



MINUTES OF A CABINET MEETING
Havering Town Hall, Romford
Wednesday, 15 June 2011
(7.30pm – 8.45pm)

Present:

Councillor Michael White (Leader of the Council), Chairman

Cabinet Member responsibility:

Councillor Steven Kelly (Deputy Leader)	Individuals
Councillor Michael Armstrong	Transformation
Councillor Robert Benham	Community Empowerment
Councillor Andrew Curtin	Towns & Communities
Councillor Lesley Kelly	Housing
Councillor Roger Ramsey	Value
Councillor Paul Rochford	Children & Learning
Councillor Geoffrey Starns	Community Safety
Councillor Barry Tebbutt	Environment

Councillors Clarence Barrett, David Durant, Linda Hawthorn, Paul McGeary and Jeffrey Tucker also attended.

10 members of the public and a representative of the Press were present.

The decisions were agreed with no vote against.

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2011 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

2 JOINT REPORT OF THE INDIVIDUALS AND HEALTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES: DEMENTIA STRATEGY JOINT TOPIC GROUP

Councillor Steven Kelly, Cabinet Member for Individuals, introduced the report.

At their meetings on 29 June 2010 and 8 July 2010, the Individuals Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee respectively agreed to establish a joint topic group to scrutinise the Dementia Strategy in Havering.

The Topic Group's report was now submitted for consideration. The conclusions and recommendations of the Topic Group are detailed in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

Reasons for the decision:

The report of the dementia strategy joint topic group had been referred to Cabinet for consideration.

Other options considered:

No alternative had been considered.

Cabinet accepted the Individuals and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.

3 PROPOSALS FOR THE PROVISION OF TRAVEL ASSISTANCE TO SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH SEN

Councillor Paul Rochford, Cabinet Member for Children & Learning, introduced the report.

This report sought Cabinet approval of proposals to change policy and practice relating to the provision of travel assistance to school or college for children and young people with special educational needs ("SEN"). This would represent a move away from the general expectation and assumption that a child with SEN will receive help in getting to school only in the form of a bespoke door-to-door service by bus or taxi.

The proposed changes would ensure that a high quality service could continue to be delivered whilst making efficiencies and would, on average, seek to reduce journey times, enhancing quality of life for children and young people which in turn could assist educational performance. The proposed changes would mean that more children would be able to travel independently and be better prepared for future learning or employment opportunities.

It was noted that the proposals had been developed and refined over the past nine months by Social Care & Learning in conjunction with the Council's Passenger Transport Service ("PTS"). Suggestions had also been welcomed from the head teachers of the Borough's special schools, various parents' groups and voluntary sector organisations throughout the process. In addition, a thorough and formal consultation with parents of those potentially affected and, where appropriate, the children and young people who currently use the service had been undertaken.

It was reported that Cabinet approval of the recommendations would enable the Council to create a more streamlined and efficient service and meet savings targets by closely monitoring the needs and eligibility of those receiving assistance; using alternative travel solutions to fulfil its legal duties, and promoting schemes which encouraged long-term independence.

Reasons for the decision:

1. The adoption of the revised policy clearly sets out the Council's aim of increasing independence and reducing the reliance on Council-organised transport solutions.
2. An annual application for travel assistance will:
 - Ensure that only those who are eligible for help will receive it year-on-year;
 - Avoid transport solutions being paid for by the Council indefinitely where the student no longer meets the eligibility requirements; and
 - Enable the Council to identify where a student's circumstances have changed, so that the assistance offered can be tailored to suit their needs best.
3. The introduction of safe meeting points for pupils at Corbets Tey and Dycorts schools will reduce bus journey times for many children, as journeys will follow a more direct route with fewer stops.
4. Where door-to-door transport to school is provided, stipulating that for new applicants this will only be to and from the child's home address will enable the Council to carry out efficient route planning and make the best use of its resources, whilst meeting its statutory obligations.
5. Extending the travel training scheme to children with SEN who are assessed as suitable will:
 - Give increased freedom and quality of life;
 - Be an enabling process for future employment and social life; and
 - Develop social skills and increased self-confidence.
6. The introduction of mandatory assessments of suitability for travel training will enable the Council to identify as early as possible any children who would benefit from personalised travel training. By assessing children at Key Stage 3, the focus will not only be on helping them to be independent on their journey to school but also looking to their potential future journeys to college. For those in Further Education, training will improve their future employment prospects as they would be better prepared for travel to work.
7. Increased use of voluntary sector organisations will create a mixed economy and facilitate the smooth implementation of travel training and safe meeting point proposals in a cost-effective manner. This would be necessary for timely execution as the Council does not have sufficient staff resources to dedicate to this.

Other options considered:

- Do nothing: not a viable option given the financial pressures faced by the Council.
- Increase the maximum target journey time from 60 minutes to 75 minutes, in line with national guidelines: rejected due to the potential adverse impact on children.

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- Outsource the entire current provision of home-to-school transport: rejected as it did not address efficiency issues and would have hindered wider ambition to increase independence wherever possible.
- Use private hire taxis for home-to-school transport as an alternative to the Council's PTS buses: rejected as (i) soft market testing indicated that this would not result in any significant savings; (ii) there would be a negative environmental impact; and (iii) concern over having a large number of vehicles entering school premises at the start and end of the school day.
- Cease provision of travel assistance to 22-25 year olds attending Further Education Colleges as no legal duty to do so: rejected. However, travel training will be promoted for these young people and the Council will work with Colleges around the curriculum and timetabling.
- Offer of a mileage payment to parents who resume responsibility for taking their child to and from school: rejected as (i) concerns raised over fairness as many parents do already take their own children to school and do not expect payment; and (ii) deemed ethically unsound as, if parents are able to take their child to school, they should not be moved to do so only for potential financial gain.

Members suggested that the outcome of consultation be considered by the Children & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee before being reported to Cabinet.

Cabinet agreed:

- 1. The adoption of the revised policy on travel assistance (Appendix A) which embodies the basic principles which are set out in recommendations 2 to 6.**
- 2. The introduction of a requirement that parents must apply for travel assistance for their child in respect of each academic year.**
- 3. The introduction of safe meeting points for children currently transported by PTS bus to Corbets Tey and Dycorts schools (subject to a full independent assessment of need).**
- 4. That children who are eligible for and given travel assistance in the form of door-to-door transport, will only be taken to and from the child's home address. New requests for travel assistance to school from an address other than the child's home will not be accommodated. Existing arrangements for a small number of families will continue while the children concerned remain eligible for door-to-door travel assistance to school.**
- 5. The expansion of the existing travel training scheme to all children and young people with SEN who are assessed as being suitable and likely to benefit from such training.**
- 6. The introduction of a mandatory assessment of suitability for travel training for all students with SEN:**

- on receipt of any new requests for assistance to get to school or college;
- at the end of Key Stage 3 (approximately age 14), if already receiving Council assistance in getting to school; and
- at age 21 for those in Further Education establishments and already receiving Council assistance in getting to college.

7. To enter into contracts for travel training, mobility assessments and route delivery with the voluntary sector or private sector where business cases were agreed with the Lead Member.

4 ROMFORD LEISURE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Councillor Michael White, Leader of the Council,, introduced the report.

The report before Members outlined issues relating to the in-principle proposal to sell the Rom Valley Way ice rink site to a retail developer and to consider the proposed allocation of the capital receipt to the building of a new leisure centre in Romford Town Centre (which would be subject to Council approving the addition of this scheme to the capital budget in July 2011).

It was highlighted that as well as it being a Council priority, the London Mayor had identified the importance of increasing and improving the provision of sports facilities in London in the draft Replacement London Plan, including swimming pool facilities. He had recognised that sports and leisure facilities were an important part of the social infrastructure and aimed to get more people involved in sport after the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games.

The proposed new leisure centre would be a 'state of the art' facility, designed by one of the top leisure architects in the country (with experience of designing over 100 leisure facilities). In summary, it would include an 8 lane, 25m competition swimming pool, a learner pool, sauna and steam rooms, a changing village, a health and fitness gym, a dance studio, an ice rink (for public use and competitive games) and café / bar facilities. It was intended that the downstairs café (in the vicinity of the Foyer area) would be a high quality eating establishment and a destination facility in its own right.

It was reported that the swimming facility would address recognised deficiencies in provision. A recent Sport England facilities planning model report has identified Romford as being deficient in publicly accessible and affordable swimming pool facilities. The proposed 25 metre competition pool would help address the identified deficiency, as well as providing a much needed training facility for swimming clubs in Havering (one of which has to currently train outside of the borough). The competition facilities and the proposed 200+ seats in a poolside spectator gallery would also allow local and sub regional swimming galas to be held in the borough for the first time, which had long been an ambition of the Council and swimming clubs based in the borough.

Members were informed that the proposed new ice rink would provide modern, high quality facilities for skaters and spectators, replacing the tired

existing facility at Rom Valley Way. It would provide the same mix of facilities, including an ice rink that would be the same size as the current ice rink.

Overall, it was suggested through the report that the proposed new leisure centre would make a positive and significant contribution to enhancing the culture offer in Romford town centre (in addition to the refurbished Romford library and the Museum) in line with the Council's wider objectives for Romford as set out in the Romford Urban Strategy. It would make an important contribution to boosting the local economy, particularly in the evening when more people may be attracted to the town centre and make use of its other facilities such as places to eat and drink. Its location in the town centre would make it accessible to visitors who would come by car as well as those to who to Romford by public transport.

Matters relating to the commercial aspects of the proposals were considered in an exempt report. Exempt Minute 57 is appended separately.

Reasons for the decision:

The development of a major leisure centre in the borough with the consequent impact on the Council's resources requires the agreement of Cabinet.

Other options considered:

The option of not considering the opportunity was considered and rejected as the proposals contained in the report, if agreed in principle, represented an excellent opportunity to deliver in a new leisure centre, including a swimming pool in Romford town centre. Other options relating to the commercial aspects of the proposals had also been considered but these were set out in the exempt report on this same subject.

Members expressed concern at the potential financial implications of the proposals and there was doubt that it would be possible to bring them fully to fruition. In response, Members were assured that there was demand for a facility such as that proposed and that the solution proposed would enable two major developments in the vicinity of the town centre to move forward.

Cabinet agreed, in principle, to the development of detailed proposals for a new leisure centre in Romford town centre, subject to the resolution of the outstanding legal, financial and technical issues identified in the report and referred to in minute 57.

5 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Cabinet decided on the motion of the Chairman that the public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the ground that it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and it was not in the public interest to publish the information.

6 **ROMFORD LEISURE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS -exempt information**

Cabinet received a report (containing exempt information and not available to the press or public) setting out in detail aspects of the proposals referred to in minute 55 preceding.

Cabinet decided to proceed with the proposals as recommended in the report submitted. The details of those decisions are set out in the Appendix to these minutes containing exempt information (and not available to the press or public)

Chairman
14 JULY 2011