

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 23 February 2023

### Question 1

**Mr P McKay, Leominster**

**To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport**

May I please have an update on progress re adding a link on the PROW website to increase the visibility and availability of the Public Rights of Way Glossary of Terms that includes CRF, reference reply to question of 27 October?

### **Response**

Thank you for reminding me that I had promised that the “Public Rights of Way Glossary of Terms” would be published on the Council’s website, please accept my apologies for the team’s oversight in progressing this matter. I can now confirm that a link to the document has been embedded on the page here: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/public-rights-way/definitive-map-statement-dms/3>.

### Question 2

**Kate Shepherd, Bright Sparks Nursery, Hereford**

**To: cabinet member, commissioning, procurement and assets**

Since 1979 Bright Sparks have been providing Early Years education & in July 2022 we retained our ‘Outstanding’ OFSTED grade, providing the best possible start in life for those that attend, a key message in the council’s children & young people’s plan for Herefordshire.

When Beacon College plans were publicised we were not consulted prior to this & again we have not been! Therefore we feel we are being victimized & council bodies have not given any due regard in their decision making to all those concerned.

A key consideration in the report is to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet parental demand, I would like to point out, it is also their statutory duty to ensure sufficient childcare places.

What is the council's plan to make sure Bright Sparks is not adversely affected by council decisions again?

### **Response**

Thank you for your question and a huge congratulations on the success with Bright Sparks Nursery. I am so sorry that you have felt excluded from the process and the upset that this has caused. The project is currently at feasibility stage and the purpose of the feasibility was to determine if the suggested capacity increase could be realised on the site. We also required an indicative concept as to what the expansion may look like and some high-level costs. This is not the developed and detailed design stage in which consultation will be undertaken with key stakeholders, including Bright Sparks Nursery. The results of the feasibility are being presented to us as a Cabinet to consider whether we agree that the project moves to this next stage.

I am sincerely sorry for the lack of consultation with the Beacon College, I was not part of this but can absolutely understand how this would have impacted on you, the nursery and the children and families. Please take my assurance that we will work with you as this expansion progresses.

### Question 3

**Mr J Shepherd, Hereford**

**To: cabinet member, commissioning, procurement and assets**

Within the plans of the building that is hoped to be built for the expansion of Aylestone, what is going to happen to the current accommodation that the 'Outstanding' Bright Sparks Nursery currently use on site?

### **Response**

Many thanks for your question. I can confirm that the intention is that Bright Sparks Nursery will remain in situ. Please refer to my answer to Kate Shepherd's question for further detail, if required.

### **Question 4**

**Ms H James, Hereford**

**To: cabinet member, commissioning, procurement and assets**

With regard to 'Outstanding' Bright Sparks on site, are they within your future plans of the Aylestone expansion so they can continue to support the council with providing early years places?

### **Response**

Many thanks for your question. I can confirm that the intention is that Bright Sparks Nursery will remain in situ. Please refer to my answer to Kate Shepherd's question for further detail, if required.

### **Question 5**

**Ms Reid, Hereford**

**To: cabinet member, children and families.**

Two recommendations by the CYP Scrutiny Committee regarding the Improvement Plan agreed by the Cabinet (15/12/2022) have not been enacted.

Recommendation 2 includes:

“Family Group Conference model be targeted for implementation by April 2023.”

However, the Plan submitted to Ofsted states (5.7):

“Determine FGC model and approach by April 2023.”

Recommendation 3 includes:

“Request made for links to the Family Rights Group website and information pages be added to the Council's website in January 2023.”

However, at 20 February 2023, the website does not appear accordingly updated.

FGCs and such information would reduce the number/cost of children in care. Per FOI2022/01890: fostering agencies on average cost per child: £890 weekly (£46,280 pa). Also, family support, family advocacy and family reunification would reduce the number of Looked-After Children.

What will the Cabinet do to ensure that its decisions are timely implemented?

## Response

Ensuring that families receive the right support at the right time and that where possible reunification is enabled and supported is an important element of our transformation activity and introducing Family Group Conferencing is a key part of this. The Director has made this an element of the services' practice model and of course it is clear within our Improvement Plan. Additional capacity is being planned for and new posts are currently out for recruitment. Draft changes to our website are currently being tested and are expected to be live by 1 March 2023.

Implementation, progress, and impact of the improvement plan are overseen by the Improvement Board (of which I am a member), and the Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet through regular assurance meetings.

## Supplementary question

Please explain why:

- Recommendation 2 regarding Family Group Conferences will not be implemented by April 2023 as agreed by Cabinet.\*
- The website was not updated by 31 January 2023 as per the Improvement Plan (6.3): Recommendation 3.

I do not consider the recommendations have been enacted at pace.

\* Family Group Conferences could be implemented by April 2023 if, for example, the Family Rights Group were expeditiously commissioned.

Per FOI2022/01890 at 12 January 2023, the average weekly costs for each child in care were:

- **Fostering: £315 (£16,380 pa)**
- **Fostering agencies: £890 (£46,280 pa)**
- **Children's homes: £5,066 (£263,432 pa)**

Many families could be helped with £46,280.

At pace, implementing Family Group Conferences and reunification, investing more in family support and advocacy (unmentioned in response), would reduce the high rate/cost of children in care, variance of **£7.1 million**.

## Response

The cabinet member confirmed that a written response would be provided.