

CABINET

Decision Notices and Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 15 March 2018 at 5.00pm at Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 21 MARCH 2018

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY, 26 MARCH 2018)

Present: Councillors S Davies (Leader and Chair), L D Carter, A R H England, R C Evans, J C Minor, A D McClements, R A Overton, S A W Reynolds and P R Watling.

Also Present: Councillors A J Eade (Conservative Group Leader) and W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrat/Independent Group Leader).

CB-158 Apologies for Absence

None.

CB-159 Declarations of Interest

None.

CB- 160 The Cabinet Member for Children's and Adult's Early Help & Support gave a statement to reassure the public that tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Telford continued to be a top priority for Telford & Wrekin Council. The statement is attached at Appendix A. An independent expert inquiry into CSE in Telford was debated by Cabinet Members, the Conservative Group Leader and Leader of the Liberal Democrat/ Independent Group.

CB-161 Minutes

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CB-162 Well Managed Highways Infrastructure Code of Practice & Highway Safety Inspection Policy

Key Decision identified as **Risk Based Approach to Highways Maintenance** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 15 February 2018.

Councillor A D McClements, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Broadband presented the report of the Assistant Director; Customer and Neighbourhood Services, which outlined the outcome of the recent approach to managing the Highway and responding to defects. It was reported that a continual reduction had been seen year on year with the number of potholes reported and completed; figures showed in 2012/13 there was 7,012 potholes inspected and

completed and by 2017 this had reduced to 3,397, a reduction of 48%. The condition of the roads in the Borough was better than both the regional and national averages and in 2017 the Council was second out of 104 other Local Highway Authorities for overall public satisfaction with highways and transport (*National Highways and Transport Survey*).

Members noted the importance that the highway network played in supporting communities and businesses in the Borough. The Council was continuing to invest significant funding over and above current government funding into maintaining roads, footpaths and other assets through the Pride in Our Community initiative. This had included £2m each year additional funding for roads, £1m a year investment into footways, £1m into urgent structures and £750,000 into improving residential parking. The Council was committed to a major investment of £20m in 2019/20 and 2020/21 into improving the condition of all assets in particular roads and this would allow a more proactive approach to maintaining assets than responding reactively.

The Council currently received £1.5m per annum (£1.49 per metre of road) in government funding to spend on the Highway, however, one pot hole was on average £120 to repair and so the Council's additional investment was critical to maintain the highways to an acceptable standard. In addition to the Council's investment work was also being done towards a new highways contract with a significant focus on innovation, efficiency and customer satisfaction.

In order to maintain a safe highway network, local authorities must adhere to national guidance setting out policies with regards to Inspections including frequency and response times. In October 2016 a new National code of practice, 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' (WMHI) was introduced. This revised code of practice aimed to address issues with the previous approach which made it difficult for authorities to significantly change how they completed highway inspections and therefore not achieve potential efficiencies and improvements in the delivery of the service.

The Council's current maintenance policies and practices were developed based on the previous codes which were prescriptive in nature. The Well Managed Highways Inspection (WMHI) policy enabled authorities to apply flexibility in defining investigatory levels together with a risk assessment process to define the response time for repairing the defect, based on size, location and other local factors. The new code of practice encouraged the principle of developing local levels of service and taking a risk management approach to maintaining local highways, which meant the response to managing highway defects or issues could be based on a range of factors relevant to the local area. The Council's revised policy and approach was at Appendix A and the report outlined what it would mean by moving to the new approach.

It was noted that the change in policy and approach was cost neutral and allowed the Council to maintain its levels of service within a defined budget and to allocate resources more appropriately. This revised approach should also lead to increased customer satisfaction.

It was recognised that this change from reliance on specific guidance to the implementation of a risk based approach would require time and authorities had until October 2018 to implement WMHI across all assets. Given the benefits that the new

code could provide to authorities in managing the highway network the Council was keen to bring the new Inspection Policy in as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) the risk based local highway safety inspection policy appended to the report, be approved**

- (b) delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director: Customer & Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure & Broadband to approve revisions to the Councils highway safety inspection policy and regime where required.**

CB-163 Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-2020

Non- Key Decision

Councillor P R Watling; Cabinet Member for Children & Adults Early Help and Support introduced the Corporate Parenting Strategy of the Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting.

It was highlighted that Telford & Wrekin Council wanted all children and young people to achieve their ambitions and reach their full potential. The purpose of the Corporate Parenting Strategy was to reaffirm the Council's commitment and reinforce the corporate responsibilities of the whole council, jointly with partners, to ensure that children in care and care leavers in the Borough had every opportunity to achieve success.

Members noted that the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group which brought together elected members, officers from the Council, and colleagues from partner agencies oversaw the services provided to children in care and care leavers within the Borough. The Group was responsible for scrutinising all services available for children in care and care leavers (from universal through to safeguarding) and had developed a strategy to define the overarching priorities for the next three years. Whilst the Group challenged the safety of children in care and care leavers, this was also done in the wider context of safeguarding children and young people in the Borough through the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board (TWSCB).

The strategy identified four overarching priorities outlined in the report which had been decided through analysis of intelligence and consultation with partners. The Corporate Parenting Strategy defined how the Board and its partners would address the four priority areas over the next three years and how this would impact on children in care and care leavers. Progress against the priorities would be monitored and challenged through the Partnership's action plan and associated performance framework. A copy of the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy was appended to the report.

Members noted one of the cross-cutting aims of the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group was to raise the profile of corporate parenting within the whole council. The lead officers had begun to develop an engagement programme for members and

officers, who were not directly working with children in care and care leavers, to raise awareness of this statutory expectation and their roles and responsibilities.

The Corporate Parenting Strategic Group was accountable to the Children and Families Partnership who received regular updates on the implementation of the strategy. The Group was also held to account through the Council’s Cabinet and, specifically in relation to safeguarding, through the TWSCB

RESOLVED that the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-2020 be approved.

CB-164 Duke of York – Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award

Non- Key Decision

Councillor S A W Reynolds; Cabinet Member for Education & Skills presented the report of the Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting which outlined the new exciting award and how Telford and Wrekin Council would be promoting and using it. The Duke of York Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award, known as iDEA, aimed to equip people across the UK with digital and enterprise skills through a free online training portal.

The award was based on rewarding participants with badges for the effort they put in to acquiring skills. Each badge was worth points that could be built up to achieve a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award. Work was being done across the Council in Libraries, Customer Services, Job Box, Cooperative Council Team and Education and Corporate Parenting. The Council was also creating its own badges.

Members noted that the award would impact on the Council’s priorities to ‘Put our children and young people first’ by providing the tools and easy access through a range of devices to inspire them to achieve a digital award and gain key skills for supporting them in their education; and to ‘Improve local people’s prospects through education and skills training by promoting access to online training in all the Borough’s community centres and library facilities and by encouraging groups through Age UK and Job Box to obtain digital skills and enhance their digital awareness.

RESOLVED that support for the delivery of this programme to students and residents of Telford be approved.

The meeting ended at 5.38pm

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Jonathan Eatough
Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning
Date: 21 March 2018

Signed:

Date:

Appendix A: Statement of the Cabinet Member for Children's and Adult's Early Help & Support.

CSE in Telford – tackling this evil crime together

I wish to make a statement on the recent national media coverage about Child Sexual Exploitation in Telford.

I want to reassure the public that tackling CSE remains ours, the police's and other partners' top priority and as always our thoughts are with those children and families affected by this crime.

Media coverage this week has highlighted some truly shocking cases of this vile and evil crime from a number of years ago. Some of the incidents referred pre-date this Council formation. As a Telford resident, as a father and grandfather, I am truly sickened by this crime.

Let me say it very clearly - some very terrible things happened to a number of children & young people in Telford & Wrekin 10, 20, 30 years ago. Yes our services missed signs 10-20 years ago and we regret this. But so did everyone else's because awareness of CSE was very different at that time.

Some media have tried to paint a picture of cover up. Nothing could be further from the truth. But you'd expect me to say that, so let me quote directly from a Home Office statement given to the BBC only yesterday.

“Inspections undertaken by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Ofsted have highlighted that whilst there have been clear problems in the past, and criticisms of police (and other services), there is acknowledgement that services have responded to the original failings, and improvements can be seen. Telford & Wrekin Council's own scrutiny committee undertook a robust review of its response, which does not suggest it is a Council in denial.”

I wish I could say that today there are no cases of CSE in our borough. The truth is that this vile and evil crime is happening here as it is in every major town and city in the UK. No Council anywhere in the country can hand on heart say it is not happening. Let me be equally clear that just one CSE case here is one too many.

Amid all the national media coverage it's very easy to forget the work we, the police and other partners have been doing to tackle CSE

Something different did happen here. Teams in the Council, police and other agencies started to see bad things happening and organised exploitation of children, many of whom did not realise or see themselves as actual victims.

We set up a task force to identify the issue, start to tackle it and bring perpetrators to justice: This was Operation Chalice which began its work in 2008. Over the last 10 years we have built ever closer links. That work continues and legal action and prosecutions continue today.

The national media coverage does not mention:

Telford was one of the first places in the UK to launch prosecutions for organised CSE.

Telford was the second place in the country to secure convictions for organised CSE.

Telford continues to have a dedicated team of police, council and other partners working to identify and support victims of CSE. The Council and police increased resources for its CATE team in 2016/17.

Partners in Telford have always been open about our work on CSE. That's why we commissioned an independent review of our approach to CSE so we could learn lessons and further improve. This review was published in 2013. We also asked scrutiny to review this.

We have always wanted an expert independent inquiry into the issue here and hoped this would be the national inquiry led by Baroness Jay. We have now asked the Government to commission an independent inquiry. An independent inquiry commissioned and scoped by the Council risks not being seen as impartial. Such an inquiry must be truly independent – if the Council appoints someone to investigate and agrees terms of reference, it can be accused of acting as “judge and jury”.

A Council commissioned inquiry would have no legal basis to compel individuals and agencies such as police, CCG, PCT, Hospitals Trust and Shropshire Council, which preceded this Council, to co-operate or give evidence. Considering the historic nature of the cases highlighted in Telford, many individuals as well as other agencies would be likely to be called to give evidence. The cases highlighted by media have involved many agencies.

Due to the limited scope of a council-commissioned inquiry, such an inquiry's findings could be incomplete. The victims of this vile crime and the public rightly expect a “full inquiry”, which only an independent expert public inquiry commissioned by Government can do.

The Council has already commissioned an independent review which reported in 2013, while Telford was the one of first areas in the country to make prosecutions against organised CSE.

In 2016, a team of seven OFSTED inspectors looked at our safeguarding services in great detail for 4 weeks. A month, no hiding places. They concluded our work on CSE was “strong” and said: “The local authority has been a champion for tackling this issue”.

Since 2008, Telford & Wrekin Council with West Mercia Police has been at the forefront of identifying and tackling the evil crime that is CSE. We care, we act and always will.

It is really important that the public have trust in this inquiry so it would not be appropriate for the Council to commission this.

For those calling for a ‘Rotherham style inquiry’, it must be noted that this Council appointed report came after the Government's own Casey inquiry.

The Home Office has stated that 'they are satisfied that Telford & Wrekin Council is not a Council in denial on the issue'.

Everyone in our borough has a role to play in tackling CSE. If you suspect a child is a victim of sexual offences or is being sexually abusing you must report this, even if it is just a suspicion. We will act on every report we receive and we continue to support survivors of CSE.