



<u>Cabinet</u>
16th November 2011
12.30 pm

Item
<b>3B</b>
Public

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2011**  
12.30 pm – 1.45 pm

**Responsible Officer:** Jane Palmer  
e-mail: jane.palmer@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01743 252748

**Present:**

Mr K Barrow (Leader)  
Mr G Butler, Mrs A Caesar-Homden, Mr S Charmley, Mrs A Hartley, Mr M Owen,  
Mr M Price and Mr M Taylor-Smith

**108.0 Apologies for Absence**

108.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr S Jones and Mrs C Motley.

**109.0 Declarations of Interest**

109.1 No declarations of interest were made.

**110.0 Public Questions**

110.1 No public questions, petitions or statements had been received.

**111.0 Matters Referred from Scrutiny/Council**

111.1 No matters had been referred from Scrutiny/Council.

**112.0 Reports of Scrutiny Committees**

112.1 No reports had been referred from the Scrutiny Committees.

**113.0 Replacement of Customer Relationship Management [CRM] System**

113.1 The Portfolio Holder for Service Transformation and Organisational Development presented a report by the Group Manager for Customer Care and Involvement – copy attached to the signed minutes – to enter into an agreement with Herefordshire Council to join their contracting of a new CRM system.

- 113.2 He explained that the current system was not fit for purpose and additional problems were caused because the Council's current systems did not use common data. Members noted that the new system would increase and improve the productivity of operators within the Council's Customer Services Centre.
- 113.1 Members noted that the new CRM system should be implemented live by 1 April 2012 and that this timescale was achievable because of the joint working with Herefordshire Council whose requirements represented a 95% fit with Shropshire Council. The Portfolio Holder added that this joint project resulted in less spend on consultants, less spend on training and a significant reduction in ongoing costs.
- 113.3 The Chairman of the Performance and Strategy Scrutiny Committee was in attendance and permitted to speak by the Leader. He stressed that this type of change was fundamentally important for the Council to achieve the necessary changes in accordance with its Transformation Programme. In voicing his support to the proposed agreement with Herefordshire Council he concluded that this option represented the least risk to the authority.
- 113.4 The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing sought reassurance that the introduction of the new system would efficiently maintain the 'First point of Contact' system for social care. Similar reassurances relating to the education management system were sought from the Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills. The Portfolio Holder for Service Transformation and Organisational Development assured Cabinet that data would be accurately transferred and that the incoming and outgoing systems would be run in parallel to test the efficacy of the new CRM prior to 'going live' by 1 April 2012.
- 113.5 **RESOLVED:**
- (a) That, following a detailed analysis of the options available to Shropshire Council and given due consideration to timescales available, the Council procures the Microsoft enterprise licensing alongside its plans to enter into Shared Service arrangements with other authorities in the West Midlands.
  - (b) That the Council leverage the authority's existing Microsoft Enterprise Agreement and enters into a shared development agreement with Herefordshire Council which has already procured a West Midlands contract with its preferred supplier to implement and integrate the Microsoft Dynamics CRM product within a Local Authority setting.
- 114.0 **BBC Consultation**
- 114.1 The Leader presented a report by the Communications Manager – copy attached to the signed minutes – on the BBC consultation on the re-organisation of its business to make the required savings needed as a result of the 2010 licence fee settlement. Members noted that the proposals included a number of changes that could see the diminution of the current Radio Shropshire service and its replacement by regional and national programming.
- 114.2 The Leader expressed his disappointment that Shropshire Council had not been directly approached by the BBC as part of its 'Delivering Quality First' consultation. The Portfolio Holder for Flourishing Shropshire Communities stressed that Shropshire Radio played a key role in keeping Shropshire communities united and its current levels of broadcasting should therefore be

retained. He proposed, and it was seconded, that the Council should make a formal response to the BBC consultation.

- 114.3 The Leader indicated his intention to use his discretion to suspend the Council's Public Speaking Procedure Rules at this meeting in respect of this item. Accordingly, he stated that public speakers would be permitted to make their representations following the presentation by the Managing Editor of BBC Radio Shropshire, Mr Tim Beech. A copy of the presentation slides is attached to the formal record of this meeting.
- 114.4 Mr Beech drew Members' attention to the BBC's need to save 16% to meet new obligations under the Licence Fee settlement with the direct effect on BBC Radio Shropshire of a 20% cut in its staffing budget and a loss of 35 hours of Shropshire generated programmes a week. He added that the issues highlighted within the presentation did not illustrate all of the cuts that would be required. Referring to the reduction in Shropshire generated hours he explained that some of these hours would be filled with regional programming from, in all probability, a base in the Birmingham area.
- 114.5 Mr Arthur Hill, a Shropshire business ambassador, spoke against the BBC's proposals and commented that the cuts were too deep, ill-conceived and took little account of local needs. Referring to BBC Radio Shropshire as the fourth emergency service in the county he reminded those present of the vital role that the local radio had played during the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001, the dissemination of flood information that had kept Shropshire open for business, its role as an information conduit on road and school closures, rail services and snow line information. He also drew attention to its vital role in keeping the community together and, through modern technology, even maintaining a link with local people who might be overseas.
- 114.6 In drawing his comments to a close, Mr Hill stated that he had launched a petition to request the BBC to revisit its proposals to take into account the different approach offered by the local radio service in a large, rural area. The Leader agreed that rurality had not been taken into account and the needs of rural communities were little understood by city officials.
- 114.7 Mr Andrew Boddington, a local radio listener, stated that the local radio was well supported and had a strong local audience. He believed that the BBC upper management based in London was weak and cared little for rural communities. For many people BBC Radio Shropshire was a friend, confidante and a means of holding people [including local politicians] to account and teased out the quieter voices in the community. He urged all present to make a stand against the proposed cuts and to do everything possible to protect this service to the community.
- 114.8 The Leader of Council re-enforced the sentiments expressed for as many people as possible to make their voices heard through social media, correspondence and the airwaves and recognised the importance of making the strength of local opinion known as widely as possible.
- 114.9 Mr Eric Smith, a freelance reporter, added that BBC Radio Shropshire was a truly local service that was provided by people who lived in the local area themselves and had a social, economical and political relationship with the area. He reiterated the importance of the service to older listeners who were provided with companionship throughout the day. The Leader of Council agreed and added that

the BBC was currently out of synch with the Government's drive for localism and the importance of local communities supporting themselves.

114.10 Several Cabinet members echoed the sentiments of the public speakers and agreed that the wide reach of the local radio service, its role as a communications link in the area together with the importance of its local staff who understood the county and its values needed to be properly recognised.

114.11 Responding to a comment from a member of the public about the importance of making representations at the highest possible level, the Leader agreed that direct contact needed to be made with the upper echelons of management at the BBC. The Chief Executive added that opinions on this important issue needed to be conveyed to as high a level of the BBC as possible and social media and the media itself should be used to broaden the spread of this evident local feeling.

114.12 It was noted that the BBC Trust would be an ideal point of contact as the role of the Trust was 'to get the best out of the BBC for licence fee payers' and it had launched a public consultation on the proposals that would run until 21 December 2011 and would reach its conclusions in early 2012. Making arrangements for the Leader, together with a local business ambassador, Mr Arthur Hill, to make direct representations to the Trust was wholeheartedly supported.

114.13 **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Leader of the Council's letter to the Director General of the BBC, Mark Thompson, be noted.
- (b) That the importance of the ongoing consultation on the proposed changes to BBC Radio Shropshire be noted.
- (c) That arrangements be made for the Leader of Council together with an ambassador of local business to meet the Chairman [or one of the Trustees] of the BBC Trust at the highest possible level to make strong representations against the proposed diminution of the current service provided by BBC Radio Shropshire.
- (d) That a formal response be made by the Council to the BBC's ongoing 'Delivering Quality First' consultation and that its content be shared with the local press.
- (e) That the full range of social media be used as a conduit to encourage others to raise their voice and respond to the BBC's proposals.

Signed ..... (Leader)

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011