

**MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Council Chamber
- The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on
Thursday 20 October 2016 at 2.00 pm**

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

Councillors H Bramer, DG Harlow and P Rone

Cabinet support members in attendance Councillors NE Shaw and EJ Swinglehurst

Group leaders in attendance Councillors JM Bartlett, TM James, RI Matthews and AJW Powers

Other councillors in attendance: Councillors CA Gandy, J Hardwick, EPJ Harvey and D Summers

Officers in attendance: Geoff Hughes, Jo Davidson and Claire Ward

45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors J Lester and P Price.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

47. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

48. SOUTH WYE TRANSPORT PACKAGE - COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDERS AND SIDE ROAD ORDERS

The cabinet member transport and roads introduced the report. He highlighted that the South Wye Transport Package (SWTP) was a priority for the council and that the southern link road (SLR) would reduce congestion, provide access to the Hereford enterprise zone and encourage physical activity and exercise. Funding had been secured to deliver the package and moving to secure the land required would demonstrate the council's commitment to delivery of the scheme. The council would seek to acquire the land by agreement but compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) would be used where necessary. Landowners would not be disadvantaged by entering into negotiations early. Terms for the purchases would be in accordance with statutory guidance. The cost of the proposed land acquisitions was estimated to be in the region of £1m excluding fees, taxes etc. The costs would be contained within the overall scheme budget.

In response to questions from a group leader the leader stated that the reasons for delivering the SLR in this time frame had been fully discussed in previous meetings, including at scrutiny, in previous cabinet meetings and as part of the core strategy. He further stated that the purchase of properties outside the footprint of the road would be considered on a case by case basis.

The cabinet member economy and corporate services drew attention to the many exciting plans in place for Herefordshire including the university project and shell store incubator. He acknowledged that the SLR would not solve all traffic related issues but would contribute as part of a wider programme of improvements.

The assistant director environment and place commented that some enquiries had been made regarding the potential purchase of properties outside the footprint of the planned SLR. A further report would be brought to cabinet in the event that there was a sound business case for making any such purchases.

A group leader queried the funding arrangements for the SWTP. He noted that the growth fund allocation of £27m was not fully secured and that the council was to contribute £3m towards the scheme. He asked which budget the £3m contribution would be taken from and what this would impact on.

The assistant director environment and place explained that the £27m allocation from the growth fund had conditions attached and required the council to deliver the whole package which included the SLR and complimentary measures. Certain elements could be delivered in advance of the SLR and some would come later. The Local Transport Plan (LTP) budget would fund the £3m contribution from the council with items prioritised on an annual basis.

A group leader stated his concerns that the SLR would enable housing development rather than deliver additional employment.

It was noted that the principle of delivery of the SLR and related issues had been debated on previous occasions and that permission for the road had been granted.

A group leader queried if it was appropriate to take the decision on land acquisition at the current meeting as there was a suggestion that the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) was conducting an investigation into the SWTP.

The solicitor to the council stated that it was not permissible to disclose if an LGO investigation was ongoing or not but that regardless of any potential procedure it was appropriate for the cabinet to make the decision before them at the current meeting.

Resolved that:

- a) the director for economy, communities and corporate, be delegated authority to take all operational steps necessary to acquire all the necessary land interests required for the delivery of the southern link road through negotiation with possible affected landowners;**
- b) in principle use of the council's statutory powers of compulsory acquisition in making a compulsory purchase order, and the use of the council's statutory powers to make a side roads order be approved, subject to a further decision to more specifically identify the land interests to be acquired and further explain the necessity for a CPO in a statement of reasons; and**
- c) a further report be prepared to consider the business case for the purchase of properties outside of any proposed CPO boundary.**

49. EARLY HELP STRATEGY

The cabinet member health and wellbeing introduced the report. She stated that helping to give children and young people a good start in life was one of the most important things the council could do. The early help strategy was about ensuring a good start and making sure that as few families as possible ended up needing formal intervention from social care services or other intensive support. The early help strategy would complement other strategies in place.

The assistant director commissioning and education highlighted the following points from the report:

- that co-operation with other agencies was vital
- that the strategy covered a range of different activities to tackle issues at the earliest opportunity and prevent them from becoming entrenched
- that the strategy had been endorsed by the Children and Young People's Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board
- that there would be an emphasis on children and families being able to support themselves, for example by encouraging groups of parents to come together to share experiences
- that there was a lack of clarity and confidence in the third sector about how partners could work with the council which would need to be addressed as part of the strategy
- that the definition of troubled families was being widened
- that the early help strategy should pay dividends by preventing problems from escalating, higher level intervention being generally more costly
- that early help covered all ages and stages of need

The cabinet member health and wellbeing asked what the local experience of the troubled families programme had been, given the issues that had been reported nationally.

The assistant director stated that there was good evidence of turning around families in Herefordshire through the programme and that there was an audit process in place. He noted that the widening of the approach would require working with 600 families over the period to 2020. The early help strategy would form part of the package to achieve this target.

A group leader noted the number of children living in income deprived households in the county and asked how this would be tackled.

The assistant director stated that one priority was to build up the local economy to deliver better job opportunities. This was an example of the wide ranging nature of the early help strategy.

In response to a question from a cabinet support member the director for children's wellbeing stated that the number of children with child protection plans and number of Looked After children were reducing and that the number of CPCs was now in line with statistical neighbours. The number of LAC was still above statistical neighbours but plans were in place to tackle this.

A group leader asked for assurances that there would be engagement with partners and that this would be considered a high priority.

The assistant director stated that this was an important part of the strategy and that there was an emphasis on the fact that the council could not achieve these aims alone. He

highlighted a provider forum he had recently attended as an example of efforts to recognise the good work that was already taking place and to make links with partners. A group leader expressed concerns that as there were a number of reorganisations taking place across the council there was a risk that services would end up in buildings that were not fit for use or would be squeezed into buildings that were not large enough. This would have a potential impact on the delivery of services.

The cabinet member health and wellbeing stated that the council should not be too prescriptive about how the early help services were delivered. It needed to be innovative in the support offered and not focus too much on the buildings.

A query was raised as to whether the early help strategy had been to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The cabinet member health and wellbeing stated that the strategy had been discussed by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The scrutiny committee had not identified the strategy as a topic it wished to consider however the effectiveness of the strategy would be an issue for the future scrutiny work programme.

In response to a question the director for children's wellbeing stated that if the early help strategy had the impact it should then the workload on social workers would reduce as fewer families would need formal intervention. She stressed that the strategy was about working with families rather than imposing actions on them.

Resolved that:

- a) The early help strategy 2016-18 be approved.**

50. ANNUAL FOSTERING REPORT – APRIL 2015-2016

The cabinet member health and wellbeing introduced the item. She thanked the fostering team and the foster families for their work. She noted that some long standing Herefordshire foster carers had received honours for their work.

The head of looked after children presented the report. She noted that the annual fostering report was a statutory requirement. She highlighted the following points:

- that there had been a 15% increase in the number of foster carer households
- that Herefordshire was performing well against a background of a national shortage of foster carers, this allowed more children to remain in the county and retain links to their school and family members
- that the number of LAC remained high and that there was still a need to recruit additional carers
- that some additional carers had been recruited to the Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPS), providing specialist support for children with more challenging needs
- that provision of mother and baby placements were avoiding high cost independent or residential unit costs
- that there was expected to be an increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers.

In response to a question from a group leader it was noted that carers had been attracted to Herefordshire by its good reputation. Carers valued the support and training provided. Fees and allowances had been increased to better match those paid by independent agencies but it was the co-ordinated support strategy that was the most important factor in recruiting carers from other agencies.

A query was raised by a group leader as to whether the service would be able to keep pace with the rising demand predicted. Officers stated the importance of continuing to

recruit additional carers. They also drew attention to funds made available by central government to support councils in caring for unaccompanied asylum seekers and the importance of accessing and carefully utilising this support.

A group leader asked how many children were now in in-house placements compared to the previous year. It was noted that as the number of in-house carers had increased, the council was more able to accommodate children in in-house placements. It was agreed that details of the figures involved would be provided in writing.

Resolved that:

- a) the activity, quality and impact of Herefordshire Council's fostering service as detailed in appendix A was reviewed and no additional actions to support improvement were 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.**

51. PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The cabinet member economy and corporate services introduced the report. He highlighted that Herefordshire Council worked in partnership with a range of organisations and in a range of different contexts. The proposed framework was intended to strengthen governance arrangements and accountability of partnerships the council was involved with. The cabinet member noted that there was no central database of partnership arrangements and that the introduction of the framework would allow a register to be created, published and maintained annually.

The head of corporate governance stated that most partnership arrangements worked well and that some had been in place for a long time. The proposed framework was intended to give assurance and transparency. It also presented an opportunity to review how well each partnership was working and whether it was still achieving the desired outcomes.

In response to a question from a group leader the head of corporate governance stated that it was intended the reviews would take the form of an annual self-assessment but that they could be undertaken less frequently where this was appropriate and proportionate to the nature of the partnership.

A group leader asked when the briefing referred to in the report had taken place. The head of corporate governance stated that this took the form of a written briefing paper distributed as part of a pack in the summer 2016.

A group leader commented that the framework was an important piece of work and should sit alongside the work of the audit and governance committee and the constitution review.

Resolved that:

- a) the draft framework for partnership governance at appendix 1 be approved.**

The meeting ended at 3.05 pm

CHAIRMAN

