

Minutes of the Cabinet

Council Chamber, County Hall

Thursday, 21 April 2022, 10.00 am

Present:

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

Also attended:

Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr Peter Griffiths and Cllr Matt Jenkins

2089 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Marc Bayliss.

2090 Public Participation

None

2091 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 March 2022 were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting and would be signed by the Chairman.

2092 Corporate Plan 2022-2027

The Leader (also the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Finance) moved the recommendations regarding the refreshed Corporate Plan. The Plan was for Worcestershire as a whole, not just the County Council, and covered the core duties of the Council. The Plan would be monitored periodically.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care highlighted the changes that were approaching with the Integrated Care System which would bring greater integration with health services and he was optimistic that the groundwork had been put in place to ensure success. Progress would be judged by the improving health of residents.

Cabinet Members made various comments regarding the plan:

- Encouragement for businesses to enable start ups and growth of existing businesses was welcomed, as well as improving skill levels across the county. The benefits of the investment the County Council had made in digital solutions had been clear over the last couple of years and gave value for money for residents;
- Prevention was key to improving the health and well-being of Worcestershire residents and would be shown by the increase in the average healthy life span of people living in the County. Presently, 70% of the total Council Budget was spent on the 2% of people who were most in need so by improving outcomes for people there would be more money to spend on a greater variety of areas. The new Health and Wellbeing Strategy was currently being consulted on and everyone was urged to give their opinion;
- The importance of looking after the Environment was mentioned with climate change being an ongoing challenge. It was noted that there were strong interrelationships between the four priorities of the Corporate Plan;
- For the area of Children and Families, the Plan gave a high level strategy but the details of measurable actions were contained within the Worcestershire Children First Business Plan.

Questions were asked by Members outside the Cabinet regarding the failure of the bid to gain funding for bus services and what that meant for service improvement. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport responded that a public consultation had taken place before the bid had been submitted, meaning that the Council had a clear view of what was important to the people of Worcestershire and improvements would take place in line with the Passenger Transport Strategy, even without the additional Government funding. The County Council had not cut its bus subsidies and was committed to improving walking and cycling routes as well as increasing bus usage.

The Corporate Plan 2022-27 would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board before going to Full Council.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) Approved for recommendation to Council the refreshed Corporate Plan 2022-27, the four key priorities of open for Business, Children and Families, the Environment and Health and Wellbeing and their respective performance measures; and**
- (b) Delegated authority to the Leader of the Council for minor amendments to the text during the style and design process.**

2093 Pershore Area Review Consultation Findings and Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills explained that the Regional Schools Commissioner had allowed Pershore High School to take year 7 pupils from September 2021 with an intake of 90, while continuing with a year 8 intake for the majority of pupils. The County Council agreed, in principle, to a

change of age range within the Pershore Pyramid, to a two-tier system. The schools and Multi-Academy Trusts within the Pyramid supported the consultation in order to move to a consistent education system in the area. 78% of respondents to the consultation agreed with the proposal to move to a two-tier system. It was clarified that the County Council supported the change in age range and would fund changes to LA maintained schools, subject to relevant funding for expanding Pershore High School being identified.

A Cabinet Member who was also a Local Member for part of the Pershore Area Pyramid, explained that although there were still sufficient places in Middle Schools, standards were at risk of falling as parents were showing a preference for their children to be schooled in a two-tier system leading to difficulties for those schools in retaining teachers.

A member from outside the Cabinet queried whether it was normal practice to start a consultation regarding changes which did not have funding agreed. In response it was explained that consultation was an important step in the process to gauge support for proposals and to help develop ideas. It was pointed out that if funding was always in place for projects before consultation occurred, the Council could be accused of pre-determination. The Cabinet was assured that the process had been carried out properly and the change was requested by the schools themselves.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- (a) noted the findings of the pre-publication Consultation undertaken in October – November 2021 as outlined in paragraphs 27 – 29 of the agenda report;**
- (b) agreed a commitment in principle to support a collective change of age range to align schools in the Pershore Education Planning Area (EPA) to a single, two-tier (primary and secondary) system of education subject to funding being fully secured;**
- (c) recommended officers to continue to work with all partners including schools, Multi-Academy Trusts and the Department for Education to identify a collective solution to fund the changes required;**
- (d) agreed that until a collective solution for funding the whole pyramid age range changes is identified, Cabinet cannot take proposals for LA Maintained schools forward; and**
- (e) agreed that the critical milestones (see paragraphs 62 & 63 of the agenda report) for changes from September 2024 are not going to be viable unless funding is identified by September 2022 and changes are likely to be made from September 2025 at the earliest subject to funding.**

The meeting ended at 10.50am

Chairman