

Cabinet**Thursday, 18 October 2018, County Hall, Worcester,
10.00 am****Present:****Minutes**

Mr S E Geraghty (Chairman), Mr A T Amos,
Mr A I Hardman, Mr M J Hart, Mrs L C Hodgson,
Ms K J May, Mr A P Miller, Dr K A Pollock,
Mr A C Roberts and Mr J H Smith

Also attended:

Mr C J Bloore, Mr M E Jenkins, Mr R C Lunn,
Mr P Middlebrough, Mrs F M Oborski, Mrs M A Rayner,
Mrs E B Tucker and Mr P A Tuthill

Available papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated); and
- B. The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2018 (previously circulated).

**1871 Apologies and
Declarations of
Interest
(Agenda item 1)**

None

**1872 Public
Participation
(Agenda item 2)**

Chris Mair, Chairman of Upton Villages Together Trust spoke on Item 6, Libraries Re-modelling, to protest at the proposals and to call into question the data which had been used to assess the libraries.

Mrs Lorraine Lockyer – spoke on Item 7 – Children at the Edge of Care and Children's Homes, to protest at the proposal to close a number of Children's residential homes. She presented information from her foster daughter in support of Worcestershire Children's homes and raised her own concerns at the proposals.

Simon Mallinson read out a submission from Stacey Worrall, a Care leaver regarding Item 7 - Children at the Edge of Care and Children's Homes. One of the residential homes had helped and supported her and she felt that others would benefit from them in future.

Ginny Smith spoke on Item 7 - Children at the Edge of Care and Children's Homes. She believed the homes were a necessity which provided specialist care for

children.

Two late submissions regarding Item 7 – Children at the Edge of Care and Children's Homes were also distributed to Cabinet: one from a child in care and one from a care leaver. Both submissions were protesting about the proposals to close children's homes.

1873 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting (Agenda item 3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1874 Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2017/18 (Agenda item 4)

Cabinet considered the Worcestershire Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2017/18.

Derek Benson gave an overview of his report. He highlighted some of the priorities of the Board which included work on a neglect strategy, domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, early help and how to hear the voice of the child. Early help was important but was now being monitored by a sub group under the Health and Well-being Board.

Knowledge gained from serious case reviews was being used and would be distributed through Learning Events, with one being held in early 2019. There had been an underspend on the budget as fewer serious case reviews had taken place than expected and conversations were taking place as to whether the money would be given back to partners or used in other areas. Progress had been made during 2017/18 but they were not there yet.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- Assurances were made that Partners were engaged with and committed to the safeguarding agenda. From September 2019 the Safeguarding Board would cease to exist and responsibility for safeguarding would fall to Local Authorities, the police and CCGs. Derek Benson offered to return to explain the new arrangements to Cabinet once they had been agreed
- There was a concern that some Serious Case Reviews had taken a long time to complete. Recent guidance stated that it was expected that the reviews would happen in a shorter timescale than previously, but it was emphasised that

**1875 Future Use of
The Grange,
Kidderminster
(Agenda item 5)**

reviews aimed for quality and spreading learning rather than hitting a deadline,

- The Child Death Overview Panel was also subject to change under the new guidance but Derek Benson felt that the work they carried out was of a very high standard with a good annual report being produced and their good practices needed to be retained
- The Annual Report had also been discussed at the Health and Well-being Board and members had been pleased at the progress made and recognised that collaboration with partners was necessary.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) received the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2017/18,**
- b) noted the progress of the work of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board.**

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Services introduced the report which explained that although Cabinet had agreed in February 2018 to repurpose the Grange for long term dementia care with 5 short term rehab and recovery beds, they had not been fully appraised about how much it would cost to convert the building. Following an options appraisal it had been found that the remodelling of the building would cost between £2.2 million and £3.3 million and it would still not be up to the Kings Fund Standard for being dementia friendly. It had therefore been decided that the building was not suitable and should be closed and deemed surplus to requirement.

It was recognised that an error had been made in trying to design a service around an existing asset rather than designing a service to meet needs. A paper would be brought back to a future meeting to explain how the services for those living with dementia would be provided in future.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- Cabinet Members had no doubt that staff did their very best for residents at the Grange and those residents within the Wyre Forest deserved the best quality service possible within their locality
- Cabinet Members agreed that high standards of care could not be provided in the existing building

- It was regrettable that the state of the building had not been considered prior to the report to Cabinet in February
- A Member from outside the Cabinet felt the loss of residential care for people with dementia was a concern. People could rely on Council run services to be able to supply the service they said they would. Provision also needed to remain in the same area, and bus routes needed to be considered to enable relatives to be able to visit.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) Noted that a detailed property analysis had indicated that the Grange was not fit for its previously intended purposes;**
- b) Agreed that 'The Grange' would not be re-purposed as a long-term dementia unit and would cease to provide short-term recovery and rehabilitation beds and other short-term provision known as replacement or emergency care beds by 31 March 2019; and**
- c) Agreed that upon the consequent closure the asset be declared as surplus to requirements by the Adult Services Directorate**

1876 Libraries Re-Modelling (Agenda item 6)

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities introduced the report. She stated that the library service had seen significant change since 2011 however in order to find the necessary saving under the current financial plan, of £1million by 2021, further change was necessary. A full review of Worcestershire libraries had been undertaken through an assessment which mapped current provision and looked at the indicators of need in the categories of deprivation, service isolation, exclusive use of the home library and activity levels. Each library had been ranked against the indicators of need and their value for money was assessed.

Various options had been put forward to shape the library service in the future. A formal consultation would begin on 29 October 2018 until 2 February. Local communities would be actively encouraged to identify local solutions because for most libraries 'no change' was not an option.

During the discussion the following main points were

raised:

- The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agreed with the public participant that libraries were more than a nice to have and offered a range of services for communities, however he was not worried that the report referred to 'data' as that was needed to help find value for money solutions. He hoped that communities and the voluntary sector could provide ideas for how to shape the library service in future
- The Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure wished to comment on Tenbury library, within the area he represented. The report recommended that libraries should seek co-location and he had tried to achieve that with the DWP; that had not occurred (apart from a jobs phone) but the CAB now used the same building. He queried the figures which suggested a reduction in the use of Tenbury library and hoped the figures were robust
- A Member from outside the Cabinet was concerned at the possible use of unstaffed opening as there could be problems with anti-social behaviour. She felt that co-location should be looked at and volunteers could be encouraged to staff libraries
- A Member from outside the Cabinet hoped that the recent discussion at the OSPB on the principles of consultation would be taken into account. He felt the volunteers and Trustees in Upton were enthusiastic in providing a service for the community however they had the support of the local Parish Councils who helped to fund the facilities. He hoped the Council would be able to offer help and support on finance and HR issues to any community groups who were considering taking on their local libraries. He also hoped there would be enough to staff to deal with the results of the consultation
- Members from outside Cabinet were concerned at the ratings allocated to libraries as some were recorded as having no deprivation when the local members felt that was inaccurate for their areas. One Member felt that it should be made clear that some libraries such as Evesham, Kidderminster and Redditch would not be closing and he queried whether if the decision was made to close certain libraries would they then be given time

- to find a Partner
- A Member from outside the Cabinet felt that it was not helpful that the consultation information did not provide details on the savings that would be needed or how individual libraries would be affected
 - One member queried the constantly changing policy on libraries as he felt they were a very important resource. He queried as to why it had been suggested that self-service could be increased and opening hours increased when the previous policy from 2013 decreased self-service in Bromsgrove and reduced opening hours. He also cautioned against the feeling that co-location was the answer as Catshill library was moved into a school and was now only open 13 hours a week. There was a worrying lack of strategy as libraries were an important service which could extend opportunities and improve social mobility
 - The Leader responded that there was a clear strategy to work with the community to reform library services to allow the good service in Worcestershire to be able to continue in future. There was a significant financial challenge however they had robust data to be able to start the consultation
 - The Cabinet Member thanked Library Staff for suggesting ideas, some of which had led to agreements with the DWP and other Partners. In response to the queries she clarified that Acorn figures were used for deprivation figures but some libraries could be looked at individually. There would be meetings with all libraries and the consultations would include all councillors, parishes and districts. They wanted everyone to engage to allow as wide a service as possible to be sustained, and that meant the consultation could not be rushed.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) **recognised its statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service in Worcestershire;**
- b) **agreed to continue with the innovation and transformation programme, launched in May 2011, with an updated set of key principles outlined in paragraphs 13 and**

14, and continue to work with partner agencies and community groups in order to provide a service within the future Medium-Term Financial Plan envelope;

- c) agreed to the updated set of potential options for library service points as outlined in paragraph 24 and that these be used as the model to shape the future of all library provision in Worcestershire;
- d) noted the headline findings of the Libraries' Needs Assessment and proposed recommendations for the library service delivery offer as outlined in paragraphs 25-32;
- e) authorised the Director of Children, Families and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities, to finalise consultation documents and commence public consultation and engagement on the proposed options for libraries service points described in paragraph 38; and
- f) would receive a further report following the outcome of the public consultation process in order to reach decisions about the future of relevant libraries.

1877 Children at the Edge of Care and Children's Homes (Agenda item 7)

The Cabinet member with responsibility for Children and Families introduced the report, explaining that there needed to be a shift to prevention rather than cure with the objective being to increase life chances for vulnerable young people in a secure family environment.

After considering the professional advice and being challenged by Essex, (the Council's Improvement Partner) as to why there were so many children in residential homes, the Council had decided to adopt North Yorkshire's No Wrong Door system. Ofsted had said Worcestershire's Edge of Care system was underdeveloped and although improvement had been sustained it was still not good enough.

The proposal to concentrate on Edge of Care Services and the proposed closure of six out of twelve children's homes would result in a saving of £0.5 - £1.2 million but that would not mean less would be spent on Children's services as it would be spent in other ways. The report

was requesting an agreement in principle for consultation to begin.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills endorsed the approach being taken and acknowledged the contributions from care leavers but pointed out that the aim was doing what was best for the child and by providing families with more support, more children would be able to stay in a home environment. There would always be a need for a safety net and not all the children's homes would be closed, however they did not want to keep homes open and fill places and perpetuate demand regardless of need. The aim was not to save money but to have more young people in loving homes
- The Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure pointed out that the report stated that 3 in 10 children in England lived in poverty but he felt caution should be applied to using such terms. He clarified that the home in Tenbury had never actually opened
- The ambition of not having any children homes was a correct one
- A Member from outside the Cabinet supported improving prevention but felt it did not match the Council's actions of cutting funding to lots of prevention services in the past. He felt that it may take a long time for prevention measures to work. He hoped that the children who were affected could stay reasonably local to their families
- A Member from outside the Cabinet said that most local people agreed that it was sensible to close Downsell road as it was currently closed and there would be a cost involved in bringing it up to standard, however he would like to know what had happened to the staff who had previously worked at Downsell Road
- Members felt that although it was good to concentrate on the Edge of Care Service they were concerned at the speed of change and queried whether it would be better to close three homes initially rather than six, or wait until the young people in the homes were at an age when they were ready to move out
- A Member hoped that the commitment to ensure that young people would only be moved from homes at a time which was appropriate to them,

would be honoured. She understood that a number of the young people were approaching being ready to move on anyway and the Council should be proud of the staff who did such good work at the residential homes

- There was concern that what worked well for Essex may not be the best thing for Worcestershire, but it was pointed out that North Yorkshire, whose No Wrong Door policy would be followed, was more similar to Worcestershire
- There was always likely to be a need for some sort of specialist care and although that could be bought in there was a concern that it would not be as good as the care provided by the Council
- The Cabinet Member with responsibility responded that there was no timescale to the plan yet; they were seeking agreement in principle and a following report would provide a timescale. The plan was not about money but for every £1 spent on prevention £4 would be saved at a later date. They were not following a finance based model but rather one which put the child first. In response to the query over timing of the closures, the Cabinet Member did not support the idea of 'running down' each home, but numbers had already reduced so that 13 Children were now in residential homes rather than the original 19 and the Cabinet Member had been assured that each young person would be considered individually. Early help was needed, especially as funding for Troubled Families was ending next year and the Council needed to consider if and how it should lobby for continued funding. Policies which had been introduced in the past had led the Council in the wrong direction but that was now being changed
- The evidence showed that edge of care was the right policy to follow. Rather than saving money more would be spent on children and the interests of vulnerable children were being put first.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) noted the context around children at the edge of and moving into Local Authority care and the current mix of service provision in Worcestershire;**
- (b) agreed the development of an Edge of Care Outreach Service to support children to live**

at home with their families where it was safe to do so;

(c) approved in principle the revised approach to in-house children's homes as set out in the report;

(d) approved the consultation process with children, young people and families and stakeholders in relation to the revised approach to children's homes, and authorised the Director of Children, Families and Communities to finalise the consultation documentation and undertake such consultation;

(e) approved engagement with children, young people and families and stakeholders to inform the new model of the Edge of Care outreach Service; and

(f) delegated decision-making in relation to the proposals for specific children's homes to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, having regard to the outcome of that consultation.

The meeting ended at 12.25pm

Chairman