

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 23 June 2020

Time: 2.00pm – 2.50pm

Venue: Meeting held remotely in accordance with The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020

Present: Councillors S Bywater (Chairman), S Hoy (Vice Chairwoman), D Ambrose Smith, P Downes, L Every, A Hay, L Nethsingha, S Taylor, J Wisson and J Whitehead

Co-opted Members:

A Read - Church of England Diocese of Ely

F Vettese - Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

326. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

327. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

328. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 26 MAY 2020

The minutes of the meeting on 26 May 2020 were approved as an accurate record. A copy would be signed by the Chairman when practicable.

329. ACTION LOG

The action log was reviewed and noted. At the previous meeting Councillor Nethsingha had drawn attention to the slightly unusual arrangements in relation to the College of West Anglia, whereby the Council's representative was also required to complete the Board's own selection process. Councillor Nethsingha had subsequently confirmed that she was happy to continue as the Council's representative for now, provided that the Committee remained content with this arrangement. No Members objected to the appointment continuing on this basis.

330. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no petitions or public questions.

DECISIONS

331. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19: UPDATE

Officers had been asked to bring a report on the Covid-19 response to date for those services for which the Children and Young People Committee was responsible. A similar report would be brought to each future meeting until further notice. The Chairman had accepted this as a late report on the following grounds:

1. Reason for lateness: To allow the report to contain the most up to date information possible.
2. Reason for urgency: To enable the committee to be briefed on the current situation in relation to the Council's response to Covid-19 for those service for which it is responsible.

The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that the first section of the report was produced centrally at the start of each month for inclusion in the reports to each policy and service committee. The current figures across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for laboratory confirmed cases of Covid-19 was 1,669 and to the end of May 2020 there had sadly been 442 deaths. Each directorate within the Council was currently producing its own recovery plan and these would be reviewed by the Joint Management Team before being brought to committees. The Executive Director chaired the Vulnerable People Group and would feed back to the Committee anything relevant which arose in this forum.

Children's Services

The position in Children's Service was currently as anticipated, with a peak in demand expected from now until September/ October 2020 as more pupils returned to school. Officers were looking at how services would be re-started and the future shape of these services in the light of the evolving guidance from Government. Recruitment was continuing and a number of agency staff had joined the council as permanent employees which was a positive development.

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

- Asked for an update on the use of Grafham Water to provide emergency accommodation. The Service Director for Children's Services stated that the accommodation at Grafham Water would be available for any child in care who required it including, but not limited to, unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). One young person was currently accessing this facility whilst an alternative placement was sought for them. Placement stability in general was good, but the placement market remained challenging, particularly for older young people. Some residential schools were not currently accepting new placements so the accommodation available at Grafham Water provided a useful backstop for now if needed. Its use would remain under review.
- Asked whether any summer holiday activities were planned for children in care. Officers stated that group activities were not permitted under current Government guidelines, but that some support packages might be purchased as the situation evolved. The possibility of adopting a hybrid approach would also be explored.
- Paragraph 1.7: Asked that the reference to 'Huntingdon' District Council should be corrected to 'Huntingdonshire' in future reports. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that this section of the report was generated centrally and undertook to feed this back.

(Action: Executive Director, People and Communities)

Education

The Service Director for Education reported a continually evolving picture on education services reflecting constant shifts in Government policy. There was now wider opening in Cambridgeshire schools with a higher take-up rate for available places. The extension of free school meals during the summer holiday period was welcomed, although clarification was awaited on whether eligible Year 11 students would receive this. To date, there had been no firm announcements about summer or September opening arrangements.

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

- Expressed frustration at the lack of certainty for families around the arrangements for the summer holiday period and from September 2020 onward. This made planning childcare arrangements difficult, especially for key workers. Uncertainty around wraparound child care provision where this was not provided on site was also a cause for concern both for families and for providers who did not yet know when they would be allowed to re-open. The Service Director for Education stated that he shared this frustration. The need to ensure safe and appropriate provision was clearly understood, but schools no longer ran on a 9.00am to 3.00pm basis. Officers were concerned about the financial viability of some providers and were looking at the sustainability of provision, particularly for key worker families.
- Asked whether the laptops to be provided to vulnerable children and young people had been delivered. Officers stated that 1,700 of the 2,000 devices requested had been received. These were currently being configured and would be sent out this week. The tablets which would be provided to younger children were still awaited.
- Paragraph 2.11: Sought more information around the assertion that 'the test and trace process was working effectively'. The Service Director for Education stated that this referred to local arrangements brokered with schools. Schools had been provided with advice on how to deal with a suspected case of Covid-19 including a suite of letters for informing parents. If a case was confirmed Public Health England would contact the school and support the school. To date, 83 suspected cases of Covid-19 had been reported of which three had been confirmed. Contact bubbles had been closed without delay and on this basis he judged the local test and trace process to be effective. Measures were in place within schools to maintain contact bubbles and reports indicated that children were adhering to these arrangements well.
- Commented that the financial position looked very bad and asked for an update on the position in relation to the High Needs Block. Officers stated that there had been an increase in referrals during the lockdown as special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) were using their time to complete and submit applications. The Government had announced an additional £1bn in education funding and the detail of how this would be delivered was awaited. All existing education, health and care plans (EHCPs) were currently being reviewed in relation to appropriate provision and if costs were likely to increase this would be raised with Government. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that additional support had been funded from the Covid-19 monies for a number of children with special educational needs and disabilities who were not

able to go to school. The anticipated increase in the number of social care referrals as children returned to school had also been flagged.

- Suggested that thought needed to be given now around the messages which would be given to parents around risk in relation to the return to school. The Service Director for Education confirmed that this would be considered. A campaign would be run over the summer about getting ready for the return to school and the public health message would be part of this.
- Asked about the position on children's centres. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that officers were looking at how children's centres could re-open safely as part of the wider work on the re-opening of children's services. Some had remained open during the lockdown to offer midwifery services whilst others had offered virtual parenting sessions.
- Expressed concern around the transition arrangements for those students in Years 11 and 13, acknowledging that these students would all be placed within academy schools. The Service Director for Education stated that the destinations of these students remained a key priority and many schools were offering support to these year groups. Both Hills Road and Long Road Sixth Form Colleges were members of the Cambridgeshire Secondary Heads Association and had done a lot of work preparing young people.
- Asked when public exam results would be known. The Service Director for Education stated that GCSE results would be published on 28 August 2020. These would be awarded on the basis of the grades submitted by schools following a national moderation process. The Government was also consulting on running a series of exams in autumn 2020 so that those students unhappy with their results would have the opportunity to sit their exams. Schools and the local authority would work together to support these young people.
- Commented that it would be interesting to look at the summer 2020 public exam results in relation to gender and socio economic factors.
- Asked whether school attendance would be compulsory from September 2020 onward. Officers stated that the legislation around schools remaining closed would expire at the end of July 2020 so it was assumed that schools would be re-opening at the beginning of September. Government guidance on this was expected during the next fortnight.

Summing up, the Chairman expressed huge thanks to the Service Director for Education and his team, academies and all school settings in Cambridgeshire for the adaptability and flexibility which they had shown. He further thanked the Executive Director for People and Communities and the Service Director for Children's Services and his team for their continued efforts.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus.

- b) note the continuing commitment of leaders and staff across children's services and partner agencies to ensure that the needs of all children and young people continue to be met.

332. AGENDA PLAN, APPOINTMENTS AND TRAINING PLAN

The Committee agenda plan was reviewed and a number of changes to the published plan were noted. Further to the discussion earlier in the meeting about the Council's representation on the Board of the College of West Anglia (minute 329 above refers) there were no changes to the Committee's appointments.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the following updates to the committee agenda plan:
 - i. September 2020: The reports on SEND Recovery report, Schools Funding Consultation Outcome and Opportunity Area – Impact on attainment in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland would be incorporated into the Service Director for Education's report;
 - ii. September 2020: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Children's Safeguarding Partnership Board Annual Report 2019/20: To be deferred to October 2020.
 - iii. October 2020: New item – Service Director's report: Children and Safeguarding
- b) note the Committee's appointments to internal advisory groups and panels and outside bodies;
- c) note the Committee training plan.

Chairman
(date)