

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday 11 July 2017

**Time:** 2.00pm – 4.25pm

**Present:** Councillors S Bywater (Chairman), A Costello, K Cuffley, P Downes, L Every, A Hay, S Hoy (Vice Chairwoman), L Nethsingha, C Richards and S Taylor

**Apologies:** Councillors J Whitehead (substituted by C Richards) and J Wisson (substituted by K Cuffley)

Co-opted Members: F Vettese and A Read

**CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

**13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were noted as recorded above. There were no declarations of interest.

**14. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 12 JUNE 2017 AND ACTION LOG**

The minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman. The Action Log was reviewed and noted.

**15. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no petitions or public questions.

**DECISION**

**16. CHILDREN'S CENTRES UPDATE**

The Committee received a report from the Executive Director for Children Families and Adults and presented by the Interim Service Director for Children and Families which set out work to date on arrangements for Children's Centres and timescales for future engagement and public consultation. The Chairman noted that copies of correspondence on this issue received from Neil Perry and Anne Kent had been circulated in advance to all members of the Committee for information.

The report contained a draft public consultation document which set out proposed changes to Children's Centres service provision. This work had been carried out as part of the wider Children's Change Programme and would locate Children's Centre provision within the district delivery model. It was designed to drive out gaps and duplication in provision where possible. The Council's commitment to the Children's Centre offer remained unchanged, but the way in which this was delivered needed both to take account of the increasing levels of demand for services and to target the finite resources available to those in greatest need.

A plan for national consultation on the future of Children's Centres was announced by central government in September 2015, but this had yet to be published. Officers had

been involved in work at a national level as part of an All Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Centres. This had concluded that future work should seek to address the wider needs of more vulnerable families through a flexible offer tailored to best meet local circumstances. In Cambridgeshire there had been a 40% increase in the number of Looked After Children (LAC) and a 100% increase in the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan in the past four years. The new model of delivery proposed for the Children's Centre offer would enable the Council to target this acute area of need as well as meeting the needs of the wider population through the flexibility offered by the district delivery model.

The proposed changes to Children's Centres formed part of the wider Children's Change Programme which was designed to support the transformation of services to children and families in Cambridgeshire, particularly the most vulnerable, whilst delivering an agreed savings target of £1,000,000. This would be achieved safely and effectively by rationalising management and back office costs, identifying efficiency savings and driving out duplication while maintaining or enhancing front-line services. As part of the effort to drive down costs it was important to ensure that the best use was made of capacity across the Council estate. At present there were 40 designated Children's Centre buildings, but the Children's Centre offer was already delivered across over 100 buildings. The proposed changes would extend this outreach whilst ensuring that money was spent primarily on service delivery rather than building maintenance and running costs. The offer of flexible services within the community would be complemented by a strong on-line offer which would respond to people's wish to take charge of their own needs. The lengthy public consultation process would include a wide range of engagement activities and was designed to allow as many people and organisations as possible to offer their views on the proposals. These would be used to inform the final proposals which would be submitted to the Committee in October 2017 for decision.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Scutt for giving him advance notice of her wish to speak on this item and invited her to address the Committee. Councillor Scutt stated that the Labour Group had every respect for Council officers, but she found the report to be lightweight and lacking in both sufficient data and evidence base. Despite the proposed public consultation it sounded like decisions had already been made and this was not acceptable. The emphasis on disadvantaged families did not recognise the need for preventative work to stop families falling into this category. The notion of 'pop-up' provision was risible; what families needed was consistent and reliable service delivery in a fixed location. There was no explanation of what was meant by split centre provision in relation to the North Cambridge Family Centre and this needed to be clarified. The proposed use of the Central Library did not offer the same opening hours as the provision it was supposed to replace and it was unclear whether library staff would be expected to deliver the service. This proposal was really about cutting money from the budget and more evidence should be obtained before any decisions were taken. The overall budget for Children's Centres was publicly available, but not the budgets for individual Centres and this should also be made available.

There were no questions from the Committee. With the permission of the Chairman the Interim Service Director for Children and Families thanked Councillor Scutt for her helpful observations and responded to the points raised. The amount of data obtained to inform the proposals was extensive and would be published alongside the public consultation document on 17 July 2017. She agreed that the definition of disadvantage did not refer solely to financial disadvantage and that families across the economic spectrum could be vulnerable and in need of support. It was envisaged that 'pop-up' provision would be a consistent and responsive offer delivered at a specified time and location to meet

identified need, but which would avoid the significant cost of permanently maintaining a building within the Council estate. However, she accepted that it would be helpful to review the language used to describe this offer to ensure that this was made clear. (**Action:** Interim Service Director for Children and Families)

The Chairman thanked Councillor A Taylor for giving him advance notice of her wish to speak on this item and invited her to address the Committee. Councillor A Taylor stated that she wished to voice her dismay at what she perceived to be an attack on children and families, especially in relation to the existing Children's Centres at Homerton and Fawcett. She knew of the excellent facility and services offered at Homerton both through personal experience and by repute and she was horrified to hear that it was judged not to be needed. The news had only become known the previous Tuesday and she felt that this was an entirely unacceptable way to treat the staff and public. She could not understand how such a busy Centre could be deemed not to be needed and noted significant housing development in the area which would increase future demand for its services. Since midnight a petition opposing its closure had already attracted over 800 signatures. Around 90 disadvantaged families lived locally and if Homerton and Fawcett were closed their needs would fall elsewhere on the public purse. Travelling to the Central Library would take longer and cost more and it would not offer the purpose-built facilities available at Homerton. In her view the report contained insufficient data and the proposal to hold the public consultation during the school summer holiday was poor. On this basis she felt that the consultation should be postponed.

In response to Councillor A Taylor's comments a member asked if there were any other community buildings locally which might be used to deliver services. Councillor A Taylor felt that there might be, but that they would require adaptation.

With the permission of the Chairman the Interim Service Director for Children and Families thanked Councillor A Taylor for her helpful observations and responded to the points raised. She acknowledged that telling staff about the proposals had been very difficult and offered an assurance that senior managers would continue to support staff throughout the process. She offered her personal thanks to all of the staff concerned for the professionalism of their response in difficult circumstances. In considering which buildings it was proposed to retain each had been assessed for the suitability of the facilities available, including those which had been purpose built. A number of financial models had been produced for making the required £1,000,000 saving, but these would not be finalised until the outcome of the public consultation was known and this could be properly taken into account. These models did not take into account the financial implications of failing to provide adequate early intervention services as officers did not accept that the proposals would lead to any such failure.

The Chairman accepted a request from the floor from Councillor Crawford to speak on this item. Councillor Crawford stated that she did not see how savings would be achieved by the proposals contained in the report. Changing the location of Children's Centres would require large capital outlay and renting space in alternative buildings would also give rise to additional costs.

With the permission of the Chairman the Interim Service Director for Children and Families thanked Councillor Crawford for her helpful observations and responded to the points raised. The Council was responsible for all costs and associated overheads for buildings designated as Children's Centres so it was important to ensure that any building with this designation could be operated at full capacity in order for it to be cost-effective.

The following comments and questions were raised by members of the Committee in discussion of the report and the points raised above:

- A Member commented on the inherent difficulty of timing communication with staff in situations where posts could be affected;
- A Member commented that they were not at all happy with the current position. It would have been helpful for the Committee to have had sight of the data which would be published alongside the public consultation document to inform the discussion. They felt that members of the public reading the consultation document would be perplexed by the deceptive nature of the language which disguised the real impact of the changes proposed and they felt that the actual proposals should be made clearer. They questioned whether the proposals would increase accessibility to services as suggested or whether they would in fact deter the most needy from accessing them, so increasing rather than reducing inequality. They expressed serious concern that the savings achieved by the proposals could prove a false economy which would lead to significant and possibly greater additional costs to the public purse down the line. They considered the timing of the public consultation to be singularly inappropriate given that it was primarily during the school summer holiday period. On that basis they proposed that the public consultation should be deferred and further cross party work carried out on the proposals.

Officers acknowledged the concerns expressed over the timing of the consultation. Unfortunately the original timescale for the report to be submitted to the Committee and the public consultation had had to be revised to avoid the pre-election Purdah period. The revised consultation period of 17 July to 22 September 2017 would open just before the school holidays and close just after they ended and there would be engagement events held throughout this period. It was not judged appropriate to delay the consultation further as this would prolong the period of uncertainty for staff and decisions were required on some existing contracts which would come to an end in April 2018. The Children's Centres issue had been discussed on a number of occasions by the Committee during the previous Council and briefing sessions had been offered to all county councillors to ensure the opportunity for cross party input into the proposals. A review of hundreds of cases showed that those children with the poorest outcomes had not consistently accessed the existing Children's Centre offer and the more flexible and targeted nature of the proposed offer was designed to address this need.

- A Member questioned whether the online offer would be easily accessible to vulnerable families. Officers stated that the Communications Team had advised that the majority of people accessing Council services digitally did so using smart phones and that this technology was now used widely across the socio-economic spectrum;
- A Member commented that having sat on the Committee during the previous Council they had initially been deeply concerned by the proposals relating to Children's Centres. However, as the work evolved their perspective had changed and they now saw it as becoming a family offer. Their only remaining concern related to how the need for and duration of a 'pop-up' provision would be defined and how the costings for this would be assessed.

Officers acknowledged that the issue of 'pop-ups' needed to be defined more clearly in the consultation document, including that this might include working with families in their own homes. The proposals submitted to the Committee in October would be wholly transparent about the financial allocations behind them.

- The Vice Chairwoman emphasised the Committee's wish that all affected staff should be kept well informed and supported throughout this difficult period;
- A Member noted that the proposals did not refer to the possible creation of Wisbech Garden Town and asked for further information on this;  
(**Action:** Interim Service Director for Children and Families)
- A Member stated that they did not see the proposals as closing services; rather, they were delivering services in different and more flexible ways to respond to the varying needs of local families and communities;
- A Member emphasised the need to ensure that the consultation reached the county's most vulnerable families and to ensure that the language used was both clear about what was being proposed and easily accessible to all;
- A Member expressed concern at the lack of costings in the report and questioned whether the proposed service delivery would fully meet the needs of the youngest and most disadvantaged children in the community. They highlighted the role of Children's Centres in promoting community cohesion by bringing together people from different backgrounds. They expressed concern that local knowledge and continuity of care would be lost through staffing changes and questioned whether city councillors had been consulted about the proposals. They were unhappy at officers' assertion that the detail of how the revised arrangements would be staffed would not be addressed until the consultation had informed final recommendations and felt that the proposals should not go forward until the Committee had this information;

Officers confirmed that engagement had begun with city councillors and other stakeholders and that this would continue over the summer. If approved the proposals would see closer alignment with the 0-19 Healthy Child programme and staffing proposals would reflect this.

- A Member commented that they were very angry at the proposals. The £1,000,000 saving from the children's services budget did not need to be made and was a political decision. The decision not to increase council tax taken by the Council in February 2017 was a bad decision. To collect the information on which the report was based in the pre-election period and to submit the report immediately after the election was unacceptable. It was also unacceptable to run the majority of the public consultation during the school summer holidays. There was considerable risk that such action would exacerbate a lack of trust in politicians at a local level. The Member expressed serious concern at the proposals relating to South Cambridgeshire which they felt did not adequately reflect the significant growth in that area and the particular challenges faced by families in new communities. They were also concerned that 'pop-up' provision might be delivered in individual homes and would not provide the social contact and networking opportunities so important to young families;

Officers stated that the term 'pop-up' reflected a range of support delivery models which could be tailored to meet the needs of individual families, groups and communities. The feedback from Members had identified the need to make clear within the public consultation exactly what this concept would mean in practice. Officers were also mindful of the requirements for enhanced Early Years provision and should buildings cease to be designated as Children's Centres they would look at re-designating them as Early Years provision where appropriate.

Councillor Downes proposed the following amendment, seconded by Councillor Nethsingha:

*Replace the report recommendation with:*

*the Committee acknowledges the work done by officers, but does not feel confident at this stage that the consultation as it stands is in a fit state for public consumption. The wording should be reviewed and it should be published in the second half of the autumn school term.*

On being put to the vote, Councillor Downes' amendment was defeated.

Councillor Nethsingha proposed the following amendment, seconded by Councillor Downes:

*Amend the report recommendation to specify that:*

*the length of the public consultation be extended to mid-October 2017.*

On being put to the vote, Councillor Nethsingha's amendment was defeated.

On the original motion being put to the vote it was resolved by a majority decision to:

be aware of work done to date and timescales for future engagement and public consultation.

The Chairman called at short adjournment at 3.20pm. The meeting resumed at 3.25pm.

## **KEY DECISION**

### **17. CONTRACT FOR THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF NEW MODULAR MOBILE CLASSROOM BUILDINGS FOR USE AS SCHOOL ACCOMODATION**

The Committee received a report by the Construction Programme Manager which sought retrospective approval for the procurement of a contract for the supply and delivery of new modular mobile classroom buildings for use as school accommodation. The Committee had received a report at the meeting on 12 June 2017 seeking approval for the re-procurement of three existing contracts and frameworks and an additional new framework to support delivery of the Children and Young People capital programme. Since that report was submitted to the Committee it had come to light that this further contract should have been submitted for member approval before the contract was awarded to Ideal Building Solutions. Officers were therefore seeking retrospective approval for the award of this contact from the Committee. Officers expressed regret for this oversight which had occurred during re-structuring of the Council's arrangements for the procurement and management of construction related frameworks. They offered

Members an assurance that the procurement process had been undertaken appropriately in partnership with LGSS Procurement and Legal to ensure that the relevant compliance measures were met.

The Chairman thanked officers for bringing this matter to the Committee's attention as soon as it had been identified and welcomed their assurance that thorough checks had been made to ensure that there were no other contracts which had been awarded without Members' approval where this was required.

It was resolved to:

retrospectively endorse procurement of a contract for the supply and delivery of new modular mobile classroom buildings for use as school accommodation.

## **DECISIONS**

### **18. FREE SCHOOL PROPOSALS**

Standing item. There was no business to discuss, although a Member expressed some surprise that no report had been submitted on proposals relating to Godmanchester and St Neots. The Committee noted speculation about an imminent announcement from central government relating to free schools and asked that officers should provide a briefing note if an official announcement was made, setting out the implications for Cambridgeshire.

**(Action:** Director of Learning)

### **19. JOINT LOCAL AREA SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY INSPECTION IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Services and Principal Educational Psychologist on the outcome of a joint inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission between 20-24 March 2017. The inspection had focused on the effectiveness of the implementation of the disability and special educational needs reforms contained in the Children and Families Act 2014 within Cambridgeshire. With the approval of the Chairman two supplementary papers were tabled which set out a draft action plan. The outcome of the inspection was largely positive and reflected the considerable work done by services in conjunction with parents and others stakeholders. There was recognition of the joint and effective working which was taking place across agencies and the report highlighted the good level of awareness of the SEND offer within the Council. Learning from the peer review of SEND services in November 2016 had been used to good effect, but officers acknowledged that there was still more work to be done. The Council remained committed to delivering a seamless service experience for service users and officers were looking at how the work of the Statutory Assessment Team could be more integrated within SEND services.

The following comments were offered in discussion of the report and in response to Members' questions:

- Members offered their congratulations to officers on what was largely a very positive inspection report, noting in particular the comments relating to safeguarding arrangements;

- Paragraph 2.6: A Member noted that children receiving SEN support were doing less well at primary school and making less progress than pupils nationally during Key Stage 2. They questioned whether this issue was specific to Cambridgeshire or reflected a wider trend and asked what was being done to address it.

Officers stated that this was recognised as a key issue and that they were working with the School Improvement Board to improve achievement levels for this cohort. An SEN Support Action Plan had been developed with schools and parents which set out clearly the measures being taken. A copy of this would be sent to members of the Committee for information;

**(Action:** Director of Learning)

- Paragraph 2.14: A Member noted that '*a significant proportion of parents and carers (were) dissatisfied with the arrangements and procedures for assessing children and young people's special educational needs and/ or disabilities*' and questioned whether this was due to pressures on funding. Officers stated that this was not solely due to the level of funding available, but also about how funds were used most effectively. A new model of delivery for pre-school children was providing early access to funded support for those who needed it and work was starting to look at a similar model for school-age children. Measures were already in place for those children with significant or complex needs who met the threshold to receive an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), but it was those children and young people with additional needs below this threshold whose requirements also needed to be met;
- A Member questioned whether devolved SEN funding to schools acted as a disincentive to schools to press for an assessment of a pupil's needs as it would be of no additional financial benefit to the school, although it would be of benefit to the pupil. Officers reported that there was a variation in parental understanding and expectations regarding additional support and also a lack of clarity amongst practitioners and professionals about the support available. There was a recognised need to map out the full range of support available and to make this clear to all interested parties.

Summing up, the Chairman congratulated officers on the outcome of the inspection which recognised the good work being done and also welcomed the action plan which demonstrated a recognition that there was still more work to be done.

It was resolved:

- a) note the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection;
- b) agree to proceed with service planning to address areas for improvement across the local area and with parent carers;
- c) send congratulations to the team on what was largely a very positive inspection report.

## **20. AGENDA PLAN, APPOINTMENTS AND TRAINING PLAN**

Members of the Committee reviewed the Committee Agenda Plan, appointments and training plan. It was noted that the following appointments remained unfilled or had become open:



- Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education: one vacancy;
- Cambridgeshire Music Hub: two vacancies;
- College of West Anglia Governing Body: one vacancy. Members noted that this appointment was subject to completing the College's own selection process and approval by the College Board. Appointments would be particularly welcome from those with financial, audit or education experience.

It was resolved to:

- a) note one change to the published agenda plan: No Wrong Door would move from the September meeting to the meeting on 10 October 2017;
- b) note the appointments of Councillor L Joseph to the Cambridgeshire Culture Steering Group and Councillor P Topping to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board under the delegated authority of the Executive Director, Children Families and Adults in consultation with the Committee Chairman on 4 July 2017;
- c) appoint Councillors L Every and S Taylor to the Cambridgeshire Music Hub;
- d) note that the Children's Trust Executive Partnership would in future form part of the Children's Change Programme Board;
- e) note the Committee training plan.

## **MONITORING REPORTS**

### **21. CORAM CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Countywide and Looked After Children's Services and introduced by the Interim Service Director for Children and Families. Members welcomed Sarah Byatt, the Managing Director of Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption (CCA) to the meeting.

The provision of adoption services was a key statutory requirement of the local authority and provided a permanent care option for Looked After children who could not return to their birth family. In 2014 the Council had entered into a contract with Coram to provide the majority of its adoption services and a Voluntary Adoption Agency, Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption (CCA) was formed to deliver this service. The Annual Report fulfilled a statutory responsibility to report to the Council on the service quality and outcomes of the adoption service in Cambridgeshire. It was crucial to place children promptly in the right placement to avoid as far as possible the breakdown of those placements. At present the County Council had 675 Looked After Children in its care and it would usually be expected that around 10% of that total figure would leave to adoption.

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and in response to Members' questions:

- A Member asked what happened in those cases where an application to the Court to grant an adoption was not approved. Officers stated that a parallel planning process was carried out so that alternative arrangements were explored concurrently with the adoption process;

- A Member asked how frequently foster carers go on to adopt a child in their care. Officers stated that they would always look to convert a foster placement into a permanent care placement where the foster carer/s wanted to do this and it was deemed to be in the child's best interests. Children under the age of two who might not be able to return to their birth family were placed where possible with dually approved foster carers/ prospective adoptive parents so that continuity of care would be provided should the care arrangement need to be made permanent.

It was resolved:

to note and comment on the report.

## **22. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT: MAY 2017**

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Finance Business Partner which set out the first set of figures relating to the 2017/18 financial year. As of the end of May 2017 an overspend of £2,014,000 was forecast across the Children Families and Adults (CFA) Directorate as a whole, of which £1,087,000 was within Children and Families Services. The main revenue pressures were set out at paragraph 2.2 of the report and had been discussed in detail by the Committee previously. This included a forecast overspend of £273,000 on the Looked After Children (LAC) Placement budget and assumed approval of a recommendation to the General Purposes Committee that £2.9m of the corporately held demography and demand budget be allocated to the LAC Placement budget to bring the underlying pressure on this budget down to a more manageable level. Work was in hand to manage the further revenue pressures on the CFA budget in order to meet its required savings target of £20,658,000 2017/18 and further mitigations might be considered in-year.

The following comments were offered in discussion of the report and in response to Members' questions;

- The Chairman noted pressures relating to the use of agency staff, unfunded fostering costs, business support and one-off costs relating to the Children's Change programme which the Committee would wish to keep under close review;
- Paragraph 3.1: Members noted that a significant increase in the number of Looked After Children from 479 in 2012/13 to 674 in 2016/17 had been managed with a relatively small increase in cost from £15,903k in 2012/13 to £16,664k in 2016/17. This had been achieved by driving down commissioning costs, making relatively low use of residential care except where this was deemed in the child's best interests reducing the Council's reliance on non-County Council foster carers;
- Whilst emphasising that the figures should be treated with caution, officers noted that there had been no increase in the number of Looked After Children (LAC) during the previous eight week period. This placed the Council around mid-table in terms of numbers of LAC against comparable local authorities;
- A Member asked for more information about the overspend relating to the Grafham Water Centre. Officers stated that this related to the repayment of a sizeable loan from the County Council some five or six years previously to fund the building of a residential block and indoor facility. The repayments cost around £100k per

annum and if this cost was stripped out from the figures the Centre would be covering its costs. The Centre was actively marketing its services to both public and private sector customers and to private individuals and to increase its charges would make it uncompetitive. A review of all outdoor education provision was currently underway to address the viability of the provision as a whole going forward and this would be considered fully through the political process. A Member spoke warmly in support of the valuable resource provided by the Grafham Water Centre.

It was resolved to:

- a) review and comment on the report.

## **23. YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE: HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTOR OF PROBATION'S INSPECTION REPORT AND DRAFT IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Committee received a report from the Acting Youth Offending Manager and presented jointly with the Service Director for Community and Safety which set out the positive outcome of the full joint inspection led by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) of services for youth offenders in Cambridgeshire which took place in November 2016. It had taken some time to produce a considered response to the inspection so the report and draft improvement plan were being brought to the Committee at the earliest practicable opportunity. Cambridgeshire had been selected for inspection in recognition of its high performance in this area. Inspectors identified a large numbers of areas for praise including the leadership provided by the Executive Board, the multi-agency nature of the service and in particular the positive relationships established between young people and professionals. An action plan had been produced to address the recommendations contained in the report and good progress was being made on these.

The following points were raised in discussion of the report and in response to questions from Members:

- The provision of education, training and employment for over 16s presented the area of greatest challenge, but was key to diverting young people away from the criminal justice system. Those who did come into the criminal justice system represented a particularly challenging cohort to work with;
- A Member asked for more detail about how young people were supported to move into employment. Officers stated that a range of education workers were involved, but that more holistic support was also available to address the particular needs of the individual such as addressing mental health or substance abuse issues. Apprenticeships provided an important vocational offer and officers worked closely with partners in other services involved with the young person to draw provision together.

The Chairman thanked officers and staff in partner organisations for their excellent work which was illustrated by the positive findings contained in HMIP's report.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the positive outcome of the inspection into services with young offenders in Cambridgeshire;

- b) be aware that a draft improvement plan is in place and being monitored within the Youth Offending Service (YOS), by the YOS Executive Board, by the Children and Families Performance Board and by the Youth Justice Board.

#### **24. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee will meet next on Tuesday 12 September 2017 at 2.00pm in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairman  
(date)