



## EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday, 28 June 2017 at 2.30 pm

Council Chamber - Shire Hall, Gloucester

### Present:

Cllr Phil Awford	Cllr Colin Hay	Cllr Brian Robinson
Cllr Matt Babbage	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Cllr Rachel Smith
Cllr Robert Bird	Cllr Stephen Hirst	Cllr Vernon Smith
Cllr Richard Boyles	Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Cllr Lynden Stowe
Cllr David Brown	Cllr Carole Allaway Martin	Cllr Klara Sudbury
Cllr Chris Coleman	Cllr Dr Andrew Miller	Cllr Ray Theodoulou
Cllr Dr John Cordwell	Cllr Patrick Molyneux	Cllr Brian Tipper
Cllr Kevin Cromwell	Cllr Nigel Moor	Cllr Pam Tracey MBE
Cllr Stephen Davies	Cllr Graham Morgan	Cllr Robert Vines
Cllr Iain Dobie	Cllr David Norman MBE	Cllr Eva Ward
Cllr Bernard Fisher	Cllr Brian Oosthuysen	Cllr Simon Wheeler
Cllr Andrew Gravells (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr Shaun Parsons (Chairman)	Cllr Jack Williams
Cllr Kate Haigh	Cllr Sajid Patel	Cllr Kathy Williams
Cllr Terry Hale	Cllr Loraine Patrick	Cllr Lesley Williams MBE
Cllr Tim Harman	Cllr John Payne	Cllr Suzanne Williams
Cllr Joe Harris	Cllr Alan Preest	Cllr Roger Wilson
Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Cllr Keith Rippington	Cllr Will Windsor-Clive

Apologies: Honorary Aldermen Bill Crowther, Bill Hobman, Terry Parker, John Sewell and Gordon Shurmer.

Councillors Nigel Robins and Steve Robinson

### 53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A copy of the declarations of interest is attached to the signed copy of the minutes.

#### **54. OFSTED INSPECTION OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED OF HELP AND PROTECTION, CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS**

Under Section 3.1.2 of Part 4 of the Constitution, the following five members had called for an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to consider the motion included on the agenda.

Cllr Iain Dobie  
Cllr Joe Harris  
Cllr Paul Hodgkinson  
Cllr Jack Williams  
Cllr Suzanne Williams

Cllr Paul Hodgkinson and Cllr Joe Harris, as the proposer and seconder of the original motion, requested that it be amended as indicated below (see the shaded text):

- a) *In response to the Ofsted report published on 13 June 2017, this Council calls for cross-party representation on the newly established Improvement Board to review progress and ensure maximum scrutiny.*
- b) *This Council also requests:*
  - i) *A Peer Review to be carried out by the Local Government Association of the cultural issues and management oversight failings as outlined in the Ofsted report in order to ensure that similar problems do not arise again in any part of the Council.*
  - ii) *The Peer Review report to be published in the public domain.*
  - iii) *The key lines of enquiry to be agreed in advance by Group Leaders.*
  - iv) *The Peer Review Panel should include one Liberal Democrat elected member.*

In proposing the motion, Cllr Hodgkinson said that the Ofsted report made embarrassing and painful reading. He stated that it was clear that there were serious and widespread failures in the services that were meant to protect vulnerable children. Despite the apology given by the Chief Executive, he believed that trust between members and senior officers had been severely damaged.

He stated that it was essential that there was proper cross-party representation on the Improvement Board. He called for a Local Government Association peer review to look at the cultural issues that had caused the failings within Children's Services. He said that all political groups needed to be part of the healing process for the Council following the publication of such a damning report. He questioned the role

of the Leader of the Council when he had now overseen two inadequate reports on Children's Services.

In seconding the motion, Cllr Harris stated that he had been shocked to read the findings of the report. It was evident that there had been a total breakdown in communications among officers and there was a culture of fear within Children's Services. He said that the review had opened up sores within the Council and he was fearful that other parts of the organisation were suffering similar issues.

A number of other members expressed serious concern regarding the findings of the Ofsted report. They questioned how things could have gone so badly wrong and they sought assurances that it would never happen again. Some members believed that they had been misled and they were anxious that the improvement process involved members from all political groups and not just those from the administration.

Particular concern was expressed that vulnerable children had returned to Magistrates' Court hearings without a social worker present to provide support. They believed that an organisation that was relying on whistle-blowers was failing in itself and a long hard look needed to be taken at its culture.

Cllr Richard Boyles, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, recognised that the Council had fallen short of its responsibilities. He said that it would not be a quick fix and it would take time to change practices. He assured members, however, that immediate action had been taken to address the most serious concerns identified in the report.

Experienced staff had been recruited into senior leadership role and the cultural issues identified in the report were being reviewed. Discussions were underway with the Local Government Association, other local authorities and the Department of Education to improve working practices. The Council was working with a Department of Education Advisor to establish an Improvement Board. He noted that Ofsted would be undertaking quarterly monitoring reports. He said that he was anxious that members from across the chamber were involved in the improvement process.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne, the Leader of the Council, said that he wished to put on record his apology for the failings of the past. He thanked Cllr Boyles for the work he had undertaken since he had taken over the Children and Young People Cabinet Portfolio. He also thanked the Chief Executive for taking swift action to address the most serious concerns identified within the Ofsted report. He noted, however, that the report praised members from across the chamber for their level of engagement in Children's Services. Similarly there was no criticism of the Council's

*Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting*

policies or the level of funding provided. The failings were in how the services were being delivered on the ground.

He recognised the importance of giving members the access to the information that allowed them to undertake their roles effectively. He assured members that immediate action was being taken to ensure that the service was improved and that the lessons were learnt.

Cllr Hawthorne proposed and Cllr Boyles seconded the following amendment to the motion:

- a) *In response to the Ofsted report published on 13 June 2017, this Council calls for cross-party representation on the newly established Improvement Board to review progress and ensure maximum scrutiny.*
- b) *This Council requests an open, public and fully independent Local Government Association Peer Review, the scope to be agreed by Group Leaders, of the failings as outlined in the Ofsted report, specifically to understand the cultural issues identified within the Council and the inadequacies in management oversight to ensure that similar problems do not arise again or in other service areas, in preparation for which this Council requests the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Leaders, to carry out a full review into the Council's corporate culture and in particular:*
  - i) *To commission an independent review to support for whistle-blowers and independent help and support for staff to raise concerns.*
  - ii) *To ensure corporate ownership of all exit interviews, and appropriate access by scrutiny and cabinet members to that information.*
  - iii) *To review the appraisal process.*
  - iv) *To carry out an independent transparent annual staff survey, the results of which will be shared with all councillors.*

Cllr Hodgkinson and Cllr Harris indicated that they were prepared to accept the amendment as part of their motion so it became the substantive motion. They were both anxious, however, that there was a mechanism to allow the findings of the review to be brought back to a future Council meeting.

On being put to the vote, the substantive motion received unanimous support.

**RESOLVED that**

- a) *In response to the Ofsted report published on 13 June 2017, this Council*

*Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting*

*calls for cross-party representation on the newly established Improvement Board to review progress and ensure maximum scrutiny.*

- b) This Council requests an open, public and fully independent Local Government Association Peer Review, the scope to be agreed by Group Leaders, of the failings as outlined in the Ofsted report, specifically to understand the cultural issues identified within the Council and the inadequacies in management oversight to ensure that similar problems do not arise again or in other service areas, in preparation for which this Council requests the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Leaders, to carry out a full review into the Council's corporate culture and in particular:*
- i) To commission an independent review of support for whistle-blowers and independent help and support for staff to raise concerns.*
  - ii) To ensure corporate ownership of all exit interviews, and appropriate access by scrutiny and cabinet members to that information.*
  - iii) To review the appraisal process.*
  - iv) To carry out an independent transparent annual staff survey, the results of which will be shared with all councillors.*

The meeting ended at 3.30pm

**CHAIRMAN**