

The Leader's Report of Cabinet Issues

1. Integrated Bid for Service Development and Productivity using Public Health Grant

Following the enactment of the Health and Social Care Act, Public Health, as a function, transferred to Essex County Council from April 2013. With this transfer came a range of responsibilities and an associated budget (Public Health Grant) of £48.8m.

Cabinet agreed an investment in and development of a range of services across Essex to improve the Health and Wellbeing of its residents addressing key Public Health issues. This investment will support the development of much needed services to Essex residents as well as providing potential gross savings across Essex of £12.308m. The agreement was to an investment of £9.205m from the public health grant in falls and alcohol service improvements and Stroke Early Supported Discharge Services and the Continence Service over a period of four financial years (2013-14 to 2016-17).

The projects are concerned with setting up initiatives based on prevention and anticipated mitigation in the demand for residential social care as well as other areas of spend, so are not cashable. However they are 'win/win' initiatives suitable for funding through the public health grant to produce anticipated system savings for Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and to a lesser extent the County Council.

In return, CCGs will resource areas that would deliver productivity gains to the County Council. Additionally, the developments would lead to a range of high profile service improvements across Essex with considerable improvements in health and wellbeing.

2. Recommissioning Formal One to One Advocacy

Advocacy has been described as providing the support someone needs to be able to express their views, to understand and communicate their choices or to participate in decision making. Cabinet agreed to replace the current Independent Mental Health Advocacy Service on a 'like for like' basis whilst exploring the option of introducing a new model of provision covering the three contracts expiring in 2014, namely, Social Care Advocacy, Mental Health Formal Advocacy and NHS Complaints advocacy. By combining the 1:1 formal advocacy elements of these contracts into one service specification, the new provider will assess need for any of these services using the 'Prioritisation Tool' to determine if an individual is eligible for 1:1 advocacy support in relation to the presenting issue.

The cost is expected to be significantly lower than the combined value of the existing contracts, since eligibility for the service will be set at a higher level of need than currently. The actual number of advocacy hours delivered will be monitored regularly

once the new contract is in place, to ensure that the priority matrix is applied appropriately and that costs stay within budget.

3. Deanes School – decision whether to discontinue the school

Following the publication on 9 September of a Statutory Proposal to discontinue The Deanes School, Thundersley, the report to Cabinet on 7 November presented a summary of the representations received by 21 October; the proposer's comments on the representations; "A Review of The Pupil Forecasting Methodology and The Housing Impact Methodology in Essex County Council" commissioned from an independent reviewer recommended by the National Foundation for Educational Research; and set out the reasons for proposing the closure of the School. As a result Cabinet decided that the proposals issued on 9 September to discontinue the Deanes School on 31 August 2016 be approved. Admissions to Year 7 of the School would cease after the end of the academic year 2013/14.

In conjunction with the determination of the closure proposal Cabinet also agreed that:

- if the Secretary of State approves the transfer of the ownership of The Deanes School campus to the County Council it be retained for educational use in the first instance for the relocation of Glenwood School;
- officers explore options with a range of local partners to secure the continued use of the sports centre as a community facility;
- schemes for The Appleton School and The King John School be added to the capital programme for 2013/14 and 2014/15;
- the current £11.3m budget for The Deanes element of the Deanes/Glenwood project be released and £4m directed to the schemes at The Appleton School and The King John School with £2.5m directed to the Glenwood School relocation;
- the relocation of the Glenwood School to the Deanes site, with the addition of the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) provision proceed as soon as practicable and achievable and feasibility work be carried out in connection with this and the future shared use of The Deanes site for potential secondary school provision in the longer term.

Before taking its decision Cabinet heard a number of representations representing the views of the School and the local community.

Six call ins were received of this decision and these were considered by the People and Families Scrutiny Committee on 14 November. After hearing the reasons for call-in, justification of the decision by the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, questions and debate it was resolved that the decision to discontinue the school be referred back to Cabinet. The People & Families Scrutiny Committee, having heard and seen all the evidence at the call-in believe that The Deanes School deserves support and should not be closed. This view was based on a number of factors which the Committee identified for Cabinet but primary amongst the reasons was that as a good, comparatively small school, with the benefit of a rebuild, together with its unique

location to the north of Castle Point Borough, it would attract sufficient pupils to be viable.

Following the Scrutiny Committee's meeting the Cabinet held discussions with the Committee's Task and Finish Group and the Leader and Chief Executive of Castle Point Borough Council. In accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 20.14 Cabinet reconsidered the decision on 28 November. The Cabinet had the benefit of a report from the Scrutiny Committee recommending to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning that there is insufficient evidence to close the School on the basis of current evidence, and a repositioned school could be a success and offer an alternative to other schools in the area.

Cabinet considered a report by the Cabinet Member enabling it to reconsider its previous decision to discontinue the School. The report responded in detail to each of the six call ins. Having reconsidered the matter Cabinet confirmed its decision taken on 7 November to discontinue The Deanes School.

4. Concessionary Travel Reimbursement Negotiations

Essex County Council was given responsibility for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme in the administration area of Essex on 1 April 2011. Previously this was the responsibility of district councils. The legislation for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme requires that each authority responsible for a concessionary travel scheme must compensate operators who carry Concessionary Pass Holders with a level of reimbursement such that they are neither better nor worse off than they would have been had the scheme not existed.

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme legislation requires a scheme to be negotiated with the Transport Operators. Cabinet considered the options for a scheme of reimbursement, including any legal challenges that might arise. Given the scale and scope of the concessionary fare agreement, Cabinet authorised the Director for Commissioning Transport and Infrastructure to negotiate on behalf of the County Council over the 2014-15 English National Concessionary Travel Scheme with the aim of minimising any increase as far as is consistent with the 'no better and no worse off' principle for operator reimbursement enshrined in legislation, within a defined upper limit. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation (in consultation with the Director for Commissioning Transport and Infrastructure) will approve the final scheme, provided any settlement falls within the upper limit.

Cabinet also authorised the Director for Commissioning Transport and Infrastructure to publish a default scheme on 1 December 2013 with the aim of minimising any increase as far as is consistent with the Department for Transport Guidance and maintaining the discretionary elements.

5. Pooling Business Rates

Cabinet agreed the principles for the formation of an Essex business rates pool with the County Council acting as lead authority for the pool. The Cabinet Member for Finance

will approve the percentage share for distribution of any net benefit from pooling which will come to Essex County Council and will decide whether to withdraw from the pool if it ceases to be financially beneficial, with advice from the Executive Director for Corporate Services (S151 Officer).

David Finch
Leader of the Council