

Minutes

Cabinet

Date: 4 March 2019

Venue: Mezzanine Rooms 1 & 2, County Hall, Aylesbury

Time: 10.30 am to 12.00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr M Tett (in the Chair).

Mr M Appleyard, Mr N Brown, Mr W Chapple OBE, Mr J Chilver, Lin Hazell, Mr M Shaw and Mr W Whyte

OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Julia Wassell, Mrs W Mallen, Mrs A Cranmer and Mr M Hussain

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ms R Bennett, Mr R Ambrose, Mrs S Ashmead, Ms R Shimmin, Mr T Vouyioukas,
Miss S Callaghan, Mr G Morgan, Mr P Robson and Ms S Turnbull

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

Mrs A Cranmer, Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Skills was in attendance.

Other members in attendance were Mrs W Mallen, Mr M Hussain and Julia Wassell.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2019 were **AGREED** as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2019 were **AGREED** as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4 HOT TOPICS

Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment highlighted the ongoing success of the SCRAP (Suspect, Check, Refuse, Ask, Paperwork) fly tipping campaign. Since the launch of the campaign last summer there had been a decrease for the first time in six years. Mr Chapple stated that the previous five years' average annual increase was 14% a year, but based on 10 months' of data this year; they were expected to record a fall of at least 7.5%. Mr Chapple said that although it was early days, it was encouraging to see that the campaign messages are making an impact. There would be a repeat of main messages over the coming weeks in press statements and on social media. Mr Chapple reaffirmed that the County Council had a zero tolerance policy on fly tipping with 1 in 38 prosecuted compared to the national of 1 in 638.

Cabinet Member for Transportation highlighted that the plane and patch scheme had commenced with an additional £4.6m this year in the budget on top of the annual road surfacing budget. Mr Tett commented that potholes were the single biggest complaint for the council and the advantages of plane and patching was in being able to cover larger areas of road surface rather than filling individual holes. Mr Tett also confirmed that the additional budget for weed spraying would be focussed on town centres and major village centres.

5 QUESTION TIME

Julia Wassell, County Councillor for Ryemead and Micklefield, thanked Mr M Shaw, Cabinet Member for Transportation, for his updates regarding the A40 project but asked that they were issued in a timelier manner. There were however a number of concerns including the Micklefield turn and pavement where cars and vans were driving over the pavement and no action had been taken and would like an update. Julia Wassell also highlighted that residents over the weekend had cleared all the buddleia plants from London Road as they felt they could not wait until year end.

Mr Shaw confirmed that he would provide an update on the A40 project. Mr Shaw also thanked residents for their work clearing buddleia plants. Mr Shaw stated that there would be two teams out clearing such areas.

Julia Wassell highlighted to Mr W Whyte, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, the low morale and high pressures across staff in the service area and in particularly social workers. Julia Wassell also highlighted the decision to be taken at the meeting regarding early help and the future of children's centres and the hope that more key stakeholders would have been

involved. Julia Wassell was pleased that the east wycombe children's centre, hampden way, was now included in the proposals, however other centres were still at risk and could Cabinet ensure that the morale issue was being addressed and provisions are being sought for those centres that are not becoming family centres.

Mr Whyte responded by highlighting the appendix in the report that related to all the proposed future uses of the 35 current sites and the preferred future usage of those centres to no longer to be used as children's centres. In reference to low morale, Mr Whyte stated that he appreciated the hard work that they did and the challenges they faced with case work workload. Mr Whyte mentioned that the Ofsted monitoring letter in January touched on improvements in morale and if there were particular issues that needed highlighting he would speak directly with Julia Wassell to pick these up.

Julia Wassell asked Mr J Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources, if he was pursuing the transit site for travellers. Mr Chilver stated that he was not aware of the site and would look into it and go back to Julia outside of the meeting.

Mr M Hussain, County Councillor for Booker, Cressex and Castlefield asked how many outreach staff would be affected by the new early help model. Mr Whyte stated that he would provide a written answer to Mr Hussain.

Mr Hussain also asked what the implications were of the unitary decision and if this would have an impact on the early help decision made. Mr Tett stated that this issue was a policy matter for the County Council which would exist until April 2020. Mr Tett went on to say that there was a financial pressure now that needed to be addressed and the existing way that the council intervene early was not effective and there was an obligation to improve. It was noted that there would be a new council elected in May 2020, and with the children's service improvement report, Children's Services would be ring-fenced during the transition period so they would not initially expect any additional changes. Mr Whyte reiterated that the council could not wait to make changes and that a new council would also be able to make policy decisions as part of the new council, but these would need to be reconciled with the Children's Commissioner and Ofsted.

6 FORWARD PLAN FOR CABINET AND CABINET MEMBERS

RESOLVED: Cabinet NOTED the report.

7 CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

RESOLVED: Cabinet NOTED the report.

8 SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME & INQUIRY WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: Cabinet NOTED the report.

9 EARLY HELP REVIEW

Mr T Vouyioukas, Executive Director for Children's Services, Ms S Callaghan, Service Director for Education, Ms S Turnbull, Early Help Programme Manager, and Mr G Morgan, Head of Early Help, attended the meeting to answer member questions.

Mr Whyte, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, took members through the report included in the agenda pack. Mr Whyte made reference to the Cabinet Member report, the consultation findings, the Early Help Strategy (a partnership document setting out the policy and strategy for delivering Early Help co-signed by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and all stakeholders), the proposed new service 'Family Support Service', the family centre site location report and the completed quality impact assessment.

Mr Whyte highlighted the following points:

- Cabinet were being asked to agree the new Early Help service, to be called the Family Support Service.
- Children's Services were on a road to improvement and the early help review was an important part of the process.
- There had been a lengthy consultation process which had included six public sessions resulting in improved offers from the draft proposal.
- The new Family Support Service would be an integrated service working in partnership with key stakeholders.
- There had been an increase from 14 proposed centres in the draft proposal to 16 ensuring there was still a physical presence in local communities.
- The centres would provide a wide range of professional advice and services able to respond to issues in the community.
- There would be a named link officer for each school.
- There would be improvements to the Buckinghamshire Family Information Services.

Mr T Vouyioukas also highlighted that:

- The model was based on helping families to identify their needs early.
- The existing offer was not reaching the right families at the right time and there had been an increase in the number of vulnerable families and children needing support. Mr Vouyioukas stated that it was not just about the physical presence of a building but ensuring the right professional support was available at the right time.
- The consultation had been over a 10 week period.
- Mr Vouyioukas thanked colleagues across health, schools and the voluntary sector for their contribution to the strategy.

Cabinet raised and discussed the following points:

- Following a question from Mr Tett, Mr Whyte confirmed that public health services currently provided at the centres would remain accessible. Mr Brown, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health, added that contracts for those services were for three years and would continue and work in conjunction with the family centres. Mr Vouyioukas confirmed that public health services to support families were

commissioned by the council; with approximately £7.6 million per annum spend. These services were not in-scope of the review.

- Mr Brown supported the review and highlighted the importance of intervening early in a child's life and Mr Whyte confirmed that only 5% of those accessing the children's centres had an identified need for support which meant that some children were being reached too late.
- Mr Chilver supported the proposal and the suggestion to change to family centres. Mr Chilver highlighted improvements to the family information website which was critical to ensure access to reliable and key information and wanted assurances that the council's digital team were involved. Mr Morgan confirmed that there had been regular dialogue with the digital team and the focus was on improving self-service.
- Mr Chilver wanted assurances that the council were fully engaged with town and parish councils on the suggested alternative uses of those sites no longer being used as centres and the need to ensure local members were kept informed. Ms Turnbull confirmed that there had been regular engagement with parish and town councils and local members.
- Ms Turnbull also stated that there was no risk of clawback from central government in relation to the Surestart grants given for a number of children centres as there was no overall change in usage as those buildings were intended for continuing early years use.
- Ms Turnbull confirmed that if the recommendations were agreed the next step would be further engagement to finalise lease arrangements. Written updates would be provided to members..
- It was highlighted that the new model would focus more on reaching those that were in need and more accessible as the new model provided more options for them to engage with the service.
- Members made reference to the strength of the Early Help Strategy and the importance of early intervention. Lin Hazell highlighted that too many children were receiving support too late in life. There had been an increase in children in need, high protection plans and looked after children.
- It was highlighted that change could not wait until the new council was in place; it would be unlikely that the new council would have additional money. Reference was made to county council's that had already made similar changes and the success of those, which Bucks were taking key learnings from.
- Members highlighted the excellent goal of the new service with named link officers to ensure service users would only need to tell their story once.
- Mr Whyte and officers were thanked for their thorough report and residents were thanked for their feedback as part of the consultation.
- Mr Whyte thanked the team for their work and urged people to read appendix 3 'Proposed design for the new Family Support Service, which was an easy to read accessible document setting out what would be delivered.
- The Leader asked to convey Cabinet's thanks to all those that had worked on the review

The report set out the following recommendations:

1. To agree the Early Help Strategy as set out in Appendix 2.
2. To agree to establish an integrated Family Support Service that will assist children and families to deal with difficulties as early as possible, and reduce the need for statutory social care (see Appendix 3).
3. To agree to retaining 16 children's centres across the county for early years provision (as set out in Appendix 4), with the buildings also available for additional use to support families with children 0-19 (up to 25 for children with special educational needs or disabilities). These sites will be renamed as family centres to reflect their wider support role.
4. To agree to close 19 children's centres as listed in Appendix 4, and ensure their continuing use for early years and community benefit.
5. To agree to give delegated authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services, following consultation with the Executive Director for Resources, Cabinet Members for Children's Services and Resources, to:
 - a. authorise changes in lease agreements for those children's centres to be closed, including agreeing the final use for such buildings;
 - b. authorise further changes in the location of the premises of children's centres if required, subject to those changes being in accordance with the Early Help Strategy, and following a consultation on the proposals.

RESOLVED: Cabinet AGREED the recommendations.

10 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Mr T Vouyioukas, Executive Director for Children's Services, Ms S Callaghan, Service Director for Education, and Mr P Robson, Head of Integrated Transport attended the meeting to answer member questions.

Mr M Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- The cost of Home to School Transport for Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) was £15m with an increase of £1-2m per year and was becoming unsustainable.
- There was an increase in numbers of special needs children that needed support, providing a service was crucial, therefore all elements of cost needed to be reduced to impact the total bill.
- There were a number of areas that were statutory but post 16 transport was not a statutory service.
- The proposals would provide skills for independent travel arrangements helping those SEN children to become skilled in travelling independently as well as asking parents of special educational needs (SEN) children to contribute towards the cost and remove free transport.
- Public transport routes were similar to school routes and conversations were taking place to see if public buses and routes could be utilised but ensuring extra capacity was provided.

- There had been a wide consultation process and feedback and ideas had been taken into account including those related to switching to public transport.
- Mr Appleyard confirmed that before any changes were made, parents would be informed.

Cabinet raised and discussed the following points:

- The challenge that had been placed on BCC by central government with children remaining in education until they were 18 but with no additional funding for their travel.
- Asking parents for contributions for specific travel would allow BCC to continue to provide the service.
- Cabinet raised concerns about moving to commercial bus service and the practicalities and safety around that. It would be essential to ensure drivers were aware of their responsibilities and for BCC to ensure a safe environment including walking to and from bus stops, lighting, shelters and real time information at bus stops. Mr Robson confirmed that they were already in conversation with stakeholders/suppliers to gauge interest and that it would be a partnership service and would include provision justification and monitoring.
- Concerns were raised about large number of children waiting at bus stops and being unable to get on the bus due to overcrowding leaving them in a vulnerable position. Mr Robson confirmed that it would be carefully managed and would look at capacity of each supplier to ensure that suitable capacity would be provided. Provisions at each bus stop would also be reviewed.
- Cabinet raised that while it was keen to promote independence and preparing young people for adulthood, there needed to be assurances that it would be closely monitored by BCC to ensure practical and safe. Mr Robson confirmed that it would be a phased approach and would start with the most suitable areas that had already been tested. Mr Robson also stated that it was about a broader community offer which would offer further services to the community, not just school children, in particular in rural areas, some of which had been disengaged.
- Cabinet asked that local members be kept informed throughout the process and when changes within their area were being made.
- A suggestion of live information at bus stops was highlighted so that school children would know if buses had been delayed. Mr Robson stated that there was a bus disruption board available that sends messages out but it did need to be improved. Mr Robson agreed to look into it.
- Officers were thanked for their work on the consultation, with a lot of data having been collected, analysed and considered.

The report set out the following recommendations:

- 1. To note the results of the consultation and agree the changes to Buckinghamshire's Home to School Transport provision, in line with the recommended options summarised below and detailed in paragraph 12:**
 - a) Transport for Post 16 pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability**
 - i. Remove free transport for existing and new pupils.**
 - ii. From September 2019, charges to be based on the distance from home to school as detailed within section 12.**
 - iii. Increase provision of independent travel training for eligible young people aged between 16 and 18 years old.**
 - b) Reduction of costs associated with our Home to School Transport offer**
 - i. Review the cost of all paid for transport, including mainstream.**
 - ii. Review unnecessary transport through rationalisation of routes and bus sizes.**
 - iii. Remove commissioned transport where there is a viable public route.**
 - c) Evreham and Ivinghoe arrangements**
 - i. From September 2020, remove discretionary free transport for all new pupils only.**
 - ii. Offer routes to commercial sector where appropriate.**
- 2. To agree that the revised Home to School Transport Policy (Appendix 1), produced in consultation with parent carer representatives, is adopted.**
- 3. To agree that the revised Post 16 Annual Transport Policy Statement (Appendix 3) setting out the Post 16 transport offer be adopted.**
- 4. To agree to give delegated authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and the Cabinet Member for Transportation to:**
 - a) Update and revise both the Home to School Transport Policy (Appendix 1) and the Post 16 Annual Transport Policy Statement (Appendix 3) and undertake consultation as and when required.**
- 5. To agree that there should be a further review of the Post 16 Transport Policy in January 2020 to determine whether future policy changes are required.**

RESOLVED: Cabinet AGREED the recommendations.

11 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

25 March 2019.

**MARTIN TETT
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**