

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 21 September 2023 at 10.00 am in Third Floor, Southwater One, Southwater Square, Southwater Way, Telford, TF3 4JG

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY 2 OCTOBER 2023)

Present: Councillors S Davies (Chair), R A Overton (Vice-Chair), E M Callear, L D Carter, C Healy, R Mehta, K Middleton and P Watling.

Also Present: Councillor T J Nelson (Conservative Group Deputy Leader) and Cllr W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrats Group Leader)

Apologies: Councillor S A W Reynolds and N A M England

CAB-19 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-20 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB-21 Leader's Announcements

The Leader advised that it had been almost six months since the Council had written to the Health Secretary, asking them to intervene on the planned closure of the Accident and Emergency Department at the Princess Royal Hospital and to date, had not had a reply. The Leader noted that the proposals were a downgrade for the Borough and that residents would have to travel further to be treated. Over the last few weeks, it had been announced that cancer care, including all planned care, would not be available at the Princess Royal, as well as no planned paediatric care.

The Leader noted that residents of the Borough would be left with a large bill to fund the changes, and reassured residents that the Council would take all available steps to force the issue back to the attention of the Minister.

The Leader called on the Borough's Members of Parliament to raise the issue in the House of Commons.

CAB-22 SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy

The Cabinet Member: Education, Employment & Visitor Economy presented the report of the Director: Education & Skills. The report provided the outcome

of the recent local area SEND inspection and sought approval of the SEND and alternative provision (AP) strategy.

The Strategy set out the local vision for children and young people aged 0-25 years with special educational needs and / or disabilities and for children and young people who need to access alternative provision. The strategy recognises that many children who attend AP will have SEND and it was noted that AP included a range of providers outside of mainstream education.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and thanked officers, partners, parents, carers and the children and young people for their involvement. Members discussed the outcome of the recent OFSTED inspection.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group welcomed the report and commended the work of the Council in it's SEND provision and noted the impact of SEND and mental health has on school attendance.

In response to a question by the Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group, it was confirmed that the dashboard was a national scheme and it was hoped this would be in place by the end of the year. The data was formally reviewed termly, however, was regularly monitored.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the report.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) **The recently revised Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy (Appendix A of the report), recognising this as a local area partnership document between children / young people, parents, the Council, NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICA and other key partners, be approved;**
- b) **The outcome of the recent local area inspection of SEND undertaken by OFSTED / CQC, which:**
 - a. **Resulted in the Council achieving the highest possible result;**
 - b. **Judged our SEN arrangements to typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people who have SEN and / or disabilities;**
 - c. **Recognises that appropriate action is being taken where improvements are needed****be noted;**
- c) **The letter from the Minister of State for Children, Families and Wellbeing, Claire Coutinho MP (Appendix C of the Report) congratulating the Council for the outcome of our inspection that recognised many positive aspects of our local area practice, alongside areas in need of improvement be noted;**

- d) Telford & Wrekin Council has recently been selected by the Department for Education (DfE) to lead the new SEND pilot for the West Midlands, as part of its £70 million investment into a change programme in respect of the national SEND and AP system be noted.

CAB-23 Special Guardianship Order (SGO) Support Policy

The Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care & Health Systems, on behalf of the Cabinet Member: Early Years, Children & Young People, presented the report of the Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support. The report set out the support available to Special Guardians, so that, if appropriate, foster carers could be encouraged to become Special Guardians to provide consistency for children.

Special Guardianship Orders were permanent arrangements, where adoption was not appropriate but were considered to be more secure than Child Arrangements Orders and did not end the legal relationship between a child and their birth parents like adoption.

The report outlined the support provided by the Council as part of the current SGO policy and the proposed additional supports.

Cabinet Members stated that the Council's role as the corporate parent was the most important undertaken by the Council. Children who were unable to live with their birth families needed to have a range of options available to give them a sense of security and belonging.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group welcomed the report and noted that the process to become a Special Guardian was very thorough.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group stated that all children want a loving, permanent home and noted that the work in the report would support this.

RESOLVED that:

- a) **The updated Special Guardianship Order (SGO) support policy attached at Appendix A of this report be approved;**
- b) **Authority be delegated to the Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support, following consultation with the Cabinet Member: Early Years, Children & Young People, to implement the policy with immediate effect.**

CAB-24 2023 Employee Survey

The Cabinet Member: Place (The Economy & Neighbourhood Services), on behalf of the Cabinet Member: Finance, Customer Services & Governance, presented the report of the Director: Policy & Governance. The report

provided an overview of the results of the 2023 Employee Survey and the progress made to respond to any identified issues.

Overall, the results were very positive, with 94% of employees being interested in their work and 93% feeling that they were respected by the people they worked with. 90% of respondents felt that the Council was committed to equality, diversity and inclusion.

The report provided an update on the corporate response to specific actions and noted that work would be undertaken with individual directorates.

Cabinet Members thanked officers for their dedication to their work.

In response to a question, it was noted that 61% was an excellent return rate for this type of survey and that ongoing work was being undertaken to reach out to all employees across the organisation.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The results from the 2023 Employee Survey be noted;**
- b) The progress made on addressing issues raised in the survey be endorsed.**

CAB-25 Volunteering in Telford and Wrekin

The Cabinet Member: Inclusion, Engagement, Equalities & Civic Pride presented the report of the Director: Communities, Customer & Commercial Services. The report provided an update on volunteering within the Council and the support offered to external organisations.

The report highlighted the vital role undertaken by volunteers and the contribution made. The Council had almost 2,400 volunteers supporting 17 Council services, including Steet Champions, Summer Reading challenge volunteers and mystery customers. The report provided experiences of several volunteers.

The valuable contribution made by volunteers was noted by Cabinet Members and a discussion took place on the benefits of volunteering on mental health, including social isolation.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The updates to the Corporate Volunteer Policy (Appendix A of the report) and the progress being made with recruiting and supporting Council volunteers be noted;**
- b) The development of a new Volunteer Telford system to improve the way organisations can promote volunteer opportunities across the Borough and connect local voluntary organisations**

with businesses, as referred to in paragraph 5.1 of the report, be approved;

- c) The project approach and funding to recruit more Street Champions (with a target to reach 2,000 by 2026/27) as set out in paragraph 5.2 of the report be approved;
- d) The introduction of a new volunteer satisfaction survey as set out in paragraph 5.3 of the report be approved;
- e) The development of a new partnership volunteering group as part of the delivery of Vision 2032, to share best practice and explore opportunities to join up activity to recruit and support volunteers be endorsed.

The meeting ended at 10.57 am

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Anthea Lowe
Director: Policy & Governance
Date: **Wednesday 27 SEPTEMBER 2023**

Signed

Date: Thursday 19 October 2023