

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 12 November 2019

Time: 2.00pm – 3.45pm

Venue: Swansley Room, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambourne CB23 6EA

Present: Councillors S Bywater (Chairman), S Hoy (Vice Chairwoman), D Ambrose Smith, A Bradnam, P Downes, L Every (from 2.30pm onward), A Hay, S Taylor and J Whitehead

Co-opted members: A Read and F Vettese

Apologies: Councillor J Wisson

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

255. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked South Cambridgeshire District Council for hosting the Committee on this occasion.

256. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were noted as recorded above. Councillor Tim Wotherspoon declared a non-statutory disclosable interest as a member of Cottenham Parish Council in relation to his written representations regarding Item 6: Provision of additional Early Years provision by Cottenham Parish Council (minute 261 below refers).

257. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 8 OCTOBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting on 8 October 2019 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

258. ACTION LOG

All actions had been completed or a date had been specified by which they would be completed. Use of the term 'triggers' in risk registers would be discussed at the next Risk Board meeting in November 2019 and then by the Council's Strategic Management Team.

259. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

KEY DECISION

260. FUTURE PATTERN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION IN SAWTRY (KD2019/071)

The Chairman handed the chairing of this item to the Vice Chairwoman as he wished to speak on the proposals in his capacity as the member for Sawtry and Stilton.

The Chairwoman stated that the report contained an exempt appendix and asked whether any members of the Committee wanted to discuss this. No members expressed the wish to do so.

The Area Education Officer stated that plans had previously been agreed to expand the existing infant and junior schools from two forms of entry (2FE) to 3FE on their existing site to meet the needs of the growing community in Sawtry and new housing developments in the catchment area. However, it had become necessary to review these plans when a planning application for 300 homes was submitted to Huntingdonshire District Council in July 2018 which, if it went ahead, would generate the need for an additional 120 primary school places. Section 106 contributions had now been agreed which would result in reduced borrowing of £800k on Options 1 and 2 as set out in the report and a reduction of £1.78M on Option 3, the proposal which was recommended by officers. This recommended a project to build a new, separate primary school on the site of the proposed new development on Glatton Road in Sawtry. Option 3 would also secure sufficient land for a 2FE primary school even though the requirement at this stage was for a smaller school.

Councillor Bywater addressed the Committee in his capacity as the Member for Sawtry and Stilton. He expressed his thanks to officers for their work on this issue. As the local Member he described the proposals as a head versus heart issue. The original plans had been progressing well, but the proposals for additional housing by Larkfleet Homes meant that these had to be reassessed. Many Sawtry residents were opposed to further development which created a difficult decision. The proposals by Larkfleet Homes had created a problem, but they were also offering a solution in offering sufficient land at Glatton Road to accommodate a 2FE/ 420 place primary school. This offered the Council the opportunity to reduce its borrowing commitment and provide a long-term solution to the rising demand for primary school places in Sawtry. On balance, and despite reservations, he judged that Option 3 offered the most realistic solution.

A Member sought clarification of the pattern of primary school provision in Sawtry if Option 3 was approved. Councillor Bywater stated that there would be three schools: the existing infant and junior schools and a new all-through primary. He acknowledged an expressed concern that this could potentially be divisive, but judged that whilst not ideal it would be workable position. The question of who would deliver the provision would be a matter for future consideration.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Provision of a new primary school on the site of the proposed Glatton Road development seemed sensible given the 300 new homes proposed;
- Officers confirmed that if Option 3 was approved there would be no further expansion of the two existing primary schools in Sawtry;

- Reassurance was sought that Option 3 would offer sufficient but not excessive capacity. Officers stated that the need for 127 primary school places was forecast in 2027 so four forms of entry would be needed;
- A planning application had already been submitted to Huntingdonshire District Council;
- Options 1 and 2 only offered sufficient accommodation to meet existing need rather than projected future demand;
- The Highways Department had raised concerns around drop off arrangements and congestion in relation to Option 2. Option 3 would further disperse the primary school population and associated traffic across Sawtry rather than concentrating it in a single area;

On being put to the vote it was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Consider the options for providing additional primary school places in Sawtry.
- b) Confirm support for the request to change the project at Sawtry from an expansion by one form of entry to the existing Infant and Junior schools on their current shared site, to a project to build a new, separate primary school on the site of the proposed new development on Glatton Road in Sawtry.
- c) Approve the capital funding, if required depending on the final preferred option approved.

Councillor Bywater resumed chairmanship of the remainder of the meeting.

DECISIONS

261. SUPPORTING THE PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL EARLY YEARS PROVISION AND CHILDCARE BY COTTENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

The Committee considered proposals to recommend the transfer of £800k of S106 funding to Cottenham Parish Council to support the provision of additional early years and childcare places for 0-4 year olds in the village. Cottenham Parish Council had identified almost £5m of funding for the delivery of a new village hall which would provide within it accommodation for a 42 place day nursery. Providing this childcare as a standalone project would cost the Council considerably more, so the proposal represented good value for money. If approved, funding would be made subject to a funding agreement that would strictly limit the Council's liability and would secure long-term early years and childcare provision via a clawback mechanism if the early years provision was to cease.

Two requests to speak and one written representation had been received on the proposals and these were taken in the order in which they had been received.

Councillor Eileen Wilson, South Cambridgeshire District Councillor for Cottenham, commented that she was attending to support Cottenham Parish Council and the officer recommendations. S106 funding had been secured and additional day nursey provision was much needed in the area. Councillor Wilson had taken a close interest in the proposals since their inception. The Parish Council had put a lot of work into the

proposals and Ladybird, their preferred provider, was well-known and trusted locally. She commended the proposals to Committee. There were no questions of clarification.

Councillor Frank Morris, Chair of Cottenham Parish Council, commented that nursery provision in Cottenham was a longstanding issue. Planning permission had been obtained a year ago and he expressed his thanks to the Area Education Team for their support. If approved, he expressed the hope that the proposals could be progressed quickly.

Written comments on the proposals had been received from Councillor Tim Wotherspoon, County Councillor for Cottenham and Willingham. Cllr Wotherspoon had consulted the Monitoring Officer and declared a non-statutory disclosable interest as a member of Cottenham Parish Council. Councillor Wotherspoon wrote that he had been watching the emergence of this proposal for many years and it came at an opportune moment, with Cottenham on the way to growing by 600 extra houses. The nursery element was being largely financed by the S106 contributions from five recent, current and forthcoming developments in Cottenham. Given the estimate that it might cost the County Council £1.44m to meet its own statutory duty to meet the forecast need for early years places he fully supported the Parish Council's proposals. Councillor Wotherspoon further commented that he believed that the conditions gave adequate safeguards to the County Council to ensure excellence in standards should there be any future uncertainty about the quality of provision offered.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Whether the proposed 0-4 years' provision was in addition to the existing provision for 2-5 year olds and if it would be better to consolidate the early years offer within a single organisational arrangement. Officers confirmed it was envisaged as additional provision, but that organisational structure could be reviewed in working through the setting's business plan. The number of five years olds in early years provision was relatively small;
- Applauded Cottenham Parish Council for taking the initiative to meet the local need for additional early years provision and encouraged other parish councils to consider whether similar opportunities existed within their areas;
- Asked for more information about the future relationship between the parish council and the provider. Officers stated that any issues regarding the quality of provision would be raised via Ofsted. Should it become necessary for the parish council to seek an alternative provider the Council would support this process.
- Some of the largest revenue reserves in the early years sector in Cambridgeshire were held by maintained nursery schools. Officers stated that the nursery at Cottenham would be within the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector and the expectation of it generating significant surpluses was low;
- The new village hall would be available for community events, private hire and rental outside of nursery hours and as such would be of both social and economic benefit to the local community.

The Chairman thanked councillor colleagues on the parish, district and county council for sharing their knowledge and views with the Committee and commended the admirable work carried out by the parish council.

On being put to the vote, it was resolved unanimously to:

- a) recommend to the General Purposes Committee the transfer of £800K to Cottenham Parish Council, subject to:
 - i. The satisfactory conclusion of a funding agreement; and
 - ii. Cambridgeshire County Council being engaged in an ongoing advisory role to Cottenham Parish Council (and the provider) to ensure that its preferred early years and childcare provider prepares a sustainable business case so that it can provide high quality* and financially sustainable early years and childcare places in the newly built facility.

**Ofsted Good or Outstanding and a minimum of three years engagement with the Early Years' Service or another quality improvement provider.*

INFORMATION AND MONITORING

262. FINANCE MONITORING REPORT

The report format had been revised slightly at the Committee's request. An executive summary had been included in the covering report and a number of sections in the appendices that did not relate to the Committee's responsibilities had been greyed out. Forecast pressure on the budget remained at £1.7M and there were no significant changes to the position reported in recent months. An in-year pressure of between £8.5-9M was forecast on the High Needs Budget bringing the cumulative pressure including carry-forward to between £15-16M. Overall numbers of children in care were continuing to reduce, although the need to provide some additional high cost secure placements had reduced the impact of this on the budget. The number of education, health and care plans (EHCPs) had increased by 11% in the last 12 month period.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Whether there was sufficient capacity in residential children's services to accommodate more children if there were not enough foster care placements. Officers stated that the rise in numbers of children in care nationally had placed pressure on the number of foster care placements available. Residential placements were only used to accommodate children who could otherwise have been placed with foster carers in a very small number of cases. These children would be moved to foster care placements as soon as possible as this was better for the child and cost significantly less;
- The rationale for the reconstitution of panels. Officers stated that an additional Assistant Director post had been created within Children's Services and that the reconstitution of panels had arisen from a review of functions related to this staffing restructure;
- The review of supervised contact demand criteria. Officers stated that the majority of supervised contacts took place during care proceedings, so the increase in numbers of care proceedings in this period had led to increased demand. Historically, it appeared that officers had sometimes been overly accommodating of requests for supervised contact visits at weekends and out of hours when these

could have been accommodated during the working week at less cost, or in cases where supervision might not be required;

- The 72% increase in legal proceedings between February and April 2019. Officers stated that this increase had arisen following changes in staffing structure which had put in more line managers and led to additional cases being picked up and processed. This initial spike in numbers had been expected and following this there had been a sustained reduction in the number of proceedings;
- Whether holiday parks were being used to accommodate any Cambridgeshire children in care. The Service Director for Children's Services stated that there had been one case recently where a young person accompanied by a member of staff had been accommodated for one night in holiday park accommodation before moving to their placement.
- Praised the revised presentation of the red, amber, green (RAG) rating section of the report.

It was resolved to review and comment on the report.

263. SERVICE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: CHILDREN AND SAFEGUARDING

The changes in the structure of Children's Services which had been agreed a year ago by the Committee were now showing an impact. The number of cases open to Children's Services was reducing, bringing Cambridgeshire's numbers back towards those seen in other comparable local authorities. Compliance was improving and a peer review carried out in September and October 2019 had found much progress since the Ofsted inspection in January 2019, although management oversight and quality was not yet consistent. Work to introduce the Family Safeguarding model was continuing to progress and the Department for Education had conducted a first visit and were satisfied with the work done to date. The changes this required to professional support meant that the children's clinician role did not fit with the new model of practice, but the new team would ensure that children in care continued to have access to high quality mental health care. As numbers of children in care began to decrease more time would be available to psychiatrists and family therapists to work with families in need of support.

The Chairman stated that the Committee had needed to make some brave decisions in relation to Children's Services in the past 18 months. The number of children in care was now decreasing which was welcome, but there was still a way to go. It had been encouraging to hear that the findings of the recent peer review mirrored the Council's own assessment of its progress since the Ofsted inspection. Children's Services was on the road to improvement and he thanked the Committee for its resolve in standing by the changes which had been introduced.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- The Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee commented that the Sub-Committee had received representations from the Voices Matter panel on the importance which children and young people in care attached to mental health support services. Having an in-house children's clinician team provided reassurance that the county's children in care would receive the support they needed. Given the

decision to move to a Family Therapy model she sought an assurance that this level of support would not diminish. The Service Director for Children's Services stated that he was happy to give that assurance. Ofsted deemed the most important factor to providing good quality care was to have social workers with reasonable caseloads who stayed in post and were able to provide consistent support. The structure of the new Family Therapy support model was currently being addressed, but not all staff within the children's clinical support team had the qualifications necessary to work with adult family members. He welcomed the suggestion that the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee should monitor this area and undertook to attend the Sub-Committee to report on the position as the new model developed. (**Action:** Service Director for Children and Safeguarding) The Executive Director, People and Communities stated that work was also in hand to develop a children's mental health strategy and that children in care would form a specific element of that.

- The work being done in support of children and young people's emotional and mental health and wellbeing by the Annabelle Davis mental health centres in Yaxley and Wisbech;
- Recent media reports had referred to children in care being placed in unsupervised residential accommodation. An assurance was sought that this did not happen in Cambridgeshire. The Service Director for Children's Services stated that a number of providers offered activity placements which might occasionally be used as a bridge until a regular placement became available, but that would include supervision. Some unregulated placements existed and these would typically be 16-17 years olds subject to a care order who choose of their own volition to return home. A pragmatic approach might be taken to allow this to remain unchallenged, but that decision would need to be reviewed and approved by the Service Director. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that both she and the Chief Executive had requested details of the position in relation to Cambridgeshire's children in care when these media reports first occurred;
- High numbers of contacts were received from a number of agencies which did not relate to child protection issues. These created unnecessary additional work and reduced capacity to handle actual child protection queries. Officers were working with the agencies concerned to signpost them to the correct support services. The Chairman suggested that Members of the Committee who had not previously visited the children's services contact centres might consider doing so to get an insight into the type and volume of enquiries received and how these were managed.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the information within the report relating to the performance of children's services;
- b) Note the progress on implementation of the Family Safeguarding model;
- c) Note the continuing actions to secure improvements to service delivery and ensure that our response to meeting the needs of children and young people is proportionate and consistent.

264. SCHOOLS FUNDING UPDATE

The local authority was responsible for proposing a budget to schools. The Schools Forum was consulted on the proposals and the Children and Young People Committee made the final decision. The Government was reporting a positive settlement for schools with more funds nationally being made available to education. The minimum funding level would benefit many Cambridgeshire schools. However, significant budgetary pressures still existed such as teacher starting salaries and pensions. Additional national investment in Early Years provision was good news for Cambridgeshire's seven maintained nursery schools for the next financial year so decisions on future arrangements would now be postponed. Funding for special educational needs and disability (SEND) services had also seen an increased allocation nationally.

Schools Block funding had increased, but the High Needs Block had not increased as had been hoped. It was proposed to top slice the Schools budget by 1.8% (rather than 1.5% as stated in the report) to address this pressure and the approval of the Secretary of State would be required for this. 80% of funds in the High Needs Block were passed straight to schools.

The National Funding Formula Central Services Schools Block (CSSB) comprised of two elements: funding for historical commitments which was fixed and could not be increased and funding for on-going responsibilities. The Department for Education (DfE) had applied a 20% reduction on the historic element to begin unwinding this commitment. This included the budget for the Cambridgeshire Public Services Network Broadband contract, so the shortfall would need to be recovered via charges to schools.

Details of the consultation process had been emailed to schools earlier in the week together with dates and venues for a number of consultation events. A copy would be circulated to Committee members for information and they were invited to attend one of the eight consultation events which were being arranged.

(Action: Service Director, Education)

The Chairman stated that the Schools Forum had discussed these issues in detail during a lengthy meeting the previous week. Strong concerns had been voiced in relation to a wide range of issues including High Needs funding, broadband charges and the growth fund. Ultimately the decision on schools budgets would rest with the Committee, but his wish was to work constructively with the Schools Forum and to listen to what its members had to say.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- The wish to retain some flexibility at local level in relation to budget setting in order to meet identified local need;
- Requested more information about the implications of the 20% reduction to the historic element of the CSSB. Officers stated that this represented a budget reduction of around £1.5M;
- Expressed the view that there had been a lack of understanding demonstrated at previous Schools Forum meetings about the role which schools needed to play to help address budget pressures through use of their reserves or by reducing the demand for High Needs Block services. A Member expressed frustration that

schools continued to look to the local authority to resolve the difficulties. The Chairman stated that the Schools Forum had offered challenge on this issue at its last meeting and officers reported that, at the request of the Schools Forum, the consultation which had been sent to all schools included a question regarding the use of reserves. Schools needed some reserves to provide a degree of resilience, but the question remained about what level of reserves should be deemed reasonable.

- A co-opted member recognised the presentational difficulties of schools holding significant reserves which it would appear could be used to reduce the deficit. However, he judged that a better understanding was needed of the size of reserves, what use they were intended for and the extent to which they were already allocated to enable an informed discussion and the opportunity to reach a collective view on the way forward. He commended officers' contributions to the discussions taking place at the Schools Forum and commented that there should be an expectation that chief executives of multi academy trusts (MATs) would engage with the process at a detailed level. The Chairman stated that senior officers stood ready to meet with chief executives to discuss the position.
- The continuing mismatch between the local authority's financial year and the financial year for MATs was acknowledged as an on-going area of difficulty;
- Previous discussions about employing someone to look in detail at the issues around the High Needs Block. The Service Director for Education stated that Transformation Funding had been used to fund work around this. The findings would be included in his update report to the Committee in January 2020;
(**Action:** Service Director: Education)
- Commented that the local authority's focus should be the county's children.

The Chairman stated that the Committee faced some difficult decisions on schools budgets during the next few months. The Council was committed to engaging fully with the Schools Forum and with individual schools and he urged all schools to respond to the consultation process to ensure that their voices could be heard. He expressed his thanks to Jon Lee, Head of Integrated Finance Services at LGSS, for his excellent work during his time in post and wished him every success in his future ventures.

It was resolved to note the content of the report and the requirement to approve the Cambridgeshire schools funding formula at its meeting in January 2020.

266. APPOINTMENTS TO INTERNAL ADVISORY GROUPS AND PANELS AND PARTNERSHIP LIAISON AND ADVISORY GROUPS

The Committee reviewed the committee agenda plan, appointments and training plan.

It was resolved to:

- a) Review the agenda plan and note the following changes to the version published with the meeting agenda:
 - i. 4 December 2019: Service Directors' report: Education – removed
 - ii. 21 January 2020: Free School Proposals – removed
 - iii. 21 January 2020: Cambridgeshire Music – new item

- b) Note that committee appointments remained unchanged
- c) Note the Committee training plan.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Children and Young People Committee will meet next on Wednesday 4 December at 2.00pm in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairman
(date)