

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 12th July 2016

Time: 2.00pm – 3.40pm

Present: Councillors D Brown (Vice-Chairman), P Brown, S Bywater, D Divine, P Downes, D Harty, M Loynes, Z Moghadas, A Taylor (substituting for Councillor M Leeke), S Taylor, J Wisson and F Yeulett (substituting for Councillor S Frost).

Apologies: Councillors S Frost, M Leeke and J Whitehead (Chairwoman).

Also in attendance:
Councillor S Hoy (Item 5)

184. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

185. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 24 MAY 2016 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2016 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the correction of the numbering of the final paragraph from 171 to 183, and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

The Action Log was noted. The Vice-Chairman reported that, in the absence of the Chairwoman, he had signed off a letter to the National Schools Commissioner about the Darwin Green free school competition during which the Regional Schools Commissioner had overturned the panel's decision.

186. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

187. NATIONAL FREE SCHOOL PROCESS

The Committee received a report from the Executive Director for Children, Families and Adults Services on the application submitted by the Active Learning Trust (ALT) to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to establish a primary free school in Chatteris. The report described the outcome of the joint member and officer panel's evaluation of the Chatteris proposal as well as proposals for two new specialist free schools which it was anticipated would be submitted to the RSC in the September 2016 application round.

Members noted that there was already an identified need for additional primary school places in Chatteris. The joint member and officer panel had met representatives of the ALT on 23 June 2016 and had been impressed by the Trust's openness and willingness to engage with the Council and answer questions. However, some concerns remained about the slower than expected pace of improvement in some schools already run by the Trust; the possibility that the Trust's central staff team's engagement with its schools might be reduced as the number of schools run by the Trust increased; and the

absence of the places for funded two year olds within its planned Early Years provision. On balance, the panel had concluded that the positive aspects of the proposal outweighed the concerns identified and sought the Committee's endorsement of the recommendation that the Council should give formal support to the ALT's free school application and that on this occasion should not run a separate competitive tendering process for the new school in Chatteris.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- A member expressed concern about the performance levels in the ALT's existing schools and questioned whether the Trust had the capacity to improve these schools whilst taking on additional work in relation to the Chatteris proposal. The Strategic and Policy Place Planning Manager said that detailed and lengthy discussions had taken place with the ALT on this point and that officers were satisfied that the Trust was taking active steps to support improvement in its existing schools. The most recent visit to Kingsfield School by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Schools had recognised that some improvement had already been achieved. However, the proposed letter to the Regional School's Commissioner did highlight this as an area of specific concern to the Council;
- Concern about the number of schools which the Trust might be seeking to establish in a particular area and whether this might create a monopoly supplier. The Strategic and Policy Place Planning Manager confirmed that this question had been raised and that whilst the Trust's management confirmed that they were seeking to establish one of three planned hubs within the Cambridgeshire area they demonstrated a clear understanding of the need for this to remain of a manageable size;
- The Trust had confirmed that it intended to develop its provision of funded places for two year olds within its Early Years provision over time;
- A member commented that figures published on 7 July 2016 noted no significant difference in performance between local authority maintained schools and those run by multi-academy trusts and cautioned against any assumption that schools run by multi-agency trusts would necessarily perform better.

Members noted that the second annual round of applications for free schools would open in September 2016 and that work was in hand on two possible applications. The first related to Meadowgate Special School and was considered as a separate agenda item (minute 188 below refers). The second related to the possible establishment of a special school by Impington Village College on its existing site.

The Vice-Chairman noted the reservations expressed by the joint member and officer panel and by members during the discussion, but noted the reassurances given by officers.

It was resolved unanimously:

1. To approve the joint member and officer panel's recommendation set out in section 2.8 of the report that the Council should endorse the Active Learning Trust's (ALT's) application to establish a new primary school as a free school in Chatteris;

2. To note the proposals for two new specialist free schools which were anticipated to be submitted to the Regional Schools Commissioner in the September 2016 application round.

188. MEADOWGATE SCHOOL WISBECH: APPLICATION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW SPECIALIST FREE SCHOOL

The Committee received a report from the Executive Director for Children, Families and Adults Services on the application by Meadowgate School, Wisbech to establish a new 50 place specialist free school for children and young people between the ages of 2-19 with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Meadowgate School would need to become an academy during the free school application process in order to be eligible to make an application to the Regional Schools Commissioner during the September 2016 bidding round.

The number of young people in Cambridgeshire with diagnoses of ASD had increased significantly during the past decade. This had led to more young people being placed in specialist out of county provisions and there was a clear needs-based case for the additional specialist provision proposed.

The site of the proposed school was adjacent to a large piece of land and officers were seeking to work with the Education Funding Agency (EFA) on a joint development brief for the land in order that any future planning risk was reduced should there be a proposal, in future, to develop a secondary school in the area. Due diligence work on the suitability of the adjacent site for the location of a secondary school was being taken forward separately.

The Vice-Chairman invited Councillor Hoy, member for Wisbech South, to give her views on the proposal in her capacity as the local member. Councillor Hoy said that Meadowgate School was currently rated an outstanding school and that she could not speak highly enough of its work, both with its students and in the local community. She remained concerned about the possible future development of the adjacent site for a secondary school, but acknowledged that this would be considered as a separate issue in the future. Councillor Hoy asked that the Committee endorse the proposals contained in the report.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Members noted that there might be some initial set up costs which would fall to the Council and that there was some uncertainty about the future management of basic needs special school funds in light of the current national consultation on the revised schools funding formula. However, it was anticipated that there would also be some cost savings over time due to a reduction in the number of young people being educated in specialist out of county provisions and members asked that this should be made clear in the final business case (**Action: 0-19 Area Education Officer**);
- The leadership team at Meadowgate School was drawing on the experience of colleagues at Spring Common Academy in preparing for the change to academy status;
- Members were concerned about the possible impact on Meadowgate School's own performance given the heavy commitment which would be placed on both

staff and governor staff time during the academisation process. The Head of Commissioning Enhanced Services confirmed that senior officers had discussed this with the school and were satisfied that they were clear about the demands involved.

It was resolved unanimously to:

1. Give support in principle to the application being made by Meadowgate School to establish a new specialist free school on adjacent land in the ownership of the College of West Anglia (CWA);
2. Confirm that this support was conditional on the joint member and officer assessment panel being satisfied that the detailed bid, when it was submitted, met the requirements of the specification to be prepared by the Council for this type of school;
3. Confirm that there was no need in this instance to run a competition to establish this new provision should the above conditions be met;
4. Support officers in seeking to enter into a joint development brief with the Education Funding Agency for the land adjacent to Meadowgate School and in the ownership of CWA.

189. WORK OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

The Vice-Chairman welcomed Theresa Leavy, Interim Head of Children's Social Care, to the meeting as an observer.

The Committee received a report from the Executive Director for Children, Families and Adults Services setting out progress on the Corporate Parenting Strategy action plan and subsequent outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) and care leavers.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy was launched in June 2015 and was a three year strategy designed to achieve better outcomes for LAC. The five key work streams were:

- I. Looked After Children to achieve their educational potential;
- II. Care leavers gaining successful employment;
- III. Good health and well-being;
- IV. Care leavers equipped to be parents;
- V. Children placed out of county not being disadvantaged.

Progress was being seen across all of these five work streams, although challenges remained across a number of areas including educational achievement levels at Key Stages 2 and 4, the number of care leavers not in education, training or employment (NEET) and the number of care leavers becoming parents before their 21st birthday.

During discussion it was noted that:

- The Virtual School was designed to ensure that all LAC received adequate education and to provide a mechanism for overseeing the needs and attainment of all LAC as a single cohort;

- Officers were working actively with the Virtual School to keep young people engaged in education and equipped to move forward into employment;
- Children and young people placed out of county were now being provided with regular access to a range of support services;
- Members welcomed news that the proportion of LAC making expected levels of progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 was 3% higher than the national average. Whilst noting that there was still room for further improvement members commended officers' work in this area;
- Officers were in the final stages of producing a document setting out the rights and entitlements of care leavers as part of preparing them for independence. This would include supporting care leavers to monitor and get the best value from the resources available to them, including an allowance for setting up home;
- Members noted that as of June 2016 there were 41 LAC care leavers who were parents and a further 8 who were expecting a baby. The gender split was usually 2:1 with females in the majority, but members were mindful that this was an issue affecting young men as well as young women and asked for an exact breakdown of these figures by gender (**Action: Head of Corporate Parenting**);
- The Vice- Chairman said that work on establishing employment pathways for care leavers within Cambridgeshire County Council was in hand.

It was resolved unanimously:

To note the content of the report and to continue the Committee's engagement in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

190. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director for Children, Families and Adults Services setting out progress on the Looked After Children (LAC) Strategy and Action Plan which the Committee had approved in March 2016. It had been agreed at that time that officers would provide a quarterly update on progress towards the following five key outcomes:

- I. Families would be supported to stay together;
- II. Risk was managed confidently and intensive support provided for families on the edge of the care system;
- III. Children remained in education;
- IV. Placements for children in care were within the county and with a family;
- V. Children were moved through the care system quickly, were reunited with family and friends where possible, had stable placements and left the care system positively.

Resource implications and progress against all key outcomes were monitored continuously and some progress was beginning to be seen.

During discussion it was noted that:

- Unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC) were classed as children until the age of 18 and they would then be supported as care leavers;
- The number of UASC in Cambridgeshire continued to rise as part of the Home Office UASC transfer scheme which encouraged local authorities to take a regional approach to supporting this group. In May 2016 there were 65 UASC within Cambridgeshire and under current central government guidelines the maximum number to be accommodated by the county was 92.

It was resolved unanimously:

To note the progress which had been made regarding the Looked After Children (LAC) Strategy and to support the on-going work taking place through the LAC Action Plan.

191. RISK REGISTER

The Vice-Chairman welcomed Sue Nix, Head of Strategy for Children, Families and Adults Services, to her first meeting.

The Committee received a report by the Executive Director for Children, Families and Adults Services (CFA) setting out the risks identified within CFA Services and seeking members' views on the management of the identified risks and mitigating actions planned.

The Head of Strategy for CFA said that the risk register was managed by the CFA Performance Board and was subject to robust scrutiny and challenge. The degree of risk was calculated on the basis of degree of risk posed and the likelihood of it occurring. Three risks within the CFA portfolio were currently deemed sufficiently significant to be included on the Corporate Risk Register

During discussion it was noted that:

- Work was in hand to clarify the risk posed by the potential insufficient availability of supported housing schemes due to the impact of capped housing benefit at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels. This was predominantly an adult social care issue, but could impact on 18-25 year olds with Education, Health and Care Plans;
- Any immediate risks would be submitted separately to the Committee via Children and Young People Spokes (the regular meeting of political group spokesmen and women) for consideration and action;
- Key controls relating to the availability of affordable placements for Looked After Children (LAC) were reviewed on both a weekly and monthly basis. The role of preventative services and community resilience were also actively taken into account.

It was resolved unanimously:

To endorse the Children, Families and Adults (CYA) Risk Register and management of the identified risks.

192. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2015/16

The Committee received a report by the Executive Director for Children, Families and Adults Services and Chief Finance Officer on the final outturn and performance report for Children, Families and Adults Services in 2015/16.

The Strategic Finance Manager reported that the final outturn position at the end of the 2015/16 closedown period was an underspend of £1,623k compared to a forecast underspend of £1,904k in March 2016. Most of the difference related to changes in the adult services element of the budget.

During discussion:

- Members expressed concern about the increased time taken when moving a child or young person with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plan from one school to another and the resultant pressure on the Out of School Tuition budget. Officers confirmed that they were working with schools to try to ensure that delays were kept to a minimum, but it was agreed that it would be helpful to take a report to Spokes which set out the issues and timescales involved and identified any schools where this was a particular area of difficulty (**Action: Director of Learning**).
- Members noted that there had been an expensive judicial review within the children's portfolio since the March report and questioned whether the current judicial review budget was realistic. The Strategic Finance Manager confirmed that that this was the case based on current information and said that there were no judicial review cases on-going. The Interim Service Director for Children's Social Care had also been taking forward work separately on legal fees.
- Members noted that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) provided by central government was currently divided into three notional blocks of expenditure and that funds could be moved between these blocks to manage pressures flexibly. However, one option being considered as part of the National Funding Formula consultation was ring-fencing the three funding blocks which could if agreed lead to significant pressures on some areas in future years. The Cambridgeshire Schools Forum's response to the consultation exercise had highlighted this concern and advocated the retention of maximum flexibility between expenditure blocks.
- Councillor Yeulett asked whether there had been any slippage on the Westwood Primary School project (**Action: The Director of Learning to reply direct to Councillor Yeulett**).

It was resolved unanimously:

To review the 2015/16 CFA outturn finance and performance report and comment as recorded above.

193. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT: MAY 2016

The Committee received a report by the Executive Director for Children, Families and Adults Services (CFA) and Chief Finance Officer on the financial and performance position for CFA at the end of May 2016.

The Strategic Finance Manager reported that CFA was currently forecasting an overspend of £1,100k compared to a forecast overspend of £1,304k at the end of May. The main pressures on the children and young people element of the CFA budget related to increasing numbers within children's social care and numbers of Looked After Children (LAC), but mitigating actions were already in place.

During discussion it was noted that:

- The table at the top of page 186 should read, 'Only 15 out of 32 secondary schools with Inspection results are judged as good or outstanding, covering 14,676 pupils.'
- Members questioned how the targets for the attainment gap between pupils who received free school meals and those who did not at Key Stages 2 and 4 were calculated (**Action: The Director of Learning to circulate an explanation of how the target figure was calculated**).

It was resolved unanimously:

To review the CFA finance and performance report for May 2016 and comment as recorded above.

194. AGENDA PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO INTERNAL ADVISORY GROUPS AND OUTSIDE BODIES

Agenda Plan

Members considered the Agenda Plan for July 2016 and were advised of the following proposed changes:

- I. Notification that the reserve dates of 11 October 2016 and 6 December 2016 would become confirmed meeting dates and would both focus on business planning;
- II. Deferral of the 0-19 Joint Commissioning Unit (JCU) Specification from September to October;
- III. Deferral of Sufficiency of Early Years Places from September to November.

Committee Representation on Internal Advisory Groups and Outside Bodies

Councillor Bywater said that he had spoken to officers about the role and responsibilities of members of the Cambridgeshire Fostering Panel and that he had decided to submit an application to join the Panel. Members warmly welcomed his commitment to such valuable and demanding work.

Reports from Members Representing the Committee on Internal Advisory Groups and Outside Bodies

Councillor Downes provided a verbal report on the work of the Accelerating Achievement Strategy Board and the School Improvement Board, which was working on bringing together maintained schools and academies.

Councillor Bywater noted that it had been some time since the Child Poverty Champions Group had met and asked whether it would be possible to expedite another meeting (**Action: The Director for Strategy and Commissioning**).

It was resolved:

1. To note the Agenda Plan for July 2016 and the proposed amendments recorded above;
2. To appoint Councillor Bywater as the committee's second representative on the Cambridgeshire Fostering Panel, subject to him successfully completing that organisation's application process;
3. Note the oral updates from representatives on outside bodies.

Chairwoman

