

Minutes of the Cabinet

County Hall

Thursday, 18 November 2021, 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Alan Amos, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Matt Dormer, Cllr Simon Geraghty (Chairman), Cllr Adrian Hardman (Vice Chairman), Cllr Marcus Hart, Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Tony Miller and Cllr Andy Roberts

Also attended:

Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Matt Jenkins and Cllr Richard Udall and Abraham Ezekiel

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 September 2021 (previously circulated).

(Copies of documents A and B will be attached to the signed Minutes).

2056 Public Participation

None

2057 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be an accurate record of the last meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

2058 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Cllr Karen May had given her apologies for the meeting.

2059 Approval of Plans for New Secondary School for Worcester

The Cabinet Member for Education introduced the report considering the actions needed to deliver a new secondary school for Worcester. A pre-specification engagement had taken place and 595 responses had been

received with the majority agreeing that a new school was needed. The intent was that the land for the new school, on Newtown Road, would be acquired by private treaty. The project would take 5 years until completion and would cost £44million. The funding would come from the County Council but was necessary as it was a statutory duty for the County Council to provide sufficient school places.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families explained it was the Council's duty to ensure that children were not disadvantaged and for that to happen the number of school places needed to keep up with housebuilding. He commended the Cabinet Member for Education for his hard work on this project, as well as the tenacity of officers.

Members from outside the Cabinet asked various questions and in response the Cabinet Member for Education replied that:

- All existing feeder schools and the full number of potential pupils had been taken into account in Worcester during the consideration and planning of a new school
- It was likely that the new school would have a 12-place autism base, although the final specification had not been agreed
- In future a catchment area review may be necessary for areas of Worcester and surrounding areas
- All new schools had to be set up as Free Schools so the new Academy would set its own admissions criteria, but it was hoped the admissions criteria would be morally right and not be selective. Any admissions criteria had to meet legislative requirements.

The Chairman summarised the item by stating the decision was a key gateway to move the project forward to ensure that education provision meets the needs of the growing county.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) noted the progress made to date on the County Council's delivery of a new Secondary School;**
- (b) noted the outcome of the engagement survey undertaken in May-June 2021 as outlined in paragraphs 6-10;**
- (c) endorsed the proposal to acquire land by private treaty within the boundary of the site as outlined in appendix 1 necessary to deliver the secondary school proposal and authorises the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change in consultation with the s151 and Monitoring Officers, to acquire the land in accordance with the delegated authorities as set out in paragraphs 31-33 below;**
- (d) authorised the consultation on the proposed school specification as outlined under paragraphs 25-27 and appendix 2;**
- (e) authorised the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education, in consultation with the Director of Children's services, to approve the specification having regard to any representations**

made during the consultation period;

- (f) recommended that Council increase the Capital Programme by the outline project cost of £44m in order to deliver a new four form entry secondary school; and
- (g) authorised the Director of Children’s Services in consultation with the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change, the Chief Finance Officer and the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance to undertake all necessary steps to implement the project within the funding envelope agreed including any regulatory consents and contracts required including the completion of a pre-planning public engagement exercise and the preparation and submission of a Planning Application.

2060 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring

The Chairman, also the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Finance presented the report which covered the period up to the end of September 2021. The main points were that there would be modest pressure until the end of the year with a £1.3 million overspend forecast; savings were on track apart from the £1.5 million expected savings for the restructure which was currently suspended; the capital programme was ambitious at £197 million, which would ensure the right infrastructure was place for the County and more money was available for the Dedicated schools grant (DSG) but there was significant pressure in the high needs block.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Services felt there had been good news for Covid funding as spending had been fully paid for by the Government. There was some concern that some local schools were in deficit despite substantial money being distributed through the DSG and Local Members were asked to take an interest in their local schools and see if they could assist in any way.

Pressures were increasing in the social care market, especially with other Councils offering golden hellos or bonus’ to staff. There was also pressure in the budget due to the increased cost of learning disability placements despite numbers being relatively low. Demand for home care was expected to be high over the winter and that had been highlighted as a risk in the report. It was hoped that the hospital discharge system could continue past March and although it had been expected to be part of the new social care funding system details were uncertain, however the way the CCGs had managed and distributed the grant was applauded.

In response to queries from Members outside the Cabinet it was clarified that:

- The increase to the DSG meant that more money was going into the system but it had not kept up with the deficit. The Council had resisted top slicing the budget so far, as the scale of the deficit was relatively small, but it was hoped that there would be some recognition of the situation by the Government in response to the lobbying which had been taking place

- There had been a reduction in the numbers of carers but the Council aimed to make social work and domiciliary care more attractive as a profession, perhaps with increased pay, so that people see the roles as a career
- The paragraph about HR implications on the agenda was a standard paragraph and the reform process was very modest so there were no plans for redundancies. It was pointed out that the JMB consultation on strike action was not helpful as it meant that the pay settlement would not be sorted until next year.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) endorsed the conclusions concerning revenue budget monitoring up to 30 September 2021;**
- (b) noted the financial impact and forecast for COVID-19 expenditure;**
- (c) noted the current progress regarding savings plans approved by Council in February 2021; and**
- (d) noted the report on borrowing and lending transactions during 2020/21 detailed in paragraphs 39-40 of the report.**

The meeting ended at 10.40am.

Chairman