

# THE CABINET

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Shire Hall, Taunton, on Wednesday 17 October 2018 at 11.30am.

## PRESENT

Cllr D Fothergill (in the Chair)

Cllr M Chilcott  
Cllr D Hall  
Cllr C Lawrence  
Cllr F Nicholson  
Cllr F Purbrick  
Cllr J Woodman

Junior Cabinet members:  
Cllr G Frascini  
Cllr M Pullin

**Other Members present:** Cllr C Aparicio-Paul, Cllr A Bown, Cllr J Clarke, Cllr S Coles, Cllr H Davies, Cllr M Dimery, Cllr A Govier, Cllr A Groskop, Cllr M Healey, Cllr M Keating, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr J Lock, Cllr T Munt, Cllr L Redman, Cllr G Verdon and Cllr L Vijeh

**Apologies for absence:** Cllr D Huxtable

### 124 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – agenda item 2

Members of the Cabinet declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a District, City/Town or Parish Council:

Cllr M Chilcott	West Somerset District Council
Cllr J Woodman	Sedgemoor District Council

Junior Cabinet Members declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a District, City/Town or Parish Council:

Cllr M Pullin	Mendip District Council
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### 125 **Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12 September 2018** - agenda item 3

The Cabinet agreed the minutes and the Chair signed these as a correct record of the proceedings, subject to the following amendments: Cllr Frances Nicholson's offer to meet with Kirsty McCrory; and Cllr Liz Leyshon being added to the list of members in attendance.

### 126 **Public Question Time (PQT)** – agenda item 4

The Leader of the Council, Cllr David Fothergill noted that public questions would be considered as a part of the relevant agenda item.

127 **Revenue Budget 2018/19 Monitoring Update** - agenda item 5

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Cllr Mandy Chilcott introduced the report and made a number of points including: the report was a monitoring update; the Council's proposals for change; the 2018/19 projected outturn had been adjusted in light of the proposals; that there was currently £3.4 of uncommitted contingency funding; that some service areas show a budget underspend; and that close monitoring of the budget is essential.

The Cabinet heard from Nigel Behan who raised a question regarding Learning Disabilities costs and the Discovery Equalisation Reserve, and asked for further clarification regarding the movement of monies. The Section 151 Officer clarified the position relating to the equalisation reserve.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Cllr David Huxtable responded to the question, noting: that not all Adult Social Care services are discretionary; and that additional expenditure relates to increased demand for Adult Services.

The Cabinet heard from Alan Debenham who raised a number of points including: further funding cuts; the importance of lobbying MPs for further funding; and that simply writing letters to MPs is not enough.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr David Fothergill responded to the points raised in debate noting: the hard work of Somerset's County Councillors; and that the Council must set a balanced budget.

At the Leaders invitation the Interim Finance Director highlighted the confidence levels of MTFP savings, referenced the current 85% confidence level and that this was expected to increase to 95% once outstanding DSG proposals had been determined.

Further points raised in debate included: the cost of home to school transport and the justification for taxi usage.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Cllr John Woodman responded, noting: the Council's statutory duty to provide contact between children in care and their families.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr David Fothergill highlighted the management action, progress made and the increased confidence levels with delivery.

**Following consideration of the officer report, appendix discussion the Cabinet resolved to note the contents of this report and request that the Senior Leadership Team undertakes further action to ensure that the projected overspend is reduced.**

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

128 **Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee – Review of Decision CAF14a – agenda item 8**

The Council's Monitoring Officer, Scott Wooldridge, noted that the reference to Appendix 1 in the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee Report was referencing the report of the Director of Children's Services.

The Chair of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee, Cllr Leigh Redman highlighted the following points: the committee's recommendations had been unanimously agreed; concern at potential unseen impacts; the importance of a full consultation; the importance of acknowledging the complex and varied nature of early intervention work; early intervention capacity based on current staffing levels; and reassurance from other agencies that they would 'fill the gaps'.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson responded to the report and points raised by Cllr Redman, noting: the council is in a very difficult and challenging financial position; the work of the Somerset Children's Trust; the continuation of the Council's statutory role; the importance of all partners contributing financially; and the Director of Children's Services confidence that the Council will continue to provide statutory services and a safe caseload.

The Director of Children's Services, Julian Wooster, further noted: the proposed reduction in staffing levels was based on caseloads; and there was sufficient staffing capacity included in the proposed model.

The Cabinet heard from Nigel Behan, who raised a question regarding the changes in referral figure numbers.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson responded noting: the importance of the early help case management system; and data sharing with partners.

The Council's Monitoring Officer read a statement on behalf of Sandra Cole noting: support for young parents; the work of Children's Centres; the impact on supported families; and the importance and varied nature of level 2 support.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson responded noting: the proposal to reduce staffing levels was no reflection on the work of early help services; that many people don't live within walking distance of a Children's Centre and the importance of services reaching all people in need; that there was no guidance regarding caseloads for early help practitioners; and the importance of maximising the effectiveness of interventions.

The Cabinet heard from Mrs Elliot who read a statement on behalf of Sharon

Collard noting: her own experience of isolation; that she is a disabled traveller; the importance of the Children's Centre as a constant point in her life; meeting other mums; that Social Services help was not forthcoming; the importance of a variety of services; the importance of a key worker; and the stigma of Social Services involvement.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson responded noting: that level 2 services were subject to consultation; the importance of consultation responses; and that she was happy to meet with any individual to discuss their specific circumstances.

The Cabinet heard from Tina Emery speaking on behalf of the Somerset Carer Forum noting: the report submitted by the Somerset Parent Carer Forum; the importance of Early Help Assessments; and the importance of voluntary organisations and external funding sources.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson responded noting: her thanks for the forums report and recommendations; that today's decision was only regarding practitioner's caseloads; and that an Early Help Assessment could only be completed with the consent of the family and was not always appropriate.

The Cabinet heard from Sally Devlin who raised a number of questions regarding: a specific case regarding a young mother who was attacked, and the importance of Get Set support.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson responded to Sally Devlin's Written question noting: the Scrutiny report outlined details of the groups run by Get Set; and an invitation to discuss the specific case raised outside of today's meeting.

The Cabinet heard from Kris Black speaking on behalf of Fiona Weidberg who raised a number of questions regarding the importance of early help to prevent situations escalating and requiring higher levels of support, and the importance of safeguarding for vulnerable children.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson responded noting: today's proposal did not include the withdrawal of services; and that caseloads would continue to be operated at safe levels.

The Cabinet heard from Kris Black speaking on behalf of Karen Marsh who raised a question regarding the reduction in level 2 services and resulting potential increased demand for tier 3 and 4 support.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson responded noting: level 2 caseloads would be reduced; that there was no expectation of increased demand at levels 3 and 4; situations of real or imminent danger were not early help; and that caseloads would continue to be monitored.

The Councils Monitoring Officer read a statement on behalf of Kama McKenzie regarding delaying the decision CAF14a Early Help Services. The Monitoring Officer further responded setting out publication requirements.

The Council's Monitoring Officer read a statement on behalf of Family Voice Somerset, points raised included: commissioning services; the work of the VCSE; VCSE grants; meeting statutory requirements; and the importance of transparent data.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson responded noting: the Director of Children's Services was confident that regarding the proposed amendments to caseloads; and that the Council did not plan to commission all services.

The Cabinet considered a second statement submitted by Family Voice Somerset regarding: the work of volunteers; and the role of the VCSO sector.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, Cllr Christine Lawrence: paid tribute to the work of volunteers across the County; noted her delight a community involvement across the County; and highlighted that there was no expectation that the VCSO sector would undertake any of the Council's statutory duties.

The Cabinet considered a third statement submitted by Family Voice Somerset regarding: setting up a shadow board / forum / group to oversee all children's social care costs; the number of young carers across the county; the EHA strategy; level 2 Get Set and level 2 CAHMS services; and consideration of human rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson responded noting: a misunderstanding regarding the proposals being considered today; and that the CAHMS service was commissioned via the Clinical Commissioning Group and was not a service provided through Get Set.

At the Leader of the Council's invitation the Cabinet considered a question from Mr Redgewell regarding: consultation on the proposed reduction in bus subsidies; the importance of discussing cross boundary services with neighbouring authorities; working with rail and bus operators; accessible stations funding; and Regional Transport Boards.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Cllr John Woodman responded to the points raised, noting: the consultation would be for a minimum of 8 weeks; improvement to stations was on-going with and was being delivered by GWR; and that two Regional Transport Bodies were being created.

*(At this point the Cabinet adjourned for lunch)*

The Cabinet proceeded to consider a number of questions which had been submitted anonymously, and the Cabinet Member for Children and Families responded to the points raised.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr David Fothergill confirmed that all questions

submitted had been published on the Council's website.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson added to the points already raised, noting: the reduction in the number and variety of forms which are required to be filled in to access Early Help Services; and that forms are generally rejected because the family has not given consent.

Further points raised in debate included: the Audit Committee's comments regarding Team Around a School; early help practitioner caseloads; the concerns raised by the Parent Carer Forum; the long term cost implications of the proposals; commitment from other agencies to support affected families; how a missed intervention could result in an escalation in need; the importance of being able to submit referrals without parental consent; and preventing the most vulnerable escalating into greater need.

The Director of Children's Services Julian Wooster, and the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson responded to the points raised in debate noting: Level 2 staff will have a maximum caseload of 20; practitioner caseloads are regularly reviewed; the valuable contribution of the Parent Carer Forum; that no extra cost implications were envisaged; that a number of partners were also statutory bodies with statutory responsibilities; that there was no evidence of increased demand at this time; that level three cases are often 'stepped-down' from CSC; that level two workers do not hold child protection cases; and the proposal to transition into an integrated family support service was no longer viable.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr David Fothergill highlighted the two decision options available to the Cabinet: to note the recommendations from the Director of Children's Services but instead agree the Scrutiny recommendations; or to note the Scrutiny recommendations but instead agree to the Director of Children's Services recommendations.

Cllr David Fothergill highlighted that the Cabinet had considered the Scrutiny recommendation but proposed that the Cabinet agree to the Director of Children's Services recommendations. This was seconded by Cllr Frances Nicholson.

**Following consideration of the Scrutiny recommendations and the supporting report from the Director of Children's Services, the Cabinet agreed to confirm its decision of 12 September 2018 to implement the recommendations made in respect of proposal CAF-14a.**

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

## 129 **Corporate Performance Report** – agenda item 6

The Director of Corporate Affairs, Simon Clifford introduced the report and made a number of points including: the new report format which reflects the Council's vision, business plans and service plans; that 44% of measures

were on or above their target; 15% of measures were missing their target; and that some measures will still be fully developed.

Further points raised in debate included: support for the amended report format; and that £2.782m of the 2018/19 MTFP savings were rated as not deliverable.

The Council's Interim Finance Director noted that where MTFP savings were not being delivered alternatives were being explored.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr David Fothergill commended the new format of the report and the Cabinet acknowledged the performance on target and those where improvement was required.

**Following consideration of the officer report, appendix and discussion the Cabinet resolved to:**

- 1. Note the information contained within this report.**
- 2. Consider that the proposed management actions already in place are adequate to improve performance to the desired level.**
- 3. Agree this report and any appendices as the latest position for Somerset County Council against its Council Vision**

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

130 **Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20+ Initial Assessment and Proposed Approach** – agenda item 7

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr Mandy Chilcott introduced the report and made a number of points including: the challenging Financial Imperative work; the on-going delivery challenge; the £19m funding gap for 2019/20; the importance of on-going work on the proposals for change; the purchase of vehicles for the Somerset Waste Partnership; and the importance of continuing to provide services to vulnerable adults and children.

The Interim Finance Director, Peter Lewis, added to the points raised by Cllr Chilcott, noting: the proposal to purchase waste vehicles allowed the opportunity to work with partners to underpin the tender process; and the £19m funding gap figure included a number of assumptions regarding longer term funding for local government.

Further points raised in debate included: thanks to officers for their work; the process for writing-off the cost of new recycling vehicles; and the life span of recycling vehicles

The Interim Finance Director responded to the points raised, noting: the purchase of recycling vehicles would help bidders to structure their proposals.

The Cabinet heard from Nigel Behan who raised a number of points regarding Council Tax funding flexibility and possible additional precepts.

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr Mandy Chilcott responded to Mr Behan's question, noting: the Council was seeking support to raise Council Tax above the current precept limit; the importance of flexibility; business rate pilots; and that public awareness of the Council tax increase limits.

Further points raised in debate included: Learning Disability day service budget pressures.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Stephen Chandler responded to the points raised in debate, noting: the on-going work regarding day services provision; and that future arrangements may not be with Discovery.

**Following consideration of the officer report, appendix and discussion the Cabinet resolved to:**

**1. Note the initial assessment of the funding gap for 2019/20, being £19m and note the proposed timetable for developing the MTFP and actions being taken to prepare proposals for change to address the funding deficiency and service pressures.**

**2. Agree to recommend to County Council that it approves the expansion of the Capital investment Programme in 2019/20 to commit a sum of up to £10m to facilitate the purchase of waste vehicles and depot infrastructure for the Somerset Waste Partnership, provided that it can be proved that this offers better value for money than the vehicles being supplied by the private sector**

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

131 **Fit for my Future** – agenda item 9

The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing, Cllr Christine Lawrence, introduced the report, noting: the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board; fit with the County Vision; and on-going consultations.

The Director of Public Health, Trudi Grant added to the points raised by Cllr Lawrence, noting: the opportunity accommodate future demands and become more sustainable; and the importance of closing the gap between life expectancy and health life expectancy.

The Chief Officer of the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, Nick Robinson addressed the committee, points raised included: the Council's excellent approach to the future; the fundamental reshaping of the CCG; how doing nothing was no longer an option; building on the health needs analysis; the importance of preventative work; and the importance of engagement.

Further points raised in debate included: cross border working with other



Clinical Commissioning Groups; and the challenging budget constraints for all public sector organisations.

**Following consideration of the officer report and discussion the Cabinet resolved to:**

- 1. Endorse the approach taken in the Case for Change, Fit for My Future, and continued engagement with the development of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health to lead progress on further engagement.**

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

132 **Proposed new primary school at Somerton – approval to award contract – agenda item 10**

The Leader of the Council highlighted the Cabinet had been fully involved in the proposal for a the new school.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Transformation, Cllr Faye Purbrick further noted the Council's on-going commitment to provide school places.

The Service Manager – School Commissioning, Elizabeth Smith further noted: there was currently separate infant and junior schools; new home developments in the local area; and that there was no opportunity to expand either of the existing school sites.

Further points raised in debate included: future use of the existing school sites; the importance of involving local children in the development of the new school; frustration that the Council was required to fund the development of a new school which would immediately be transferred to an academy trust; and that no Somerton Councillors were in attendance today.

**Following consideration of the officer report, appendix A, confidential appendix B and discussion the Cabinet resolved to:**

- 1. Approve the appointment of the preferred contractor set out in Appendix B through the Southern Construction Framework and to proceed with the delivery of a 14-class primary school (including 52 place Nursery) at Northfields, Somerton for September 2020 at a gross maximum project cost.**
- 2. Approve the gross maximum project cost as set out in Appendix B. These costs include allowances for IT and furniture as required.**
- 3. Agree the case for applying the exempt information provision and therefore to treat Appendix B in confidence, as it contains commercially sensitive information, and as the case for the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing that information.**

- 4. Delegate the authority to the Head of Corporate Property and the County Solicitor to complete any necessary documentation to enter into a contract with the preferred contractor.**

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

**133 2017/18 Annual Customer Feedback Report – agenda item 11**

The Director of Corporate Affairs, Simon Clifford introduced the report noting: 98% of complaints were resolved at first contact; and the relatively high number of complaints received.

Further points raised in debate included: the definition of a complaint; monitoring for complaint trends; the importance of welcoming compliments with particular reference to the Get Set service.

The Leader of the Council noted the report highlighted the good work of Council staff.

**Following consideration of the officer report, appendix and discussion the Cabinet resolved to:**

- 1. Approve the 2017/18 Annual Customer Feedback report as set out in Appendix 1**
- 2. Authorise the Director of Corporate Affairs to publish the report on the Council's website**

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

**134 Any other urgent items of business – agenda item 12**

There was no other business.

**(The meeting ended at 16.02pm)**

**CHAIR**