

Cabinet**Thursday, 21 July 2016, County Hall, Worcester,
10.00 am****Present:****Minutes**

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

Available Papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda Papers (previously circulated); and
- B. The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16 June 2016 (previously circulated).

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

**1735 Apologies and
Declarations of
Interest
(Agenda item 1)**

An apology was received from Mrs S L Blagg.

**1736 Public
Participation
(Agenda item 2)**

None.

**1737 Confirmation of
the Minutes of
the previous
meeting
(Agenda item 3)**

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**1738 Balanced
Scorecard -
Future Fit
Performance -
Corporate Risk
Update Report
(Agenda item 4)**

The Cabinet considered the latest update of the Corporate Balanced Scorecard for Quarter Four 2015/16 and the latest refresh of the Corporate Risk Register. The details were set out in the report and its Appendix.

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

- (a) The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Commissioning introduced the report and made the following points:
 - The Debtor Days performance indicator had

moved from a green to an amber risk. This figure was somewhat skewed by five blocked debts totalling £1.7m. However it was a matter that needed to be monitored

- The performance indicator for sickness rates had improved from a red to an amber risk which was better than expected. All Directorates had improved but the sickness levels in DAS remained a cause for concern. Although the improvement was welcomed, there was no room for complacency
- The performance indicator for the percentage of pupils who achieve 5 A*-C at GCSE had improved from no status to a green risk and was significantly above the national average. Nearly nine out of ten schools in Worcestershire were adjudged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding
- Although the performance indicator for the percentage of Looked After Children adopted had been identified as a red risk due to the number of adoptions falling, there was an increase in the number of children placed with a family in preparation for adoption. The initiative set up in 2014/15 to target children with complex needs had been effective but meant that the performance bar for this indicator had been set at a high level
- The performance indicator for the "Demographic changes lead to changed demand for services" remained a red risk. The Council had mitigated this risk by helping people and families at an early stage so they did not enter the system and through improved forecasting as well as utilising the additional Council Tax funds set aside for this purpose

(b) A competition had been held recently for schools to raise awareness of the need to reduce household waste per head. Stanley Road Primary School had won the competition and their winning poster had been displayed on freighters in Worcester. It had successfully raised awareness amongst children of the significant amount of food waste that went into residual bins. Work continued to reduce the amount of household waste per head of population

(c) A member from outside the Cabinet requested an explanation of what represented a blocked debt, how they had become blocked, the proportion of debts that were blocked and what the Council was doing to unblock these debts. The Chief Financial Officer

explained that debtor days related to income due to the County Council. Blocked debts were where the system indicated that the debt had aged and the Council should be taking recovery action but for particular reasons the Council was not actively pursuing and was therefore looking at other ways to recover. He would provide a written explanation for members of the 5 blocked debts referred to in the report. Debtor days were determined by value. The amount the Council had in income was divided by the outstanding amount and multiplied by 365 days. This allowed the Council to compare performance with other local authorities

- (d) A member from outside the Cabinet indicated that despite comments to the contrary, the Council's performance in relation to 16-18 year olds who were NEET had not improved. The reduction in youth service provision had impacted on the Council's ability to collate information on young people thereby impacting on the number of NEETs. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families responded that substantial progress had been made in reducing the number of NEETs and the destination of young people post 16. A NEETs Strategy Prevention Group had been established which was working on a strategy to drive down the number of NEETs further. Strong progress had been made therefore it was difficult to make further improvements. The volume of apprenticeships had risen exponentially to meet the Government's targets. The closure of youth centres had not impacted on the number of NEETs as this was not the method used to collect data on young people. The Cabinet Member for Localism and Communities added that the 16-18 Adult Learning Service had received a good Ofsted report and in particular in relation to 16-18 year olds had helped a lot of NEETs to get into college courses and apprenticeships
- (e) A member from outside the Cabinet expressed concern about the reliance on volunteers to provide council services. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families responded that volunteers had made an important contribution to the economic growth of the county. It was added that there were benefits both to the Council and for volunteers in terms of keeping active, social engagement, community payback, corporate/social responsibility, positive action, youth provision and community champions

- (f) There were a number of performance indicators that remained a green risk on the Balance Scorecard. The fact that the risk rating had not changed did not necessarily mean that there had not been an improvement in performance of the indicator, for example, the number of NEETs and "unknowns" had reduced even though the risk remained the same
- (g) A member from outside the Cabinet expressed concern about the impact of the new Early Help arrangements on the number of NEETs and RONIs following comments to her from the ContinU Trust, Kidderminster about the potential impact on partnership working. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families responded that he would ensure that the changes to the Early Help contract would not impact on performance. He had offered to meet the Trust to clarify partnership arrangements. He would also ensure that the service would continue to provide careers advice to young people who were at risk of becoming a NEET.

RESOLVED: that

- (a) **the latest update of the Corporate Balanced Scorecard for Quarter Four 2015/16 be noted together with the actions being taken to improve performance for the one indicator newly rated 'red'; and**
- (b) **the latest refresh of the Corporate Risk Register including actions to mitigate the risk that is rated 'red' be noted.**

1739 West Mercia Energy - Governance Issues (Agenda item 5)

The Cabinet considered governance arrangements for West Mercia Energy (WME). The details were set out in the report.

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

- (a) The Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the report and commented that the report set out the proposed governance arrangements for WME. These included the rules relating to members wishing to leave, clarification of access to information, code of conduct matters and confirmation of the lead authority. The Council was committed to participating in WME for the benefit of the public purse. Any future work at WME would be undertaken on a commercial basis but profits would only be shared amongst the

founder members. WME had performed well in recent times but needed to be more flexible to respond to changes in the market place especially with the creation of Academies and provide more of a national remit

- (b) WME had been particularly successful and provided the Council with a substantial amount of money
- (c) A member from outside the Cabinet suggested that an approach be made to Bromsgrove District Council to invite them to join WME. The Cabinet Member for the Environment responded that he would be willing to speak to Bromsgrove District Council and any other district council interested in buying services from WME.

RESOLVED: that

- (a) the discussions taking place between the member authorities of West Mercia Energy be noted;**
- (b) the current governance arrangements for West Mercia Energy may be amended in line with the report; and**
- (c) the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to finalise and execute amendments to the governance arrangements in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer.**

The meeting ended at 10.35am.

Chairman