

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at County Hall, Glenfield on Tuesday 6 April 2010.

PRESENT

Mr. D. R. Parsons CBE, CC (in the Chair)

Mr. A. M. Kershaw CC	Prof. M. E. Preston CC
Mr. I. D. Ould CC	Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC
Mr. M. B. Page CC	Mr. D. A. Sprason CC
Mrs. L. A. S. Pendleton CC	Mr. E. F. White CC

Also in attendance.

Mr. D. Houseman CC, Mr. J.T. Orson JP, CC, Mr. G.A. Boulter CC, Dr. R.K.A. Feltham CC, Mr. S.J. Galton CC, Mr. T. Gillard CC.

Welcome.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Martin Caple, independent Chairman of the County Council's Standards Committee, who was attending the meeting as an observer.

143. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2010 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

144. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

145. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting. No declarations were made.

146. 'Our Short Breaks' Commissioning Strategy for Short Breaks (Respite Care) for Adults with Learning Disabilities across Leicestershire and Rutland 2009-2014.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities which provided an overview of the joint commissioning strategy 'Our Short Breaks', for short breaks (respite care) for adults with learning disabilities, and progress made on taking forward the actions set out in its Delivery Plan. A copy of the report, marked 'B', is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Sprason CC said that the Strategy was an excellent example of work which was being carried out in partnership with Rutland, Health, and Leicester City Council. He instanced the Short Breaks residential unit in Melton, and a similar facility which would be opening in Wigston in May.

RESOLVED:

That the Commissioning Strategy for Short Breaks (Respite Care) and its Delivery Plan be endorsed.

(KEY DECISION)

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure that the Cabinet is made aware of this Strategy (which is a key priority for the Council) and endorses it, given the importance of ensuring that people with learning disabilities and their carers are well supported.

147. Objections to the Proposed Closure (Discontinuation) of Holmfield Primary School, Leicester Forest East.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Children and Young People's Service regarding the objections and comments which had been received in response to the proposal to close Holmfield Primary School, and recommending closure of the School. A copy of the report, marked 'C', is filed with these minutes.

The Director advised the Cabinet of additional representations which had been received since publication of the report, bringing the total number of objections to 11.

Mr. Ould CC said that he sympathised with the concerns which had been expressed about the proposed closure, but standards remained unsatisfactory and the number of pupils on roll was now very low.

Mr. Parsons CC indicated that he would reluctantly accept the recommendations in the report, but would not vote on the matter. He noted that a further report would be submitted regarding the choice of primary schools available to parents in the area and the impact of the closure of Holmfield.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the objections to the proposal to close (discontinue) Holmfield Primary School and the commentary on those objections be noted;
- (b) That the statutory guidance setting out the considerations to which Local Authorities must have regard when deciding a proposal to close a school be noted;

- (c) That in accordance with Paragraph 8 of Schedule 2 to the Education and Inspection Act 2006 the closure (discontinuation) of Holmfield Primary School with effect from the end of the Summer Term 2010 be approved;
- (d) That officers be requested to ensure that parents from Leicester Forest East have the broadest choice of primary school available following the closure of Holmfield, and that a further report be submitted to the Cabinet that analyses the impact of the closure on other schools in the area.

(KEY DECISION)

REASON FOR DECISION:

On 9 February 2010 the Cabinet approved the publication of a statutory notice proposing to discontinue Holmfield Primary School because, despite ongoing support from the Local Authority, the school was not making adequate progress to come out of 'special measures'. The HMI Monitoring Report of 11 December 2009 stated that *"inaccuracy in the assessment of pupil's work results in failure to identify the precise causes of underachievement and consequently the gaps in pupils' learning, particularly writing are not routinely addressed"*. HMI also found that 'inspection evidence from pupils' books and work seen in lessons indicates that the (school's) assessments are over-generous and unreliable'. The School has 172 (56%) surplus places.

(Note: Mr. Parsons CC did not vote on this item)

148. Policy on Use of Double Deck Vehicles for School Transport.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport regarding a minor change to current policy on mainstream home-to-school transport, to allow double-deck vehicles to be used to transport Year 6 children who attended four High Schools in the County. A copy of the report, marked 'D', is filed with these minutes.

Mrs. Pendleton CC said that it made sense for children in their first year at High Schools to travel with the other pupils, and she was satisfied with the improved supervision and CCTV safety measures which had been introduced on school buses in recent years. Mr. Ould CC added his support for the proposals.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Mr. S.J. Galton CC addressed the Cabinet. He suggested that all 10-year olds should be provided with the same transport, regardless of whether they attended a primary school or a high school. Mr. Galton noted that the issue had not been highlighted as a policy change in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and that no consultation had taken place.

Members discussed the proposal. It was noted that it was a relatively minor change, which would reduce the number of vehicles around the schools and improve fleet efficiency. There was moreover an argument for treating 10 year-olds at high schools slightly differently from those in a younger, primary school, environment.

In the light of the debate the Chairman proposed that discussions with the four High Schools and parents be held, and that the Cabinet Lead members be advised of the outcome.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the current policy on the use of double deck vehicles for school transport be changed, to allow the use of double-deck buses for all mainstream home-to-school transport journeys except for home-to-school transport to Primary Schools;
- (b) That the Director of Environment and Transport inform the four High Schools and parents affected by the change and report back to the Cabinet Lead members.

(KEY DECISION)

REASON FOR DECISION:

The change would allow double-deck buses to be used to transport Year 6 children at those four High Schools which take in children at age 10+. This would allow more efficient use of vehicles and better loadings to achieve estimated savings of £50,000 in a full financial year towards the savings required under the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

149. Draft Equality, Diversity, and Human Rights Strategy.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive regarding the County Council's draft Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Strategy. A copy of the report, marked 'E', with the draft Strategy appended, is filed with these minutes.

Mrs. Pendleton CC thanked officers for their work on the Strategy and commended it to the Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Strategy be approved and forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for comment;
- (b) That a further report, with the comments of the Scrutiny Commission and a final draft version of the Strategy, be submitted to the Cabinet on 4 May.

(KEY DECISION)

REASON FOR DECISION:

To enable the draft Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Strategy to be considered by the Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on 21 April 2010.

150. Exception to the Contract Procedure Rules for Contracts with Leicestershire Citizens Advice Bureaux for Debt Advice Services - Urgent Action by the Chief Executive.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive advising of urgent action taken in consultation with the Leader of the Council to approve an exception to the Contract Procedure Rules. A copy of the report, marked 'F', is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the urgent action taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to extend the current contracts with Leicestershire Citizens Advice Bureaux for the provision of debt advice services until 30 September 2010 be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The County Council's Contract Procedure Rules require the Cabinet to be informed of the circumstances of every exception to the Rules directed by the Chief Executive.

151. Items referred from Overview and Scrutiny.

There were no items referred from Overview and Scrutiny.

2.00 pm – 2.28 pm  
6 April 2010

CHAIRMAN