

Minutes of the Cabinet

County Hall

Thursday, 21 July 2022, 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Simon Geraghty (Chairman), Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Marcus Hart (Vice Chairman), Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cllr Andy Roberts and Cllr Mike Rouse

Also attended:

Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Steve Eccleston, Cllr Steve Mackay and Cllr Beverley Nielsen

2105 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

There were no apologies.

Cllr Marc Bayliss declared an interest in the Shrub Hill Quarter report as Leader of Worcester City Council.

2106 Public Participation

None

2107 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on 1 July 2022 were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

2108 Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual report 2020/21

Steve Eccleston, the independent Chairman of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership introduced the Annual Report and gave a brief overview of the background and structure of the partnership and also the challenges and areas for development.

He explained that the safeguarding partnership replaced the Board in 2019 following a change to the legislation. The three member Partners,

Worcestershire Children First, West Mercia Police and Health had equal responsibility for safeguarding. The Executive Group was made up of a representative from each of the Partners and the Chair of each of the four subgroups

The four subgroups were:

1. Get Safe Partnership Group
2. Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group (QAPP)
3. Child safeguarding Practice Review Group, and
4. Head Teachers Education Safeguarding Steering Group

During the discussion the following points were discussed:

- There were various projects being undertaken by Partners such as Climb, Operation Encompass and Drive, and it was queried whether there were any gaps in the Partnership. The response was that there were no obvious gaps but it was an on-going challenge to ensure that the correct service was supplied at the correct time. A National Review Panel around Children harmed in domestic abuse settings was expected and that would be considered to see if there were any gaps in Worcestershire processes.
- With regard to whether families had sufficient support available to them, it was quoted that the Josh MacAlister report believed that £2 billion was needed for early intervention and that Worcestershire was mindful of an increase in mental health needs, post COVID. Services needed to be used effectively and agencies needed to be aware of what support was available so they could sign-post effectively. Programmes such as Drive and Climb existed but there was a query whether everyone knew they existed and could signpost effectively.
- Cllr Kent explained that the Get SAFE programme was doing an important job but felt that the challenges it was trying to address were growing in number and complexity, and wondered if the GET SAFE programme and the Partnership would be able to cope in future. It was clarified that the Get Safe programme was now a broader response than the sexual exploitation and gangs response it started as. A large part of exploitation now took place online and it was estimated that as many as two out of every five incidents were not reported. There would be a future focus on online risks and providing support to professionals. The Partnership was also looking at supporting families at risk and looking to prevention before exploitation occurred and support from GET SAFE became necessary.
- When asked about the media report of a Worcestershire Child being placed in at a campsite 100 miles away, it was explained that was the responsibility of Children's Social Care, however in general, the Josh McAllister report suggested that Early Help could mean there would be around a 30,000 reduction in the number of children who were looked after and a reduction in demand would mean that more appropriate placements would be available.
- Cllr Steve Mackay, Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel explained that the Local Authority and Councillors had been promoting foster care as that gave better life chances to children than residential care.

- In response to a query about whether the concerns that COVID could have resulted in an escalation of safeguarding issues were justified, it was stated that there had been no significant change in the child protection data and overall quality assurance of practice and procedures was generally in line or better than the national average. There was also continual professional curiosity and consideration of national reviews. As a way of considering the quality of the child protection process, 10 cases classed as a 'red' risk of exploitation were examined to see that the child protection system was being used correctly and the children were properly on a plan. Generally, the quality was found to be good although there was some learning.

For the future and following the reports into the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson issues which were being considered were:

- Whether there were sufficient resources for child protection, and audits were finding that the answer was yes; and also the quality of information sharing.
- A recommendation was that there should be a Partnership sub-group looking at the quality of day-to-day child protection work, but Worcestershire already had that.
- It was being discussed nationally whether education should be a fourth safeguarding partner. It was felt that, in practice, Worcestershire already had strong engagement from education through the Head Teachers Education Safeguarding Steering Group.
- A standard Leadership Development package for Safeguarding was also being considered.
- Once the findings from the Domestic Abuse Thematic Review had been released Worcestershire's practice would be assessed against them.
- The Joint Targeted Area Inspection in Solihull would be considered and what it means for the Partnership.
- It was noted that although it was important to manage and minimise risk, it was not possible to prevent it entirely. It was necessary to give professionals the skills and confidence to manage the risk. Although the Star and Arthur report talked about the necessity of having the correct processes in place, it was important to have the right people in place, with the correct recruitment, training and retention policies
- It was agreed that generally children had better outcomes with foster carers than in care homes. There was a national need for more foster carers, with a figure of around 3,000 suggested. The Government response to this need was awaited.
- With the major changes to Health and the creation of the Integrated Care System it was suggested that the system should engage more with children, rather than mainly concentrating on older people. From a safeguarding perspective, Cabinet was reassured that the experienced safeguarding leads working in Health were still working within the new system.

Steve Eccleston was thanked for the report and the work he carried out, along with all partners and individual officers who managed risk on a daily basis. The Children and Families Scrutiny Panel Chairman stated that at their last meeting Steve Eccleston had been asked if he was assured that everything was being

done to keep children safe in Worcestershire; his response being that everything was being done which could be done, to keep children safe.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) received the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21; and**
- (b) noted the progress of the work of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership.**

2109 Malvern Hills Art College

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills introduced the report, explaining that in the past the college had been owned and operated by the County Council and Malvern Hills District Council, and most recently by Warwickshire College Group. After the 2020 lockdown the college did not re-open due to there not being enough mainstream students. A local campaign group had been set up with the aim of delivering arts-based courses in Malvern.

The County Council would allocate a grant of £400,000 to the project, which would be matched by the District Council as well as £600,000 from the Bransford Trust. Worcestershire Local Enterprise Council (WLEP) had carried out an independent review of the Business plan, which concluded the plans put forward warranted support.

It was hoped that once funding was in place, a service could be provided as soon as possible. Arrangements had been put in place to ensure that the Council could get the majority of its money back if the college failed to open or ceased to operate. The County Council had been offered a place on the Board but there would be no on-going financial responsibility.

It was recognised that the Council would be showing their support for regeneration and partnership with the local community and that it was what the local community wanted.

A Local Member thanked the Cabinet Member for his commitment to a project which would not lead to financial gain for the Council but was passionately supported by the local community. It was pointed out that the college had links to international artists of great renown. The Councillor was impressed that the Council should support a newly formed group but noted that she had been impressed with the experience and professionalism of the Executive Directors of the new company. Harriett Baldwin was also thanked for her support.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) Allocated £0.4 million from the Open for Business reserve as a grant to a third party, Malvern Hills Arts & Community College Limited, in order to enable that Company to purchase the Malvern Hills Community**

College site on condition that the limited company provides an arts skills programme from the site to meet the need of the community. Funding will be committed in partnership with Malvern Hills District Council and an external funder;

(b) Authorised the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change in consultation with the Cabinet Member of Economy Infrastructure and Skills to negotiate and agree security on the property with the other funders in order that the Council is able to reclaim any (or part) of the County Council's investment, should the Malvern Hills Arts & Community College enterprise not be delivered or ceases delivery at a future point; and

(c) Authorised the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change in consultation with the Cabinet Member of Economy Infrastructure and Skills to agree Heads of Terms with the partners engaged in purchasing the site and building.

2110 Shrub Hill Quarter

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills introduced the report and explained that the Shrub Hill Quarter was a development project of significant scale and opportunity. The site had been bought, a steering group formed made up of representatives from the County Council, City Council and the LEP and a vision for the site created. The project would allow Shrub Hill Station, designed by Brunel and having significant architectural merit, to be linked to the rest of the city. The City Council had won £10 million of funding which it had committed to the refurbishment of the area and bids were also being put in for funding to refurbish the station and engine shed.

The initial stage of the project would be to develop the Isaac Maddox triangle and a report would return to Cabinet after market testing had taken place. It was estimated that it would take 20 years for the full realisation of the project. The project offered huge opportunities but was diverse and complex with issues such as listed buildings to consider, however, the area could become a real asset to Worcestershire.

This project supported one of the key areas of the Corporate Plan – Open for Business and it was confirmed that one of the original reasons the Council became involved in the project was for all the transport opportunities which could be gained such as active travel and increased modal choice. It was hoped that the canal network could be included, perhaps opening up the canal side to greater biodiversity as well as the potential for a heritage project to be considered with the history of the Brunel line and engine shed.

In response to a written query which had been received from a Member outside the Cabinet, the Chairman explained that the project had been started after a report to Cabinet regarding the land acquisition and the project was

included on the Scrutiny work programme. Strong governance was important to the project and the Leader and Cabinet Member were on the steering group. Expertise would also be brought in where necessary.

Members from outside the Cabinet supported the development of that area of Worcester as it was a gateway into the city from the station. It was hoped that as it was a long-term project, that efforts would be made to improve the less attractive buildings next to the station and future proof the project as much as possible by making the buildings carbon neutral. It was pointed out that some of the buildings were privately owned but within the project it was hoped that buildings could be improved rather than removed.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) noted
 - i. progress since the last report on the acquisition and ongoing management of Shrub Hill Industrial Estate (SHIE) pursuant to the Gamechanger 2 initiative;
 - ii. progress with master planning and preparation of a development vision of a Gamechanger 2 Site;
 - iii. the support given to Worcester City Council on their Towns Fund Business Case proposal;
 - iv. the award of a Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF) grant and the obligations of that funding; and
 - v. the preparation of a Levelling Up Fund bid for the adjacent transport node, Shrub Hill Station.
- b) authorised the Strategic Director for Economy Infrastructure and Skills and subject to the express approval of the CMR for Economy Infrastructure and Skills
 - i. to let contracts to undertake works on Unit 16 of the SHIE in accordance with the BLRF grant and following due process of vacation of the site;
 - ii. to engage consultant/s to advise on the services that are required as set out in the report, funded from the Strategic Infrastructure reserve;
 - iii. to undertake a market engagement exercise to understand the options for the packaging and phasing of works in order to optimise the conditions attached to any grants and to maximise any income; and
 - iv. receives a further report, following the undertaking of the market testing, on the proposals for development of SHIE.

The meeting ended at 11.45am

Chairman