

Cabinet**Thursday, 18 June 2015, County Hall, Worcester – 10.00 am****Minutes****Present:**

Mr A I Hardman (Chairman), Mr M L Bayliss,
Mr A N Blagg, Mrs S L Blagg, Mr J P Campion,
Mr S E Geraghty, Mr M J Hart and Mrs L C Hodgson

Also attended:

Mr P M McDonald, Dr K A Pollock and Mr I Hopwood

Available Papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated)
- B. The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21 May 2015 (previously circulated)
- C. The written submission of Professor Raine in relation to Agenda item 6.

(A copy of documents A and C will be attached to the signed Minutes).

**1661 Apologies and
Declarations of
Interest**

Mr J H Smith.

The Chairman asked for Item 6 – Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme – to be taken as the first substantive item.

**1662 Public
Participation**

Ms Ruth Forecast, representing the steering group Malvern Welcomes Syrian Families, addressed the Cabinet in relation to Item 6, Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.

She highlighted that the community spirit shown already in Malvern had been overwhelming. It had not taken the group long to identify a large number of committed and skilled individuals, church groups, faith groups and charities who believed passionately that they must reach out and play their part in offering sanctuary to a small number of the world's most desperate people. In addition to this, many groups and individuals nationally had expressed their interest and support.

While the group appreciated the concerns around funding, they believed them to be over-pessimistic and she aimed to offer some reassurance.

Ms Forecast felt confident that further conversations with

the Home Office and other Local Authorities who have received refugees under the Scheme would allay the fears expressed around the funding beyond the first year. She believed that with more discussion the issues raised in the Report which were causing concern could be resolved. The Refugee Council was able to provide excellent advice, was willing to work with the County Council to make links with other Local Authorities, and also to advise on the basis of their extensive resettlement experience over the last 11 years.

She urged the Cabinet to most sincerely to take these comments into consideration when making their decision.

Earlier this week she had spoken to a gentleman from Syria. He was a graduate in accountancy from Damascus University. Life was going well for him until the civil war started. Eighteen months ago he had made the difficult decision that, for the safety of his wife and three children, he must leave his homeland. He was now working and contributing to the community here in the UK. There was a need to avoid thinking of refugees as a 'burden'. They are people who have skills to contribute and who could enrich our community.

Ms Forecast acknowledged the serious consideration and time which had already been given by the Council to researching this subject and appreciated that the Report recommends, 'the scheme continues to be monitored and the situation reviewed'. However, she felt it must not be forgotten that, as people discuss and deliberate, the months go by and those whom we have it in our power to help, face the prospect of enduring yet another winter in unimaginably harsh camp conditions.

More powerful than any of the financial and practical points was the moral case. Currently 95% of Syrian refugees are hosted by 5 neighbouring countries; with Lebanon hosting 1.2 million registered refugees. Several UK cities had already responded to this humanitarian crisis by opening their doors.

The impact of resettlement was clear. She knew of one Syrian family, for example, who needed medical treatment for their seriously disabled father and who have seen their lives transformed through Sweden's resettlement scheme.

She asked whether we in Worcestershire would do nothing, or would we play our part in supporting some of those who are currently recognised as being among the

most vulnerable individuals in the world, as they look to rebuild their lives?

The group was working very hard in Malvern to make this a reality. A day entitled 'Creating a Culture in Malvern' was planned for Saturday, July 4th which would be facilitated by experts on issues related to supporting refugees, and with more than 40 volunteers already signed up to participate. She urged members to come along to learn more and to share ideas and discuss these urgent global issues and had circulated personal invitations to the Cabinet.

1663 Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2015

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Cabinet held on 21 May 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1664 Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme

The Cabinet considered a report on the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. On 12 February 2015, the Council had referred a Notice of Motion to Cabinet for advice and the report set out the implications for the Council of putting forward an application to the Home Office's Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Relocation Scheme. The details were set out in the report.

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

(a) The Leader of the Council introduced the report. He made particular reference to:

- The complex and specialist nature of the subject, which had made it worthwhile for Council to ask Cabinet to have a more detailed look at the issue before determining the Notice of Motion
- Since February the Council had had informal discussions with its partners and their concerns were set out in the report
- When the Council had first heard of the Scheme two years ago there had been discussions with the Home Office, which had indicated that the Scheme was targeted at metropolitan urban areas and the Government did not see rural shire counties as suitable areas to run the Scheme. There had been no indication that the Government had changed its position since
- It was not clear what Malvern Hills District

Council's formal position was; before the local government elections in May they had referred the question to the County Council

- The Scheme would have to be county-wide, so in terms of numbers of families for WCC it could be six times the number for Malvern Hills
- There was concern that the Scheme was only centrally funded for the first year. The Leader did not want to add further cost challenges to the authority, especially when there was already a £7m financial gap for 2015/16
- It was felt that the Council's priority should be to Worcestershire residents, who would expect their council tax to be spent on existing residents
- The focus of the Notice of Motion was quite tight as it concentrated on the Syrian crisis that had been topical in February. Since then a further 500,000 people were on their way into Europe through Italy from a number of African countries
- Worcestershire had welcomed considerable numbers of immigrants over the years
- It was right to wait and see what the Government's direction of travel was

(b) Members understood and shared the genuine and sincere concerns about this significant international crisis, but it would be wrong at this time to move forward with the Scheme due to its very significant potential financial implications

(c) It would be wrong to take refugees knowing that they could not be properly supported going forward

(d) Worcestershire had a long and distinguished history of welcoming immigrants: 2434 in 2012, 2293 in 2013 and 2229 in 2014; but the County must be able to meet their significant needs

(e) This was not a straight rejection of the Scheme, the proposal was to monitor and review the situation

(f) Cllr J Raine, who had proposed the Notice of Motion, had submitted a written statement as he was unable to attend, and which was read out to the meeting

(g) A comment from outside the Cabinet was that this was a clear rejection of the Scheme

(h) In response it was confirmed that Cabinet was not deciding today that the scheme would never be supported in the future. It was recommending to full

Council how to proceed with the Notice of Motion, and it was also proposed that the scheme continue to be monitored and reviewed should the funding change. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that Council would decide the Notice of Motion but Cabinet could decide its approach as in recommendation b) as that was an executive function.

RESOLVED: that

- (a) Cabinet recommends to Council that the Notice of Motion is not supported at this stage due to the financial implications, unquantifiable risks and that there is no guarantee of funding from Government beyond the first year and in the light of (b) below; and**
- (b) Cabinet agrees that the Scheme continues to be monitored and the situation reviewed should the funding arrangements from the Home Office change and any decision to progress the Scheme be delegated to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning.**

**1665 FutureFit:
Commissioning
of Learning and
Achievement**

The Cabinet considered a report on the commissioning of Learning and Achievement Services. The report set out a proposal for Babcock to deliver the services within scope, following a procurement process, whilst the Council retain overall responsibility for the maintenance and improvement of educational outcomes for the County's children and young people. The detail was set out in the report.

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

(a) The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning introduced the report. He highlighted:

- The proposal was the culmination of work that had been ongoing for a long time
- The Council's aim was to deliver excellent commissioning and ensure a sustainable financial model for the service
- The Council would continue to retain its overall responsibility for outcomes for children and young people in Worcestershire's schools and settings; Learning and Achievement was a key priority and the Council could never change its responsibility

in this area

- The decision taken by Cabinet in April 2014 that the Council would retain a Strategic Commissioning Function for these services
- Continuing financial constraints on the Council meant that it was vital to find new ways of delivering services
- There had been an extensive tendering process which stakeholder engagement had fed into
- The Council was taking a measured and thoughtful approach to commissioning; initially no tenders had been considered suitable so a period of negotiation had been undertaken to enable tenders to come forward. These tenders had been assessed using criteria set out in the Report
- The selected partner, Babcock, was the largest provider of such services in the UK, working with over 50 local authorities, and could effectively deliver the services
- It was planned that staff would be transferred on 1 October 2015
- Savings totalling £2.5m over the next three years were anticipated

(b) The Council was not removing its responsibility for outcomes in this area; this was a process driven activity to protect the service. Financial savings had to be made and commissioning – rather than salami slicing budgets - was the right way to protect the service

(c) Worcestershire needed world class education to feed in to the economy and Babcock had a national reputation for high quality services

(d) There had been a good response to the consultation and there was full support for the strategy. It was felt this process was an example of how the Council's new operating model was maturing

(e) A comment from outside Cabinet asked the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Families to facilitate a meeting between the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of SACRE and Babcock. It was confirmed that this would be done as part of the transition over the next few months

RESOLVED: that Cabinet

(a) notes the Council retains responsibility for outcomes for children and young people in Worcestershire's schools and settings;

1666 Update on Commissioning of Adult Social Care Services

- (b) approves the recommendation to appoint Babcock as the preferred supplier of those Learning and Achievement services for Worcestershire agreed to be in scope by Cabinet on 10 April 2014, subject to (c) and (d) below;**
- (c) authorises the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families to finalise the terms and enter into a contract with Babcock for the supply of Learning and Achievement services (other than in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision) after having conducted satisfactory contract discussions and due diligence; and**
- (d) authorises the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families to decide whether, and if so when, to contract with Babcock for SEND provision, and to take all necessary action in relation to any such decision.**

The Cabinet considered an update on the commissioning of Adult Social Care Services. The report set out recent developments and recommended that the Cabinet Member be given delegated authority to take forward commissioning for each service. The details considered were set out in the report.

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

- (a) The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Adult Social Care introduced the report. She highlighted:
 - In July 2014 Cabinet had approved a programme of commissioning with proposed dates by which decisions would be brought to Cabinet for final decisions. It was recognised at the time that market interest across the services would vary and that this could influence the timescales and this had proved to be the case
 - In addition, the new Public Contract Regulations 2015 came into force just before the tenders were published, which required full pension details to be provided to tenderers. This information was not then available so the invitation to tender was withdrawn and subsequently re-issued in line with the new legislative requirements. There had also

**1667 Resources
Report - Post-16
Supported
Living**

been one challenge to the tender process for one service

- Given the broad range of services in scope, it was felt that a prescriptive approach to commissioning for all services en bloc would not be workable and delegated authority for the Cabinet Member for deciding each unique service area was therefore being sought
- The aim was to deliver risk-free outcomes and maintain high standards of care through rigorous monitoring
- Service users and carers would be part of relevant service plans

(b) The Leader thanked the Cabinet member for her work and diligence in this area

RESOLVED: that Cabinet

(a) notes the progress made on plans to commission adult social care services currently provided by the Council as agreed by Cabinet in July 2014; and

(b) approves that the final decision for each service is delegated to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care in consultation with the Director of Adult Services and Health.

The Cabinet considered a report on resources for Post-16 Supported Living Accommodation. The report set out proposals for capital investment of £1m to purchase a diverse property portfolio to provide a suitable service. The details considered were set out in the report.

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

(c) The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Families introduced the report. He highlighted:

- This was a very important development for Children's Services; Children and Families were a key priority and the proposal was to ensure money was efficiently spent
- The aim was to provide further support living accommodation by investing in in-house services
- This would be a long term investment for the Council and would be a capital asset
- The Council's existing in-house accommodation

was rated as Good by Ofsted

- this was a financially sensible proposal and a good choice to keep young people safe

(d) There was an element of urgency for the proposal in order for it to go to the next Council for approval

(e) There were currently 83 young people in post 16 supported living accommodation at a cost of £2.5m. This was a lot of money and it was important to be cost effective. The numbers in the report spoke for themselves

(f) This was a pragmatic Administration; there was a need to direct the market and intervene when appropriate and the financial savings made a good business case

(g) It was a very sensible proposal, very good for outcomes for young people and good for the financial management of the Council

RESOLVED:

(a) That Council is requested to approve the addition of £1 million to the Capital Programme for the development of in-house Post-16 Supported Living Accommodation within Children's Services to be funded by revenue savings from the project.

The meeting ended at

Chairman