



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of meeting of the Cabinet

Held on MONDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2017

**PETER BUNGARD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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

Cabinet Meeting	Gloucestershire County Council
18 September 2017	

Present

Cllr Richard Boyles
Cllr Tim Harman
Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE
Cllr Nigel Moor
Cllr Vernon Smith
Cllr Lynden Stowe
Cllr Ray Theodoulou
Cllr Roger Wilson

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Kathy Williams, Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2017 were agreed and signed as an accurate record of that meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

4. Questions at Cabinet Meetings

Public Questions

No public questions were submitted for consideration at this meeting.

Member Questions

A total of 6 member questions were submitted in advance of the meeting.

Please refer to the following link to view the responses to the questions: -

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<http://192.168.220.171:9071/documents/b13541/Cabinet%20Questions%20and%20Answers%20-%202018%20September%202017%20Monday%2018-Sep-2017%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=9>

If you are unable to access the document at the above link, please go to the link below and select the 'Cabinet Questions and Answers' PDF document at the top of the web page: -

<http://192.168.220.171:9071/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=117&MId=8858&Ver=4>

The following supplementary questions were asked at the meeting.

Question 1: Cllr Kate Haigh

Agenda Item 5: Children's Services Improvement Plan (page 11 of the agenda pack)

Splitting the supplementary question into two parts, Cllr Haigh referred to the update on the progress of the actions agreed at the extraordinary council on 28 June 2017, (Appendix 1), and questioned the use of wording relating to a meeting with the LGA, (Local Government Association), on 8 September 2017 to '*discuss the practicalities of a cultural review alongside a Peer Challenge*'. Cllr Haigh's understanding was that the review would be 'part' of the Peer Challenge.

Response by: Cllr Mark Hawthorne: Leader of Council

With the agreement of the Leader, Pete Bungard, (Chief Executive of Gloucestershire County Council), agreed to provide a further update on the Peer Challenge after the meeting.

In addition, the Chief Executive has since confirmed in an email to Cllr Haigh his acceptance of the terminology proposed by Cllr Haigh's supplementary question and the suggestion that the wording in the briefing be amended to read 'that the practicalities of a cultural review form part of the Peer Challenge'.

The second part of Cllr Haigh's question expressed concern on how Gloucestershire's Children's Services engaged with local communities and how the council planned to work with local organisations and communities in the future.

Response by: Cllr Mark Hawthorne: Leader of Council

Cllr Hawthorne reflected on the areas for improvement that had been identified by the inspection report and said 'he did not recall that this as an issue that had been flagged by the Ofsted Inspection'.

The Leader stated he was certain the council would continue it's good work of engaging with local organisations and communities. In addition, the Improvement Advisor, (appointed by the Department of Education), would ensure best practice as

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part of his long-term commitment to the improvement of Children's Services for Gloucestershire.

Question 2: Cllr Iain Dobie

Agenda Item 5: Children's Services Improvement Plan (page 11 of the agenda pack)

Cllr Dobie thanked Cllr Boyles for the responses to his 5 questions on the Children's Services Improvement Plan and to the responses provided at the Full Council meeting on 13 September 2017.

Relating his supplementary question to all 5 of his original questions, Cllr Dobie asked the Cabinet Member to 'look him in the eye' and 'state man to man on behalf of all the vulnerable children in the care of the council and its officers', if Cllr Boyles 'personally believed the Children's Services Improvement Plan was being pursued with the urgency it deserved?'

Response by: Cllr Richard Boyles (Cabinet Member: Children and Young People)

Cllr Boyles assured members that the improvement plan was being pursued with urgency. He also referred to the £2m investment the Council had made towards the recruitment of more staff in response to increases in demand.

Cllr Boyles disclosed that, with no 'clear understanding' of the issues that had emerged from poor front line practices in the past, 'it had taken time for the council to draw breath before engaging with staff and in ensuring the council was able to get it right this time'. Looking back to a couple of years ago, Cllr Boyles acknowledged, 'there had been lessons to be learned'

Investing in support from the council's Improvement Partner, (Essex County Council), and following a re-structure of the senior officer team, Cllr Boyles believed the improvement plan was 'solid' and provided a good basis from which to deliver necessary changes.

Cllr Boyles concluded with an assurance to the children and young people of Gloucestershire that the improvement plan was a 'robust platform from which the council could build on'.

Question 3: Cllr Iain Dobie

Agenda Item 5: Children's Services Improvement Plan (page 11 of the agenda pack)

Cllr Dobie asked the Cabinet Member if he accepted that the person in charge of children's services at the time of the Ofsted inspection, his predecessor, had failed in his responsibilities?

Response by: Cllr Richard Boyles (Cabinet Member: Children and Young People)

Cllr Boyles clarified he had not been a member of the council at this time and would not be drawn on the matter. He suggested to Cllr Dobie that everyone involved at the time, including officers and shadow members, had been accountable.

5. Children's Services Improvement Plan

Cllr Richard Boyles, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, presented the Draft Children's Services Improvement Plan, seeking approval of the document for submission to Ofsted, following Ofsted's inspection of Children's Services for Gloucestershire in February 2017.

Cllr Boyles outlined the background to the decision, confirming that Gloucestershire's Children's Services had been inspected under the single inspection framework for inspecting local authority children's services. (Ofsted is the Independent Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills). The Ofsted inspection report, published on 13 June 2017, had rated Children's Services in Gloucestershire inadequate overall.

On 10 August 2017, the Department of Education issued an Improvement Notice based on the findings of the Ofsted inspection report. The notice included a requirement for the council to address the Ofsted recommendations and to appoint an Improvement Adviser to support the change process. Ofsted and the Department of Education required the council to submit an Improvement Plan by 19 September 2017.

It was confirmed that, following submission of the document, Ofsted would review the Improvement Plan and provide feedback, with a possibility of making further recommendations. It was noted that the Improvement Plan was anticipated to be subject to further change.

Cllr Boyles confirmed that that the Improvement Plan was structured around 3 themes; i) Leadership and Management, (including Leadership and Governance, Culture, Management, Recruitment and Retention, and Performance and Quality; ii) Help and Protection and iii) Children in Care and Care Leavers.

Key Directors and Senior Officers from Children's Services would be responsible for implementation of the plan, including providing updates to the Improvement Board on progress made. Essex County Council, (the Council's Improvement Partner), would work with the council to support the improvement process and to ensure the good services provided by Gloucestershire's Children's Services were robust enough to be sustained into the long term.

Cllr Boyles outlined some of the actions that had already been taken by the council to address the issues highlighted by the Ofsted Inspection. These included; a new leadership structure to support the necessary changes; focussing on the most at risk children; improving children's protection practices and establishing robust and transparent quality and performance systems.

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Responding to questions, Cllr Boyles gave an update on the new leadership team, including the role of Children's Commissioning and the new Children and Young People's Plan to be provided by Sarah Scott: Director of Public Health. Cllr Tim Harman, Cabinet Member: Public Health and Communities, reinforced the relevance of the role and supported the intention to seek contributions from the Public Health Team.

The Cabinet Member gave an overview of key dates, including forthcoming discussions with Essex County Council, and confirmed a visit to Gloucestershire was anticipated in October 2017.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Mark Hawthorne, confirmed that, so far, an additional £9m of funding had been allocated to address areas identified as needing improvement. Cllr Boyles provided a breakdown of the funding, as follows: -

Adoption/Fostering/Independent Reviewing Team	£1.175m
Additional Social Workers	£2.460m
Intensive Recovery and Intervention Service	£1.4m
Domestic Abuse and Family Breakdown	800k
Breaking the Cycle Service	320k
Reducing Exclusions	270k
Enabling Active Communities	30k
Recruitment of in-house foster carers	100k
Children in Care	2.033m

The Leader of the Council thanked Cllr Boyles and Interim Director of Children's Services, Alison Williams, for the work they had contributed to the development of the Improvement Plan. Commending Cllr Boyles' expertise and experience, Cllr Hawthorne believed the plan was a positive step forward in confirming the council's commitment to improving Gloucestershire's Children's Services.

Having considered all of the information, including known proposals and the reasons for the recommendations, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to: -

- 1) Approve the Children's Services Improvement Plan for submission to Ofsted, and*
- 2) Authorise the Interim Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, to make any further minor changes to the plan as required by Ofsted.*

Leader of Council

Meeting concluded at 10.25 am