



## **Committee and Date**

Cabinet

10 November 2021

## **CABINET**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2021**

**In the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND**

**10.00 - 10.51 am**

**Responsible Officer:** Amanda Holyoak

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### **Present**

Councillor Lezley Picton (Chairman)

Councillors Gwilym Butler, Dean Carroll, Rob Gittins, Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Simon Jones, Cecilia Motley, Ian Nellins and Ed Potter

### **36 Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Simon Jones sent apologies for late arrival. There were no other apologies.

### **37 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None were declared.

### **38 Minutes**

## **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2021 be approved as a correct record.

### **39 Public Question Time**

Two public questions had been received from Mr Stephen Mulloy, one in relation to learning from customer feedback, and one in relation to the promotion of the Shrewsbury West Sustainable Urban Extension. The full questions and responses provided by the Portfolio Holder for Digital, Data and Insight, and the Deputy Leader are attached to the webpage for the meeting:

[Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 20th October, 2021, 10.00 am — Shropshire Council](#)

### **40 Members Question Time**

Member Questions were received from the following Councillors:

Bernie Bentick – in relation to proposed Health Hubs

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Bentick asked if a preferred site was the Meole retail park located at or near the park and ride car park. In

response Cllr Carroll (on behalf of Cllr Jones) stated that no decisions had been made but as part of the One Public Estate Programme, the Council was actively reviewing all locations in its ownership as were other public sector partners.

David Vasmer – in relation to transport plans and carbon reduction.  
By way of supplementary question, Councillor Vasmer asked whether Shropshire Council would review its commitment to the North West Relief Road should further information be made available regarding a reduction in funding from the government if Councils are not being seen to be making a big enough contribution to carbon reduction. In response, Cllr Carroll (on behalf of Cllr Jones) stated that although further detail was still awaited, he would be very disappointed should government retrospectively reduce funding to a scheme that has already been provided funding.

Ruth Houghton, read by Councillor Vasmer – in relation to recruitment issues in the care sector.

By way of supplementary question, Councillor Vasmer asked for an assurance that staff working on Shropshire Council commissioned care work are being paid above the minimum wage and that our health partners are taking appropriate action to maintain their staffing levels and recruitment. This has been highlighted by the temporary closure of the Bishops Castle Community Hospital. In response, Cllr Carroll (on behalf of Cllr Jones) advised that Shropshire's rates to providers are higher than the regional average, whilst rates of pay in 2020/21 were lower, and the Council had previously recommended higher rates of pay to providers and continued to monitor rates of pay. Further work is being carried out on this as part of the 2022/2023 review of uplifts. With regards to the temporary closure of Bishops Castle Community Hospital, Cllr Carroll expressed his disappointment and concern, reminding members that the range of skills required by staff at a community hospital were different to those required in residential and domiciliary care settings.

Roy Aldcroft – in relation to complaints about education and children's services referred to the ombudsman.

A full copy of the questions and the responses provided by Portfolio Holders is attached to the web page for the meeting: [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 20th October, 2021, 10.00 am – Shropshire Council](#)

#### **41 Scrutiny Items**

There were no scrutiny items for consideration.

#### **42 Annual Customer Feedback (complaints) Report**

Portfolio Holder for Digital/Technology/Data and Insight, Councillor Rob Gittins, presented a report which provided an overview of formal customer feedback to

the Council in 2020/21; covering complaints, compliments and comments as well as MP enquiries and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigations. In total, the council received 2,615 cases of formal feedback, including 1,200 complaints, 801 comments and 614 compliments. The report had been considered in detail by the Performance Management Scrutiny in September 2021.

A request was made for an addendum to the report itemising complaints and compliments raised by MPs. The Portfolio Holder said he would look into meeting this request.

It was felt that a 51% increase in compliments was remarkable and a great recognition of the efforts of staff during a difficult period.

Other comments were made with regard to the volume of highways complaints and planning complaints. The Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure reported that over 15,000 potholes had been filled between 19<sup>th</sup> April and 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021, with the backlog falling from over 12,000 at the end of last winter to 4,500. This number continued to reduce each month. The Deputy Leader advised that a piece of work was ongoing in light of the pressures the planning service was encountering with an increase in the number of applications.

## **RESOLVED**

To note recommendations and actions in the Annual Customer Feedback Report to deliver robust customer feedback performance.

### **43 Business Rate Relief and Council Tax Discretionary Discount Policy Review**

Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gwilym Butler, presented a report on the review of the business rate relief and council tax discretionary discount policy which has previously been reviewed every three years.

Members were advised that the continuation of the existing rate relief policy for a further twelve months will provide certainty to businesses and enable a full review to take place in 2022 when the impact of the pandemic may be better understood.

## **RESOLVED**

To continue with the existing Business Rate Relief and Council Tax Discretionary Discount Policy for 2022-23 with a review of the policy in 2022.

#### 44 **Discretionary Housing Payment Policy Review**

Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gwilym Butler, presented a report on the annual Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Grant from central Government. Members noted that the Council policy was last reviewed in 2015.

Due to the uncertainty as a result of the pandemic, it was recommended that the policy remain as it is, with a commitment being made to review the policy every three years.

Members were urged to promote the discretionary housing payment scheme moving forward.

#### **RESOLVED**

To approve the DHP policy with a commitment to review the policy to be undertaken every three years.

#### 45 **Annual Health & Safety Performance - 2020/2021**

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Jeff Anderson, was taking up the role of Health and Safety Champion for Shropshire Council following the work he has been carrying out since the elections in May.

Councillor Anderson presented a report on the Annual Health and Safety Performance 2020/2021 which detailed the key health and safety challenges for the Council, progress on last year's Annual Report and identifies key priorities for 2021/22.

Thanks were given to the Occupational Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager, Carol Fox and her team for their hard work over the last twelve months.

A query was raised regarding a possible review of the Council's policy on working from home with regards to equal pay for those unable to do so. Members were advised that any arrangements for additional pay would form part of the budget process and could be looked into further following the outcome of the pay review being discussed by the Unions.

#### **RESOLVED**

**To accept the contents of the report;** particularly noting:

- Good progress has been made during 2020/2021 on managing health and safety across the Council.

- Reportable employee accidents to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) have decreased and minor accidents have also decreased compared to last year's figures.
- Service Areas and the Health & Safety Team work well together.
- The Council continues to maintain a good relationship with the HSE.

### **To agree the Key Actions for 2021/2022**

The key actions for Shropshire Council are:

- The Health & Safety Team to continue with the ongoing work involved with the Covid recovery
- Key actions from 2020/2021 have therefore been extended into 2021/2022 to include:
  - The Health and Safety Team to work with Service Areas to produce and implement Health & Safety management systems including policies, procedures and arrangements
  - Continual development of external contracts with associated Service Level Agreements (SLA) in place.
  - To fulfil contractual monitoring and support to Academies and customers under Service Level Agreements
  - To engage with Service Areas to ensure that health and safety compliance is in place and to review Self-Monitoring Checklist to ensure roll out to Premise and Team Managers.
  - Raise awareness of workstation assessments in particular agile working brought about by Covid and which will form part of the Council's working practices going forward.
  - Rollout of new workstation Healthy Working system.
  - To continue to implement the Wellbeing Plan and facilitate the three themes of Be Active, Be Minded and Be Informed by continuing staff wellbeing events throughout the year.
  - Support 'Leap into Learning' development for e-learning health and safety awareness courses across service areas.
  - Revised and simplified auditing plan for schools to enable more schools to be visited annually going forward.

### **46 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children National Transfer Scheme**

Portfolio Holder for Children and Education, Councillor Kirstie Hurst-Knight, presented a report which provided an overview of the duties of Shropshire Council towards unaccompanied asylum-seeking children; how children and young people become the responsibility of Shropshire Council; how they are supported and how this is funded.

Members noted the important role of Shropshire Council to be a good corporate parent.

Members further noted that we are now in cycle six and should the scheme be adopted, a further six young people would be transferred into Shropshire. This is in addition to the 20 unaccompanied asylum-seekers under the age of 18 who are currently being looked after and 37 unaccompanied asylum-seeking care leavers ages 18-25.

**RESOLVED**

To support the work of the Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding Service in fulfilling the Council’s statutory duties and the requirements of the National Transfer Scheme.

To consider what other services or functions of the Council and partner agencies could contribute or assist in settling unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Shropshire, for example offering a secure base to be cared for, participation in activities, integration into local communities and with other young people and opportunities as care leavers for employment or training and suitable housing.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....