

Cabinet

**Thursday, 26 September 2019, 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 and
Mr A C Roberts

Also attended:

Mr R C Lunn, Mr P Middlebrough, Mrs F M Oborski and
Mrs E B Toker were also in attendance.

Available papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated); and
- B. The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2019 (previously circulated).

**1929 Apologies and
Declarations of
Interest
(Agenda item 1)**

An apology was received from Mr J H Smith.

Mrs L C Hodgson declared an interest in Agenda item 5
as a Governor of the Heart of Worcestershire College.

**1930 Public
Participation
(Agenda item 2)**

Tracey Rochelle and Tina Southall made representations
to the Cabinet in relation to Agenda item 4 setting out
concerns about the business case, the consultation
process and the impact of the changes to the short
breaks overnight respite provision.

**1931 Confirmation of
the Minutes of
the previous
meeting
(Agenda item 3)**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held
on 5 September 2019 be confirmed as a correct
record and signed by the Chairman.

**1932 Future
Provision of
Overnight Unit-
based Short
Breaks for
Children with
Disabilities**

Cabinet considered the future Provision of Overnight
Unit-based Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and
Families introduced the report. He thanked Tracey
Rochelle and Tina Southall for their contribution and
promised a written response to their submissions. He
particularly welcomed the news that Tina had been

(Agenda item 4)

offered transport for her daughter to Osborne Court, Malvern with a hydro pool available for her use. He appreciated the stress caused by the uncertainty about future respite care provision over a long period of time. Lessons had been learned from the review process particularly about improvements to the client/provider relationship (the Council and the Health and Care Trust).

The Council did not own Ludlow Road, Kidderminster and therefore was never in a position to close the facility. Ofsted had indicated that the facility was only suitable for 4 children which meant that it was no longer a viable option. There was now a commitment to update provision at Providence Road, Bromsgrove and in liaison with the Health and Care Trust, a commitment to improve accommodation and facilities at Osbourne Court, Malvern.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills indicated that there was a balance to be struck between the need for haste and ensuring that plans were robust and complied with the Council's statutory and equality duties. It was clear that parents/carers had a high level of personal attachment to the Ludlow Road facility and it was important to replicate this relationship at Osborne Court.

The Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel indicated that the Scrutiny Panel supported the proposals on the basis that the provision at Osborne Court and Providence Road had been upgraded. The Panel would wish to receive a further report after the delivery model had been running for 6 months. This update report should include feedback on levels of parent/carer satisfaction. The Panel would also wish to receive six monthly or annual reviews so that any issues could be identified as early as possible. The Leader thanked the Chairman and members of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel for their work and recognised the important future monitoring role of the Scrutiny Panel.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care commented that the facilities at Osborne Court would be an improvement on the existing arrangements for the transition of children with learning and other disabilities into adulthood. Osborne Court was seen as a training and facilitating establishment to allow young people to eventually move onto other more appropriate facilities or into independent living. He welcomed the investment made by the Health and Care Trust to

upgrade these facilities.

A Member from outside the Cabinet commented that it was important that parents/carers previously using Ludlow Road received assurance that transport would be provided to Osborne Court. There was no mention in the report about the future of the Ludlow Road staff. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families responded that the staff were employed by the Health and Care Trust. However, he understood that the Trust had provided opportunities for staff to transfer to Osborne Court and Providence Road. In general, parents/carers would be travelling shorter distances to Osborne Court although he recognised it did not always lessen the difficulty experienced by parents/carers.

The Leader of the Council acknowledged the shortcomings of the initial consultation exercise and lessons had been learned. He recognised the emotional attachment of service users to Ludlow Road but believed that Osbourne Court was the most appropriate facility for future service provision.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) noted the information relating to short breaks respite provision for children with disabilities contained in the report, including the results of the consultation on the proposed model for the delivery by Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (the Trust) as outlined in paragraphs 23 - 32 of the report and Appendix 1 to the report;**
- (b) agreed the future model for the delivery by the Trust of short breaks provision outlined in paragraphs 19 – 22 of the report; and**
- (c) 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.**

**2019-2024
(Agenda item 5)**

the report and commented that Worcestershire had a wide range of schools and did not have a one-size fits all approach to education provision. However, the Council had an aspiration to drive up standards and provide a good or outstanding school for every child in the county and had a target that 90% would be so. The Council also aspired to build skills for the future, improve support for vulnerable learners and SEND, improve social mobility for children and young people and ensure that the county had a well-equipped and educated workforce. In developing the Strategy, the Council had ensured that stakeholder partners had been engaged through the Education and Skills Strategy Board. He thanked all stakeholder partners as well as officers for their contribution. It was important that the Strategy was continually reviewed and valued by schools and parents.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment emphasised that the education provision at all levels should be tailored to provide children and young people with the appropriate skills to enable them to be fit for the work place, in particular, he highlighted the need to fill vacancies in areas such as engineering.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities welcomed the inclusion of skills provision in the Strategy, in particular reference to further education and vocational courses. It was important that colleges provided the right courses requested by local businesses as well as appropriate apprenticeships. Higher education graduates should be encouraged to remain in the county to improve the skills-base of the workforce. In response it was stated that this approach should not be at the expense of encouraging skilled workers to relocate to the county from elsewhere.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure commented that there was a fixation in the education system on performance league tables. Although this approach benefited the higher achievers, it was to the detriment of lower attaining students. There needed to be a focus on a broad range of educational attainment instead.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care emphasised the importance of providing a curriculum that inspired and enhanced graduate level opportunities to stem the flow of talent out of the county which had an indirect impact on social mobility.

A member from outside the Cabinet queried how this

Strategy linked into adult learning. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities responded that the adult learning service worked closely with the library service delivering services through libraries and community centres. It should be noted that this service had been rated as good by Ofsted.

A member from outside the Cabinet commented that the Strategy lacked explicit reference to partnership working with independent schools and the indirect impact this provision had on social mobility. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills highlighted the importance of parental choice in education and noted the importance of collaborating with the independent education sector.

The Leader of the Council commented that the Council had an important leadership role in collaborating with partners to provide an effective education provision. The population of the county was growing and it was vital to have sufficient places in good or outstanding schools. The Strategy set out the Council's expectations of Worcestershire Children First for the future education provision in the county.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) **approved the Education and Skills Strategy 2019-2024 on behalf of the Council; and**
- b) **noted that a progress update will be provided in 12 months as part of the annual report from Worcestershire Children First.**

1934 Children's Social Care - Ofsted Inspection update and Priorities for further Improvement (Agenda item 6)

Cabinet considered the Children's Social Care - Ofsted Inspection update and Priorities for further Improvement.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families introduced the report and highlighted the successful establishment of Worcestershire Children First and the positive Ofsted Report which recognised the Council's sustained trajectory of improvement. He thanked the Director of Children, Families and Communities and representatives of Essex County Council for their efforts. A number of the areas highlighted for improvement by Ofsted in their report relied on positive working relationships with other organisations with a shared goal. One of the lessons learned from the review of the respite care provision was that the Council and district councils had an important role in bringing partners together to achieve a collective goal.

The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Commissioning indicated that children's social care provision was in a great position for the handover to Worcestershire Children First. It was important that the company continued the improvement journey.

The Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel welcomed the report and congratulated the Director of Children, Families and Communities and her staff for the progress made to date. The Panel had focused on priorities for future improvement and had particular concerns about mental health and the performance of CAMHS. As a result, the Panel would be opening discussions with the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel with view to a joint scrutiny of child and adolescent mental health arrangements. The Panel had also identified accommodation for young people as an issue and felt that a better working relationship was required with registered social landlords.

The Cabinet Member for Adult and Social Care highlighted the major challenge facing Worcestershire Children First in engaging with social housing providers to encourage a step change in provision across the county. There was no easy fix without a change in the way property was allocated.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment commented that more effective planning was required to facilitate the provision of appropriate and suitably adapted housing for service users. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families noted the concern but highlighted the difficulty in homing young people at short notice. Every effort was made to avoid bed and breakfast establishments.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the independent verification by Ofsted of the progress made by the Council to-date. The Council was transferring a well-resourced, safe and effective service with good quality staff to Worcestershire Children First. The next stage for the company would be to liaise with partner organisations to improve its rating to a good service for children. The Council would look to review the service on a six weekly or half yearly basis.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) noted the Ofsted report published on 29 July 2019;

1935 Resources Report - Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring - Month 4 (31 July) 2019/20 (Agenda item 7)

b) noted the progress on service improvement; and

c) endorsed the recommended priorities for further improvement as set out in the report.

Cabinet considered the Resources Report - Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring - Month 4 (31 July) 2019/20.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and commented that there were pressures on the revenue budget in relation to service costs of £4.3m although this was partly offset by an underspend of £1.4m on the corporate budget. The overall budget was in a better position than last year as budgets had been restored to reflect demand-led pressures.

Ambitious targets had been set to deliver savings through the organisational redesign and review of contracts. These one-off savings that had taken longer than expected to deliver but were vital for a sustainable budget in future years. There was significant overspend on the Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block. This was recognised by the Government and was not unusual but had resulted in an overspend this financial year which would need to be managed and mitigated with schools. The Council needed to continue to reform its services going forward to ensure they were suitable for future demands in spite of financial pressures.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care commented that in relation to the £2.8m overspend in adult services, commissioning of nursing services at an expected cost level as well as increased demand levels had presented difficulties. This reflected the shortage of available nursing staff in the county. As a result, the cost of employing agency staff at nursing homes had increased. Despite these issues, the proposed £8m savings were on target to be delivered. He welcomed the improvements to the road infrastructure in Pershore including the Pershore Northern Link Road. Although the Council had £460m of debt, it paid low interest rates and the level of debt was lower than a number of other county councils. £100m of that debt related to the Energy from Waste plant.

A local member from outside the Cabinet expressed delight and relief that the Pershore Northern Link Road had been included in the capital programme.

A local member from outside the Cabinet welcomed the

inclusion of £2m in the capital programme for works on the junction of the A38 and A4104 at Upton-on-Severn.

A member from outside the Cabinet queried the plans for the use of the waste reserve. The Leader of the Council responded that plans were in place to utilise the waste reserve. The Director of Environment and Infrastructure had been authorised to enter into discussions with the contractor about the possibility of extending the contract or undertaking a new procurement exercise. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care added that it had always been envisaged that the waste reserve would be zero when the PFI contract ended in 2024. It was appropriate to use the reserve over the remaining life of the contract.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) endorsed the Cabinet Member's conclusions concerning revenue budget monitoring up to 31 July 2019;**
- b) noted the current progress regarding savings plans approved by Council in February 2019;**
- c) endorsed the Cabinet Member's conclusions concerning capital budget monitoring up to 31 July 2019;**
- d) agreed to recommend that Council approves the updated Capital Programme at Appendix 7 of the report; and**
- e) noted the report on borrowing and lending transactions during 2018/19 detailed in paragraphs 58 to 59 of the report and Appendix 8 to the report.**

The meeting ended at 11.35am.

Chairman