

Children and Young People Committee: Minutes

Date: 17 May 2022

Time: 2.00pm – 4.03pm

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald PE28 4YE

Present: Councillors D Ambrose Smith, A Bulat, P Coutts, C Daunton (from 2.16pm), B Goodliffe (Chair), A Hay, S Hoy, J King, M King (Vice-Chair), M McGuire, L Nethsingha (left 3:45pm), K Prentice, P Slatter (from 2.16pm) and S Taylor

Co-opted Member: Canon A Read, Church of England Diocese of Ely

70. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillors Atkins (substituted by Councillor Coutts), Sharp, Thompson (substituted by Councillor Nethsingha) and co-opted Member Flavio Vettese

There were no declarations of interest.

71. Minutes – 1 March 2022 and action log

The minutes of the meeting on 1 March 2022 were approved as an accurate record. The action log was noted.

72. Petitions and public questions

The Committee received two requests to speak on Item 5: Home to School Transport to After School Clubs - SEND. A copy of the questions can be viewed on the [Council's website](#) and minute 75 below refers.

Key decisions

73. Education Transport Contracts

At the time of presentation, the School Education Transport Team operated around 1200 routes, of which around a third were procured each year. The report sought approval to let education transport contracts for the current procurement round of special and mainstream routes to enable transport arrangements for 150 mainstream and 300 special school routes, for implementation in September 2022. In future, officers aimed to bring a report to the Committee preferably in January, and no later than March, each year seeking this approval.

It was requested that, in future, the sum total of contracts was included in the report.
Action.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the letting of special and mainstream school and child social care transport contracts current procurement round.
- b) Delegate authority to the Director of Education, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Children and Young People Committee, to finalise the subsequent award of those contracts.
- c) Endorse the proposal for officers, in future, to bring an annual key decision report to the Committee setting out the transport contracts to be renewed in the coming year for committee approval.

Co-opted members of the committee were eligible to vote on this item.

Other decisions

74. Home to School Transport to After School Clubs – SEND

Since 2011, discretionary funding had been used to fund transport to after school clubs operated by the county's five area special schools. In 2021, the Children and Young People Committee had approved a fresh public consultation on this provision. This was carried out between 31 January and 11 March 2022. Four options were presented in the consultation, with the majority of parents favouring the continuation of transport provision, without which 65% of respondents stated their child would be unable to continue with after school activities.

Currently, fifty-four pupils were in receipt of this discretionary transport at cost of c.£94k per year. At present, only Meadowgate Academy was the only other special school offering after school club provision. To provide transport to students accessing this provision would cost an additional £14k – 17k per year. There would though be additional cost implications if other special schools should subsequently decide to offer similar provision and transport was provided on the same basis.

Two requests to speak on this report had been received from Nadia Bowes, a local resident, and Mayor Dr Nik Johnson. Neither Ms Bowes or the Mayor were able to attend the meeting in person and their comments were read out by an officer. The full text can be read [here](#).

In response to Ms Bowes' question about the annual cost per child of providing the current service, the Service Director for Education stated that the cost of £1,734.93 per child per year was an indicative average per pupil cost based on current annual expenditure. It was accepted that further refinements of costs, taking into factors such as frequency of travel, would need to be undertaken as part of any future work

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

- Queried why the approval of additional funding would be a decision for the Strategy and Resources (S&R) Committee. The Service Director for Education stated this would require the allocation of additional resources and so would require the approval of S&R.
- Welcomed the cross-party support for the decision to cover all schools providing after school transport, especially in its inclusion of Wisbech.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the recommendation to continue with the existing discretionary after school club transport arrangements, with a further review in 12 months' time.
- b) Recommend that the Strategy and Resources Committee approves additional funding for the extension of the existing transport provision to some special school after school clubs to all Cambridgeshire special schools offering similar after school club provision.
- c) Note the feedback received as a part of the consultation on the proposed options for future arrangements. This is for noting only, so no vote required. And,
- d) Request officers further explore the option of a means tested approach to continuing the After School Club Transport arrangements.

Co-opted members of the committee were eligible to vote on recommendations a) and d).

75. CUSPE Research Project: Improving Outcomes for Young People Leaving Care

Researchers Ellie Blake, Ernestine Hui and Partrick McAlary from the University of Cambridge presented their, Anna Chaplin and Myrsini Tzioni's findings and recommendations for improving outcomes for young people leaving care. Their presentation is available on the [Council website](#), alongside the [officer report](#) setting out the Council's response to the researchers' recommendations.

The researchers had completed a literature review which focussed on accommodation, finance and employment, and mental health. Evidence used included best practice in other authorities, general good practice, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, care leaver experience, a survey approved by the ethics council and verified by councillors, and canvassing of young people.

The research team found that individuals who left care had an increased likelihood of homelessness. Following a 30% increase in Cambridgeshire's housing costs over the last 10 years, the University recommended piloting a scheme in which the Council acted as a rent guarantor; employing a dedicated accommodation officer/team with personal advisers; and using artificial intelligence for data storing.

Unlike most children outside of care, those within are required to be self-reliant at a younger age. Therefore, a Council tax policy supporting these children had been implemented, and the University also recommended ensuring the County Council paid former children in care's district taxes directly, rather than through a refund scheme. They also recommended having designated money and budgeting webpages.

In 2021, 45% of care leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET). CUSPE had developed a £1,600 scholarship to support care leavers to find work experience. Further, existing research recommended ringfencing apprenticeships for young people leaving care and having dedicated roles for care leavers within the Council.

It was reported that 25% of young people suffered from a mental health crisis after leaving care. Therefore, the following were recommended: improved signposting to healthcare; lobbying at national level for dedicated services for this group; inclusion of a mental health professional in the care team; and mental health training for care teams. The Assistant Director for Early Help and Children's Social Care noted that the clinical services offer had been updated since this recommendation was made.

The Chair expressed her thanks to the research team for their detailed work on this important issue. She described the proposed CUSPE scholarship as brilliant news.

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

- Established that the report was written in 2019 and that there had been significant changes in the Council's offer to care leavers since then arising from a restructuring of children's services and the response to Covid. For example, the clinical offer was no longer in a stage of transition, there was an improved virtual offer, and personal advisers had increased. 98% of care leavers now kept in touch with Cambridgeshire County Council, and this was higher than the national average.
- Confirmed that the report had been circulated to members of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee, which would also review to the actions of the Council to mitigate the high NEET figures.
- Agreed that proposed training would include spotting and responding to mental health problems.
- Expressed concern that the renaming of 'Care Leavers' to 'Young People with Care Experience' may result in confusion. In response to this, researchers suggested alternative wording could be considered by the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee and Children in Care Council.
- Noted that Ofsted had recently reviewed Child Protection Plans and Children in Need. They had shown concern with regard to staff levels, but not towards general management.
- Suggested that the Council should give support to all young people, not just care leavers and help those trickle into that support network with other young people.

However, researchers stated that the research focussed specifically on the challenges faced by care leavers versus the general population because of the high levels of disparity. Councillors acknowledged that these children were unlikely to have high levels of direct parental support after leaving care, unlike their own children.

- Established that Council would act as a guarantor based on individual need, for example for university students or out of area cases. Unaccompanied asylum seekers also received a grant from Government.
- Suggested engaging with foster carers and asked what the Council, could do to improve employment for people in this space.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the content of the CUSPE report and thank those involved for their extensive research.
- b) Note and comment on the officer assessment of the research recommendations.
- c) Consider whether the chair of the Committee should advocate at a national level for increased mental health support for young people leaving care.

Co-opted members of the committee were not eligible to vote on this item.

76. Response to the Government's SEND Review Green Paper and Update on SEND Provision and Placements

The SEND Green Paper was issued by Government in March 2022 and provided an update and review of the consequences and benefits of the 2014 SEND policy shift. The five-ten year reform agenda included: strengthening of the local authority roles to cover oversight and suspended children, electronic education, the health care plan, list of appropriate provision, and localism.

Following a motion in the 25 January 2022 Full Council meeting regarding young people's mental health provision, work was already being done to meet demand and secure provision through safety valve funding and new capital funding. The Department of Education had also recognised the high needs block deficit and was looking to support the Local Authority to mitigate this before early autumn. The impact of these actions was reflected in the reduction of new education, health and care plans in Cambridgeshire, despite the number increasing nationwide.

Cambridgeshire County Council were holding a consultation on responses on the Green Paper, closing 22 July, which would be shared with councillors, stakeholders, schools and government.

In response to Members' questions, officers:

- Established that schools and parents were concerned about the lack of detail within the paper. There was a presumption that there would be a move to listed, rather than flexible, provision and the Council was working with PinPoint (a parent forum) to formulate a response to this. Schools were driving for an increase of the already available provision offer.
- Confirmed that publication of the paper would not stop pre-existing workstreams such as the SEND Transformation Programme. Instead, the Department for Education had been consulted with regard to how these workstreams could be best implemented so that the changes made would provide the Local Authority with an advantage whence the Government did introduce specific proposals.
- Noted an NVQ and NVQH for SENCO support which would put SENCO roles on a similar plane to key leadership roles, improve SEN workforce resilience and reduce the disparity of provision across schools.
- Clarified that the Green Paper was evidence based.
- Informed Councillors that the division of education health and care plans [EHCPs] in secondary and primary schools was balanced and was being treated as such, with collaboration in response to the paper between the Council, the Secondary Heads Association, SENCOs, governors, Heads of Maintained Schools and primary schools. The Service Director for Education agreed to provide a note on the number of children with EHCPs at primary school and secondary school. Action.
- Acknowledged that SENCO turnover was higher because they frequently move onto more senior roles, such as head teachers. However, there was more concern for small school's capacity to prepare SENCOs for their role through shadowing and deputising; and headteacher recruitment.
- Stated that a report on a recent Ombudsman case relating to SEND provision would be brought before by Committee in July 2022. If councillors were contacted by any parents with concerns about SEND provision they should be advised to contact the Education Team.

The Chair noted a correction to recommendation c), the consultation deadline was for the 22 July, rather than 1 July.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the report.
- b) Agree that Officers should circulate the final draft response to Committee members for review.
- c) Delegate authority to the Director of Education to submit the Council's consultation response, following consultation with CYP Spokes, in order to meet the deadline of **22 4-July 2022**.

Co-opted members of the committee were eligible to vote on this item.

77. Education White Paper: Opportunity for All

The Education White Paper was released in 2022. It set out the Government's long-term aspirations for education and the way in which the Council would respond to these objectives. Actions occurring as a result of the Green Paper would be reviewed by the Committee regularly, as would the impact of Covid-19 on schools.

The paper aimed to improve the quality of teaching through addressing staff turnover and skills gaps (such as through teacher bursaries); and strengthen curriculum standards through the reintroduction of KS3 SATS and increasing focus on modern foreign languages, sport and music. Attendance monitoring would also change with the introduction of a statutory attendance policy, Ofsted involvement, and rules on prosecution and oversight of this. There was also a formalised parent pledge to ensure parents remained informed on the academic wellbeing of their child.

The Government had set aspirations for all schools to belong to an academy trust by 2030. The definition of a 'Good Academy Trust' would be set and local governments would be able to establish multi-academy trusts and control in-year admissions to help academy trusts to meet this definition.

Cambridgeshire was recognised as one of twenty-four priority areas for education investment. Money from this would be used for bursaries on subject-shortage training and salary top-up in disadvantaged schools.

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

- Expressed concern that concepts within the paper may affect the Service's ability to focus on the impact of Covid-19 on schools, but noted there was still detailed work occurring around provision and excluded children.
- Established that the White Paper committed to reviewing admissions criteria. Responsibility would revert to the local authority, but there would still be own admission authorities such as faith schools or academies.
- Clarified that there was not yet a specific amount of money proposed for disadvantaged area investment, but it could be used on a range of projects to improve reading, behaviour and attendance. These disadvantaged areas could also claim up to £3k per annum for a period of three/four years for every newly qualified maths, science and computer science teacher.
- Noted that the establishment of new 'academically focussed' 16-19 year old free schools would have a limited impact in Cambridgeshire which already had this provision through colleges.
- Confirmed small schools would be supported to respond by the Assistant Director for School Place Planning and Education Capital.

- Noted that the White Paper did not include plans for further education, but that a briefing would occur with further education establishments with which relations had strengthened as a result of the pandemic.
- Canon Andrew Read welcomed engagement with the CEO network and the new Regional School Commissioner over expectations around place-based planning and affordability.
- Were reassured that the phrase on page 376 'we remain committed to our family of schools remaining maintained' was not a policy position, but a statement about schools proceeding with care and ensuring a child centred approach using community engagement.

It was resolved to note and comment on the report and request any further information on the areas outlined.

78. Children and Young People Committee Agenda Plan, Training Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies and Internal Advisory Groups

A Member suggested a training or briefing session for Children and Young People and Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Members on the work of foster carers. **Action.**

The Chair expressed the Committee's thanks to all those who serve as school governors and who play such a vital role in our schools. She also thanked Councillor Anne Hay for her appointment onto the Fostering Panel, and the SACRE Conservative and NWAFT Quarterly Liaison Group vacancies.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the agenda plan attached at Appendix 1.
- b) Note and comment on the training plan attached at Appendix 2.
- c) Review the committee appointments to outside bodies within the Committee's remit, attached at Appendix 3.
- d) Review the appointments to Internal Advisory Groups and Panels as detailed in Appendix 4;
- e) Appoint Councillor Anna Bradnam as the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee and Councillor Philippa Slatter as the Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee for 2022/23;
- f) Note the Local Authority School Governor nominations and appointments for spring term 2022, attached at Appendix 5.

(Chair)