

## Cabinet

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### **MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2024 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.**

#### **Present:**

Cllr Richard Clewer (Chairman), Cllr Laura Mayes (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Phil Alford, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Nick Botterill, Cllr Jane Davies, Cllr Nick Holder and Cllr Ashley O'Neill

#### **Also Present:**

Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Dominic Muns, Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr David Vigar, Cllr Derek Walters and Cllr Graham Wright

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#### **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Caroline Thomas.

#### **2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023 were presented.

#### **Resolved:**

**To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023.**

#### **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader paid tribute to Cricklade & Latton Cllr Bob Jones MBE, who passed away on 4 January 2024.

Cllr Jones represented the Cricklade & Latton division since 2013 and was also a Member of Cricklade Town Council; Vice-Chairman of Wiltshire Council's Environment Select Committee; Vice Chairman of Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Area Board; and Vice Chairman of the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Authority. Before becoming a councillor, Cllr Jones served in the Royal Air Force and was also a recipient of the Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE).

Cllr Jones was a committed public servant and represented the communities of Cricklade and Latton with a great deal of dedication and dignity. Bob was a very

active councillor and keen to get involved in a variety of roles and meetings, all with the purpose of positively representing his constituents and county.

The Leader reminded members that they had an opportunity to pay tributes to Cllr Bob Jones at the next Full Council meeting on 6 February 2024.

## 5 **Public Participation**

[Agenda Supplement 1](#) included details of questions submitted for the meeting, together with responses.

Cllr David Vigar asked a supplementary question about the possibility of seeking the views of the Ukrainian Refugees about their primary needs. Officers confirmed that plans were in place to undertake a survey and the request would be considered. He also commented on the potential to rent homes for the Ukrainian Refugees. The Leader explained the reasons for this not being possible, especially in the currently rental market conditions.

Andy Janes asked a supplementary question about nutrient Neutrality in as far as it related to Warminster. The Leader suggested and Cllr Botterill, as the relevant Cabinet Member, agreed to meet with Mr Janes outside of the meeting to consider the matter further.

## 6 **Safety Valve Update**

Cllr Laura Mayes, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, presented the report which provided an update on the draft Safety Valve Plan.

The Deputy Leader, in introducing the report explained that the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive were leading the work on this matter, demonstrating it's importance. She highlighted that changes to the Council's submission were made in response to Department for Education (DfE) feedback, in advance of the 12 January 2024 submission. With the revised version going forward to the Secretary of State for approval and to form the basis of a Safety Valve Deal for Wiltshire. Due to the ambitious approach of the Plan, the Programme Team would begin to deliver the Plan without delay to ensure key conversations take place before April 2024.

Cabinet was reminded that the Safety Valve Plan offers councils additional funds from the DfE to help with their historic deficits, so long as the Department is satisfied that the council can return their DSG to a balanced position over the period of the deal. In addition, there is the opportunity to bring additional capital investment into the county to address some of the capacity issues that have historically been present. The Deputy Leader highlighted that the scale of the challenge should not be understated and required a concerted effort from everyone in the Council's SEND system.

The Leader explained his original views about the proposals and how these had changed over time and in listening to other Cabinet members and officers. He

noted that all Councils were facing the same types of challenges to some degree and the issues had been caused by national policy. This created a set of challenges for the Council and delivery would be extremely challenging.

Cllr Graham Wright, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, on behalf of Cllr Jon Hubbard Cllr Jon Hubbard, Chair of the Children's Select Committee, reported that the Select Committee had considered the report at their extraordinary meeting on 7 December 2023. It was noted that the Select Committee had considered the report in great depth and noted that the proposals allowed for investment to address the challenges being faced.

Cllr Gordon King, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, thanked the Leader for his kind comments about Cllr Bob Jones. Cllr King welcomed the update, agreed with the comments already made and indicated that this was indeed a complex issue with a number of associated risks.

**Resolved:**

- 1) To note the changes made to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan and the SEND Sustainability plan.**
- 2) To note the submission of these documents to the Department for Education (DfE) on 12 January 2024.**
- 3) To note the continued progress to reduce and remove the financial risk that the deficit in the High Needs Block (HNB) represents.**

*Reason for Decision*

*The submission of amended documents to the DfE was agreed at Cabinet on the 12 December 2023 and this update ensures that Cabinet are kept apprised of the changes.*

**7 Recommissioning for the Provision of Advocacy Services for Adults**

Cllr Jane Davies, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Inclusion presented the report which outlined the statutory obligation of a local authority to provide an independent Advocacy Service for adults.

The Cabinet Member commented on the Council's contract spend for the current Whole Life Advocacy Service and unbudgeted spend for advocates to meet referral need as demand increases. Cllr Laura Mayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills explained that an Advocacy Service for children and young people would be delivered separately to the Adult Service using a tailored approach that is more appropriate.

Cabinet noted that young people and adults have been engaged, along with professionals who refer into the Advocacy Service, in the co-design of the specification. It was also noted that an essential element to be provided by the

Service is Peer Advocacy and the promotion of Self-Advocacy enabling people to develop skills to potentially self-advocate in the future.

The Leader reported that he was comfortable with assurances from the Cabinet Member about the process to recommission the Service and highlighted that there was a need to focus on prevention and aim for people to receive a level of independence through Self-Advocacy. He expressed a concern at the loss of the Integrated Care Board contribution towards the Generic element of the Service and children's budget used to implement an In-House Advocacy Service for Children and Young People.

Cllr Johnny Kidney, Chair of the Health Select Committee, reported that he and Cllr Gordon King, Vice-Chair of the Health Select Committee received a briefing on 15 January 2024. It was noted that they explored a number of areas during the briefing which included the reasons why adults and children were being commissioned separately and an understanding where the demand lay between statutory and non-statutory services. There were also some areas of on-going concern that would be included in the Select Committee Forward Plan for consideration at future Select Committee meetings.

**Resolved:**

- 1) To agree the procurement and award of an independent Advocacy Service for Adults, to focus on Statutory advocacy.**
- 2) To agree the development of a Service Specification for a commissioned supplier to deliver a Statutory Advocacy Service for Adults, which is informed by the views of people who have accessed advocacy, or who may access advocacy in the future, and the people who support them, together with those professionals, stakeholders and funding partners, who refer people for advocacy services.**
- 3) The decision to award an Adults Advocacy Service contract is delegated to the Director of Commissioning, by the Corporate Director for Resources & Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Inclusion,**
- 4) The decision how to deliver the Advocacy Service for Children and Young People is delegated to the Corporate Director of People, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, to include either an in-house or commissioned service and the decision to award such a service.**

*Reasons for Decision:*

*The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to Cabinet on the status of the Council's contracted Whole Life Advocacy Service which is delivered by an external Advocacy Supplier and which expires on 30/06/2024.*

*The current contract delivers a Whole Life Advocacy Service to children, young people and adults and delivers both Statutory and Generic Advocacy.*

*The provision of an independent Advocacy Service fulfils the Council's statutory obligations. Therefore, a recommissioned Advocacy Service should be in place from 01/07/2024.*

*The procuring of an independent Advocacy Supplier to deliver Statutory Advocacy for Adults under a procurement process will ensure that a contract is awarded to a Supplier who has been vetted to ensure they adhere to legal and quality standards together with financial parameters and ensures continuity of service for residents.*

## **8 Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 10.45 am)

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