

COUNCIL
7 NOVEMBER 2019**REPORT OF CABINET - SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN**

Development of Worcestershire Children First

1. Members will be aware that Worcestershire Children First (WCF) was launched on 1 October 2019. A great deal of work has taken place to get to this point. The Cabinet at its meeting on 5 September 2019 considered the progress made in developing WCF and approved the Company Board appointments and the location of WCF's headquarters at County Hall.
2. The Cabinet also authorised the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Department for Education appointed Children's Commissioner, Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills and Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, to take all appropriate steps on behalf of the Council in relation to the development of WCF and the commencement of its operation. This included agreeing the Service Delivery Contract, Articles of Association Service Support Agreement, and Governance Side Agreement.
3. Additionally, the Cabinet in September approved the contract sum for 2019/20 to WCF and authorised the Chief Finance Officer to make the budget transfer to WCF accordingly. The Cabinet also noted the indicative contract sum for 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Future Provision of Overnight Unit-based Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities

4. In June 2019, the Cabinet was minded to agree the proposed future delivery model for the delivery by Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (WHCT) of short breaks provision for children and young people subject to consultation. Following extensive consultation the Cabinet has given detailed consideration to the proposals, consultation responses and the assessment of need of affected families and agreed for implementation the future model for delivery by the Trust of short breaks provision. It is believed that the proposed delivery model can meet the assessed needs of impacted families and will deliver a service that is stable, sufficient and flexible to the changing needs of the population in the future. The negative impact of the change process for some families can be mitigated by careful planning and management of the transition process.
5. The Cabinet has authorised the statutory Director of Children's Services to take all appropriate steps to implement that future model, including varying the contractual arrangements with the Trust as necessary to implement the changes, and any future variation to the commissioned provision, to ensure the Council continues to meet its sufficiency duty in relation to the provision of short breaks.

Worcestershire Education and Skills Strategy 2019-2014

6. The intention of the Education and Skills Strategy is to foster an environment of support and trust which enables professionals and front-line staff to take ownership and ensure all agencies and professionals are working together to improve educational outcomes for all children and young people. Worcestershire Children First (WCF), as agent of the Council, will oversee the implementation of the Strategy and hold stakeholders to account.

7. The Cabinet has approved the Education and Skills Strategy 2019-2024 on behalf of the Council and noted that a progress update will be provided in 12 months time as part of the annual report from WCF.

Children's Social Care – Ofsted Inspection update and priorities for further improvement

8. The overall findings of the inspection are that the Council's Children's Social Care Services are rated as 'requires improvement to be good'. The report particularly noted the Council's strong trajectory of improvement since the last inspection. Ofsted have commented positively upon a number of areas of practice, demonstrating the progress made since the 2016 inspection. It has also set out suggested priorities for improvement.

9. The Cabinet has noted the Ofsted report published on 29 July 2019 and the progress on service improvement. It has also endorsed the recommended priorities for further improvement. The Council remains committed to sustaining the progress so far made to achieve full consistency in high quality services for all children.

Resources Report – Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring – Month 4 (31 July) 2019/20

10. The Cabinet received a report detailing the provisional financial results for the year ending 31 July 2019 and progress to date on the savings and reforms programme. The Council continued to deliver statutory services and deliver against its Corporate Plan although it was facing service cost pressures of £4.3m, which included £3.3m in relation to Adult Services. There were further one-off pressures of £6.8m relating to savings targets for which, although expected to be achieved, there was a risk they may not be achieved in full until next financial year. To offset these pressures there was a £1.4m underspend on Corporate budgets and Directorates were identifying actions around the tightening of controls and deferring expenditure where possible until a future date.

11. The report also noted the significant cost pressures with regard to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block which was forecasting a £7.2m overspend. Looking forward to next financial year, the Government announced on 4 September 2019, as part of its Spending Round, that there will be additional funding for adults and children's social care as well as for DSG High Needs. Whilst the actual amount the Council will receive has not yet been confirmed, the announcement is welcomed and will support the budget process for 2020/21. The latest borrowing and lending transactions were also reported.

Scrutiny Report: The Relationship between the Family Front Door and Schools

12. The Cabinet has considered a Scrutiny Report on the relationship between the Family Front Door (FFD) and Schools. The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) identified as part of its work programming process a wish to look at how the relationship between the FFD and schools was working. Following the establishment of a Task Group to scrutinise the issue it was decided that its focus should be narrower and that the scrutiny should concentrate on the relationship between the FFD and schools. The terms of reference of the scrutiny were therefore *'to investigate how the Service is currently working, taking into account the relationship between the County Council and School partners, and the progress made since the Ofsted Inspection and subsequent monitoring visits'*.

13. The Cabinet has received the Scrutiny Report on the relationship between the Family Front Door and Schools together with the response from the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families. It has noted the Scrutiny Report's findings and recommendations and agreed to adopt the response of the Cabinet Member as the way forward.

Use of Children's Centre Buildings – Transfer of the Centre at Abbey Park First and Middle Schools, Pershore

14. Council will recall that in June 2016, the Cabinet agreed a range of recommendations relating to the provision of effective prevention services for children and young people including optimising the use of children's centre buildings for delivery in localities. Cabinet approved proposals for the future use of a number of children's centre buildings where consultation was not required including a proposal that the Children's Centre building, Blossom Vale located at Abbey Park First and Middle School in Pershore continue to be used by the Parenting and Family Support provider for the delivery of services. This decision was implemented and a lease for the Centre granted to Action for Children.

15. When the lease expired in March 2019, Action for Children decided not to take a new lease due to the low level of direct service provision. The Abbey Park Schools Federation (Pre-school, First and Middle School) had confirmed that they would be interested in taking on the lease of the centre to extend their pre-school provision and support the delivery of health services, family learning and other activities. The Cabinet has therefore approved proposals for the future use of the Children's Centre building Blossom Vale at Abbey Park First and Middle Schools and authorised the Director of Children's Services to take all necessary steps to give effect to this decision.

Mr S E Geraghty
Chairman

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Specific Contact Points for this report

Nichola Garner, Committee and Appellate Officer

Tel: 01905 846626

Email: ngarner2@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and background papers for the meetings of the Cabinet held on 5 September, 26 September and 24 October 2019.