

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday 10 September 2019

**Time:** 2.00pm – 4.20pm

**Venue:** Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon

**Present:** Councillors S Bywater (Chairman), S Hoy (Vice Chairwoman), D Ambrose Smith, A Bradnam (to 4.05pm), P Downes (2.05pm – 3.50pm), L Every, A Hay, S Taylor, J Whitehead and J Wisson

**Apologies:** Co-opted members A Read and F Vettese

**CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

**232. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman expressed his thanks to Huntingdonshire District Council for hosting the Committee on this occasion.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Read, co-opted member representing the Church of England Diocese of Ely and Mr F Vettese, co-opted member representing the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia.

**234. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 9 JULY 2019**

The minutes of the meeting on 9 July 2019 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

**235. ACTION LOG**

The Action Log was reviewed and the following verbal updates noted:

- Minute 217: Community Short Breaks for disabled children and young people: Wider work was taking place in relation to the model of short break services which was expected to be completed towards the end of 2019.
- Minute 226: Service Director's Report – Children and Safeguarding: The Executive Director for People and Communities was chairing a Joint Apprenticeship Group across Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council. Work was also taking place as part of the Adult Health and Skills Sustainable Transformation Partnership. A committee report or briefing note was offered for later in the year as this work progressed.
- Minute 227: Service Director's report – Education: An item on the proposed guidance to Members on their role in relation to local schools and education would be added to the Members' Seminar programme when a slot was available.

- Minute 228: Free School Proposals: The Wave 13 application round was complete and the Wave 14 round was due to close at the end of October 2019. The Council would not be supporting any Wave 14 bids apart from those relating to Wisbech.
- Minute 230: Fenland and East Cambridgeshire Opportunity Area Update: The Service Director for Education's November report would include some qualitative information around the Opportunity Area programme's impact when presenting the 2019 unvalidated examination results.

## **236. PETITIONS**

No petitions were received.

## **KEY DECISION**

## **237. ABBEY COLLEGE, RAMSEY: FEASIBILITY OPTIONS**

The Chairman stated that he had received two requests to speak on this item. The first was from Councillor Adela Costello, County Councillor for Ramsey and Bury. He had exercised his discretion as Chairman to accept a second late request which had been received the previous day from Mr Andy Christoforou, Headteacher at Abbey College.

Officers stated that the college Trust had been considering its future options for some time. The County Council was committed to working alongside the Trust on this and had commissioned a feasibility study to explore the options available. This had produced the three options set out in the report, all of which would require significant capital investment. Given the limited funds available from the Trust and the financial constraints on the County Council, officers were recommending that the Council support the Trust by sharing the feasibility study and condition survey with the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) with a view to securing funding for the development of a phased asset management strategy. This would enable the Trust to address the College's condition issues and maximise use of its accommodation.

The Chairman invited Mr Christoforou to address the Committee. A summary of the points he wished to make had been circulated to all members of the Committee the previous day.

Mr Christoforou thanked the County Council for working with Abbey College on this issue. However, he felt that the feasibility study did not make clear all of the options available and that more cost effective options including a possible land swap had not been fully explored. Many lessons were currently being taught in a building which had not been renovated for 50 years and the split site presented practical and safeguarding challenges. The maintenance cost of the site was equivalent to two salaries per year. Mr Christoforou acknowledged the financial constraints within which the Council was operating, but commented that the College's preferred option would be of little or no cost to the Council as it would be mainly funded by the sale of the land on the site which the Council owned. This would bring huge benefits to the college and to the local community and he expressed the hope that the Council would establish a programme to look at this option.

The Chairman invited questions of clarification to Mr Christoforou on the points he had made. Members:

- Asked for more information about the college's preferred option. Mr Christoforou stated that this would be a hybrid of the proposals set out as Option 2 in the Committee report and would include elements of both refurbishment and redevelopment;
- Asked whether, as an Academy Trust, the college should not be putting its preferred option to the Academy funding body rather than to the Council. Mr Christoforou stated that this would happen, but that it needed to be done in collaboration with the Council due to the Council being one of the site's landowners;
- Asked what discussions had taken place with representatives of Lord Fairhaven regarding future plans for their portion of the site when the current lease expired. Mr Christoforou stated that no response had been received to the college's invitations to discuss this. The college was required to return the portion of the land and property belonging to Lord Fairhaven in the condition in which it was presented and a full condition survey would be required.

The Chairman thanked Mr Christoforou for sharing the college's views with the Committee. He invited Councillor Adela Costello to address the Committee in her capacity as the local Member for Ramsey and Bury.

Councillor Costello commented that she was attending in support of the governing body of Abbey College. As the local councillor for Ramsey and Bury and the former Mayor of Ramsey she had attended various meetings about the future arrangements for the college across a number of years. The college site was the property of four landowners including the portion leased from the Fairhaven family which contained a Grade 2 listed building which was no longer fit for purpose, but still cost around £60k per year to insure and maintain. There was a clear need to provide educational accommodation to the young people of Ramsey which was suitable to meet their needs and support their opportunities.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Costello for her comments. There were no questions of clarification from the Committee.

Arising from the report, Members noted:

- An offer from officers to sit alongside the Trust to get more information on the alternative option being proposed and to work with them on the case to be presented to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA);
- That whilst Abbey College was an Academy Trust the Council did have a specific interest in the proposals in its role as one of the site's landowners;
- Their wish to see the Trust achieve the best possible outcome for the young people of Ramsey;
- The feasibility study had been commissioned and paid for by the Council in response to an approach by the Trust about using the land belonging to the Council to support the capital development of the school. Its findings had been shared in full with the Trust. Officers judged that Option 2 (refurbishment of the existing school buildings plus any new build with the ability to expand up to 10 form entry at an

estimated cost of £47.24m, offset by capital receipts) represented the most viable proposal, but it would still require significant capital investment. The option being proposed by the Trust was a variation on this proposal. The Chairman stated that he saw merit in officers exploring this alternative option with the Trust, but that there could be no guarantee that the Council could fund any possible solutions;

- A Member commented that the Council had no capital funding obligation to the Trust and no discretionary monies available. However, if the Council gave its support to the Trust's proposals to the ESFA this would add weight to its case. As such, the Council could provide assistance in this form;
- The feasibility study had demonstrated that the site had the ability to accommodate children now and in the future and that the southern part of the site would be the best place to focus redevelopment. As such it had set a baseline from which any further work could build;
- A Member commented that they found it a bit unacceptable that the Trust had now identified an alternative option and it seemed that the Council was being blamed for not having identified this. The Council had chosen to fund the feasibility study which it was not required to do. If the college now wished to discuss alternative proposals they judged that the onus was on the Trust to initiate further discussions;
- The Vice Chairman of the Commercial and Investment (C&I) Committee commented that any disposal of Council assets would be a matter for that Committee and that she felt that C&I should have been consulted on this issue before now;
- A Member expressed some concern that the Council had funded the feasibility study at a cost of £40k. Officers confirmed that this expenditure had previously been approved by the Committee;
- A Member noted that Options 1a and 1b were for new builds and included demolition costs and asked whether Option 2 for refurbishment would incur the same order of demolition costs. Officer stated that the costs were representational for the condition of the buildings. The refurbishment option might be limited due to the age and condition of the existing buildings;

The Chairman stated that from a personal perspective he would very much like to support Abbey College. However, the Council remained under significant financial pressure and the necessary funding just was not available. He would though want to see the Council working alongside the college on its journey.

The Chairman proposed, seconded by Councillor Every, that the resolution be amended to state that the Trust's own proposals would be included shared with the ESFA in addition to the options identified in the feasibility study funded by the Council.

It was resolved:

- a) To support the Trust by sharing the feasibility study and condition survey, and the Trust's own proposals, with the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) with a view to securing funding from them for the development of a phased asset management strategy to enable the Trust to address the College's condition issues and maximise use of its accommodation.

## INFORMATION AND MONITORING REPORTS

### 238. FINANCE MONITORING REPORT: JULY 2019

It was agreed by the General Purposes Committee in July 2019 that the finance and performance monitoring report submitted to each policy and service committee meeting should in future be divided into two separate reports. The finance monitoring report would continue to be presented at each substantive committee meeting and the performance monitoring report would be presented as a separate report on a quarterly basis. The July 2019 finance monitoring report was the first to be presented in this new format. The only significant change from the previous report related to the children in care placement budget which was showing an anticipated pressure of c£350k across the Staying Put and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Over 18 budgets. A significant reduction in the numbers of children in care had been seen in the previous few months, but a number of new placements were showing quite high costs as some providers were now full. As previously reported, a deficit of £7.2m across special educational needs and disability (SEND) services had been carried forward to 2019/20 and a further £6m in-year pressure was forecast. The Service Director for Education was chairing the SEND Recovery Board and was awaiting the Department for Education's views on the recovery plan which had been submitted. The Prime Minister had recently announced an extra £700m nationally for education, but the methodology for how that funding would be allocated had not yet been disclosed. The Chairman welcomed the positive news on the reduction in the number of children in care, but emphasised the need to avoid complacency on this issue.

During discussion it was noted that:

- The Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee welcomed the success of the marketing campaign to attract new in-house foster carers, but emphasised the importance of retaining existing foster carers;
- The reduction in the number of children in care reflected the work which was taken place as part of the new model of children's social care provision which had been endorsed by the Committee. This was based on the district model and focused on bringing only those children into care who needed this level of intervention and moving them into permanent placements as soon as possible. The number of children in care remained higher than was the case in the county's statistical neighbours, but the direction of travel was encouraging. The pattern of children and young people entering social care had not changed, but an increase in overall numbers was being seen nationally;
- The forecast overspend on legal proceedings represented a spike due to a number of legacy cases and associated costs working through the budget. The position was expected to settle in line with the County's statistical neighbours once these were resolved. There had been several recent cases involving large sibling groups which were complex and costly to resolve;
- Officers confirmed an emerging pressure on home to school transport. However, allocations were still settling and a considered update would be included in a future report when the position was more clear. A Member suggested that it would be helpful in future to follow any overspends with details of the planned mitigations.  
**(Action: Strategic Finance Business Partner/ Service Directors)**

It was resolved to review and comment on the report.

## **239. PERFORMANCE REPORT: QUARTER 1 2019/20**

It was agreed by the General Purposes Committee in July 2019 that the finance and performance monitoring report submitted to each policy and service committee meeting should in future be divided into two reports. The finance monitoring report would continue to be presented at each substantive committee meeting and the performance monitoring report would be presented as a separate report on a quarterly basis. The Performance Report for Quarter 1 2019/20 was the first to be presented in this new format and was designed to provide more information and context. A change had been made to the performance rating system to include 'very green' for performance exceeding targets in addition to the existing red, amber, green (RAG) ratings. Feedback was sought on the new report format.

The Chairman stated that he liked the charts and graphs included in the report and found it best to view them in colour electronically. It would though be helpful to include figures as well as percentages to provide context and make clear the numbers of people involved. For example, the percentages relating to persistent absences from school did not by themselves show how many children and young people this represented. The Service Director for Education stated that the persistent absences figure was based on enrolments at the start of the school year and that 10% represented 7,349 children and young people. The Council was taking a much harder line in relation to persistent absence. This included education welfare officers being linked to every school, targeting school with higher rates of persistent absences and a threefold increase in the number of prosecutions. Officers undertook to reflect on how best to present this type of information in future reports.

**(Action: Service Director for Education/ Business Intelligence Analyst)**

Arising from the report, Members:

- Commented that they found the new format very good and that the graphs made information readily accessible. The data was excellent and the accompanying narrative was helpful to explain trends and anomalies;
- Asked for more information on the variations and erratic rate of referrals to children's social care per 10,000 of the population under 18. Officers stated that the method of counting referrals changed mid-way through the reporting period which had led to some variation in results. There were no concerns about the rate of referrals, but officers remained aspirational to reduce the figures further. Typically a rise in numbers was seen at the start of each school term. The Chairman asked that the narrative should be revised to make this type of context clear to members of the public reading the report  
**(Action: Service Director for Children's Service and Safeguarding/ Business Intelligence Analyst)**
- Asked about the upward trend in the number of children in care per 10,000 of the population under 18. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that this reflected a national trend. However, whilst numbers in Cambridgeshire still remained higher than in the county's statistical neighbours there had been a decrease in numbers during summer 2019;

- Asked about the number of special schools in special measures. The Service Director for Education stated that there was one special school in special measures and that officers were working closely with that school.

It was resolved to note and comment on the report.

## **240. BUSINESS PLANNING: CHILDREN AND SAFEGUARDING**

The Committee received a presentation by the Executive Director for People and Communities and the Service Director for Education on the budget position for those services within the remit of the Children and Young People Committee as of July 2019 (copy attached at Appendix 1). Key elements included:

- The work which had taken place with the Committee's support to remodel the delivery of children's services through transformation funding;
- A continued drive to deliver services in the most efficient and effective way possible;
- The introduction of adult social care workers into family safeguarding teams which was enabling more children to stay within their families and communities by providing support to the whole family;
- The Corporate Parenting Service now had a dedicated Assistant Director to drive forward the Council's aspirations for its children and young people in care and care leavers;
- Welcoming 26 new in-house foster carers as a result of the intensive recruitment campaign financed through transformation funding which represented a net gain in overall numbers. This had included advertising through schools which had led to an excellent response;
- Staying Close, Stay Connected: A pilot project in conjunction with district councils to support young people in care at the age of 16 to choose where they wanted to live, study and work. The project was being run in conjunction with Peterborough City Council and Norfolk County Council and had been awarded a further year of funding by the Department for Education;
- Education transport for those with special educational needs and disabilities. Procurement was a key issue and officers were working with Peterborough City Council to look at tendering processes and opportunities for collaborative working;
- Giving schools time credit with an educational psychologist (EP). This gave schools greater flexibility and autonomy to decide how best to utilise the EP's expertise and was proving popular;
- Discussions would be taking place with schools about reducing some work where spend was higher than that of the county's statistical neighbours;

- The Executive Director chaired the review of provision to those children and young people with the most complex needs, including their health care, respite care and educational needs. This approach delivered enhanced provision at reduced cost.

The Executive Director expressed her thanks to the Committee for the trust which it had placed in officers by supporting the remodelling of children's services. The positive impact of the investment endorsed by the Children and Young People Committee and approved by the General Purposes Committee could be clearly evidenced.

The Chairman thanked the Executive Director and officers for their work and welcomed seeing the impact of the Council's investment coming to fruition.

It was resolved to consider and comment on the content of the report.

## DECISIONS

### 241. DRAFT JOINT BEST START IN LIFE (BSiL) STRATEGY

The draft Joint Best Start in Life (BSiL) Strategy was designed to ensure a co-ordinated and integrated multi-agency agreement on the delivery of pre-birth to five years support services that was tailored to suit local need. Feedback on individual services was already good and work was being led by the Executive Director for People and Communities and the Director of Public Health to address the challenges identified by the Early Years and Social Mobility Review to develop co-ordinated service delivery models. Stakeholders had been fully engaged in the process and three key outcomes had been identified:

1. Children live healthy lives.
2. Children are safe from harm.
3. Children are confident and resilient with an aptitude and enthusiasm for learning.

This would make sure that children were ready for school and all stakeholders were looking at the skills needed to deliver these outcomes. The footprint of the children's centre offer was being used to identify areas of greatest need. Governance was being managed via the Joint Children's Health and Wellbeing Commissioning Board chaired by the Executive Director for People and Communities.

The Chairman judged this to be a good piece of work and stated that he was excited by the opportunities which it offered to address inequality and narrow the attainment gap. He expressed his thanks to officers, partner organisations and stakeholders for their collective contributions and stated that the Committee would want to monitor progress. The Executive Director stated that the draft strategy would be presented to the Health Committee later in the month and that she proposed that the strategy would then be monitored by the Children and Young People Committee. A report would be brought back around March 2020 to look at progress with the new delivery model.

**(Action: Executive Director: People and Communities and Democratic Services Officer)**

In discussion of the report, Members:

- Commented that the analysis contained in the report was clear, but that they found that matching identified challenges with ways of addressing them was less well



developed. Sure Start centres had offered vaccination sessions and it was asked whether this service might in future be delivered through the children's centre offer. The Executive Director stated that looking at how the strategy was implemented would form the next phase of work and that the proposed implementation model would be included in the report brought before the Committee around March 2020.

- Asked how services would be delivered in those areas without a children's centre. The Executive Director stated that work would start from the children's centres' footprint, but that a flexible approach would be taken to delivery where need existed. This might include working in partnership with existing early years and childcare settings;
- Commented that there was a significant overlap in the proposed membership of the BSiL Strategy/ Implementation Group and the Stakeholder Group and asked whether both groups were needed. The Executive Director stated that the Strategy/ Implementation Group comprised representative members of the wider Stakeholder Group who would drive forward the outcomes they had identified. Some overlap in membership was therefore inevitable. The continued involvement of the wider Stakeholder Group also ensured a voice for those delivering services in their local communities and encouraged buy-in;
- Draft BSiL Strategy Appendix 2: Commented that language was crucial to educational success and socialisation and should be shown as a central risk factor. Officers undertook to make this change.  
**(Action: Partnership Manager)**
- Suggested involving the East of England Ambulance Service in the work.  
**(Action: Partnership Manager)**

It was resolved to approve the Draft Joint Best Start in Life Strategy 2019-2024.

Councillor Downes left the meeting at 3.50pm.

## **242. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2019-22**

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Youth Justice Plan 2019-22 represented the first time the Plan would span a three year period and it would be reviewed on an annual basis. Performance against key performance indicators was currently strong and at the last inspection the service had been rated as 'Good'. A positive funding contribution was made by partners and the Home Office was providing one year's funding for an early intervention project following a successful bid made with the support of the Police and Crime Commissioner's office. This would be used to provide clear safety and exit plans for young people in vulnerable situations. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough had been identified as a pathfinder area for the Youth Justice Board.

Arising from discussion of the report, Members:

- Noted that Cambridge City had a high number of county lines running in to it. This operated primarily along train lines, but it was likely that other forms of transport such as taxis might also be involved. The Home Office had issued guidance around working with taxi companies and hotels to raise awareness of potential instances of exploitation. The Safe Relationships Team would work alongside families, schools

and partners to help young people escape this exploitation. The draft report would be amended to reflect the county lines issue;

**(Action: Head of Youth Support Services)**

(Councillor Bradnam left the meeting at 4.05pm)

- There had been a slight increase in the number of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time, but it was expected that the figures would level out across the full year;
- Noted differences in the re-offending rates in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Officers stated that the figures in the report reflected a cohort which was receiving support two years ago rather than the current population. Implementation was taking place of a live re-offending radar for those young people who had engaged with the service during the previous 12 months. The re-offending rate amongst this cohort was much lower at around 20% in both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough;
- Noted that factors relating to re-offending behaviour were now being tracked, for example educational attainment and whether they were a child in care or not in education, employment or training. This could be tailored to specific cohorts or geographical areas. Members asked that these causes behind re-offending rates should remain under review;
- The Chairman noted that the Home Office Early Intervention Funding was only available for a year and asked that every effort should be made to make rapid progress. Officers stated that appointments had been made to all posts with a view to launching the initiative on 1 October 2019;
- Interviews conducted under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) were contracted out to the YMCA. This arrangement was reviewed through contract monitoring meetings on a quarterly and annual basis. PACE foster care placements were also available across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Chairman commended the work being done by the Youth Support Service.

It was resolved to:

- a) endorse the Joint Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Youth Justice Plan;
- b) endorse and agree the strategic objectives of the Youth Justice Management Partnership;
- c) endorse and agree the Cambridgeshire Youth Offending Service operational priorities.

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

The Committee reviewed the forward agenda plan, appointments and training plan. It was resolved to:

- a) review the forward plan and note the following changes to the published plan:

- i. 8 October 2019: New item – Additional primary school places for Sawtry.
  - ii. 8 October 2019: Post 16 Education – deferred to 12 November 2019.
  - iii. 12 November 2019: Service Director's report – Children and Safeguarding – deferred to 4 December 2019.
- b) note that the Executive Director for People and Communities exercised her delegated authority, in consultation with the Committee Chairman, on 22 August 2019 to appoint Councillor Downes to the Cambridgeshire Culture Steering Group to fill an existing vacancy.
- c) note that the Accelerating the Achievement of Vulnerable Groups Steering Group had been discontinued;
- d) review and note the Committee training plan.

Chairman  
(date)