

CABINET: MINUTES

Date: 14th November 2007

Time: 10.00 a.m. – 11.10 a.m.

Present: R Pegram (Chairman)

Councillors, M Curtis, V H Lucas, L W McGuire, J E Reynolds, and F H Yeulett.

Also in Attendance

Councillors: M Ballard, P Downes, D Jenkins, J Huppert, G Kenney, A Kent, S King and J West

Apologies: Councillors D Harty, A Melton and J M Tuck

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1) Councillor Pegram who was chairing the Cabinet meeting following the resignation of the Leader Cllr Johnstone, read out the following statement at the beginning of the meeting:

“Due to the recent change in the political leadership I, as the Deputy Leader, am effectively here today in my capacity as Acting Leader of the Council and I hold this position until Councillor Keith Walters position as Leader designate is ratified by full Council.”

2) Councillor Lucas announced that the County Council's Trading Standards Service (along with the relevant partners) was the winner of the "The Better Regulation Award" trophy awarded by National Business Awards in recognition of the work undertaken to discourage alcohol abuse in young people. Cabinet Members requested that the trophy should be passed to the relevant officers along with Cabinet's congratulations.

443. MINUTES 11th SEPTEMBER 2007

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 11th September 2007 were approved as a correct record.

444. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

445. PETITIONS

None.

446. ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

a) Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) – Member Led Review – Out of County Placements for Young People with High Support Needs

At the invitation of the Cabinet chairman, Councillor Downes presented to Cabinet the findings of the above review as set out in the report included on the agenda from the scrutiny committee. In introducing the report he paid tribute to all the work undertaken by the lead scrutiny officers helping produce such an excellent review.

Cabinet noted that as a result of an extensive review, the CYPS Scrutiny Committee had formulated recommendations to support the contention that in order to decrease the number of children being placed out-of-county and reduce costs in the long term, the County Council's capacity to support children required to be strengthened through investment in preventative and support work. It was highlighted that the cost per annum of placing 166 children in out of county placements was nearly £15m.

The report set out recommendations regarding the strategic direction of support services for children who were at high risk of being placed out of county and provided details of routes undertaken by neighbouring authorities who had successfully reduced the number of children in out-of-county placements and consequently reduced the budget for such placements. The report was commended to Cabinet for its consideration and was welcomed by the Cabinet lead member for Enhanced Services who also supported the view that the County Council should seek to reduce the number of out-of-county placements.

b) Response To Member-Led Review of Out of County Placements For Young People With High Support Needs

A report had been included as part of the second despatch from officers from the Office of Children and Young People's Services OCYPS also supporting the views of the scrutiny committee and the recommendations which had been put forward.

The appendix to the report set out the responses to the specific recommendations, as well as providing details of the measures that were currently in place to develop support services for children who were at high risk of being placed out of county. The report also recommended the development of an action plan to monitor the progress of developments in addressing the issues raised in the CYPS Scrutiny's Member Led Report. It was clarified in response to a Member's question that this plan would be part of the wider Children's Plan being developed in line with statutory requirements to identify the services required.

In relation to issues raised on how the complex issues could be taken forward, the Deputy Chief Executive CYPS highlighted the important role to be undertaken by the head of procurement who would be developing procurement, and contracting procedures for social care requirements. At the same time work was also being undertaken with PCT colleagues to ensure value for money was obtained for purchased services to address identified health needs.

Concerns were raised regarding the issues highlighted in terms of the tribunal process which was explained in detail in the scrutiny report, including that the local authority appeared to be insufficiently proficient at demonstrating and evidencing the need to some parents of their recommended multi agency packages assessed for their children and that in some cases the parents appeared to be unduly influenced by the marketing strategies of independent special schools. As a result, there were concerns from both members and officers that as a result of parents appealing to a Tribunal and the final decision going against the Council, this was often to the detriment of the child, who it was believed was then not receiving the most appropriate care package. Councillor Downes agreed to take this back as an issue for possible further scrutiny committee detailed investigation.

The point was made by the chairman of the scrutiny review that while the officers' response report suggested that there were no climate implications, the belief was that reducing the number of out of county placements could result in a fall in the number of required officer visits. If this did take place and the visits would have involved car journeys it could be expected that this would lead to a reduction in carbon emissions.

Cabinet fully supported the aspirations as set out in the scrutiny committee's recommendations and asked the officers to look at the detailed resource implications. There was also an enquiry regarding the need for an update report and when this was practicable. The earliest it was considered that a report providing useful progress could be provided was in the spring/early summer.

It was resolved:

- i) To approve the response to the CYPS Scrutiny Committee's report and recommendations on Out of County Placements for young people with high support needs as set out in the appendix to these minutes.
- ii) To support the proposal to draw up an action plan to be incorporated as part of the developing Children's Plan identifying lead officers and agreed timescales for each action detailed.
- iii) To request that the Scrutiny Committee consider carrying out an in depth investigation into the Tribunal Process amid concerns raised that their decisions were often not in the best interests of the child.
- iv) That Cabinet should receive a progress report to either its May or June meeting.

447. INTEGRATED PLANNING – EMERGING PRIORITIES

Cabinet received a report proposing adjustments to the presentation of the emerging priorities, and to incorporate a priority around climate change following a series of Internal and external consultation events to inform the County Council's emerging priorities.

The report summarised the following key points where changes were required:

- a. A need to incorporate Climate Change and the Environment as a major priority.
- b. A need to distinguish between 'what' the organisation delivered and 'how' it improved its organisational capacity to achieve this delivery.
- c. A need for improved clarity of understanding by members of the public.
- d. A desire for increased emphasis on the need to support and protect vulnerable people.
- e. Consideration of the 2006 White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities, and the new Corporate Area Assessment, and their implications for increased partnership working.

The results from the other consultations had not been available at the time the report had been written for the original agenda despatch. However an update paper circulated as part of the second despatch agenda updated the information summarising the results of the employee survey, the public household survey and the public roadshows. In most cases Cabinet noted that the results were compatible with the results from the focus groups and Corporate Leadership Team/Heads of Service event.

The high priority areas were seen to be:

- Transport -Improved public transport upkeep of the network and road safety and traffic management
- Support for vulnerable people, especially older people
- Support for families and children looked after by the Council (although this only figured prominently in the staff survey)
- Anti-social behaviour (although this only figured prominently in the roadshow discussions)
- Waste disposal and recycling

Similarly, the same areas of low priority were identified:

- Libraries
- Cycle ways
- Archives, arts and museums
- Countryside services and rights of way
- Trading Standards and consumer advice
- Youth services

Cabinet noted that in discussions at Black and Minority Ethnic residents (BME) focus groups and the roadshow discussions, activities for young people had been highlighted as a priority area for improvement. However, in the staff survey, the residents' survey and the roadshow questionnaires, youth clubs had been seen as an area to reduce spending. Additionally, in the roadshow questionnaires, 'youth work including working with young offenders' was classed in the bottom five priorities and was also ninth out of fourteen in the residents' survey and eighth out of fourteen in the staff survey.

Cabinet noted that 'helping young people to succeed, develop and stay safe' had been listed as a priority. Cabinet Members agreed that this prioritisation did not conflict with the results indicating a desire to reduce spending on youth clubs. In terms of the tensions with the low priority rating given to 'youth work including working with young offenders'

Cabinet agreed that 'Helping young people to succeed, develop and stay safe' covered a much wider range of services and it was therefore appropriate to retain the priority. The low prioritisation of youth work specifically in terms of youth club expenditure would be an issue to consider when determining areas for savings and investments.

Also highlighted were suggestions for including comments in respect of Recycling and Waste Disposal and Broader Transport issues than those referred to within the 'growth' priority as these had been areas identified as being important to residents and were not explicitly included in the original draft priorities.

It was resolved:

- i) To note the proposed updates to the priorities.
- ii) To recognise the difference between youth clubs and youth services provision and the important role the service provided in terms of the wider implications to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and 'Helping young people to succeed, develop and stay safe' when further developing the County Council's priorities.
- iii) To endorse the priorities, subject to further possible amendments based on additional consultation being undertaken with partner organisations and comments to be received from the Integrated Planning Process and;
- iv) To note that a final decision report would be received at the Cabinet meeting on 18th December.

448. PERFORMANCE MONITORING - QUARTER 2

Cabinet received a report providing details of performance against the 2007/08 corporate scorecard for performance up to October 2007 focussing Cabinet's attention on exceptions, i.e. those areas that needed further investigation and detailing improvements being made to address those areas where performance was not on target.

Details were provided of the update position regarding the Government's future definition of what information could be included in BV54 - Number of people per 1000 aged 65 plus helped to live at home - which would allow the Council in future to include those elderly helped by voluntary organisations which financially supported by the County Council and were not currently counted.

Cabinet Members expressed their concerns regarding the current increase in sickness levels over the target figure. Cabinet noted that while the figures in the report were projected figures that could change and that the County Council's overall sickness levels were the best for any County Council in 2006/07 (based on provisional figures) the way the information was currently provided made it unclear whether the current figures were being skewed by a relatively small number of staff with long-term sickness or whether it was the result of an overall increased trend. Officers agreed that if practicable possible future reports would differentiate between the two.

It was resolved:

- i) to agree that the lead member for Adult Support Services and the Special Adviser on Performance should work actively with officers in Adult Support Services both to ensure agreed improvement actions were being delivered, and that further innovative actions from other authorities were identified and delivered if appropriate.
- ii) That future reports should provide a breakdown between long term and short term sickness to help Cabinet Members obtain a better view of the pattern of sickness in respect of the target P and P1 Number of Council working days/shifts lost to staff sickness absence (excluding school staff)

449. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2007

Cabinet received a report setting out the budget monitoring results to the end of September 2007 reflecting the 6 month position, in order to fulfil its role of ensuring that all offices were on course to deliver a balanced year-end position or if this was not the case, setting out the management action being undertaken to respond to identified overspends. The report also presented a bid to the Future Developments & Pressures reserve from OCYPS for the development and training of Education Psychologists (transfer of function).

In response to a question on concerns regarding the continued financial difficulties of Trading Services, It was reported that there would be a further review report to Members in due course with a variety of options, including the possibility of cessation of some services. The point was made that however efficiently the services operated, within the financial regime required for the operation of trading units it was not possible for some Trading Services to achieve a break even position and therefore radical solutions would need to be considered.

A question was raised regarding the length of time that some Invest to Transform loans were outstanding, as this information was not currently provided. As a result, it was difficult to establish whether there had been delays in the repayment of longer terms loans. It was explained that most loans were now currently agreed for repayment over three years, but that previously there had been a number of loans for longer periods that were still being repaid e.g. in respect of libraries.

There was a request for details on:

- the action being taken by officers to reduce the increasing level of long term debt identified in the report to ensure that the Council was receiving an increased cash-flow. Officers agreed to respond to this query via e-mail.
- clarifying the table at the bottom of page 19 Invest to Transform Fund, and the position on OECS projects where advances had been agreed in 2007/08 where it appeared to be showing that there had been no monies drawn down. It was agreed that future reports would be made clearer in terms of explaining what funding had been drawn down and the position regarding any payback of the loans.

- That future reports should also identify on an exception basis those loans not repaid in the time frame originally envisaged. It was indicated that this information would be available in the quarterly budgetary control reports.

It was resolved to:

- i) Note the revenue expenditure of Services in 2007/08 as at the 30th September 2007 and in particular, the forecast overspends in the Office of Environment and Community Services (OECS) and the Office of Corporate Services (OCS) (excluding debt & financing budgets) (section 3 of the officer's report) and the actions intended to deliver a balanced position.
- ii) Note the capital spending and financing in 2007/08 (section 4.1 – 4.3 of the officer's report)
- iii) Note the trading units' performance in 2007/08 (section 3.9 – 3.11 of the officer's report)
- iv) Note the performance on debt management (section 4.4 – 4.6 of the officer's report) and prompt payment (section 4.7 – 4.8 of the officer's report)
- v) Approve the proposed bid to draw down funding from OCYPS for training Education Psychologists (EP's) (£28k).

450. DELEGATIONS FROM CABINET TO CABINET MEMBERS/OFFICERS

Cabinet received a report detailing the progress on delegations.

It was resolved:

To note the progress on delegations to individual Cabinet Members and/or to officers previously authorised by Cabinet to make decisions/take actions on its behalf.

451. CABINET DRAFT AGENDA PLAN 4th and 18th DECEMBER 2007

The Cabinet Agenda Plans for December were noted with the following changes:

4th December Removed from agenda:

Item 4a) Health and Social Care Scrutiny
(HASC) Committee report on Swift re-scheduled for 22nd January.

Item 5 Transport Integration Proposals for the Cambridge Fringes – moved to 18th December

Item 6 Council's Position on Draft Section 106 head of Terms Cambridge Southern Fringe
- Moved to 18th December Cabinet.

Item 19 Huntingdon Town Centre Project re-scheduled for 22nd January.

Note item 16 Budget Control Report – Learning Disability partnership will be a key decision.

Additions Under Other Decision reports

Integrated Regional Strategy Consultation response

Traffic Management Operational Measures

18th December

item 4a Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) Best Value Review of Integrated Services Older People's Services Action Plan rescheduled to a later date beyond 22nd January

Additions under Key decisions

1) Transport Integration Proposals for the Cambridge Fringes

2) Council Forward Priorities

3) Final Decision on Cambridge Southern Fringe – Section 106 Heads of Terms

Moved to a later meeting

Item 9 Hills Road Bridge
Addition

Chairman
4th December 2007