

Children and Young People Committee: Minutes

Date: 5 July 2022

Time: 10:00am – 1.00pm

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald PE28 4YE

Members present: Councillors D Ambrose Smith, A Bradnam, A Bulat, C Daunton, B Goodliffe (Chair), A Hay, S Hoy, J King, M King (Vice-Chair), M McGuire, L Nethsingha, K Prentice, A Sharp, S Taylor and F Thompson.

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

Apologies: Councillor P Slatter (substituted by Councillor L Nethsingha) and F Vettese, Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia

Also present: S Moir, Chief Executive (to 11.50am)

79. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that Mr Vettese would be leaving his role as Deputy Director of School Services for the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia to become the chief executive of the Our Lady of Walsingham Academy Trust. She thanked him for his contribution to the Committee's work during his time as a co-opted member and wished him success in his new role. Julie Connell would also be stepping down from her role at the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust and the Chair wished her well in her future role.

The Chair advised that she was exercising his discretion to vary the order of business from the published agenda to take Item 14: Response to the Local Government Ombudsman Report, as the first substantive item of business. Committee members had been notified in advance of this change and a notice had been placed on the meeting webpage.

80. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

Apologies for absence were reported as above.

There were no declarations of interest.

81. Changes to Committee Memberships

The Committee was advised that Councillor Anna Bradnam had been appointed to the committee on 18 May 2022, replacing Councillor Michael Atkins, who became a substitute member of the committee on the same date.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Bradnam and thanked her for her existing work as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. She also thanked Councillor Atkins for his contribution to the Committee during his tenure.

82. Minutes – 17 May 2022 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting on 17 May 2022 were approved as an accurate record, subject to a typographical correction.

The action log was reviewed. The Director of Education undertook to provide an update on the invitation to the new Regional Schools Commissioner to meet committee members. **Action**

83. Petitions and public questions

One request to speak had been received on Item 14: Response to the Local Government Ombudsman Report from the family concerned. This would be heard when the report was considered (minute 84 below refers).

There were no petitions.

Decisions

84. Response to the Local Government Ombudsman Report

The Chair stated that, in addition to exercising her discretion to vary the order of business from the published agenda to consider this report first, she had further exercised her discretion to accept a late request to speak from the family which the report concerned.

The Director of Education offered his sincere apologies to the family which had been impacted by the circumstances set out in the report, and acknowledged the stress and distress which had been caused to the family. The Council's aspiration was to best meet the needs of all of the children and young people living in Cambridgeshire, and it had a duty to fulfil its statutory obligations to them. In this case, that had not happened, and he fully accepted the Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO) recommendations on the case. Section 3 of his report set out the lessons learned and changes to service protocols and procedures which had already been made or which were proposed to ensure that there could be no recurrence of this family's experience. The report to the Committee contained a link to the full [LGO's report and findings](#).

The Chief Executive stated his wish to reiterate in public the personal apology which he had previously conveyed in writing to the family concerned. The Council had not got things right for their child, and for that he was sorry. He was both mindful and respectful of the need to protect the identity of the child and family concerned, and Officers would continue to engage with them privately. The principle of putting the needs of children and young people at the heart of decision-making must remain central to the Council's practice and to how the Authority and its officers behaved. The Council

would get this right, irrespective of the time it might take. The Chief Executive stated his commitment to using this family's deeply regrettable experience to improving practice, performance and culture within the Council in relation to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and to their families.

In order to preserve the anonymity of the family concerned, the parent who had submitted comments would be referred to only as Mrs X. The Chair stated that it was imperative that no Member or Officer should say anything which could reveal the identity of the family concerned. Mrs X's comments had been circulated electronically that morning to Committee members for information and a copy had been published on the [meeting webpage](#). In accordance with Mrs X's wishes, her comments were read out by the Democratic Services Officer.

The Chair expressed her thanks to the family concerned for bringing their experience to notice, and for their offer to be involved in the on-going improvements which the Council was committed to making to its SEND service. The Council would share details of PinPoint, its parent/ carer forum, and would always welcome the views and contributions of families and young people.

In discussion of the report, individual Members:

- noted that the report made reference to 'paying' the family, where in fact the family was being offered compensation
- asked whether the provision for the child concerned had been resolved and whether any other children or families might be similarly impacted. The Director of Education stated that he remained in dialogue with the family concerned to resolve the issues around their child's provision. The circumstances of this case were specific, and he was not aware of any other current case mirroring this scenario

The Leader of the Council emphasised the seriousness of the case. She had spoken with the family herself and she welcomed the Chief Executive's work with the family. The pandemic had placed exceptional strain on the families of children and young people with additional needs, and also on the Council in trying to support them. But in this case the Council had got its response wrong, and it needed to do better in future.

The Committee considered whether any further reporting on this issue was required. With the consent of the meeting, it was agreed that an action should be recorded regarding the resolution of provision for the child concerned. **Action**

The Director of Education stated that committee reports on educational provision could also be expanded in future to include alternative provision. **Action**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the report,
- b) Ask for areas of clarity.

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

85. Finance Monitoring Report – Outturn 2021-22

The outturn position for 2021/22 for the budgets for which the Committee was responsible was an underspend of c£1.7m, excluding the dedicated schools grant (DSG). The DSG represented a total deficit of c£40m being carried forward to the 2022/23 financial year. Officers were continuing to work with the DfE on recovering this position. Final variances for capital projects and earmarked reserves were also set out in the report.

The number of children with education, health and care plans (EHCPs) was continuing to rise, and in particular around behavioural needs. Inflation was also becoming more of an issue, and there were recruitment challenges around teaching assistants.

In response to questions from individual Members, Officers stated that:

- the c£3m underspend around children's services related primarily to staffing costs. Some posts had been held vacant pending a re-design of the Early Help service, but the majority of this sum related to vacancies which the Council was seeking to fill, particularly in front-line teams. This was a national issue, but significant progress was being made locally. A programme board had been established which was chaired by the Chief Executive and an offer of appointment had been made for a project lead to a candidate with a strong background in recruitment and retention in this sector. The Committee would be updated when this appointment was confirmed **Action**
- confirmed that an online system of exit interviews was currently used to invite comments from staff who were leaving the Council, and that the new project lead would be considering how this should be managed moving forward. Focus groups had also been carried out which had identified a combination of factors leading to staff deciding to leave, including a re-thinking of lifestyle following the pandemic, changes of profession and early retirement. Some staff were also moving to agency work to seek higher pay. The Director of Children's Services paid tribute to the dedicated and professional staff within the Council's Children's Services team
- some teams were operating with a vacancy rate of around 40%, representing a focused area of difficulty. Agency staff were used where appropriate, and a dedicated team of agency staff had been employed to support the team experiencing the most pressure, but this was expensive. The Director of Children's Services offered an assurance that there was no work which Children's Services was unable to undertake due to vacancy levels, that all the children and young people who needed to be seen were being seen and that the Council was discharging its duties appropriately. Staffing levels were reported weekly to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee and to the Chief Executive
- the 2021/22 underspend on CYP budgets would be placed into the general Council reserve, but there was flexibility within the relevant budgets to afford agency staff and the planned work around the recruitment and retention process. If additional funds were required to support this work these would be sought through the appropriate governance arrangements

- good pathways were in place to raise awareness of the careers available in social work and social care with local school children and the variety of entry routes, including through apprenticeships. The Director of Education undertook to look at the potential for also raising awareness of childcare training options **Action**
- there were a number of continuation grants where the final allocation was not known until the end of the financial year as these were dependent on activity and outcomes, so these were not built into the baseline
- the cover report summarised the key information relevant to the CYP committee, but Officers acknowledged a Member's comment that the inclusion of information relating to both adults and children's services in the detailed appendix to the report made it difficult to extrapolate the information for each committee. They undertook to look again at how this was presented **Action**
- the DSG was uplifted each year to recognise pupil numbers, so would take account of the unprecedented levels of population growth in some parts of the county. The High Needs Block was subject to specific pressures, but was less reactive in terms of pupil numbers
- following a change in legislation it had become unlawful, rather than undesirable, to place under 16s in provision which was not registered with Ofsted. 16-18 year olds could still be placed in semi-independent provision where this was deemed appropriate. The Council had rarely placed under 16's in unregistered provision previously, and where this had happened it was usually to provide a bespoke offer to meet specific need. However, some local authorities had made wider use of unregistered provision which meant there was now greater demand on registered provision which was impacting on both availability and cost

A Member described the outturn report as representing another year of pandemic-related costs and uncertainty. The anticipated post-lockdown spike in numbers of children entering care had not transpired, but other budget areas such as support for children and young people with additional needs had come under acute and continuing pressure. There would be a need to reflect on this as part of the budget-setting process.

The Vice Chair spoke of the calibre of the Council's existing social workers and its commitment to them, and of the Council's commitment to creating the best opportunities to attract and retain new recruits.

It was resolved to review and comment on the report.

86. Finance Monitoring Report – May 2022

The Committee received the first finance monitoring report for 2022/23 which covered the period to the end of May 2022. A small overspend was currently forecast on dedicated schools grant (DSG) expenditure, but otherwise there had been little activity to date. The capital changes to the business plan set out in Appendix C had been

considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee the previous week and were brought before the Committee for noting only.

The Director of Education offered a briefing note outside of the meeting on the reasons for the slippage on the Waterbeach New Town primary school project. **Action**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Review and comment on the report.
- b) Note the changes to the capital programme budgets from the Business Plan as summarised in Appendix C for approval by Strategy and Resources.

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

Key decisions

87. Proposed approach for developing capacity for school placements for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The demand for new specialist provision places continued to evolve. The Government's Green Paper on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) spoke to this issue, and the further Government funding announced for SEND would help the Council meet its aspirations around additional SEND provision. The Director for Education welcomed the recent visit by the Chair and Councillor Hoy to two schools in Wisbech which the Council would be supporting, including with additional capacity at Meadowgate Academy. Work was continuing to look at ways of offering inclusive provision and a number of sites for enhanced provision were being sought on mainstream school sites. Officers would be delivering a workshop on education transport with the intention of bringing a report to the October committee meeting. The Council was proposing to submit a bid for an additional area special school for the town of March in Fenland as this was considered a geographically critical location for this provision.

In response to questions from individual Members, Officers stated that:

- the Schools' Forum had allocated £2.1m for the upskilling of the workforce
- offered a briefing note around teaching assistants and encouraging diversity within this group **Action**
- confirmed that an offer of support had been made to all schools within Cambridgeshire, including those run by academy trusts
- a recommendation to include additional SEND space to the standard specification for new secondary schools reflected the Council's aspirations on this issue

- acknowledged that post-16 provision for students with additional needs was an area of challenge. The transition from a special school environment with a high staff to pupil ratio to a college setting required careful handling, and it was important that parents were reassured that their child's particular needs would be met. There were issues recruiting staff to provide post-16 support, and this had been raised with the teaching school hub
- confirmed that the additional 63 places planned at Samuel Pepys School were included in the Council's existing capital programme
- work was continuing to support a better understanding of the location of areas of deprivation across the county, and officers were working proactively with schools and early years settings to identify areas of need
- significant work was being undertaken to identify potential non-capital projects to create additional SEND places. This included a review of the school estate to identify schools operating below their published admission number (PAN). Officers were looking to accelerate as many schemes as they could, but the Director of Education emphasised the need for a considered approach

A Member welcomed the recommendation that the feasibility study for a new area special school in Fenland should be brought before the Committee once complete and the cross-party working which had informed this.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the proposed delivery approach, aimed at meeting demand for SEND placements, and
- b) Approve an amendment to the current specification for new build schools to include 55m² of additional SEND space, per up to 2FE, as standard.
- c) Consider the feasibility study for the new area special school in Fenland returns at CYP committee once complete.

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

88. Family Safeguarding Services

The Committee's approval was sought for an extension to the Barnardo's grant agreement to provide Domestic Abuse Victim Support Workers for Family Safeguarding services, and to enter into a Section 75 Agreement with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT) to deliver adult mental health practitioners for the Family Safeguarding service.

In response to questions from individual Members, Officers:

- stated that work had been done as part of the commissioning process to establish whether any potential providers would be exempt from subsidy control. However,

Barnardo's was an existing partner with proven experience in family safeguarding and to move to another provider would take around two years. Officers acknowledged the need to be open that a risk existed in relation to extending the Barnardo's contract, but advised that this risk was deemed to be low. Advice from both the legal and commissioning teams had supported this approach

- acknowledged a Member's concern that the report contained little detail around the proposed Section 75 agreement with CPFT given the significant sums of public money involved. The Director of Children's Services stated that the Council had a long-standing Section 75 agreement with CPFT for the provision of these services, and that these had previously been managed as an add-on to the provision of adult services. However, for transparency, the Council's Commissioning team had advised that a separate agreement should be set up in relation to children. The Director of Children's Services undertook to provide an explanatory note on what a Section 75 agreement entailed outside of the meeting **Action**
- stated that Family Safeguarding was not a preventative service, but provided to support to those families which had been identified as meeting the need for care. The model was though proving successful in Cambridgeshire at reducing the escalation of those cases

A Member stated that they supported the proposed approach as a Council appointed Governor of CPFT.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree an extension to Barnardo's grants agreement to provide Domestic Abuse Victim Support Workers for the Family Safeguarding services.
- b) Agree to enter into a Section 75 Agreement with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust to deliver adult mental health practitioners for the Family Safeguarding service.

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

89. Family Hubs Feasibility Study

The Family Hub model was a place-based service designed to bring services together and place families at the heart of their work. This approach had been endorsed in 2021 by the Leadsom Review. A rigorous consultation process had been undertaken and the outcome of a bid to the National Transformation Fund was awaited. The recommended Option 2 could though still be funded from within existing budgets if this bid was unsuccessful. If this approach was approved by the Committee it would be implemented from September 2022.

In response to questions from individual Members, Officers:

- stated that there were key differences between the Family Hubs approach and Children's Centres. This included provision for children and young people aged 0-19, or 0-25 for those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP). It followed a whole family/ whole system approach, included a broader range of services and was backed up by a digital offer. The model would build on the geographical location of existing child and family centres, and partners from across the five Cambridgeshire districts had expressed interest in being involved
- acknowledged the importance of making the Family Hubs welcoming and inclusive spaces to avoid service users feeling stigmatised. Conversations were taking place around how the offer would be marketed, and it was felt that co-locating with partner organisations and broadening the service offer would help address this. Officers undertook to explore whether local businesses might be interested in supporting the initiative **Action**
- stated that the Council was on the long-list for national transformation funding and would know the outcome of its bid in August 2022

Members welcomed the extensive consultation which had been undertaken and which had informed the recommendation.

It was resolved unanimously to approve recommendation two from the feasibility study executive summary report and proceed towards implementation over the next two years.

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

The meeting adjourned from 11.50am to 12.03pm.

90. Re-commissioning of Translation and Interpretation Services

The existing contract with Capital Interpretation and Translation Services would expire on 7 November 2022. Expenditure on translation services was demand-led and was rising year on year, with Children's Services accounting for around 87% of expenditure. The providers on the Public Sector Language Service Frameworks which the Council had considered were all quality checked and compliant with contract regulations. The total contract value would be £568k and separate contractual arrangements would be made for the County Council and Peterborough City Council.

In response to questions from individual Members, Officers:

- stated that voice to text provision had not been discussed with the existing provider, but that they had a flexible approach to meeting emerging need and that this could be explored. Officers undertook to provide a note outside of the meeting on whether this option was possible once discussions had taken place **Action**

- confirmed that requirements for Ukrainian language support services were being monitored in the context of the increased demand which was expected nationally. The current provider offered phone support where it was not possible to provide in-person support
- stated that most providers on the Frameworks were larger, national organisations in order for them to offer support to the range of languages required and to have the administrative structures in place to support this. Officers were not aware of any Cambridgeshire-based translation services
- confirmed that the County Council was a partner in ESPO, one of the Public Sector Language Service Framework providers. However, the Council was required to conduct an open and transparent procurement exercise and to make a judgement on which provider would offer best value for money. The Chair emphasised the importance of the Council abiding by procurement rules

With the consent of the meeting, it was agreed that recommendation b) should be amended to make the exercise of the officer delegation to award the contract for the provision of translation and interpretation services subject to consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, in accordance with the Council's usual practice.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the re-commissioning and procurement of Translations and Interpretation Services; and
- b) Delegate responsibility for awarding a contract for the provision of Translation and Interpretation services starting on the 8th of November 2022 to the Executive Director: People and Communities, in consultation with Chair and Vice Chair of the Children and Young People Committee.

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

Decisions

91. Children's Complaints and Feedback Team Annual Report 2021/22

The Chair thanked officers for bringing the report to the Committee much closer to the end of the reporting period than had been the case in recent years to ensure that Members had the opportunity to consider its findings in a timely manner. This was something which the Committee would want to see continue in future.

The Committee was advised that statutory Stage 1 complaints were down 61% in 2021/22 due to embedding new complaints-handling practice. Some complaints were also now dealt with via the corporate complaints process. The Council was committed to learning from complaints and making improvements to its practice and processes. During the reporting period the Council had embarked on a SEND transformation programme. This would include the handling of complaints relating to SEND services

and provision and the Complaints team were working with the SEND team on this. 25 complaints had been received direct from young people during the reporting period.

In response to questions from individual Members, Officers:

- stated that the content of the report was based on Government guidance and that officers must work within this. However, they acknowledged a Member's suggestion that future reports should show a balance between the numbers of compliments and complaints received, the quotes provided relating to each and an analysis of what these showed and would reflect on this **Action**
- confirmed that the next annual report could include specific reference to the number of complaints received in relation to education, health and care plans (EHCPs), and also to how learning and actions taken in response to complaints was monitored **Action**

The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee welcomed the self-advocacy demonstrated by those children in care and care leavers who had complained about perceived failings in the services which they were receiving. These appeared to share several common themes around setting up home allowance, the late allocation of a personal adviser and general lateness in response. She emphasised the importance of equality of opportunity for this group of young people and asked what steps were being taken to address these issues. The Director of Children's Services stated that whilst the number of complaints was small it was important that they were considered carefully. The complaints spoke to issues around organisation and planning ahead, and there was now a recognition of the need for bespoke transition planning for young people leaving care. There was still work to do, but the process had been re-modelled and personal advisers were placing greater focus on addressing practical issues.

It was resolved unanimously to consider the content of the report and appendix and request a further report in 12 months.

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

92. Additional Public Health funding for activities supporting children and young people 2022/23

The Committee was invited to endorse the provision of additional funding from Public Health reserves for work with children and families for 2022/23 and beyond. This would include additional investment in relation to an eating disorders training programme; support to the families of children and young people who self-harm; a Children's Public Health Manager post; and a Gypsy/ Traveller Education Support Officer post for two years. The funding for these initiatives had already been approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee or by the Section 151 Officer and were being brought to the Committee for information and endorsement. In addition, recurrent funding of £350k had been approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee for the commissioning of additional Child Weight Management Services from 2022/23.

The Vice Chair welcomed the opportunity for the Committee to discuss these important and pressing public health issues relating to children and young people.

In response to questions from individual Members, Officers:

- stated that the £102.4k allocated to supporting the families of children and young people who self-harmed would be used to commission a service providing front-line support over two years based on the findings of a pilot study. The Chair stated that the Committee would be interested in seeing the outcomes of the pilot study
Action
- clarified that the £78k funding over two years relating to tackling eating disorders was a training offer, and not a frontline service. It would be delivered by a local eating disorders charity and would be in addition to the NHS training offer
- noted Members' comments around the importance of the Gypsy/ Traveller Education Support Officer building trust with the community and the suggestion that it would be helpful for the postholder to have some lived experience to inform their work. Officers undertook to share this suggestion with the Gypsy/ Traveller Public Health team
Action
- confirmed that a report would be provided in a year's time to inform Members of the progress made
Action

It was resolved unanimously to endorse this additional investment.

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

93. Corporate Performance Report – Children and Young People Committee

The Committee reviewed the Corporate Performance report for Quarter 4 for 2021/22 (to the end of March 2022) relating to the delivery of services to children and young people.

In response to questions from individual Members, Officers:

- stated that the number of children with a child protection plan per 10,000 of the under 18 population (indicator 2) had increased during the pandemic. Work to address this was continuing, and the table in the report reflected the continuing downward trend in numbers
- stated that their expectation was that the number of education, health and care plans (EHCPs) would continue to rise over time towards national levels. The focus now was on processing those currently within the system
- noted Members' concern at the decline in the number of pupils attending secondary schools judged as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted (Indicator 9). The Director of Education stated that this was an area of significant concern and that the Council would do all that it could to support and drive improvement. All of Cambridgeshire's

secondary schools were currently academies, so the challenge back to academy trusts and secondary headteachers was to arrest this decline. He would be making this point at the annual secondary headteachers' conference which was taking place later in the week. The data was reviewed on a termly basis and some Trusts were performing better than others, but in offering the Council's support he would be clear that improvements must be made

- undertook to provide an explanation for the RAG ratings which were described as 'contextual' in the report and give consideration to how this could be better explained in future reports Action

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on performance information and take remedial action as necessary.
- b) Note the forthcoming review of performance monitoring.

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

94. Children and Young People Committee agenda plan, training plan and appointments

The Committee was advised of one change from the published agenda plan. A key decision report on the recommissioning and procurement of Children's Independent Advocacy Services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough had been added to the 11 October 2022 meeting date.

The committee training plan was noted.

The Committee was advised that Councillor Goodliffe replaced Councillor Bulat as the Committee's appointee to the Virtual School Management Board on Friday the 17 of June. This change was made by the Executive Director for People and Communities under her standing delegation in relation to committee appointments, following consultation with Members at CYP Spokes on the same date.

It was resolved to note the agenda plan, training plan and appointments.

(Chair)