

# Call in Request regarding the Agenda Item 9 at the meeting of the Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> February

## Local commissioning of youth activities – proposals for changes to the funding of targeted geographical provision

I would like to request a call in of the decision made on Agenda Item 9 at the meeting of the cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> February. The background is as follows:

1. On 18<sup>th</sup> October 2017 the Cabinet considered a report from the Task and Finish Group on the Future Commissioning of Youth Activities. In paragraph 4.2 of the report funding was allocated in a proposed hierarchy of delivery and concentrated in groups of LJC Areas described as Tier 1 with a needs score of 5% or over and Tier 2 with a needs score of 3.8% or over. In Tier 1 Shrewsbury was to receive £45,000 and the Ludlow and Clee area £18,000. The total funding proposed was £167,000
2. The officers report to Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> October proposed that total funding should be cut to £135,000 and funding concentrated in the market towns with a needs score of 5% or over in Tier 1. The level of funding in Tier 1 was the same as recommended by the Task and Finish Group. All funding in Tier 2 was to be cut. This was agreed by Cabinet and formed the basis of the subsequent consultation and the proposed budget from April 2018. The justification for this cut was summarised in paragraph 4.4 which stated: "This would limit funding to the main market towns, where evidence suggests that the need is greatest, and there is the least possibility of provision being picked up locally independent of Council support, at least in the short term."
3. At the meeting of the Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018 after the council had agreed the Budget for 2018/19 on 22<sup>nd</sup> February a report was submitted and agreed by Cabinet which substantially reduced the funding for market towns in Tier 1 – by £20,000 for Shrewsbury and £3,500 for Ludlow and Clee for example while restoring funding for LJs in Tier 2 to the level originally recommended by the Task and Finish Group for the Craven Arms area, Bishops Castle area and Ellesmere but increasing it for Wem and Shawbury by 100% to £8,000, for the Gobowen area the increase recommended was 33% to £12,000 and for the Longden Area LJC the increase proposed was 200% to £12,000. The overall impact of these changes was to increase the budget for youth activity to £174,500 – an increase of £39,500 on the total agreed by Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> October and included within the Budget agreed by Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

The reasons for the call in are as follows:

1. The Cabinet report on 28<sup>th</sup> February did not identify how the increased spending of £39,500 was to be financed.
2. In 6.1 of the officers' report to Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> February it states that where there has been a cut in youth funding and the town council has "indicated they will consider financially supporting youth activity this will now be discussed in response to the proposed reduction in funding allocations." But the decision has come too late for this to be meaningful since Town Councils have set their budgets for 2018/19 based on the decision of Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> October which was subsequently included in Shropshire's budget proposals for 2018/19 agreed on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. As far as Shrewsbury Town Council is concerned any extra funding from Shropshire would need to be agreed 3 months before the commencement of the relevant financial year according to the terms of the agreement to delegate youth provision – surely the same should apply to any cut in funding.
3. In section 5.5 of the officers' report on 28<sup>th</sup> February it is proposed that rurality grants are brought together into one centrally held pot of £33,000 but there is no indication in the report showing where this money comes from. Nor is there any indication of which LJs have previously received a rurality grant of £3,000. Nor on what basis future grant decisions may be made
4. In section 6.2 mention is made of transitional support for local challenges which impact on current provision but surely any transitional support should be identified now since it might be called upon from April onwards.
5. The Task and Finish Group analysed the needs of different LJ areas and proposed an allocation of funding on that basis. Other than the outcome of the consultation there was no justification given to the allocation of funding suggested by the report to Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> February. The only exception is paragraph 5.10 which says that the two LJ areas with the largest increases (Gobowen and Longden) have "significantly higher population and numbers of young people aged 10 to 19 years." The actual numbers should have been included in the report for the whole of Shropshire so that members could assess the justification for increased funding. At a time when every area of the council's activities is facing cuts why are some parts of Shropshire having substantial increases in their youth funding?

The alternative course of action that I propose is that the decision to cut the funding to Shrewsbury and Ludlow LJs be re-examined for the reasons given above and due consideration be given the creation and funding of a transitional scheme if there are to be substantial cuts in youth funding in any LJ area.