

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

- Date:** 26 May 2020
- Time:** 2.00pm – 3.27pm
- Venue:** Meeting held remotely in accordance with The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020
- Present:** Councillors S Bywater (Chair), A Hay, S Hoy (Vice Chair), D Ambrose Smith, P Downes, L Every, M Howell, L Nethsingha, S Taylor, J Whitehead and J Wisson
- Co-opted Members: Andrew Read, Church of England Diocese of Ely
- Apologies:** Co-opted Member: Flavio Vettese, Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia

**CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

**316. NOTIFICATION OF THE APOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

The Committee was notified by the Democratic Services Officer that Council had appointed Councillor Simon Bywater as Chairman of the Committee and Councillor Samantha Hoy as Vice Chairwoman for 2020/21 when it met on 19 May 2020.

**317. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Flavio Vettese, Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia.

**318. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Every declared an interest in relation to item 7 on the agenda 'Northstowe Secondary College – Proposed Change of Age Range - Post 16' as she was a Governor for the Cambridge Meridian Education Trust (CMAC).

Jonathan Lewis, Service Director: Education, also declared an interest in relation to item 7 on the agenda as he was a Governor at Northstowe Secondary College.

**319. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 7 MAY 2020**

Councillor Taylor commented that she had requested that clarification was sought on the position of those taking GCSEs and an update requested and that this had not been included in the minutes (**ACTION:** Democratic Services Officer)

The minutes of the meeting on 7 May 2020 were approved as an accurate record, subject to the proposed amendment.

**320. ACTION LOG**

The action log was reviewed and noted.

## KEY DECISIONS

### 321. **NORTHSTOWE SECONDARY COLLEGE: PROPOSED CHANGE OF AGE RANGE POST 16**

The Committee received a report that sought approval of a proposal by the governing body of Northstowe Secondary College to change its designation from 11-16 to 11–19, with an estimate to admit the first students effective from 1 September 2024.

Introducing the report officers explained that since the start of the Northstowe development there had been a recognition that there was a need for post 16 education in the area and that a contribution to this would be made by developers. Following a bid in 2008 Cambridge Meridian Education Trust (CMET) to open a new all through 0-19 education campus at Northstowe, approval was given for them to establish the secondary provision. This opened as Northstowe Secondary College (NSC) in September 2019 with a year 7 cohort. It would grow over the next four years until it provides for the full secondary age range (Years 7 to 11). Officers highlighted that in 2009, Cambridge Meridian Educational Trust was also awarded, by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), a presumption to open a new post-16 education establishment at Northstowe. In January 2020 the governing body of the college applied to extend the age range to the college. They completed a proposal and conducted a consultation process, with a summary of the results made available in the Committee report. Officers stated that all of the responses received as a result of the consultation were in favour of the proposal.

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

- Queried the number of forms of entry at the college as to produce a Sixth Form of 400 a twelve form entry was required. Officers clarified that currently there were four forms of entry which would increase to twelve.
- Discussed concerns around the ability of schools to be able to work closely in a consortium in relation to A-levels, when they were geographically widely dispersed. The Service Director: Education stated that teachers would be moving between bases rather than pupils and that it would be a positive step forward and that the Committee would be kept up to date with the curriculum offer.
- Raised concerns in relation to the small number of responses to the consultation including only one parent and five pupil responses. Officers explained that they had liaised with the school and they had been advised that the school had made every effort to consult widely with pupils, staff and parents and there had been a survey and two online meetings over the consultation period. Officers clarified that as it had been the intention to extend the age range for quite a long period of time that all parties had been aware of the intention for some time. The Service Director: Education stated that at present the parent group was small, so a small number of responses had been expected, and that they had not received any responses in opposition to the proposal.
- Questioned whether all of the Sixth Forms in the area had been consulted and if a phased opening would be carried out with thought for other institutions. Members noted the support of Hills Road and Long Road Sixth Form Colleges

but queried why a response from Impington Village College had not been received. Officers explained that all of the Sixth Forms in Cambridgeshire had been consulted. The Service Director: Education stated that Impington Village College were aware of the proposal and had a different offering as they undertook the International Baccalaureate (IB). He clarified that it was a good development that there would be more choice in the area and that the numbers would need to be handled carefully. Officers clarified that the proposal was raised at Secondary Heads meeting and Cambridge Academic Partnership were also consulted and Impington Village College were members of both these organisations.

- Noted that Local Members had been made aware but had not commented.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the feedback received to the consultation undertaken by the governing body of Northstowe Secondary College;
- b) Approve, as decision maker, the proposal that Northstowe Secondary College alter its upper age range from 16 to 19, effective 1 September 2024.

## **322. REVIEW OF FOSTERING ALLOWANCES FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE FOSTER CARERS**

The Committee considered a report that sought to make changes to the current structure of payments to Cambridgeshire foster carers.

Introducing the report officers explained that the proposals would result in the uplift of allowances to all carers with the exception of existing Level 6 carers, and the development of a much simpler structure for foster carer payments than the one currently in place. Because payment of fostering allowances was a commercially sensitive issue, the detail of both current allowances and proposed changes were contained within an exempt appendix to the report.

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

- Questioned what happened to children if they continued to stay in a foster home after the age of 17. The Service Director: Children's Services and Safeguarding stated that individuals were covered by a 'Stay Put' allowance when they became adults from the age of 17 - 21. He explained that this was not as high as a fostering allowance but had been benchmarked across the eastern region. Members also queried whether individuals could claim benefits when in receipt of the 'Stay Put' allowance. The Service Director: Children's Services and Safeguarding clarified that individuals could claim benefits when in receipt of this allowance and many would start to pay rent themselves at this stage.
- Noted that the changes brought Cambridgeshire in line with other neighbouring authorities and that this would help with taking on and retaining new foster carers, with less reliance on outside agencies. The Service Director: Children's Services and Safeguarding stated that the changes would make the allowance system much simpler and a much more attractive offer to prospective foster carers.

- The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee thanked foster carers for their work and explained that the sub-committee worked closely with the foster carers association and received input from them on a regular basis. She stated that the proposed changes would be welcomed by foster carers.
- Noted and gave their support to the foster carer's recruitment campaign.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree the recommendation to reduce the number of payment bands for Cambridgeshire foster carers from the current 6 to 4;
- b) Agree the recommendation to change the payment schedule for foster carers as set out in exempt Appendix 1 to this report, and support the submission of a further report to the General Purposes Committee in order to identify any further funding that may be necessary in order to implement the new payment structure.

## DECISIONS

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

The Committee received a report outlining the Council's response to COVID-19, updating on activity since the first report to Committee on 7 May 2020.

Given the rapidly changing situation and the need to provide the committee and public with the most up to date information possible 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.

In introducing the report the Service Director: Education highlighted a number of key points in relation to Education which included:

- Planned opening from 1 June 2020 of nursery provision, reception, Year 1 and Year 6, with schools prioritising access in that order for a full time provision. Further scientific guidance from Government was awaited on Thursday 28 May with discussions to be held with Head Teachers and Unions on 29 May to determine the way forward.
- Risk Assessments had been carried out by schools. There was an acknowledgement in the national guidance that social distancing would not always be possible in schools (especially with young children) so instead a principle of limiting groups in schools, known as bubbles, would be used. These bubbles would be limited to no more than 15 pupils. The government were aspiring to get all primary age children back into schools for one month before the end of the academic year (at latest by the 24 June). The Service Director:

Education explained that under the current guidance around pupil numbers in classes, this would not be possible.

In a further overview of the report the Service Director: Children's Services and Safeguarding highlighted a number of key points in relation to Children's Services which included:

- The position in children's services remained broadly unchanged since the last report to committee on 7 May.
- Looked to restart some activities including, for example, reviewing how to increase face to face supervised contact between parents and children in care in a way that is as safe as possible for all concerned.
- There was concern about the potential need to identify short term placements for young people in care as it was likely that shortages of placements for older young people, and particularly those who had more challenging needs, would continue. Steps had been taken to use the facilities at Grafham Water. Since writing the report the financial implications for this had become clear and there was a need to seek approval from Committee to agree to additional costs of £24-£30,000 per month until September 2020 in order to maintain Grafham Water as a contingency.

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

- The Chairman stated that he had been present at some of the briefings for schools and he thanked schools for their continued efforts.
- Acknowledged that the phased opening of schools on 1 June was a controversial issue and that letters had been sent from parents in Cambridgeshire who were concerned about the reopening of schools.
- Queried what numbers of pupils were expected to return to primary schools on 1 June. The Service Director: Education stated it was likely that only a quarter of pupils would return with early years, primary reception, Year 1 and Year 6 being prioritised in that order with secondary Year 10 and 12 following later in the month with some face to face support, with Special Education being reviewed as required. He explained that there was no requirement for children to return but that this would be reviewed in September 2020. Information had been collected from three-quarters of primary schools which showed that between 30-70% of parents would be taking up the offer to return. He would report to Committee after the 1 June. **ACTION:** Service Director: Education.
- Questioned whether there would be issues when schools got to September 2020 and had to start learning over again for those that had not been in school. The Service Director: Education stated that home learning would continue for pupils not in school and that schools would work to rebuild legacy issues. He explained that at the moment the focus was on trying to get the schools open fully if they were able to, opening for key worker children would carry on regardless.

- Queried how many schools officers thought would be able to reopen on 1 June. The Service Director: Education stated it would be around 50% that could potentially open on 1 June with the further 50% by 8 June. He highlighted that there was a lot of staff who were on the shielding list so full opening would not be feasible.
- Sought clarity on whether schools would be able to flex the proposed bubbles as more pupils came back to school. The Service Director: Education stated that the planning of bubbles had allowed for some capacity but that the government guidance stated 15 pupils maximum per bubble. Government continued to review guidance.
- Discussed if schools had any plans to support families over the summer to make it possible for parents to go back to work. The Service Director: Education explained that breakfast and afterschool clubs remained an issue, as there was currently no clear guidance on how they could operate safely.
- Acknowledged that things may not have changed significantly by September 2020. The Service Director: Education explained that schools were planning for the new academic year in September. It was likely that there would be three to four phases of reopening. There had been discussions about pupils, in the future, being in school part time to make the opening of schools more possible to all pupils. Discussions were ongoing with the Department for Education.
- The Co-opted Member representing the Church of England Diocese of Ely stated that the authority needed to be mindful that there were a range of responsible bodies that made the decisions and that expectations needed to be managed in relation what the authority could insist others do. The Service Director: Education stated that risk assessments had been carried out with the maintained schools and a collective sign off had been carried out with the authority. He explained that the authority did not have the same level of control over other bodies however they had been working with governing bodies and dioceses on the completion of risk assessments and officers had been commenting on them on behalf of the authority. He explained that he was happy to share the risk assessment template with the committee. **ACTION:** Service Director: Education.
- Discussed the proposed additional costs of £24-£30,000 per month until September 2020 in order to maintain Grafham Water as a contingency if there was to be a shortage of placements for older young people. The Service Director: Children's Services and Safeguarding highlighted that alternative placements would cost £6,000-7,000 per child so this option would be more cost effective. Members sought clarity on how the children would be looked after at the setting. The Service Director: Children's Services and Safeguarding explained that they would be looked after by individuals who currently worked at the setting, as well as young people's workers redeployed to the setting. The Chairman sought endorsement for the additional recommendation to the report, which was agreed by the Committee.

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 staff across children's services and partner agencies – schools in particular – to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children and young people continue to be met.
- c) agree to additional costs of £24-£30,000 per month until September 2020 in order to maintain Grafham Water as a contingency in the event that we have no placement options for older young people in care during the summer months, when there are always placement shortages.

### **324. AGENDA PLAN, TRAINING PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES AND INTERNAL ADVISORY GROUPS AND PANELS**

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

- Councillor Nethsingha explained that she was identified as the representative on the College of West Anglia. She highlighted that she was on this Board but not as a County Council representative so questioned whether this should be removed from the list. **ACTION:** Democratic Services Officer
- Councillor Whitehead questioned when the Education Achievement Board would meet next and if this would be a remote meeting in the future. She explained that if she was unable to attend the meeting virtually, then she would need to seek another representative from her party. The Service Director: Education explained that he would look to get a date in diaries for October. **Action:** Service Director: Education.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the committee agenda plan;
- b) Note the committee training plan;
- c) Agree the appointments to outside bodies as detailed in Appendix 3;
- d) Agree the appointments to internal advisory groups and panels as detailed in Appendix 4.

### **325. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The committee will meet next on Tuesday 23 June at 2.00pm. The arrangements will be confirmed nearer the time.

Chairman  
(date)