

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 20 April 2010 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 2.35 pm.

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Keith R. Mitchell CBE – in the Chair
Councillor David Robertson (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Arash Fatemian
Councillor Ian Hudspeth
Councillor Jim Couchman
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Louise Chapman
Councillor Michael Waine
Councillor Rodney Rose
Councillor Mrs J. Heathcoat

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Zoé Patrick (Agenda Item 8)

Officers:

Whole of meeting Chief Executive, S. Whitehead (Corporate Core)

Part of Meeting

| Agenda Item | Officer Attending |
|--------------------|--|
| 6. | K. Wilcox (Financial Planning), K. Jurczynszyn (Financial Planning) |
| 7. | Interim Head of Service for Children and Families, F. Fonseca (Children, Young People & Families) |

The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting, and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda, reports and schedule, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

39/10 CABINET MEMBERSHIP

The Leader of the Council welcomed Councillors Fatemian and Mallon to the Cabinet in their roles as Cabinet Member for Adult Services and for Police & Policy Coordination respectively and welcomed Councillor Jim Couchman in his changed role as Cabinet Member for Finance & Property.

40/10 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2010 were approved and signed.

41/10 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

Councillor John Goddard had given notice of the following question to the Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities

“When does the Cabinet Member expect to receive the delayed business plan from the new Cogges Manor Farm Trust and how will its independently assessed viability be assured?”

Councillor Judith Heathcoat:

“The business plan was not delayed. We are expecting it next month. This will be subject to careful scrutiny by all the relevant officers including finance. Their advice will be taken account of and reflected in the public report that will come forward for consideration by members.”

Councillor Janet Godden had given notice of the following question to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families:

“The Virtual School (referred to at Item 7, para 5 bullet point 2 & para 9, 2nd bullet point from end) must now have been in existence for about five years, unless it was disbanded and restarted. It would be interesting to know how it has performed during that time, and how many pupils it has currently (school year 09-10)?”

Councillor Louise Chapman:

- “Specific support for Children Looked After began in 2003 with the appointment of one member of staff and has grown over time. The full Virtual School has been in operation for six terms with the appointment of a Head in September 2008.
- On 19 April 2010 there were 380 students on the school roll. Due to the nature of the Looked after population this is subject to significant in year fluctuation. For example 235 young people have entered and another 211 have exited care between March 2009 and 2010.

- The educational achievement remains a challenge at key stage 2 and 4 with attendance being an issue - we are currently performing around our statistical neighbour at key stage 4 average and below at key stage 2, although again this is subject to change.
- The **attendance** issues have been caused in part by lack of education provision and by late entries to care of young people with very troubled histories.
- There are a range of strategies in place to increase the amount of provision for CYP with special educational needs and training programmes in place for designated teachers, social workers and foster carers to support re-engagement and regular school attendance. Structural changes to the Virtual school and inclusion teams will also mean a more local focus on Children Looked After within areas which should also increase the support to CYP and their networks. .
- The cohorts are small between key stage 2 and 4. At key stage 2 varying between 11 and 16 and at Key stage 4 between 40 and 50 and therefore results as a percentage are subject to wide variation.
- In recent years (since 2005) the percentage of the cohort attaining 1 GCSE or GNVQ has been consistently high and in line with the national average. The exception to this being in 2008.
- 5A*-G peaked in 2007 at 63% and 2009 it was 46% which represented an increase of 7% on 2008 figures
- In 2009, 5+ A*-C improved by 5% from 10 to 15%, which is above the National average for 2008 and 5+ A*-C including English and Maths by +3% from 5% - 8%. 15% represents only 7 children."

Councillor Janet Godden had given notice of the following questions to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families:

"The number of voluntarily accommodated children seems high (annex 1, V2 under Legal status). Please can you tell me whether this is going up or down over time, or is steady state?"

Councillor Louise Chapman:

- "The number of voluntarily accommodated children has risen by 8%, as a proportion of the total CLA, since 2007. This is lower than numbers for our statistical neighbours. Oxon's overall numbers of CLA/10,000 remains below our statistical neighbours.
- The proportion of 16+ in care has increased with more CYP staying on in education and wanting to remain looked after for longer. This is in line with expectations of the 2008 CA and new case law, entitling

homeless young people aged 16 and 17 to full accommodation and support.

- Wherever possible the Local Authority tries to work in partnership with parents. We believe that wherever possible children are best placed within their own family environment. Where this is not possible we will seek to safeguard the welfare of children by voluntary agreement with parents or we will seek court agreement under care proceedings and then help these CYP exit the care system to permanent placements when ever possible.

42/10 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

The following requests to address the meeting had been agreed:

| Speaker | Item |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Councillor Zoé Patrick | 8. Appointments to Outside Bodies |

43/10 FINANCIAL MONITORING - APRIL 2010

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet considered the eleventh financial monitoring report for the 2009/10 financial year covering the period up to the end of February 2010. It included projections for revenue, balances, reserves and capital monitoring.

The in – year Directorate forecast was an overspend of +£3.619m. After taking account of calls on balances (pending or to be approved) it was expected that the overspend reported this month would reduce to +£0.884m or +0.24% of the budget by year end.

The current position for general balances showed a forecast of £10.578m after taking account of agreed and proposed requests for supplementary estimates. After taking into account the forecast Directorate overspend adjusted for supplementary estimates requested to date the consolidated revenue balances forecast was £9.321m.

Cabinet noted an amended annex 8, and considered annex 9, which was marked to follow on the original agenda.

Cabinet also considered a supplementary report and recommendations relating to adjustments to the 2010/11 budget concerning Personal Care at Home Grant for 2010/11 and the write off of a bad debt.

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Property highlighted three areas that continued as pressure points. Children’s placements were still rising; young unaccompanied asylum seekers was beginning to see a resolution but the underlying problem of lack of proper resourcing by central government remained; and ICT was a known difficulty where action was being taken. He also referred to pooled budgets that were likely to end up close to budget

following the funding from the PCT. However he continued to be concerned about some of the underlying structure, and would continue to monitor closely seeking additional information.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families confirmed that the issues around young unaccompanied asylum seekers were a national problem and Councils had lobbied government with some limited success. Children's placements were demand led and social worker's made decisions based on the best interests of the County's vulnerable youngsters. A successful bid had been made with regard to foster caring initiatives and she would be discussing this with the Chief finance officer to explore options to invest to save.

The Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement referred to steps being taken around the schools repairs and maintenance budgets.

The Deputy Leader confirmed that steps were being taken to address the ICT overspend but that the budget would remain pretty tight.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) note the report;
- (b) approve the supplementary estimate request of £0.060m in relation to legal fees over £0.025m in Annex 2f and paragraph 68;
- (c) note the latest position relating to the Personal Care at Home bill;
- (d) agree the write off of a bad debt of £16,456 as set out in paragraph 73 and 74;
- (e) note the increase of £1.081m in the provisional allocation for the Personal Care at Home Grant for 2010/11 as set out in paragraph 97;
- (f) note the removal of £0.6m Green Book pay inflation from 2010/11 budgets as shown in Annex 8 and paragraph 98 & 99;
- (g) note the addition to Council budgets of £0.1m Teachers' pay inflation as set out in paragraph 100; and
- (h) agree the virements to Children, Young People & Families budgets for 2010/11 as set out in Annex 9 and paragraph 101.

44/10 PROGRESS REPORT ON CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND LEAVING CARE

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet considered one of regular reports that came to Cabinet on its role as legal "Corporate Parent" to the Children and Young People Looked After by the Council, and those Leaving Care to live independently.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families in introducing the report highlighted the work of the Children in Care Council who were holding their own Conference in June 2010. She also referred to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel in carrying out inspections of Children's Homes which had led to a number of issues being addressed. She thanked members for their involvement. The Pledge made by Cabinet had had positive results with computers being provided to youngsters who were very positive about the benefits gained. She paid tribute to the virtual school who did an outstanding job.

The Cabinet Member also referred to the challenge in relation to childrens' placements and steps taken to ensure that the service provided was better than good.

The Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement added that schools and governors were reminded of their corporate parenting responsibilities. Schools had a specific staff member, there were individual education plans and schools worked successfully through and with others in the virtual school.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) continue to support the Corporate Parenting Strategy;
- (b) note the information on outcomes for our Looked After Children, and the service performance measures; and
- (c) take note that a revised placement strategy is expected to return to Cabinet in June 2010.

45/10 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet considered a report on an appointment to the Learning Disability Partnership Board.

Councillor Zoe Patrick, Leader of the Opposition, suggested Councillor Janet Godden for the role, noting that she had at one time been Co-Chairman and that she had all the necessary skills and experience for the post.

The Leader thanked Councillor Patrick for her suggestion and commented that he did not doubt Councillor Godden's skills. However he was proposing Councillor Neil Owen who also had the necessary skills and would represent the administration .

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families suggested that if it were possible she would have no objection to Councillor Godden deputising for Councillor Owen.

RESOLVED: to agree the appointment of Councillor Neil Owen to be the co-chairman of the Learning Disability Partnership on the same basis as other appointments to Standing Advisory Bodies.

46/10 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 9)

The Cabinet considered a list of items (CA9) for the immediately forthcoming meetings of the Cabinet together with changes and additions set out in the schedule of addenda.

RESOLVED: to note the items currently identified for forthcoming meetings.

47/10 DELEGATED POWERS OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

(Agenda Item. 10)

RESOLVED: to note the details of the executive decisions taken by the Chief Executive under the specific powers and functions delegated to her under the terms of Part 7.4 of the Council's Constitution and set out on the schedule to the agenda item.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

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