

## Children and Young People Committee: Minutes

Date: 14 January 2025

Time: 1.00 pm - 3.38pm

Venue: Red Kite Room, New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Councillors Atkins, Bradnam, Count, Daunton, Goodliffe (Chair), Gowing, Hay, King, Rae, Sharp, Slatter, Thompson (Vice Chair) and Taylor.

Co-opted Members:  
Dr Andy Stone

### 246. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mark Goldsack (substituted by Councillor Steve Count) Councillor Alex Bulat (substituted by Councillor Catherine Rae) Councillor David Ambrose-Smith, Councillor Samantha Hoy and Jon Young.

There were no declarations of interest.

### 247. Minutes – 26 November 2024 and minutes action log

The minutes of the meeting on 26 November 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

A Member questioned action 203 on the transport strategy and whether the update on the CPCA discussions would be included in the report to Committee in February. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families confirmed that the update would be included in the report.

A Member highlighted that action 238 regarding the referral from Audit and Accounts Committee regarding the Safety Valve audit report stated that a briefing would be prepared for members by 14 January 2025. He stated that the briefing had not yet been circulated and asked when Members would receive the briefing. He highlighted that the request for the briefing had been made in July 2024. The Executive Director: Children Education and Families stated that the briefing would be circulated to both Audit and Accounts and Children and Young Peoples Committee later that day.

The minutes action log was noted.

## 248. Public questions and Petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

## 249. Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025 - 2030

The Committee received a report that set out the revised Cambridgeshire Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025- 2030. The revised strategy provided an update on the five key priorities and how they would be delivered over the next five years.

The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee thanked the Corporate Parenting team for their drive and ambition in developing the strategy and ensuring that young people had been involved and were at the heart of the production of the strategy.

The Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee expressed her appreciation of the detailed work that both the officers and the Chair of the Sub Committee had put in to developing the strategy.

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

- questioned where the measurable outcomes could be found to ensure that the strategy made a difference. Officers stated that there was a corporate parenting scorecard that was updated on a monthly basis and this was presented at every Corporate Parenting Sub Committee meeting. The Chair of the Sub Committee reiterated that members scrutinised the KPIs on the scorecard at every meeting and members on the Children and Young Peoples Committee sat on the Sub Committee and ensured that all of the KPIs were scrutinised in full and any additional information requested from officers when required.
- sought further information on what the service did to support care leavers to get ready to join the workforce. Officers explained that there was an empowerment forum set up where children and young people and parents and carers were invited to attend. Following this action plans were developed with each individual child and actions agreed.
- queried if the Corporate Parenting training could be rolled out to all members. The Chair stated that as part of the training programme for new members following the elections in May, she had asked for Corporate Parenting training to be made mandatory training for all members.

It was resolved unanimously to:

agree the updated corporate parenting strategy 2025-2030 as set out in Appendix 1.

## 250. Schools and Early Years Revenue Funding Arrangements 2025/26

The Committee received a report that set out the 2025-26 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation for Cambridgeshire published by the Department for Education (DfE) in December 2024 and to seek members approval of the 2024-25 local Cambridgeshire schools funding formula.

The Chair explained that the report had been marked as "to follow" on the agenda pack and was circulated on 8 January 2025 to the Committee. This was because the Department for Education only published provisional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations and datasets on the 18 December 2024. Detailed budget modelling had been undertaken, but officers awaited confirmation of some of the variations to pupil numbers for new and growing schools. The appendices to the report were then circulated to the Committee on 10 January 2025, following further conversations with Schools Forum on 10 January in respect of the proposed Block Transfer. As this report was not open to inspection by members of the public for five clear days before the meeting, she proposed, as Chair, that the report be considered as a matter of urgency as it related directly to the authority's statutory responsibility to submit final school budget proposals to the Department for Education by the 22 January deadline.

In presenting the report officers highlighted a number of key points:

- the Schools Block had increased by 0.7%, due to a baselining of grants and a net reduction in pupil figures.
- the High Needs Block had increased by 7% and was the minimum uplift a Local Authority could receive.
- the Central Schools Services Block had reduced as expected.
- the Early Years Block has increased significantly which reflected the extended entitlement and wrap around funding and this would be reflected in the allocations that went out to providers.
- at the Schools Forum meeting on 22 November 2024, Forum had voted not to accept a block transfer of 1% or 1.25% and this was reflective of the pressures in schools.
- at a further Schools Forum meeting on 10 January 2025, Forum voted to approve a block transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. The transfer was agreed on the basis that the funding would be used to support the creation of additional Enhanced Resource Base (ERB) provision in mainstream schools which will prevent escalation to higher cost placements.
- the draft budgets had been produced based on a £2.6 million transfer from the Central Schools Block to the High Needs Block and £2 million retained to

support growth funding and aligning the funding formula with the national funding formula as close as possible.

- a member training session was due to be held on 28 January on Schools Funding.
- the proposed rates for early years funding had been agreed by the Early Years Reference Group and were in line with their principles.

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

- questioned how many ERB spaces the block transfer would generate across the County. Officers explained that it was anticipated that the funding on a 4 year basis it would generate around 100 places per year. ERB places were funded at £10,000 a place per year plus an additional amount for top up based on the individual needs of each child. A High Needs Sub Group had been set up to develop the plans around the model and how it would be rolled out across the County. Officers reiterated that the cost of the ERB places was significantly lower than the current arrangements with a difference of around £50,000 per placement and was based on a therapeutic model allowing children to access mainstream provision.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) approve the formula factors and draft unit values to be applied in the local Cambridgeshire funding formula, for primary and secondary mainstream schools as set out in Appendix A.
- b) approve the proposed hourly rates for Early Years settings as detailed in section 6.3.

## 251. Recommissioning Children's Occupational Therapy Services

The Committee considered a report that sought agreement for Cambridgeshire County Council to enter into a Section 75 Agreement with Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) for the provision of Children's Occupational Therapy (OT). This would include a new and updated Agreement for 2025-26 to ensure continued provision of Occupational Therapy services for the children of Cambridgeshire and an integrated partnership arrangement and would therefore not be procured through a tender process

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

- suggested the service provided material for new councillors on the service including videos and case studies. **Action Required**
- queried if the KPIs would be applied to the complex cases as set out in 2.5 of the report, in the same way and housing issued factored in. Officers agreed

to feed the comment back to see how this could be incorporated. **Action Required**

- queried how the target budget was allowed to flex and if the 10% cost reduction would mean a reduction in service. Officers had a block arrangement set up aligned with outcomes based on need as there was an ongoing increasing demand regarding Education Health and Care Plans. Officers would be doing some further work with CCS to look at how the budget would continue to provide without compromising service delivery.
- Highlighted that this was a 1 year agreement with an option to extend for 12 months. and that it was important that both members and officers had a collective understanding of procurement timelines and ensuring that re-procurement was carried out in a timely manner.

It was resolved unanimous to:

- a) agree for the Council to enter into a new Section 75 Agreement, with CCS, from 1st April 2025, for a term of 12 months, with an option to extend for a further 12 months.
- b) agree the target budget of £667,306.80, which is a reduction of 10% on the previous costs.
- c) delegate authority for awarding and executing a Section 75 agreement for the provision of Children's Occupational Therapy starting 1st April 2025 and extension periods to the Executive Director for Children, Education and Families, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Children and Young People Committee.
- d) note the relevance of other viable models that could be implemented to deliver Children's Occupational Therapy provision in the longer-term.

## 252. Early Years and Childcare Contracts 2025 -2026

The Committee received a report that sought approval to award contracts, which exceeded the key decision threshold of £500k, to deliver early years and childcare provision through the Pseudo Dynamic Purchasing System (PDPS).

It was resolved unanimously to:

Delegate responsibility for awarding and executing the contracts for the provision of early years and childcare in the financial year April 2025 – April 2026, and extension periods, to the Executive Director for Children, Education and Families, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Children and Young People Committee.

- a) A five-year contract (with the potential to extend for five years) for early years provision at Burgess Road, Waterbeach, valued at £1,833,120 (5+5 years).
- b) A five-year contract (with the potential to extend for five years) for early years provision at Limes Road, Hardwick, valued at £1,985,880 (5+5 years).
- c) A five-year contract (with the potential to extend for five years) for early years provision at Upwood Primary Academy, Upwood, valued at £2,902,440 (5+5 years).
- d) A five-year contract (with the potential to extend for five years) for early years provision at School Lane, Ramsey, Huntingdon, valued at £2,749,680 (5+5 years).
- e) A five-year contract (with the potential to extend for five years) for wraparound provision at Stilton Primary School valued at £597,816 (5+5 years).
- f) A five-year contract (with the potential to extend for five years) for early years provision at Grange Lane, Littleport valued at £3,819,000 (5+5 years).
- g) A five-year contract (with the potential to extend for five years) for early years provision at 9 Main Road, Parson Drove, Wisbech, valued at £1,222,080 (5+5 years).
- h) A five-year contract (with the potential to extend for five years) for early years provision at Murrow Bank, Murrow, Wisbech St Mary, valued at £2,291,400 (5+5 years).

### 253. Business Plan and Budget 2025-26-2029-30

The Committee received a report summarising the business and financial planning proposals for 2025-26 - 2029-30 which fell within its areas of responsibility.

Members scrutinised the report and sought clarity on the following points:

- queried proposal A/R 4.011: Resourcing within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and the reasoning for the investment. Clarity was provided that this was to make the current increased capacity arrangements permanent. Clarity was also provided on funding from partners within this approach.
- questioned how officers had assessed the Home to School Transport 2025/26 Mainstream and Special Educational Needs budgets for adequacy. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families confirmed that the budget forecast was due to a fall in demand for mainstream transport and more work was being undertaken on opportunities for efficiencies. Forecasting used in pupil place planning contributes to this.
- questioned the ability to scale back on Children Centre provision. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families clarified that the

proposals were not a scaling back of provision but a review of structures and efficiencies within the budget.

- sought clarity on what difference the SEND investment A/R.4.010 would make. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families clarified that this would increase the statutory service capacity, the speed of reviews, and wider support. Members requested that officers review communications with parents and children as they navigate through the system. He confirmed that concurrently there was work looking at the current ways of working including the effectiveness of communication and dealing with enquiries and complaints.
- queried how the Council proactively worked with district partners and local developers to identify opportunities for new capacity around Residential Strategy investment A/R.5.002. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families clarified that there had been no conversations with developers, but officers were working with Department for Education in this area. Clarity was also sought on how the authority was working with other partners in this area. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families explained that officers were working with local providers and Ofsted and looking at small unit provision.
- sought clarity on the Residential care provision proposal and questioned if the authority had purchased the 2 properties referred to. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families clarified that the proposal was a reconfiguration of assets the authority already held not a purchase. Members requested an update on the two schemes. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families clarified that the schemes were still in progress but the opening was expected in late 2025/26 with cost avoidance expected in 2026/27.

The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families summarised the debate to be reported to the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee on 28 January 2025.

It was resolved to:

- a) consider and scrutinise the proposals relevant to this Committee within the Business plan and Budget 2025-26 - 2029-30 put forward by the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee, 17 December 2024.
- b) recommend changes and /or actions for consideration by the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee at its meeting on 28 January 2025 to enable a business plan and budget to be proposed to Full Council on 11 February 2025.
- c) receive the fees and charges schedule for this Committee included at appendix 2.

## 254. Determined Admissions Arrangements for the 2026-27 academic year

The Committee received a report that sought approval of the co-ordinated scheme for admission to a school and changes to the admissions arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools which would affect the admission of children in the 2026/27 academic year. By agreeing to approve the admission arrangements for 2026/27, the Committee would be ensuring that the Council was meeting its legal obligations. A decrease in the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the following schools was also proposed:

- Meridian Primary School – 45 to 30
- Wilburton Primary School – 20 to 15
- Thorndown Primary School – 90 to 60

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

- queried how the changes to PAN fitted into any longer-term planning and what would happen if there were increases to population in the different areas. Officers explained that the change in PAN affected the intake in the reception classes and currently there was a dip in numbers of reception children. The changes did not impact on the physical capacity of the building so the authority would be able to respond quickly if there were any changes. Officers highlighted that the changes came from the schools themselves and not the local authority.
- a member thanked officers for their work with Meridian Primary School which was in their locality.
- were reassured that the changes to PAN came through Schools and queried if this made it easier for schools to plan their budgets. Officers explained that it gave schools clarity as funding to schools worked on a pupil level figure and planning ahead gave schools more stability in making the best use of their resources.
- queried if there had been any modelling of the potential impact the VAT on private school fees would have on intake into maintained and academy schools. Officers explained that this was being monitored and there were no signs of any immediate impact.



- queried how catchment areas were drawn up and what happened with children that were displaced and unable to attend their catchment school. Officers highlighted that there were some instances where there were more children in catchment than places but that there was set criteria for school admissions and this was in place to ensure that places were given on an equitable basis. Officers explained that the PAN related to the intake at reception so it was a phased introduction and that should it be the case that more children did apply there would be capacity in the wider area to accommodate the children.
- queried specifically in relation to Thorndown Primary School, in St Ives, if there would be an impact in relation to the distance the children needed to travel for displaced children that needed to attend other schools in the area. Officers explained that there has been a decline in births in the area in recent years therefore there would be decreased intake into reception in future years hence the reduction in PAN. There was currently overcapacity of reception places in St Ives and this helped to manage numbers across the town. Each School was less than the 2 miles statutory walking distance.

It was resolved unanimously to:

determine the co-ordinated qualifying scheme and admission arrangements for all schools for whom the Council, as the Local Authority, is the admission authority as published in the consultation documents for admission to school in 2026/27.

## 255. Education Performance

The Committee received a report that gave an update on educational performance in 2024 across Cambridgeshire at the end of each Key Stage, up to and including Key Stage 4.

In presenting the report officers highlighted a number of key points:

- the impact of the pandemic has led to a growth in SEND in areas such as emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) as mental health and anxiety has grown in children and young people who have had their education disrupted. Attendance has been impacted at a national level post pandemic promoting a more rigorous approach within the new DFE requirements where it is an expectation that local authorities work with every school to improve attendance through a Multi-disciplinary approach.
- in general the outcomes for each key phase were in line with the national average. However the gap between all children and those that were more vulnerable was growing.
- the targeted approach used in Fenland in relation to phonics in year one had seen a positive outcome.

- in key stage 2 the writing outcome was below national average and targeted writing projects had been prioritised. The School Improvement Service (SIS) were supporting schools to be forensic in identifying and addressing challenges and share messages from moderation e.g. common barriers to awarding judgements.
- the service had been successful in an Education Fund Endowment Project bid in Fenland which would focus on communication and language.
- early years with children being school ready was at 66.5% in comparison with national at 67.7%. In Early years the outcomes for children with an EHCP was at 5.7% which was better than national indicator which was 3.8%.
- Cambridgeshire's Attainment 8 average score was above the national average, which has been a continuing trend since 2022.

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

- queried what was being done to support children in care to achieve better educational outcomes and children being homeschooled, to both get back into mainstream schooling and encouraging them to write. Members also asked if any support was being given to parents teaching at home to support in this area. Officers highlighted the priority within the Corporate Parenting Strategy in relation to educational outcomes, which would intensify the scrutiny around these outcomes. The authority had a high level of ambition in this area and had a high performing virtual school and all individual children that attended the virtual school had an education plan in place and support in terms of addressing any barriers to accessing education. Officers stated that they could look at patterns and trends in terms of children in care in more depth as there was data that could be analysed from the virtual school in this area. Officers explained that they had oversight of children that were being home educated that were known to social care or had SEND needs and there was a multi-agency response to these children. Some parents home educated for philosophical reasons and the Schools Bill would give strengthened powers to local authorities in relation to the scrutiny of elective home education. The impact of technology on writing was a national issue and therefore the targeted approach was crucial to support improvements in writing.
- highlighted that children entering any key stage where English was a second or third language were a statistically relevant group and stated that it would be good to understand if the authority still received government funding to support these children at this stage. Officers stated that there was a grant available to schools to help support children with English as an additional language but that they did not have the data and information on how the grant was allocated and used. Officers agreed to circulate an update to committee, which would include the relevant data. **Action Required.**
- commented that primary sector performance was below national comparators whilst key stage 4 performance was exceptional. Members questioned whether this was a cohort effect. Officers stated that it would be useful to

look at transition points as there was an increase in referrals of EHCPs when transitioning to secondary education, but also could look at attendance and permanent exclusions to see if this had an effect.

- queried what new approaches the authority would be taking to target attendance particularly those children who were younger during the pandemic. Officers explained that there were new DfE expectations around with a broader approach engaging a wider range of services such as targeted support so that there was a stronger focus on addressing the barriers to attendance, working with parents and carers and understanding the impact of covid in relation to these needs.
- highlighted that the data did not show trends and that members would like to see the data over a 10-year period, broken down by district and education sector. Officers stated that they had been looking at having a more analytical approach, looking at trends over time and key lines of enquiry linking to the 'Inclusion for All' framework and would be reviewing how this data was presented going forwards.
- queried the percentage of children in care that were attending good or outstanding schools. Officers explained that children in care would not be placed in a school that was below good, and a high percentage of schools were outstanding
- requested more information on the diversity of different languages and the types of support provided in schools.
- highlighted the need to look at sharing good practice and knowledge particularly through joint working with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). Officers stated that they were meeting with the new Director of Skills at the CPCA regarding opportunities.
- questioned what targeted support was being provided for key stage 2 in Fenland and Huntingdonshire, what resources were being used and what would success look like. Officers stated that through the corporate strategy there was a key objective that all children would thrive and the measures of this were that children attended school, stayed in school and had the opportunity to achieve and ensuring that there was a targeted approach for the cohorts of children that require support. All schools had support and there were weekly meetings to look at data and soft intelligence, looking at attendance, suspensions, educational outcomes and HR issues. Officers stated that they were happy to share the plan around the Education Endowment Fund Bid project in Fenland and how this would support the more disadvantaged children and look at impacts on how it developed. **Action Required**
- queried whether the new course in Early Achievement in Literacy was only available in maintained schools. Officers agreed to check in relation to this specific project and feedback to members. **Action Required**

- questioned whether the focus on improvements in writing in early years fed into the work being undertaken at key stage 2 and if this was being carried out across all schools and not just for maintained schools. Officers stated that this was being strengthened as the teams had been brought together and was across all schools.

It was resolved to note the findings of this paper and comment as appropriate

## 256. Children and Young People Committee agenda plan, training plan, committee appointments and Local Authority school governor appointments

Members noted that the Sufficiency Strategy report had been removed from the February committee agenda.

A member commented that it was their view that all training should be available for all members and that this should be the default position across all of the committees. Another member stated that this would be for the member development panel to take a view on and that there may be some training such as schools finance training that would be beneficial for all members.

A Member asked that the information on who attended the training and the link to the slide pack/recording be included on the training plan. **Action Required**

It was resolved to:

- a) note the Agenda Plan, Training plan and school governor appointments.