

**Cabinet****Thursday, 13 October 2016, County Hall, Worcester, 9.30 a.m.****Present:****Minutes**

Mr S E Geraghty (Chairman), Mr M L Bayliss, Mr A N Blagg, Mrs S L Blagg, Mr M J Hart, Mrs L C Hodgson, Dr K A Pollock, Mr A C Roberts and Mr J H Smith

**Also attended:**

Mr A A Adams, Mr R W Banks, Mr M E Jenkins, Mr P M McDonald, Mr A P Miller, and Mrs E B Tucker were also in attendance.

**Available Papers**

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda Papers (previously circulated);
- B. Feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board meeting on 12 October to the Corporate Plan refresh (previously circulated); and
- C. The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29 September 2016 (previously circulated).

A copy of document A and B will be attached to the signed Minutes.

**1747 Apologies and Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 1)**

No apologies.

Mr M L Bayliss declared an interest as he had a family member employed by the County Council.

**1748 Public Participation (Agenda item 2)**

None.

**1749 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting (Agenda item 3)**

**RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**1750 Corporate Plan Refresh -**

The Cabinet considered the emerging refresh of the Council's Corporate Plan – "Shaping Worcestershire's Future" and arrangements for its submission to Council in

**"Shaping  
Worcestershire's  
Future (2017-  
2022)"  
(Agenda item 4)**

November 2016. The details were set out in the report and its Appendix.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- (a) The Leader of the Council introduced the report and made the following points:
- The refresh of the Corporate Plan provided an ambitious vision for the future and would shape the Council's services for the period up to 2022. The Plan was outward looking and outlined how the Council would work with partner agencies to achieve that vision. It was a plan for the county not just the Council. The Plan was a refresh not a wholesale change and the 4 key themes had been retained
  - The Council had reviewed its evidence base of 35,000 pieces of interaction which had been compiled through feedback from residents, the viewpoint survey, business survey, and county roadshows
  - Feedback from the Peer Review had also been considered which challenged the Council on how it could embrace innovation, trial new things and take proportionate risks. The Plan emphasised the Council's enabling role, encouraging people to do things for themselves
  - The Council would be open for business, taking forward the vision of the LEP and focusing on the Game Changer programme and the delivery of major infrastructure to provide an ambitious vision for jobs and houses
  - The Council would take a lead in connecting the county, tackling areas of poor connectivity in terms of the physical and digital infrastructure
  - The Plan aimed to give children the best start in life and aid their progress through education into the working environment
  - Child protection was at the heart of the Council's approach to safeguarding
  - The Plan aimed to make the transport network more resilient through tackling congestion issues, pinch points, traffic signal efficiency, access to real time information and supporting travel choice
  - The Plan aimed to tackle waste minimisation

- The Plan would encourage people to take responsibility for leading more active and healthy lifestyles and provide support people to lead independent lives
  - The Plan would ensure that there was an evidence-based approach to health and social care support services and that value for money was achieved
  - The Plan set out a vision for strengthening communities. Working with agencies, the Plan set out to create a One Worcestershire approach
  - The Plan also addressed the financial challenges in terms of how the Council would grow its asset base as well as making efficiency savings.
- (b) Waste minimisation was an issue that had been regularly raised by the public as something they wished to be involved in and therefore the Council would continue to include this theme in the Plan. The Council would work with other councils and the Government via the Waste Resources Action Programme to achieve this aim. The Council had tackled major flooding hotspots although it was recognised that there was work still to be done particularly in relation to areas prone to flash flooding. It was recognised that not only did flood alleviation measures alleviate people's distress but also had an economic benefit to the county
- (c) The Plan sought to find solutions to the issues facing local residents, providing value for money, encouraging self-service and most importantly helping the most vulnerable in society
- (d) The Plan sought to encourage people to lead healthy, happy, prosperous and independent lives. This would be achieved by interaction with partner agencies to help people do more for themselves and for their local communities. The role of district and parish councils and the VCS was recognised. By working with local communities it was possible to unlock self-reliance and allow the local community to provide services that the Council was no longer able to. There were examples of this type of community work through Act Local, Community Shaping and the remodelling of local services community services
- (e) The Corporate Plan was a high level strategic plan

and it was not practical to encompass all the work undertaken by the Council. The key point was that it addressed the concerns of local residents particularly in relation to resurfacing of roads and pavements, tackling congestion and encouraging businesses to investment in the County

- (f) The county was one of the most improved education areas in the country with 9 out of 10 schools achieving a good or outstanding OFSTED rating. There had also been success in driving down the NEET rate and an improvement in the data and information available. However there remained challenges in the Plan to improve outcomes for looked After Children, strengthen the links between business and education, focus on apprenticeships, reduce the time children spent in care and fast-track the adoption process
- (g) It was important to note that as a fairly affluent area, less than 2% of the residents of the county were eligible for adult social care yet it accounted for approximately 40% of the Council's budget. Other residents leaving hospital would receive support from the service through the Pathways to Independence Programme
- (h) In support of the Open for Business theme, the Council was working with Worcester Business Central to promote business within the County. A Public Loans Scheme had been launched to make loans available to small businesses. There had been an increase in availability of Broadband to local businesses and residents and the higher than average take up rate had allowed the Council to invest in better wifi in public areas. In terms of skills, the number of 16-24 year olds seeking jobseekers allowance had reduced
- (i) A Member from outside the Cabinet raised a concern about the potential for private agencies to benefit financially from the rise in the number of adoptions. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families responded that the important point was that the number of adoptions had risen by 18%, irrespective of any party's political points about private agencies. Work would be undertaken with the proposed West Midlands Adoption Service to speed up the adoption process for young people
- (j) A Member from outside the Cabinet highlighted the

issue of the number of people sleeping rough and queried the benchmarking information used by the Council and the lack of any reference in the Corporate Plan. The Leader of the Council responded that work was undertaken with colleagues in district councils to address homelessness and he would reflect on the point. Reference had not been made in the Plan in order to avoid duplication with district council plans

- (k) In response to a query, the Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being explained that the phrase "extra care accommodation" was shorthand which in this context referred to working with housing associations to provide houses that could be adapted easily to encourage people to stay in their homes
- (l) The Leader of the Council referred to the comments made by the OSPB which were read out by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services. In response to those comments, the Leader of the Council commented that all members of the Council should be supported in embracing their community role and helping policy development and innovation. The key issue was to determine how best this could be done. Should there be any major economic changes post Brexit then the Plan would be refreshed accordingly. However it was important not to lose any sense of ambition for the county. The Plan was about driving things forward and not about any sense of complacency
- (m) There were numerous forums available to members to input into the Plan and members should take advantage of those opportunities. However a Cabinet Member pointed out that attendance at briefings was sometimes limited. A member from outside the Cabinet queried whether the Council was doing enough to include non-executive members. The Leader of the Council would wish to see all members engaged in making the county a success.

**RESOLVED: that**

- (a) **the emerging refresh of the Corporate Plan - 'Shaping Worcestershire's Future' be endorsed; and**
- (b) **following consideration of the feedback from**

**the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) meeting on 12 October 2016 responsibility be delegated to the Leader to finalise the refresh of the Corporate Plan in the light of feedback for submission to Council on 10 November 2016.**

**1751 Equality in Schools - Notice of Motion (Agenda item 5)**

The Cabinet considered a Notice of Motion, referred to it by Council on 14 July 2016, urging the Council and schools to take part in the Stonewall Education Equality Index or to use the Birmingham LGBT school tool kit. The details were set out in the report.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- (a) The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the report and commented that an amendment was proposed to the Notice of Motion to reflect the degree of autonomy now open to schools. The Stonewall Schools Champions Programme and the LGBT schools tool kit were both successful programmes. However, there were other programmes available to schools. He argued that schools should be encouraged to use these programmes rather than instructed
- (b) The proposed amendment of the Motion struck the right note in terms of the approach to encouraging schools to meet their equality duties.

**RESOLVED: that**

- (a) **the Notice of Motion to Council on 14 July 2016 which has been referred to Cabinet for a decision be considered; and**
- (b) **the Motion to take part in the Stonewall Education Equality Index is not adopted, but amended to read as follows: 'Worcestershire County Council encourages schools to take part in the Stonewall Schools Champions Programme or to use the Birmingham University-developed LGBT schools tool kit to help schools meet their own Equalities and Ofsted requirements'.**

**1752 Council Policy on responding to Change of**

The Cabinet considered how the Council should respond to change of age range requests from community maintained schools or change of age range consultations from other types of schools. The details were set out in

**Age Range Requests from community maintained schools or Change of Age Range Consultations from other types of schools (Agenda item 6)**

the report and its Appendices.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- (a) The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the report and commented that the proposed policy sought to address an unintended consequence as a result of previous statutory guidance from Government which allowed maintained schools to change their age range via their governing body without any assessment on the impact on other schools in the area. It should be noted that academies had their own process for changes to age range. It was only appropriate to adopt this policy now due to a recent change in that statutory guidance and provide a consistent approach
- (b) A Member from outside the Cabinet expressed concern about the proposals due to the impact on schools in the south east of the county where children were moving to schools out of the county because of concerns about the educational impact of the three tier system. First School head teachers in his local area had expressed concern about the academic progress of children at Key Stage 2 in the three tier system. In particular he requested that an assurance be given that the proposals would not impact on the request by Badsey First School to become a Primary School. In response, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families stated that there were arguments for and against 3 tier educational systems and academic research showed that over the life of a child, there was no discernible difference in terms of final outcomes between the two systems. There were consequences eg. where a First School wished to become a primary school which needed to be taken into account. For example, a high school might not have the capacity to accept the additional children from years 7 and 8. One approach might be a system-wide review although any change would lead to significant capital and transport expenditure and large parts of the county were content with their tier structure. It was important to avoid unilateral school 'decisions' which had unintended consequences. The Cabinet Member could not provide an assurance that the request from Badsey First School would be sanctioned.

**1753 Winter Service  
Policy 2016  
(Agenda item 7)**

**RESOLVED:** that the policy position in paragraphs 9 – 15 of the report be endorsed and the decision-making as set out in the report be authorised.

The Cabinet considered a revised Winter Service Policy. The details were set out in the report and its Appendices.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- (a) The Cabinet Member for Highways introduced the report and emphasised that the new Winter Service Policy would not reduce the existing level of service. The new Policy addressed areas of duplication with the Winter Services Operational Plan and reflected changes in national policy. The Council had a statutory duty under the Highways Act to ensure safe passage along the public highway where "reasonably practicable" and over 50% of the county's roads were on primary or secondary network gritting routes. In such a diverse county, the Council needed to be realistic about where it was possible to provide a gritting service and the frequency of the service. However the Council was committed to ensure major bus routes, routes to hospitals and schools were gritted. In some cases the Council also had a role in safeguarding vulnerable people. In addition grit bins were made available and parish councils had an important role in supporting this policy
- (b) The technology relating to the gritting process was constantly evolving and brine was now added to the spreader vehicle to reduce the amount of aggregate used and improve its ability to stick to the road surface
- (c) There were vehicles made available to allow support workers to access vulnerable people in poor winter conditions
- (d) A Member from outside the Cabinet asked if the policy in relation to primary network gritting routes could be amended to include all schools. The Cabinet Member for Highways indicated that many of the schools in the county were on the primary network gritting route however he would review the policy in relation to gritting in the vicinity of schools
- (e) A Member from outside the Cabinet asked if all members of the Council could be provided with



details of gritting routes in their division. The Leader of the Council responded that the details were available on line however he would look at the possibility of providing this information directly to all local members

- (f) In response to a query, the Cabinet Member for Highways undertook to look at the possibility of gritting along community bus routes
- (g) The Government had made it clear in the past that volunteers should be encouraged to take action and clear or grit roads without being inhibited by the fear of being sued and a sum of money had been set aside by the Council in the past to provide legal assistance to individuals being sued in these circumstances. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that the risk was low and the Council had had arrangements with external solicitors to provide such advice but there had been no take-up.

**RESOLVED: that the revised Winter Service Policy 2016 at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.**

**1754 Resources Report (Agenda item 8)**

The Cabinet considered a Resources Report. The details were set out in the report and its Appendices.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- (a) The Leader of the Council introduced the report and commented that it was proposing an additional sum added to the capital programme to fund the replacement Eastham Bridge, near Tenbury and the Director of Economy and Infrastructure would be granted authority in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and the Chief Financial Officer to agree the funding and put the scheme into effect. The Council was responding to two key consultations in relation to 100% Business Rate Retention and the Needs Assessment. The key principles for both consultations were fairness, the right responsibilities and the ability to shape eligibility criteria to support local need.
- (b) The 100% retention of Business Rates was essential for the Council. The Council was working closely with the Government on the Fairer Funding Review to ensure that the Council received more funding than at present

- (c) The proposed additional funds for Eastham Bridge showed that the Council's full commitment to the local community with the provision of a permanent replacement bridge.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the Cabinet Member's conclusions concerning revenue budget monitoring up to 31 August 2016 be endorsed;**
- (b) that the current progress regarding the FutureFit programme be noted;**
- (c) to recommend Council to approve the addition to the Capital Programme of the Eastham Bridge scheme and that the capital cash limits are updated accordingly;**
- (d) that authority be delegated to the Director of Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and the Chief Financial Officer, to agree the funding for the Eastham Bridge capital scheme and put it into effect;**
- (e) that the Cabinet Member's conclusions concerning capital budget monitoring up to 31 August 2016 be endorsed; and**
- (f) that the responses to the 100% Business Rates Retention consultation and the Fair Funding Review discussion paper be noted.**

The meeting ended at 11.05 a.m.

Chairman .....