approval as required**

133. QUARTER 3 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND BUDGET REPORT 2015/16

It was noted that timetable for adoption of the local transport plan had been amended and, having been considered recently by the general overview and scrutiny

committee, the plan would be considered by cabinet and council later in the spring. The director of resources noted the positive predictions of delivering a balanced budget overall.

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

- Overspend in children's wellbeing was confirmed as being approximately £1.9m
- The management of change budget was underspent because of action undertaken to minimise severance costs
- The recommendations of the report did not have a community impact.
- The rate of council tax collection provided was year to date not end year position; the collection rate was holding up but it was noted that in relation to business rates if appeals were successful payments were backdated for up to six years
- The current case management system used by social care was being upgraded to the latest version (MOSAIC) and therefore work on updating the existing system (Frameworki) had been halted
- An update on progress in delivering the broadband strategy was provided
- The director of resources would provide written confirmation of the spend profile on the link road since January 2015 to Councillor Mathews
- A briefing note had been provided to all members on the one-off £4.4m grant funding which had been announced in the final settlement and, in accordance with the resolution of Council this would be added to general reserves.

Resolved that:

- (a) **Cabinet notes the council is currently projected to spend within its overall budget in 2015/16; and**
- (b) **Performance for the first nine months of 2015/16 was considered**

134. OPTION APPRAISAL FOR 16 - 18 HIGH TOWN, HEREFORD (BURNT OUT SHOPS ADJACENT TO OLD HOUSE)

It was noted that the reasons for recommendations had inadvertently been omitted from the report. Whilst not materially affecting the content of the report for completeness it was noted that the reasons were to facilitate a council response should no significant market progress be made.

The cabinet member presented proposals to enable the council to take action to facilitate bringing back 16-18 High Town into economic use. The relaxing of listed building planning constraints was welcomed, and the likelihood that this would make the property more attractive to the private sector was acknowledged. In response to questions from cabinet members the following points were noted:

- Enquiries regarding the site were being received and passed on to the administrators;
- The monitoring officer provided assurance that every effort would be made to secure a negotiated arrangement before proceeding with a compulsory purchase order;

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

noted:

- The new university had been notified of the site and the current planning requirements

There was general support for action to be taken to resolve the matter.

Resolved that:

- a) subject to the conditions outlined at paragraph 17, the listed building premises known as 16-18 High Town (shown edged in red on the location plan attached to this report) are purchased and a compulsory purchase order be approved if necessary; and,**
- b) authority is delegated to the director for economy communities and corporate, following consultation with the relevant cabinet member and director of finance, to approve the business case and take all necessary steps to effect the purchase within the financial parameters set out within the report**

135. CORPORATE PROPERTY STRATEGY 2016-2020

In recommending the draft strategy the cabinet member contracts and assets the cabinet member noted the need to ensure suitable premises were available from which to deliver services to the public and in particular some of our more vulnerable service users.

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

- Operational issues (such as arose in relation to Union Street and Shire Hall) resulted in higher refurbishment and maintenance costs, emphasising the need for suitable cost effective premises; it was intended to continue use of Shire Hall
- The cabinet member contracts and assets confirmed that support would be offered to tenant farmers and invited the Independent group leader to contact him directly with specific concerns or suggestions
- A written response would be provided to Cllr Powers' enquiry about a request for integrated service provision at Belmont library
- Discussions were ongoing with the new university about their accommodation needs; in relation specifically to Franklin House, should a decision be taken to sell the property to the new university they had indicated that a phased approach to occupation would be taken.

Resolved that:

- a) the corporate property strategy 2016-2020 attached at appendix 1 be approved and used to guide the development and delivery of the property programme; and**
- b) the acquisition of a 10 year lease of the property known as Elgar House, Holmer Road, Hereford, at an annual rent of £87k be approved.**

The meeting ended at 15:53