

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Council Chamber - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Thursday 27 September 2018 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor JG Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor NE Shaw, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors H Bramer, BA Durkin, DG Harlow, PD Price, P Rone and EJ Swinglehurst

Cabinet support members in attendance Councillors JA Hyde, AW Johnson and JF Johnson

Group leaders in attendance Councillors TM James, PP Marsh and AJW Powers

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance Councillors PA Andrews, WLS Bowen and CA Gandy

Other councillors in attendance: Councillors EPJ Harvey and D Summers

Officers in attendance: Alistair Neill, Chris Baird, Claire Ward, Andrew Lovegrove, Stephen Vickers and Richard Ball

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies from members of the cabinet.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

9. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 7 - 8)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

11. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions from councillors.

12. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2018-2019

The cabinet member children and families introduced the item, supported by the head of service, West Mercia Youth Justice Service. It was highlighted that:

- it was a requirement of national government to produce an annual Youth Justice Plan, the plan covered the whole of the West Mercia area but included specific data on Herefordshire;
- the report had been considered by the children and young people's scrutiny committee and subject to the decision of cabinet would progress to full council for final approval in October 2018;

- there had been a decrease in the number of first time entrants and while the actual number of young people offending was very small it was still important to reduce this figure;
- the use of custodial sentences was reducing;
- the data showed that there was a higher level of reoffending in Herefordshire than in West Mercia as a whole but that those young people who did reoffend did so with less frequency;
- the service had been subject to a pilot join inspection at the end of 2017/18, no inspection report was published as the main purpose of the pilot was to test the new inspection methodology and framework but commentary on the inspection findings was included in the plan;
- the service was judged as requiring improvement overall but was rated as good in seven of the 12 inspection standards, an improvement plan had been agreed to address the findings of the inspection and the actions included in the delivery plan on pages 15 to 17 of the Youth Justice Plan.

In discussion of the item it was noted:

- that appropriate staff training was required and this was planned as part of the delivery plan;
- that through care for young people receiving custodial sentences was generally good although there were sometimes issues with accommodation;
- the clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) were a statutory consultee on the plan as they contributed to the funding of the youth justice service.

The chair of the children and young people's scrutiny committee gave feedback from the committee's consideration of the draft report. She explained that the committee had questions about figures in the report which were not able to be answered on the day as representatives of partner agencies were not present. They would be invited to attend when the 2019/20 plan was scrutinised. The committee welcomed the progress that had been made in reducing first time entrants and supported the increase in the use of informal responses but expressed concern about the level of reoffending. It was noted that the committee had struggled to understand what the plan did, what it achieved and who it was aimed at. It was noted that the presentation of figures in a high level plan when actual numbers were very small was difficult.

Group leaders were invited to give the views of their group. The concerns regarding reoffending were generally shared and it was noted that as the plan was a service plan it was not a particularly engaging document.

It was agreed that:

- a) the Youth Justice Plan 2018/19 (appendix a) be recommended for approval by full Council.**

13. FOSTERING AND ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORTS 2017/18

The cabinet member children and families introduced the item. She highlighted that:

- the adoption service performed well, as recognised in the recent Ofsted inspection;
- the service had had success in placing older children and sibling groups;
- the service was required to join a regional adoption agency (RAA) by 2020 or to have delegated their adoption function to a RAA, Herefordshire planned to join Adoption Central England (ACE) which covered Coventry, Warwickshire, Solihull and Worcestershire;
- the key priorities of the adoption service were summarised in section 11 of the annual report;
- the fostering service was staffed by experienced and committee team members;

- the service had been successful in recruiting foster carers but an increase in demand meant there was still a shortage of in-house placements;
- both services were outperforming statistical neighbours and regional averages in some key areas;
- the work of the teams and of the foster carers and adopters was commended.

The chair of the children and young people scrutiny committee gave feedback from the committee's consideration of the draft report. At a subsequent meeting of the committee it was agreed that the committee should write to various cultural organisations to encourage schemes to improve access for young people in care to cultural activities. This would be an expansion of current schemes to promote access to sport and leisure activities. Councillors were requested to forward on any suggestions of organisations that could be approached.

Group leaders were invited to give the views of their respective groups. There was widespread admiration and gratitude for the work of foster carers and adopters. It was also stated that:

- the increase in the number of looked after children was a concern;
- transition from care was a vulnerable time for young people and required focus;
- there was concern about the impact of universal credit rollout and pressures on families, there should be focus on edge of care support;
- there was a range of services which had potential impact on children in care which were interrelated and the success of each depended on the others.

In discussion of the report cabinet members noted that:

- those foster carers who had been recruited were of high quality, including some excellent respite care being offered;
- costs for a looked after child stemmed from a wide range of services that had to be provided and included staffing costs, placement costs and legal costs associated with court orders;
- the whole council had a duty to looked after children as corporate parents.

All those present put on record their thanks to foster carers and adopters for their care, work and support to looked after children in Herefordshire.

It was resolved that:

- (a) the performance of the adoption service as outlined at appendix 1 to this report be reviewed, any risks to achievement of objectives noted and relevant mitigating actions approved;**
- (b) the statement of purpose for the adoption service (appendix 2) be approved;**
- (c) the performance of the fostering service as outlined at appendix 3 to this report be reviewed, any risks to achievement of objectives noted and relevant mitigating actions approved;**
- (d) the statement of purpose for the fostering service (appendix 4) be approved; and**
- (e) approve the executive's response to the recommendations of the children and young peoples' scrutiny committee as per appendix 5.**

14. **END OF JUNE 2018 CORPORATE BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The cabinet member finance and corporate services introduced the report. He noted that the focus from this quarter was on the latest budget forecast position and that the commentary in the report was now aligned to the corporate priorities rather than given by directorate.

The following key points were noted from the report:

- there was a forecast budget overspend which was predominantly due to an increase in residential placements for adults and a net increase in looked after children;
- pressures were being experienced nationwide and in this context Herefordshire was in a good position, however there was great uncertainty regarding council funding post 2020;
- 55.6% of measures showed a positive shift in performance, two additional measures were proposed regarding housing claims which reflected an area of concern identified in the last end of year report;
- work was progressing on achieving permanency for a number of looked after children;
- a key milestone from the corporate delivery plan had been achieved in identifying the preferred route for the Hereford bypass;
- the Fastershire project had recently won a national prize, recognising the progress made in delivering optimum full fibre provision.

In discussion of the report cabinet members noted that:

- resurfacing funded by the Challenge Fund grant was progressing, with the final part to be delivered in 2019, this would help secure a benefit to the council's economy of £143m;
- the council had used additional funding from revenue reserves to deliver a jet-patcher, with the latest count of pot holes filled standing at over 9,000;
- refurbishment of Hereford high town was progressing well and would be completed in 2019;
- improvements continued to the enterprise zone with work having commenced on the cycleway along the straight mile;
- the project to convert the recently closed Hillside community hospital into a nursing care facility had evolved as options had been identified to increase the number of beds and provide an element of future proofing, this would require additional funding and a decision would be sought on this once the feasibility study had been completed;
- despite the increase in looked after children all other areas of children's wellbeing services were spending according to plan;
- the increase in looked after children was a nation issue but Herefordshire had a traditionally high level so were starting from a high point anyway, the costs of care had also increased as there were fewer placement options;
- additional funds had been allocated to legal services to support the preparation of court documents for LAC cases, this had reduced the external spend on legal services and there was evidence of better case work due to improved engagement between legal and children's services;
- the Fastershire project had been successful in delivering full fibre access but there was a need for innovative solutions to connect hard to reach properties, of which Herefordshire had many, work was progressing on 10 dispersed clusters across the county using a hybrid solution called rural optic;
- the enterprise zone continued to develop with a host of new buildings under construction or recently completed, a further 26 acres were under negotiation, the Rotherwas link road was now 10 years old and had been a success.

Group leaders were invited to express the views of their group. It was stated that:

- there was ongoing concern about the costs in children's wellbeing services;
- despite successes in improving broadband connections there were areas of the county with very poor mobile phone coverage and the council should lobby for the major telecommunications companies to do more;
- the target for reduction in the number of looked after children needed review to ensure that it was still appropriate, it was noted that decisions on children needing care would continue to be made on a case by case basis;
- the strengths based approach from adults social care was welcomed, however it was worrying that the delayed transfer of care was below target;
- there was a reported increase in the number of staff absent through stress and the council should look at what support was offered to staff.

It was resolved that:

- a) **the projected financial outturn and performance for the first three months of 2018/19 were reviewed and cabinet determined any additional actions required to achieve improvement; and**
- b) **The following measures be added to the corporate delivery plan 2018/19:**
 - **time taken to process housing benefit change of circumstances; and**
 - **time taken to process housing benefit new claims.**

The meeting ended at 11.31 am

Chairman

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 27 September 2018**Question 1****Mrs Wegg-Prosser, Breinton****To: cabinet member, infrastructure**

It's good to note the publication this August of the combined 2016/17 and 2017/18 'Annual' Progress Report on the Local Transport Plan with its reference to 'significantly improved access to the Hereford railway station', but there is much more to be done in this area for which around £7M is available from the remaining budget for the City Centre Transport Package. Is it the building design requirements for the new University that are delaying the roll-out of the current plans for a transport hub at the station, improved safe cycling and walking routes throughout the City, and a realistic Master Plan for Hereford?

Response

There is no delay to our plans to improve Hereford's infrastructure. The Hereford City Centre Transport Package includes a range of public realm projects which will regenerate the areas of Commercial Road, Blueschool and Newmarket Street as well as the provision of a new high quality transport hub at the train station. These public realm improvements will build on the improvements delivered on Newmarket Street to ensure improvements to the public realm consistent with Widemarsh Street and High Street and the works currently ongoing in Commercial Street. Consultation on the proposals for a transport hub and improvements from there to the city centre on Commercial Road and Blueschool Street are due to be consulted on in the New Year. In addition we have been supporting the work of the Hereford BID team who have implemented a programme of events and promotions and are developing wayfinding signage, bringing people into the in the city centre.

Work is currently underway on Commercial Street to improve the city centre public realm for visitors. This follows similar investment and improvements in High Street. Further improvements are planned in coming years as part of the overall plan for High Town improvements consulted on in 2016. Additionally, following consultation carried out in 2017, improvements in St Owen Street to provide a key link for cyclists into the city centre from the east of Hereford will, subject to due legal process, be delivered next spring.

The Hereford Area Plan, currently in development, will include policies and proposals for growth in the historic city of Hereford including specific proposals for housing, employment and urban regeneration. In doing so, the plan must also protect and enhance its attractive built and natural environment, providing for its current and future community needs. The consultation on housing and employment site options for inclusion in the plan is underway and closes on 8 October; the plan is currently scheduled for adoption in the summer of 2020.

The council is helping to facilitate the development of NMiTE, the new university, in Hereford by supporting the planning process, transport, property, economic, and urban/city planning, ensuring the city is as fit as possible to support a university which will increase the range of higher education provision for our young people, improve the balance between business demand and the supply of skills and qualifications locally, and make a significant contribution to the wider Herefordshire economy.

Question 2**Mr A Morawiecki, Breinton****To: cabinet member, infrastructure**

The Cabinet meeting in July approved spend of up to £2.45million in respect of further developing the proposed Hereford “Bypass” project. Would the cabinet member please confirm how much money was spent on the cost of expert witnesses attending and giving advice at various committee and cabinet meetings in 2017 and 2018?

Response

The £2.45m approved in the Hereford Transport Package July cabinet will fund the further development of the red route approved by cabinet as the preferred route at that meeting subsequent to that decision.

Cabinet meetings have not been attended by ‘expert witnesses’. In accordance with normal practice, officers of the council and contracted consultants have been in attendance to provide any technical detail cabinet members may have required to support the reports being considered. Attending these meetings forms part of officers’ duties and the service we procure from our partner contractors BBLP and WSP; it is not an additional cost to the project.

Question 3**Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton****To: cabinet member, infrastructure**

In Appendix B - the Capital Budget forecast for 2018/19, the South Wye Transport Package budget for 2018/19 is £15.5million with £4.5million spent in the period to the end of May 2018. I calculate that this would bring the total project spend to date to £9.5million. Would the Cabinet member please explain how much of this spend has been funded by the Department for Transport over the whole project to date?

Response

The figures as represented in the question do not accurately reflect those set out in Appendix B. The £4.5m quoted in the question as being spent in the first two months of this year is the forecast spend on the South Wye Transport Package for the financial year 2018/2019. Total spend to date on the project is £5.014m. The council receives no funding direct from the Department for Transport but from the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, which has to date released £3.844m.