

PUBLIC

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the **CABINET MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC POLICY AND BUDGET** held on 4 March 2014 at County Hall, Matlock

**PRESENT**

Cabinet Member – Councillor Ms A Western

Also in attendance – Councillor M V Longden

**5/14** **MINUTES RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Cabinet Member.

**6/14** **COMMITMENT TO THE CHARTER FOR BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE** British Sign Language (BSL) was the main language used by Deaf people in the UK. It was used by people who were profoundly deaf or born deaf, and was recognised by Government as a distinct community language in its own right. The exact number of people who used BSL in Derbyshire was uncertain. There were a range of estimates and some information was available in the Census 2011. Local and national Deaf organisations had suggested that the Census significantly under-recorded the number of BSL users, with many people indicating their first language as English instead. Derbyshire was believed to have a higher proportion of BSL speakers, in part, because of the existence of the Royal School for the Deaf in Derby.

The Charter for British Sign Language had been developed by the British Deaf Association (BDA) to help improve access for Deaf people to public services, access to education support for Deaf children, and to promote recognition of BSL by public service providers, employers and schools. Organisations signing up to the Charter were required over time to work towards a number of standard pledges to drive improvements in these areas. These were to:

1. Ensure access for Deaf people to information and services
2. Promote learning and high quality teaching of British Sign Language
3. Support Deaf children and families
4. Ensure staff working with Deaf people could communicate effectively in British Sign Language
5. Consulted with our local Deaf community on a regular basis

Derbyshire County Council had a good record of supporting Deaf people to access its services, education support and of supporting its Deaf employees, but further improvements could be made in a number of areas which were covered by the Charter. Approximately 75% of expenditure by the Council each year on translation and interpretation was on BSL interpreters. Many of the Council's public buildings had been fitted with hearing loops to support people who were hard of hearing. Courses in BSL were widely available locally and a number of employees had already been supported to obtain level 1 or 2 qualifications by the Authority. Deaf employees were supported with a range of reasonable adjustments, including the provision of interpreters, so they could carry out their duties. In recent years a number of events had been held to celebrate Deaf Awareness Week which took place each May.

If the Council was to adopt the Charter it would need to work with the BDA Officers and local Deaf organisations, and undergo a validation process carried out against the improvements made by the BDA. As one of the pledges related directly to education, the Authority would need to gain the involvement of county schools supporting Deaf children in working towards the pledges. The Authority would need to publicly sign up to the Charter and develop a corporate action plan for fulfilling the pledges. The action plan would be co-ordinated by a working group of officers from across the Authority, with progress reported to the Council's Diversity and Inclusion Board and the Cabinet Member for Strategic Policy and Budget, in her capacity as champion for diversity and inclusion.

**RESOLVED** to approve the proposal that the Council sign up to the Charter for British Sign Language.

**7/14**      **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC** **RESOLVED** to exclude the public from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items on the agenda to avoid the disclosure of exempt or confidential information.

#### **SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS CONDUCTED AFTER THE PUBLIC WERE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING**

1. To confirm the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014 (contains exempt information)

**8/14**      **MINUTES** **RESOLVED** that the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Cabinet Member.