

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 9th February 2016

Time: 2.00pm – 4.59pm

Present: Councillors D Brown (Vice-Chairman), P Brown, S Bywater, D Divine, P Downes, S Frost, D Harty, J Hipkin, M Leeke, M Loynes, A Walsh (substituting for F Onasanya) and J Whitehead (Chairwoman)

Mr P Rossi (Roman Catholic diocesan representative)

Apologies: Councillors F Onasanya and J Wisson

150. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that Mr P Rossi (Roman Catholic diocesan representative) had a non-statutory disclosable interest in item 5 (The Establishment of Denominational Schools) but that, having regard to the nature of his interest, he would be able to participate in the discussion and voting on the item.

151. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE

It was noted that Councillor J Hipkin had been appointed as the representative of the Independent Group on this Committee.

152. MINUTES 19th JANUARY 2016 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th January 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairwoman.

The Action Log was noted.

153. PETITIONS

The Committee received a 38 signature petition regarding Fordham Primary School. As there were less than 50 signatures, under the provisions of the Council's Petitions Scheme, the petitioners were unable to speak to the petition. The full text of the petition was provided to Members but, in summary, the petition welcomed the planned expansion of Fordham Primary School and requested the County Council to make every effort to ensure that the planned expansion proceeded in a timely manner and was adequately funded.

The Chairwoman reported that she had been advised by officers that the design of the building was almost complete and the work would soon be priced by the appropriate contractor. Subject to receiving planning approval in early March 2016, building works would commence on site in May 2016 with an anticipated completion date in July 2017. The buildings would then be available for occupation at the start of the new academic year in September 2017. Provision of £4.1m had been made in the Children, Families and Adults capital programme for delivery of this project, subject to final approval of the programme at the meeting of the Council on 16th February 2016.

The Chairwoman confirmed that she would write to the petition organiser, on behalf of the Committee, within ten working days of the meeting.

154. MUTUALISATION OF THE MULTI SYSTEMIC THERAPY TEAMS

Members were reminded that the Committee, at its meeting held on 10th March 2015 (minute 80), had considered a proposal to externalise Multi Systemic Therapy (MST) services and had requested further information on risks and opportunities associated with the project. The Committee now received a report which provided further detail in respect of the proposal to externalise MST through the establishment of a staff led mutual. The report was supplemented by an evaluation report on MST in Cambridgeshire; the MST Business Plan and a summary of financial projections (Appendix 3 - which was not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

The report invited the Committee to consider whether:

- The Council wished to continue to deliver or procure MST;
- The Council wished to externalise the service through the establishment of a staff led mutual, in order to gain wider benefits; and
- The Council wanted to explore alternative means of funding MST for 2016 – 2019, such as through a social impact bond (SIB).

The Chairwoman, having established that no member of the Committee wished to raise specific issues in the exempt part of the business plan (Appendix 3), asked for contributions from the Committee.

During discussion:

- It was confirmed that the business plan had not been predicated upon the development of a SIB, rather it had been developed on the basis of a service contract. However, it would be possible to commence with a service contract and subsequently convert to a SIB.
- In the light of the full detail now provided in the report around risks and opportunities, support was expressed for continuing to deliver/procure MST; for progressing with the mutualisation of the service and further exploring the option for funding through a SIB.
- Members asked what the implications would be of not proceeding with externalisation of the service as proposed. In response, it was reported that there would be less scope for the MST to trade its services, which would fetter the ability to expand beyond the service base. A company would have increased freedoms and capacity to trade. Moreover, if the service remained in house and was subject to “salami slicing” this would reduce capacity and throughput, thereby impacting on viability.
- Further information was provided to Members on the SIB funding mechanism, noting that the risk rested with investors if agreed social outcomes were not achieved and that the risk to the Local Authority was therefore reduced. The strong correlation between MST and positive outcomes lent itself to a SIB mechanism of funding.
- Following concerns at the potential implications for service users, it was emphasised that the work of the MST was highly regulated and subject to rigorous performance management and that there should therefore be no impact on service delivery.
- In response to a question, reference was made to the expectation that unit costs to

the County Council would decrease over time as economies of scale were achieved by the company.

- It was noted that an initial three year contract with the MST company would be sought. Work was on going with regard to the level of the financial commitment of the Council, but provision would need to be built into the contract to vary the level of funding.
- Following a question regarding the capacity of existing resources to deliver the performance management and data collection requirements identified in paragraph 2.3.3 of the report, it was confirmed that the costs associated with this work would be built into the SIB proposal.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Agree to the mutualisation of the Multi Systemic Therapy Service.
- (b) Give permission for a Social Impact Bond to be explored as a potential future form of investment for financing the procurement of the service.

155. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS

The Committee received a report which invited consideration of proposals to inform the Council's approach to the establishment of new denominational schools in Cambridgeshire.

The Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services requested that when considering the recommendations following debate, the Committee consider amending recommendation (b) by the addition of the words "alongside wider considerations such as those set out in paragraph 2.6.4" between the words "account" and "whether".

During discussion:

- Reference was made to further consultation and discussions which had taken place with the Diocesan authorities since this issue had previously been considered by the Committee at its meeting held on 30 June 2015.
- Further clarification was sought on the extent to which school places could be allocated on the basis of faith. In response it was noted that denominational schools could only use faith criteria in prioritising pupils for admissions where the school was oversubscribed. Moreover, in new academies and free schools with a faith designation, where the school was oversubscribed, at least 50% of places were required to be allocated without reference to faith.
- Confirmation was given that the proposed approach to the establishment of new denominational schools, as outlined in the report, would need to operate within the context of the Council's existing policies, including the Council's Home to School Transport policy. It was suggested that the recommendation should perhaps be amended to reflect this position.
- The Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services explained that the intention of the approach proposed in the report was to provide clarity with regard to the Council's position on establishment of denominational schools, rather than to seek to promote the establishment of new faith based schools.
- The Roman Catholic (RC) Diocesan representative welcomed the approach now proposed. He pointed out that the RC Diocese had two secondary schools in Suffolk, rather than one as indicated in the report. Additionally he emphasised that the Diocese would not expect the first school in a community to be a RC one.

- Reference was made to the importance of all schools being inclusive.
- The need for the use of the word “explicitly” in recommendation (a) of the report was questioned.
- Following comments, it was confirmed that whenever a proposal was submitted to sponsor a new voluntary aided or academy school with a faith designation, as well as the considerations listed in paragraph 2.6.3 of the report, it would also be necessary to consider the proposals within the context of existing policy, including the specific factors set out in paragraph 2.6.4, namely the availability of suitable sites; the availability of capital funding and the potential impact on other schools in the area.
- In response to comments regarding parental choice, it was explained that any proposals for new schools would be reviewed in the context of how demand in that area could best be met and that it was not expected that the first school in a new community would be faith based.
- It was noted that not all denominational schools had defined catchment areas.

The Chairwoman sought, and gained, the consent of the Committee to amend:-

- (i) the first line of the recommendation in the submitted report by the insertion of the words “within the Council’s current policy framework” after the word “adopt,” and before the word “with”;
- (ii) recommendation (a) by the deletion of the word “explicitly”; and
- (iii) recommendation (b) by the insertion of the words “alongside wider considerations such as those set out in paragraph 2.6.4” between the words “account” and “whether”.

It was resolved:

To adopt, within the Council’s current policy framework, with immediate effect, the proposed approach (set out in section 2.6.2 and 2.6.3) namely:

- (a) When seeking a new school sponsor, to welcome proposals from all potential sponsors including for voluntary aided schools and academies with a faith designation.
- (a) When proposals are received for the establishment of a new voluntary aided school or academy with faith designation, the Council will take into account, alongside wider considerations such as those set out in paragraph 2.6.4, whether there is:
 - unmet local demand for additional relevant faith provision;
 - an established trend where parental preference exceeds the number of places available and this is forecast for the foreseeable future; and
 - the potential for new denominational provision to alleviate demand on places in other schools in areas of high basic need.

156. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

The Committee received a report regarding the extent of Elective Home Education (EHE) in Cambridgeshire. Details of the legal background and parental responsibilities in respect of EHE were set out in the report. The report also noted that the Local Authority (LA) had no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis.

During discussion:-

- Concerns were expressed at the limitations placed on LAs with regard to EHE, noting that parents who were home educating their children were not required to register or inform the LA; the LA had no legal right of access to children being home educated; the LA could request information but parents were under no legal duty to respond; the LA could request a home visit or meeting in order to assess the education being provided but the parents had no duty to agree to such requests and the LA could make informal enquiries of parents but they were not legally obliged to respond.
- Further information was provided on how the LA sought to work with the home educating community, seeking engagement in order to provide an information, support and guidance service.
- It was noted that the LA could serve a School Attendance Order if it appeared that a home educated child was not receiving a suitable education but that this was a crass tool which could cause parents to disengage from the LA and that it was preferable to work with parents to address concerns if possible.
- Noting the possible risks associated with EHE referred to in the report, a view was expressed that there were also potential risks associated with attending school.
- It was acknowledged that the majority of parents provided a suitable education for their children but, in the absence of a requirement for parents to register home educated children with the LA, concerns were expressed at the potential for children to be “under the radar” and to receive no education. It was suggested that consideration should be given to lobbying the Government to provide greater powers to LAs in the area of EHE.
- Members referred to the case of a child who had died from scurvy in Wales and who had not been known to the LA as he had been home schooled.
- Following a question, it was confirmed that the LA did maintain a register of children who were home educated in Cambridgeshire where informed by their parents, but that parents were not required to register with the LA. There might therefore be children who were not known to the LA.
- In response to a question it was confirmed that many home educated children did sit examinations and support could be provided, as appropriate, if the child was registered with the LA.
- It was suggested that the Council should seek to establish, via the Local Government Association, if there was a wider sense of concern amongst LAs at their inability to register and monitor children in home education.
- The Chairwoman reported that the Local Safeguarding Children Board had recently considered the position with EHE and had resolved to write to the Secretary of State for Education requesting that all parents wishing to home educate their children should be required to register with the LA. It was suggested that the Committee could perhaps put a motion before Council similarly urging the Secretary of State to require registration of children in home education with the LA and possibly also seeking monitoring powers for the LA.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Committee concurred that there should be an opportunity for a more detailed discussion on elective home education. It was therefore concluded that the subject should form part of a future Members’ Seminar. **Action required.**

Noting that the recommendation invited the Committee to identify any further information required, Members indicated that it would be helpful to receive additional information and statistics around EHE, including a further more detailed breakdown of EHE students

by area; further analysis of churn rates, attainment statistics etc. **Action required.**

It was resolved:

To note the report and advise on further information required.

157. REVISED POLICY ON THE PROVISION OF EARLY YEARS EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

The Committee received a report inviting approval of a revised policy to reflect changes in legislation with regard to the provision of early years education and childcare. A copy of the policy was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

During discussion, a Member reflected on concerns being expressed in the early years sector at the implications of the Government proposal to increase from 2017 the statutory entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds to 30 hours early years education and childcare a week, for 38 weeks per year. In particular, there was a concern that many settings would struggle to make this provision and remain financially viable. It was noted that if settings were to close this would threaten the Council's ability to meet its sufficiency duties. The Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services undertook to add an item on sufficiency of early years places to the Committee's agenda plan. **Action required.**

With reference to paragraph 4.2 of the policy, it was requested that a link to the Market Position Statement should be included within the policy or the statement itself appended to the policy.

It was resolved:

To agree the policy, attached at Appendix 1, with immediate effect.

158. ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL AT WISBECH

The Committee received a report which summarised the review of secondary school provision in Fenland undertaken in response to demographic change and proposed levels of development in the Fenland District Local Plan 2014. The report additionally advised of the consultation undertaken in 2014, the conclusions drawn and the additional work prompted by that consultation.

Representations were received from Councillor Hoy, speaking in her capacity as a Local Member. Councillor Hoy spoke in support of the provision of a new secondary school in Wisbech as recommended in the report. However she expressed reservations as to the proposed location of the site identified for the new school (the former College of West Anglia site adjacent to Meadowgate School) having regard to accessibility considerations. Councillor Hoy suggested that the Boathouse Centre in the north of the town might be a more suitable location. However, if the identified site was to go ahead it was important that Local Members and the community were engaged fully in pre-planning discussions to ensure that appropriate access arrangements were secured. Whilst the proposed location was not ideal, it was acknowledged that further development was proposed in the vicinity of the site and that, subject to suitable access arrangements being made, it might prove a workable solution.

In response to a question from a Committee member, Councillor Hoy indicated that there did not appear to be any other suitable sites in the north of the town but that whichever

site was finally settled upon, it was important that it should not be too far out of town and should have good transport links.

Written comments had also been received from Councillor Clapp, in his capacity as a Local Member, which had been circulated to the Committee and were read out by the Chairwoman at the meeting. It was noted that a written response would be submitted to Councillor Clapp. **Action required.**

During discussion:

- With respect to the identified site, it was explained that development was scheduled to take part in this part of Wisbech and the site therefore offered a potential for the new school to integrate with the new urban extension of the town. Development in the west of the town was scheduled much later in the Fenland Local Plan. However since the report had been prepared, a proposal had been announced to make Wisbech a “garden town”. Officers had therefore not closed their minds with regard to the location of the site and could continue discussions with the local planning authority.
- The Boathouse site had been evaluated but was not large enough and had been identified for commercial and residential uses in the Local Plan. There were also issues associated with the reimbursement of grant monies to the District Council.
- It was suggested that the report should have included reference to Wisbech Grammar School and the number of pupils at the school.
- It was requested that future such reports should indicate any alternative sites considered and the reasons for their rejection.

During discussion upon recommendation (b), some reservation was expressed at the proposal to request the General Purposes Committee to authorise acquisition of the identified site, and it was suggested that any such acquisition should be subject to further consideration of accessibility issues etc. In response, the Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services commented that the recommendation already included the proviso that the acquisition should be subject to the conclusion of satisfactory terms for acquisition and due diligence and that this due diligence would take into account the wider issues discussed by the Committee.

It was resolved to:

- (a) Endorse the provision of a new secondary school in Wisbech and that this option be the subject of stakeholder (phase 2) consultation during the summer term 2016.
- (b) Note the outcome of the site assessment work and request the General Purposes Committee to authorise the acquisition of the site currently in the ownership of the College of West Anglia (adjacent to Meadowgate School), subject to the conclusion of satisfactory terms for acquisition and due diligence.
- (c) Authorise officers to continue to work towards identifying a preferred site in March should further additional secondary school capacity be required towards the end of the Local Plan period in 2031.
- (d) Note the financial provision made in the Children, Families and Adults capital programme (£23m in 2019/20) for a new secondary school in Wisbech and the need to review this on an annual basis given the uncertainties about demographic change and timing outlined in the report.

159. EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The Committee received a report which provided information about educational performance in Cambridgeshire at each Key Stage, up to and including Key Stage 4.

The report was supplemented by a PowerPoint presentation at the meeting highlighting the main headlines as follows:

- Results in the Early Years, Primary age range and at GCSE had all improved;
- However performance in Key Stage 2 was still below the national level; and
- The gaps between vulnerable groups and their peers remained too wide at all key stages. Addressing these gaps remained the key school improvement priority.

At the request of the Chairwoman, a supplementary paper was circulated which provided further information on Cambridgeshire's rankings against the key performance indicators, including national maximum and minimum performance levels; Cambridgeshire's quartile position and national quartile bands.

During discussion:

- It was noted that local authorities with equal performance were given tied rankings. A gap was then left numbering one less than the number of tied ranks. It was suggested that the resultant rankings could therefore be regarded as somewhat misleading, given the large number of tied rankings and the small range between the upper and lower quartiles.
- A Member commented that the figures presented related to the County as a whole but that the relative performance between schools in Fenland and those in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire was significant. In response it was acknowledged that there were differences in performance across the County, noting that Huntingdonshire was currently performing worse at secondary school level than Fenland with regard to Ofsted judgements. The Local Authority targeted its resource according to need.
- It was reported that a package of information was being produced for each Division to provide Local Members with more information around attainment etc in their area.
- In response to a question as to whether the rankings presented included independent schools, officers commented on their understanding that the rankings related to the state sector. It was suggested that it would be helpful to receive information on the percentage of pupils in private education in the County and their comparative attainment levels. **Action required.**
- Following a question as to the action being taken to seek to improve performance in Cambridgeshire, it was noted that key activities included:
 - Working with maintained schools to provide support, challenge and intervention as appropriate, together with provision of training for head teachers and subject leaders;
 - Bringing together different types of school under the Cambridgeshire School Improvement Board with the aim of working collaboratively to meet the County's priorities; and
 - Providing challenge to the Regional Schools Commissioner on the performance of academies.

It was resolved:

To note the findings of this paper and comment as appropriate.

160. EARLY HELP STRATEGY

The Committee received a report which sought approval for the Early Help Strategy for Cambridgeshire, the core principles for joint early help work and the role of the County Council.

During discussion, Members:-

- Commented that communities were reluctant to volunteer to work with children and families, as envisaged in paragraph 4.1, in view of concerns around falling foul of any safeguarding considerations. In that context, the Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services acknowledged that it was important for the Council to work on its communications to set the appropriate tone around how the community could provide support in this area.
- Suggested that it would be helpful to use case studies to provide context for the proposals in the strategy. In response, it was noted that the strategy did contain a case study showing how the revised Early Help Strategy might impact on the lives of a family.
- Noted that, in the climate of a reducing budget and growing demand, it was necessary to achieve evidence based outcomes for work commissioned by the Council.
- Requested that a further “Think Family” seminar be organised for Members. The seminar should ideally include information on how the Local Authority seeks to identify families before they reach crisis point. **Action required.**

It was resolved:

To agree the Early Help Strategy, the core principles for joint early help and the role of the County Council in delivering them.

161. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT – DECEMBER 2015

The Committee considered the Finance and Performance report for Children, Families and Adults (CFA) outlining the financial and performance position as at the end of December 2015. The report was for the whole of CFA services and as such, not all the services were the responsibility of this Committee.

The Executive Director, Children, Families and Adults Services reported verbally that at the end of January 2016 there was a projected underspend of around £1m across the whole of CFA.

Attention was drawn to a typographical error on page 225 of the report and officers advised that this should read “Only 15 out of 32 Secondary Schools with Inspection results are judged as good or outstanding....”

Noting that there had been some savings in respect of the Home to School Transport budget, the Chairwoman reported that the Total Transport Group had requested that the more flexible use of the Council’s fleet of 26 minibuses, currently used to transport elderly people to day centres, be investigated. In particular, the scope for using the buses to transport children with special educational needs and disabilities to school and to use the buses for other activities during the day would be reviewed.

It was resolved:

To review and comment on the report.

162. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Committee received a report which:

- (a) Presented the agenda plan for the Children and Young People Committee, as set out in Appendix A; and
- (b) Invited reports back from representatives on outside bodies.

With respect to the agenda plan at Appendix A, Members:-

- Received a verbal update on the following changes to the agenda plan:
 - Deletion of “Gamlingay School – Consultation on Governance Arrangements” from the meeting on 8th March 2016.
 - Addition of “Expansion of Little Paxton Primary School” to the meeting on 24th May 2016; and
 - Addition of “Fenland Secondary School” to the meeting on 13th September 2016.
- In light of the reported action earlier in respect of expansion of Fordham CE Primary School (minute 153 refers), queried whether this item was still needed in the agenda plan for 24th May 2016. The Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services, agreed to establish whether this item could be removed. **Action required.**

In respect of attendances at Internal Advisory Groups and Outside Bodies, the Committee received updates from:-

- Councillor Downes on his attendances at meetings of the Accelerating Achievement Board and the Cambridgeshire School Improvement Board;
- Councillor D Brown on his attendance at a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board, including a presentation on “Siblings Forever”; and
- The Chairwoman on her attendance at a meeting of the Local Children Safeguarding Board.

It was resolved:

1. To note the agenda plan, as set out at Appendix A, and the oral update provided at the Committee meeting.
2. To note the oral updates from representatives on outside bodies.

Chairwoman