

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 3rd June 2014

Time: 2.00 p.m. to 4.15 p.m.

Present: Councillors D Brown (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), P Brown, S Bywater, P Clapp, D Divine, P Downes, D Harty, N Kavanagh (substituting for F Onasanya), G Kenney, M Loynes, L Nethsingha, M Rouse, S van de Kerkhove and F Yeulett

Diocese of East Anglia Representative – Mr P Rossi
Ely Diocesan Board of Education Representative – Mrs P Stanton

Apologies: Councillors M Leeke, F Onasanya, J Whitehead (Chairwoman) and J Wisson

1. CONFIRMATION OF CHAIRMAN/WOMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN/WOMAN

The Committee noted that the Council had appointed Councillor Whitehead as the Chairwoman and Councillor D Brown as the Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2014-15.

2. CO-OPTION OF DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES

The Committee co-opted the following representatives as non-elected members with voting rights on those matters relating to the Council's education functions:

- Mrs Polly Stanton, representing the Ely Diocesan Board of Education (Church of England)
- Mr Paul Rossi, representing the Schools Service, Diocese of East Anglia (Roman Catholic).

Members noted that the representatives would be able to speak but not vote on other matters.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

5. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES

The Committee considered the recommendations arising from a review of the Council's three residential homes for looked after children. Two of the homes, The Hawthorns in Cambridge and Victoria Road in Wisbech, were for adolescents, each providing five places; the third, London Road, Harston, was a home for disabled young people,

providing four places, some on a shared care basis with the young people's families. The proposal was for the provision of the adolescent homes to continue in-house but for an external provider to be commissioned for London Road, Harston.

Members noted that the Council already commissioned a small portfolio of services for disabled children from an external provider. The contract for these services was due for renewal in October 2015 and the intention was to include London Road in the tender at that time, to attract the best possible range of responses from providers.

The Committee discussed the following issues:

- noted that the Council was working hard to reduce the number of looked after children placed out of county, particularly by recruiting more in-county foster carers. Many of the looked after children placed out of county had complex and specialist needs. Of those placed out of county, 91% were in neighbouring authorities.
- asked whether the key driver for externalising London Road was to improve quality or to reduce cost. The Service Director: Children's Social Care emphasised that the aim was to improve quality; an external provider delivering other similar services would be able to offer families greater flexibility than the Council could provide.
- expressed concern that a change of provider at London Road could create instability and uncertainty for families. The Service Director: Children's Social Care emphasised that this would be kept to a minimum. Families would be fully involved in the process, as had been done successfully when the short breaks service was externalised; and staff could move by TUPE transfer from the Council to the new provider.
- asked whether the Committee would be involved in the tendering of London Road. The Executive Director: Children, Families and Adult Services confirmed that the outcome of the tendering process and a recommendation for the preferred provider could be brought to the Committee. This was welcomed.

It was resolved to:

- a) agree the recommendations of the review to improve the two children's homes for adolescents, under a new service specification and internal commissioning arrangement
- b) agree the recommendations for improved provision for disabled children at London Road through the commissioning of an external provider.

6. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND INSPECTION PREPARATION

The Service Director: Children's Social Care presented a report updating members on the steps taken to address issues raised by the Ofsted inspection of arrangements for the protection of children that had taken place in 2012, which had categorised the Council's arrangements as inadequate. Since that time, the Council had made substantial progress to address the issues identified, as outlined in the improvement plan. Officers had also been preparing for the re-inspection of the service by Ofsted.

As an update to the report, the Service Director: Children's Social Care reported that the Council had received a telephone call from Ofsted that morning to confirm that the re-inspection would start the following day. It would last four weeks, with the most intense on-site activity taking place in the third week. Its scope would be wider than that of the previous inspection and there would be a strong emphasis on reviewing practice, including detailed review of 18 individual cases.

Responding to the report, members:

- noted that the inspectors were likely to want to interview the new Committee Chairwoman and Lead Member for Children's Services, Councillor Whitehead, the Vice-Chairman, Councillor D Brown, and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Count. The inspectors had been advised of the Council's recent change of governance arrangements and might also wish to speak to other Councillors.
- noted that the inspectors would issue a provisional judgment at the end of the inspection but that this would be subject to internal moderation by Ofsted. Their formal report would be published 4-6 weeks after their visit and was expected to be brought to the Committee meeting on 18th September 2014.

It was resolved to:

- a) receive regular updates on the progress on actions within the Improvement Plan
- b) note the arrangements for inspection preparation.

7. EARLY HELP STRATEGY, REVIEW AND COMMISSIONING

The Service Director: Enhanced and Preventative Services presented a report on the proposed review of the Council's approach to preventative and early help services. She explained that the Council's difficult financial position necessitated a review of the current model of provision. Future services would have to be more targeted and delivered more effectively in partnership with other organisations and with the community.

Members noted that an informal staff consultation on proposed changes was just being launched. This would be followed by a formal consultation and the development of final proposals, which would be brought to the Committee for approval.

Members commended the positive efforts being made under difficult circumstances and discussed the following issues:

- asked for more specific examples of how local members, Parish Councils and other local organisations could assist. The Service Director: Enhanced and Preventative Services explained that these would be developed during subsequent stages of the work. Given the widely diverse nature of the County, solutions would have to be tailored to local circumstances.
- emphasised the need to ensure that the voluntary sector and local communities were sufficiently robust to engage positively with the proposals. Local members

could help with this. It was suggested that a seminar for members would develop their awareness and knowledge.

- welcomed the emphasis on joint working with health and adult services, since a joined-up understanding of communities was needed to support children and families effectively.

It was resolved to:

- a) consider and comment on the development of a partnership early help strategy, including the proposed initial principles that will inform the strategy and the summary of feedback from recent multi-agency workshops
- b) consider and comment on early proposals for the future focus, structure and model of County Council Enhanced and Preventative Services
- c) agree how the Committee would wish to be involved in the early help review and strategy.

8. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

The Committee received a report on the childcare sufficiency assessment undertaken by the Council during the autumn of 2013 and the action plan subsequently developed. The Council was required by legislation to ensure that enough early years places were developed and maintained to enable children to access their pre-school entitlement and to enable parents to work.

Members discussed the following issues:

- noted progress in improving provision in the north of Cambridge, with two new projects shortly getting underway. The challenge in the south of the city continued to be the identification of suitable premises.
- emphasised the need for effective communication between the County Council, District and City Councils and providers about planning issues relating to potential sites. The Committee also asked for local members to be involved in discussions of potential sites at an early stage.
- noted recent success in agreeing the provision of sites for private day nursery providers with the developers of Alconbury Weald and Northstowe. It was hoped this would lead to similar agreements for other new communities in future.
- noted that the provision of sufficient places for funded two-year olds should help with the early help issues discussed under the previous item. However, available places were not always taken up and so encouraging engagement was also an issue. Officers also explained that early years providers were encouraged to support young children with emerging special educational needs within their settings. The Council's special schools provided after-school clubs to enable parents of children with special educational needs to work.

- noted that childminders were a key element of childcare provision, particularly in providing flexibility for parents who were shift workers. The Council encouraged people to become childminders in parts of the County where extra provision was needed and timed training courses to coincide with recruitment campaigns.
- expressed concern that many eligible families did not take up working tax credits to help pay for childcare, either because the application process was too complicated or because they were worried they might subsequently have to pay money back. Officers recognised this situation and noted that support and advice was provided through the Family Information Service and through children's centres. The Council would also be employing three fixed-term Access Officers to help promote take-up. The Committee asked officers to lobby Government for the system to be simplified.
- asked why page 3 of the report indicated a pressure on places in March and Chatteris, which was not reflected on page 10.

The Childcare Sufficiency Manager has advised since the meeting that the Council's data indicates that there are more children in March and Chatteris than there are registered places, hence the reference on page 3. However, feedback from March and Chatteris providers did not indicate pressure on places and so the locality is not listed in the section on page 10.

It was resolved to:

- a) note and comment on the content of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report
- b) approve the attached action plan for implementation with immediate effect.

9. COMMISSIONING OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

The Head of Youth Support Services presented an update on the commissioning of alternative education. He explained that the current work was the final stage of a long process which would end the role of the local authority as provider of alternative education and transfer responsibility to schools, working in partnership across the County through three Behaviour and Attendance Improvement Partnerships (BAIPs).

Members discussed the following issues:

- expressed concern that the arrangements would be effective only if the schools were able to work successfully in partnership, which might be difficult given that in many other aspects of their work, schools were encouraged to compete, not to collaborate. The Head of Youth Support Services accepted this and noted that the local authority had carried out considerable work with the BAIPs to test the strengths and risks of their approach.
- noted that in East Cambridge, the City of Ely Community College and three other secondary schools had been unable to reach agreement on alternative provision. The City of Ely Community College had therefore retained its own funding and was operating its own arrangements for excluded pupils and the remaining three schools

had joined the South Cambridgeshire BAIP. The new secondary school at Littleport would be able to join the South Cambridgeshire BAIP if it wished.

- noted that the Complementary Education (CE) Academy had been set up to specialise in alternative education. One member questioned the need for this provision to be made by an academy and emphasised the need for effective quality assurance.

It was resolved to:

- a) support the direction of travel for the provision of alternative education in Cambridgeshire and to note the risks and opportunities that this presents
- b) support the development of a Quality Assurance process
- c) note the legal position in regard to the statutory duty for 6th day provision following permanent exclusion
- d) approve the continuation of negotiations between the Local Authority, Head teachers and partnerships for the transfer of the Cambridge Learning Base and the Wisbech Learning Base either to Academy status or to a statutory land transfer.

10. PEER REVIEW OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The Service Director: Learning presented the findings of a recent peer review of the Council's School Improvement Services. Cambridgeshire had been the pilot authority for a proposed peer review process covering the Eastern region. The peer reviewers had identified a number of strengths and development points, closely aligned to the Council's self-assessment of the Services. An action plan had been prepared to address the development points identified.

Members discussed the following points:

- asked how the Council could intervene to raise concerns about academies. The Service Director: Learning explained that the Council could raise concerns with Ofsted and the Department of Education; to date, such communications had been welcomed. Members also noted that the Government would be appointing eight Regional Schools Commissioners, who would be responsible for overseeing the performance of academies, liaising with local authorities in their regions.
- welcomed arrangements outlined by the Service Director: Learning to provide additional support to the governing bodies of some academies.
- commented that school inspection findings could be skewed by data based on small cohorts of children. The Service Director: Learning recognised this and noted that schools with small numbers of children in particular categories were encouraged to share stories with inspectors about individual children's progress.

- noted that narrowing the attainment gap was a clearly identified priority for all those working in and supporting schools. A progress report would be brought to the Committee's next meeting on 29th July 2014.
- noted that the introduction of universal free school meals for infants from September 2014 would make it harder to identify pupils eligible for the pupil premium. The County Council was working with schools to help to ensure that as many eligible pupils as possible continued to be identified.

It was resolved to note the findings of the Review and the objectives for the Post Review Action Plan.

11. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT – MARCH 2014

The Committee received a report detailing the financial position for Children, Families and Adults as at the end of March 2014. Members noted that this was the month-end report, not the final outturn report, which would be presented to the Committee's next meeting on 29th July 2014. Members also noted that not all of the budgets contained within the report were the responsibility of this Committee; the next agenda item would highlight those budgets for which the Committee was responsible.

During discussion, members made the following comments:

- questioned the overspend of £1.7 million in Children's Social Care, which was due to savings from vacant posts not being high enough to meet the target set by the Directorate; to higher than anticipated agency staffing costs; and to an increase in legal proceedings. The Executive Director: Children, Families and Adult Services explained that all of these factors were linked to increased levels of activity within the Directorate. He was discussing with the LGSS Director of Law, Property and Governance how legal costs might best be managed, including the possible location of a Legal officer within Children's Social Care. Recent family law reforms might help to reduce the numbers of expert witnesses needed in court and hence also reduce costs.
- queried the forecast overspend of £330,000 for Catering, Cleaning and Groomfield Services. It was noted that the overspend figure reflected the failure to deliver the anticipated surplus of £250,000, with the trading loss totalling approximately £80,000. The Service Director: Learning explained that the overspend on school meals was due to meal numbers being consistently below expected levels through the year, but provision costs being higher than expected, particularly where the service had to provide meals in settings that would not be commercially viable for a private provider. However, the increased business associated with universal free school meals for infants from September 2014 was expected significantly to improve the catering service's position.

It was resolved to note the report.

12. BUSINESS PLAN BUDGET FOR 2014/15

Members received a report detailing the budgets for which the Children and Young People Committee was responsible.

It was resolved to note the report.

13. APPOINTMENTS TO INTERNAL ADVISORY GROUPS AND PANELS AND TO PARTNERSHIP LIAISON AND ADVISORY GROUPS

The Committee was invited to consider appointments to internal advisory groups and panels and to partnership liaison and advisory groups relating to children and young people's services.

It was resolved to:

- a) agree the following appointments to internal advisory groups and panels and to partnership liaison and advisory groups, as set out in Appendices 2 and 3 of the report to General Purposes Committee and as identified following the publication of the report to General Purposes Committee and orally at the meeting:

Appendix 2

| Body | Councillor(s) appointed |
|---|--|
| Adoption Panel | Councillors P Brown & Kenney |
| Cambridgeshire Admission Forum | Councillors Harty & Whitehead |
| Cambridgeshire Culture Steering Group | Councillors Harty, Kavanagh & Nethsingha |
| Cambridgeshire Schools Forum | Councillors Downes, Harty & Whitehead |
| Fostering Panel | Councillor Connor [& one vacancy] |
| New Street Ragged School Trust | Councillor Nethsingha |
| Places Planning Project Board | Councillors Harty & Whitehead |
| Pupil Referral Unit Management Committee | No longer needed |
| Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education | Councillors Cearns, Orgee & Scutt |
| Transitions Partnership Board | Councillor Bywater [& Councillor Kenney appointed by Adults Committee] |
| Virtual School Management Board | Councillors Kenney & van de Kerkhove |

Appendix 3 – Partnership Liaison and Advisory Groups

| Body | Councillor(s) appointed |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Cambridgeshire Children's Trust | Councillor Whitehead |
| Cambridgeshire Music Hub | Councillors Harty & Nethsingha |
| College of West Anglia | Councillor Count |
| F40 Group | Councillors Harty & Downes |

Additional appointments identified following the publication of the report to General Purposes Committee

| Body | Councillor(s) appointed |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Children's Health Joint Commissioning Board | Councillors Kenney & Nethsingha |
| Child Poverty Champions Group | Councillor Bywater |

Additional appointments identified orally at the meeting

| Body | Councillor(s) appointed |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Local Safeguarding Children Board | Councillor Whitehead |
| Cambridgeshire Improvement Board | Councillors D Brown & Whitehead |
| Corporate Parenting Executive Board | Councillor Whitehead |

- b) ask officers to check whether it might be possible to appoint a fourth Councillor to the Cambridgeshire Schools Forum
- c) send a request for expressions of interest in the Fostering Panel vacancy to all members of Council.

14. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN

Members reviewed the agenda plan for the Children and Young People Committee.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the agenda plan and ask for the following reports to be programmed:
 - the commissioning of an external provider for provision at London Road, Harston
 - the future of the Cambridge and Wisbech Learning Bases
- b) note that the two suggestions from the outgoing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were already covered by the agenda plan
- c) refer the request from the Audit and Accounts Committee back to the Committee as it was within its own remit to action
- d) discuss the working arrangements of the Committee as and when necessary
- e) ask Children and Young People Spokes to discuss the possible role and remit of 'Topic Champions' and to report back to the meeting of the Committee on 29th July 2014.

Chairwoman: