

Cabinet**Thursday, 6 April 2017, County Hall, Worcester,
10.00 am****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 P Grove, Mr P M McDonald, Mr A P Miller, Mrs F M
Oborski, Mr P A Tuthill and Mrs E B Tucker.

Available papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated); and
- B. The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2017 (previously circulated).

**1780 Apologies and
Declarations of
Interest
(Agenda item 1)**

Mr M L Bayliss declared an interest as a member of his family was employed by the Council (Children, Families and Communities).

Mrs L C Hodgson declared an interest in Agenda item 5 as a governor of the Heart on England College.

Mr J H Smith declared an interest in Agenda item 5 as his daughter worked at the Heart of England College.

**1781 Public
Participation
(Agenda item 2)**

None.

**1782 Confirmation of
the Minutes of
the previous
meeting
(Agenda item 3)**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**1783 Children's
Social Care -
Service
Improvement
Plan update**

The Cabinet considered the Children's Social Care – Service Improvement Plan (SIP) update. The details were set out in the report and its appendices.

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised:

(Agenda item 4)

- a) The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the report and made the following points:
- The Council had been working hard to introduce measures to address the issues raised by the Ofsted report as soon as possible. Work to develop an Improvement Plan had been ongoing since the oral feedback from the Ofsted process back in November 2016
 - In developing the Council's response, visits had been undertaken to a number of Councils across the country to learn best practice from councils who had been in a similar position including Nottinghamshire County Council, Leeds City Council and Devon County Council
 - An action planning day had been held, lead by HMI – Lead Inspector and the senior HMI for the West Midlands to help address a number of important issues highlighted in the Ofsted report
 - The Council was close to submitting the SIP to Ofsted and a summary of the 8 outcomes had been included in Appendix 1 to the report. Each outcome would be linked to a key theme identified in the Ofsted Report He thanked his Cabinet colleagues, the Director of Children, Families and Communities and her team and the Chief Executive for their contribution in producing a corporate response
 - The governance arrangements for the Children, Families and Communities Directorate had been re-examined and a number of changes had been introduced including increased political membership of the Improvement Board (he thanked Ms Hill, Mrs Oborski and Mr Thomas for their contribution). In addition, the ex-Director of Children's Services at Leeds City Council had been appointed to provide external challenge to the work of the Improvement Board
 - The Council would be subject to Ofsted quarterly monitoring visits. In addition, the Department for Education had appointed the Director of Children's Services at Cornwall County Council to undertake a commissioner-led review of the Council's welfare and safeguarding arrangements. The Commissioner was required to report to the Minister within three months regarding the three main aims set out in the report

- He was confident that the Council was able to show significant progress to make the argument for the service to remain with the Council. In particular he felt that with the current leadership of Children, Families and Communities, the Council would be able to deliver good and safe services for children
 - The core Children and Families strategic framework had previously been approved under delegated authority however he was keen that Cabinet had a chance to review them
 - Corporate Parenting needed to be embedded in the Council over the next 4 years, particularly for newly elected councillors. The information session arranged for candidates in the elections was a positive step in this respect
- b) The Leader of the Council emphasised that children's safeguarding was the most important issue facing the next Council and all members of the Council needed to fully play their part on a cross-party basis. He paid tribute to the leadership of Marc Bayliss working alongside the Director of Children, Families and Communities and the Chief Executive in tackling this major issue. Ofsted would be undertaking further visits in July and October to examine certain aspects of the service
- c) A member from outside the Cabinet expressed concern about the Ofsted inspection process which led to schools being downgraded as a result of historical child safeguarding paperwork irregularities and the wrong impression this gave of particular schools. It was added that the Association of Secondary Head teachers had expressed concern about the number of schools going into special measures as a result of the downgrading for safeguarding irregularities. In particular, some teachers were apparently raising concern about the advice provided by Babcocks Prime with regard to safeguarding. The Leader of the Council responded that child safeguarding was an important part of Ofsted reporting and the key message was that it was not possible for a school to be assessed as good or outstanding if its children's safeguarding arrangements were not up to date. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families added that Ofsted had always highlighted the importance of strong and robust children safeguarding but this was particularly true given

the Council's position and schools had been alerted of their responsibilities and the importance of keeping their paperwork up-to-date

- d) A member from outside the Cabinet welcomed the more inclusive approach on the Safeguarding Improvement Board. Concern was expressed however whether there was sufficient time to provide evidence to the Ofsted Commissioner prior to his report to the Minister, given the Council elections. The Leader of the Council responded that the matter had been raised but the Minister was adamant that he required the Ofsted Inspector to report back within three months
- e) A member from outside the Cabinet suggested that Marc Bayliss' picture and his foreword should be removed from the Corporate Parenting Strategy. An issue raised at a Virtual School Governing Body was the need to receive an assurance that the educational progress of Looked After Children placed outside the county was adequately monitored. The Cabinet Member of Children and Families agreed that the Council should focus on the standard of educational attainment for out-of-county Looked After Children
- f) A member from outside the Cabinet expressed concern that the reductions to the youth service had taken away a valuable source of non-authoritarian advice for young people. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families acknowledged the important role of the youth service but difficult decisions had had to be made and other ways of providing the service would be examined
- g) In response to a query, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families considered that there was cross-party support for the safeguarding process. This could be further enhanced in the future through member involvement in the scrutiny process
- h) Had the consistency of decision-making improved with the recruitment of more permanent social work staff? The Cabinet Member for Children and Families commented that the level of permanency of staff had improved, particularly at senior level. This created a degree of stability and people were now choosing to work for the Council

- i) In response to a query about district and parish council involvement, the Leader of the Council reported that he had met district council Leaders and Chief Executives in January to discuss children safeguarding. Every effort would be made to engage with partner organisations including the police and health. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families added that there had been positive engagement with district councils at senior leadership level however more work was necessary particularly in relation to housing
- j) The natural reaction to the Ofsted Report would be for a large number of staff to leave the Council however this did not appear to have happened. What was the morale of staff and had there been any impact on staff retention? The Cabinet Member for Children and Families replied that the response from staff to the criticism from Ofsted had been encouraging with a commitment to improve the service.

RESOLVED: that

- a) **the progress made in developing the Children's Social Care Service Improvement Plan (SIP) and the governance arrangements to manage delivery and monitor performance be noted;**
- b) **the Service Improvement Plan (Appendix 1) be approved and authority be delegated to the Director of Children, Families and Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families to update the Service Improvement Plan as appropriate;**
- c) **the revised Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy (Appendix 5) for Looked After Children and Care Leavers be approved which will ensure that we better understand, plan and meet future accommodation demand for Looked after Children and Care Leavers within Worcestershire;**
- d) **the revised Corporate Parenting Strategy (Appendix 6) be approved which sets out the Council's approach to delivering effective corporate parenting responsibilities across the**

whole Council and partner agencies to our Looked after Children and Care Leavers population; and

- e) the revised Care Leavers Strategy (Appendix 7) be approved which sets out the key responsibilities for the Council and our partners to ensure that our Care Leavers receive the support, help and guidance they may need to be able to support themselves, as they transition into adulthood to live independently.**

1784 Resources Report (Agenda item 5)

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

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised:

- a) The Leader of the Council introduced the report and commented that there remained budgetary pressure for 2016/17 of £500k. It had also been necessary to roll some of the programme over to the next financial year. Good progress had been made with a number of significant capital projects which had an important impact on the local economy. The county had the fastest growing economy in the country in terms of productivity. The Council was working with partner organisations to increase economic growth and attracting firms with highly skilled work forces. The informal hand-over of the EfW plant at Hartlebury was welcomed. The plant would provide waste security for many years as well as generating electricity to the National Grid. He paid tribute to the leadership of the project by Anthony Blagg. He also welcomed the additional funding for Adult Social Care up to 2019/20 but had urged the Government to recognise Adult Social Care as a growth pressure for councils into the medium term. No details had been received for the additional funds for school maintenance or the extended rights for free travel.
- b) The Cabinet Member for the Environment commented that the EfW plant at Hartlebury was the biggest capital investment of its kind in Worcestershire and the most complex. Completion of the project within 2 days of the target date was a significant achievement for a project of this scale. The plant had been tested

and had been in operation and providing power to the National Grid from October onwards.

- c) In response to a query, the Cabinet Member for the Environment commented that the environmental impact of not sending waste to landfill was particularly important. Incinerator Bottom Ash would still be taken to Hill and Moor Landfill Site for recycling. The rest of the residue material would be used in the construction industry. As the amount of landfill space and landfill waste reduced, it was anticipated that Hill and Moor would eventually change use from a landfill site to a recycling facility.
- d) The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care commented that guidance from the Government on how the additional Adult Social Care funds could be spent was still awaited. The Leader of the Council thanked Sheila Blagg for her Leadership of Adult Social Care.
- e) The Cabinet Member for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure commented that the Council had been very successful in securing the Local Growth Deal grants.
- f) The Cabinet Member for Localism and Communities commented that the improvements to the Southern Link Road were welcomed and had successfully kept traffic flowing in that area. The Department for Work and Pensions had signed off the libraries which meant that the Council was able to keep all its libraries open.
- g) The Chairman of the Waste Credit Governance Committee queried whether recyclates were sent to the new EfW plant. The Cabinet Member for the Environment responded that tests of the material brought to the plant indicated that there was very little unsuitable material. It was therefore considered unnecessary to review procedures at the plant at this stage. The key issue was improving public awareness of recycling.

RESOLVED: that

- a) **the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Finance's conclusions be endorsed concerning revenue budget monitoring up to 31 January 2017;**

- b) the current progress regarding the savings and efficiency programme be noted;**
- c) the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Finance's conclusions concerning capital budget monitoring up to 31 January 2017 be endorsed;**
- d) Council be recommended to approve the changes being made to the 2017 County Council Budget as a result of Central Government's Budget 2017 and that the cash limits are updated accordingly; and**
- e) the impact of the Actual Takeover by Mercia Waste Management Limited of the Energy from Waste Plant from its Engineering, Procurement and Construction contractor be noted.**

The meeting ended at 11.15 am.

Chairman